



NOAA Teacher at Sea
Jeff Lawrence
Onboard Research Vessel *Hugh R. Sharp*
June 8 – 19, 2009

NOAA Teacher at Sea: Jeff Lawrence

Ship: Research Vessel *Hugh R. Sharp*

Mission: Sea Scallop Survey

Geographical Area: North Atlantic

Date: Saturday, June 13th, 2009

Weather Data from the Bridge

East winds 3 KT's, 13°C

Seas 3-4ft, 1015 mb of pressure

Science and Technology Log

There is a lot of sophisticated equipment aboard a science research vessel of today. Shad who is one of the scientists aboard the ship explained to me how they used to do scallop surveys on older ships just a few years ago. Then they would catch scallops using the dredge net that was then hauled onboard and dumped on the deck. The scientist would then get on their hands and knees and sort through the pile for scallops or whatever they were looking for. The pile would have to be scoured twice to ensure everything was accounted for. There was a lot of shoveling and moving of the pile as things were being sorted. The work was long, dirty, and backbreaking. Today the *Sharp* has a sorting table onboard which makes the job much easier and gives the ship and crew the availability of adding



Magnetic measuring board



Scallops opening in the warm sun!

more stations to the survey and getting much more work done than in past seasons. Below is a photo of a magnetic measuring board. The scallop or fish are placed on the board and a magnetic wand is put at the end of the sample where an accurate measurement is made and placed into the computer showing the size of the sample. This process is much faster than measuring and recording by hand. They are also weighed in large baskets to determine average weight of the catch.

Personal Log

Some days have been very long at times yet fruitful. A week has passed and we have collected thousands of scallops, hundreds of thousands of starfish, and many other species of bottom dwelling fishes and animals. I have observed many varieties and species of animals that I have never seen before except on TV or in a textbook. This hands-on experience will leave an indelible picture in my mind for many years of what research life is like onboard a research vessel. There are many dedicated scientist and crewmembers in NOAA fisheries that are insuring the viability of certain species so that commercial fishing does not over fish areas of our oceans. These scientists do valuable research in the labs around the United States but also go out on research vessels and get their hands dirty, work extremely hard, and commit a large part of the personal lives to preservation of species in our oceans so that future generations can enjoy the wide diversity that our oceans provide for us today. NOAA has scientist working all around the oceans of the United States as well as other parts of the world to give science a better understanding of the vital role each species has in its environment and how that species overpopulation or disappearance could impact the immediate area, larger habitat of the ocean, and the world as a whole. I feel more at ease knowing that there are dedicated people in the world ensuring not only the interest of humans but are also advocating for all species. The diversity on earth is better understood every year giving scientist and the general public a better understanding of each species role on the world stage of life.

Question of the Day

What does the term Keystone species mean?