NOTE

Compensatory Growth in the Bay Scallop, *Argopecten irradians* (L.)

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Abstract

The phenomenon of compensatory growth has been described as a negative correlation between growth increments in successive years and increasing size of individuals in a given year-class. Evidence is presented that bay scallops, *Argopecten irradians*, of the 1979 year-class, exhibited this growth phenomenon in the Poquonock River estuary, Groton, Connecticut.

Introduction

The phenomenon of compensatory growth was described by Ricker (1958) as a negative correlation between growth increments in successive years and increasing size of fish in a given year-class. Simply stated, smaller fish grow faster to catch up with larger fish in a given year-class. Compensatory growth has been documented for both fish (Hile, 1941; Gerking, 1966; Ricker, 1969; and others) and molluscs (Chernin and Michelson, 1957; Eisenberg, 1966; Mooij-Vogelaar et al., 1970; Peterson, 1978; Eldridge et al., 1979; Eldridge and Eversole, 1982; and others). Time of spawning, variation in temperature during development, variable food availability and density-related growth inhibition have been cited as likely factors which set the stage for compensatory growth to occur (Sund, 1911, as cited in Ricker, 1969; Eldridge et al., 1979; Eldridge and Eversole, 1982).

Stewart et al. (MS 1981) compared the growth of bay scallops in three eastern Connecticut estuaries. Generally, animals in their second growing season (i.e. those with a raised growth ring on their valves) exhibited slow pre-spawning growth, which increased sharply after spawning until late October and early November when growth essentially ceased. Although the scallop populations in the three estuaries exhibited the same general seasonal trend in growth, synoptic values of growth rate and total shell length differed significantly. The documentation of yearly growth in the bay scallop is sparse in the published literature. Marshall (1960) and Cooper and Marshall (1963) are the only other investigators who have studied growth in a natural population of bay scallops in eastern Connecticut. The purpose of this study was to determine if scallops, which grow less than their cohorts during the first growing season (no raised growth ring), compensated for their smaller size during the second season by growing at a faster rate.

Materials and Methods

A representative sample of 200 scallops (1979 year-class) was collected by biologist-divers on 6 November 1980 at a station in the Poquonock River estuary, Groton, Connecticut (Fig. 1). The scallops occurred in shallow (1–2 m depth) water on a substrate of sand and silt in an eelgrass, *Zostera marina*, bed.

Total shell length of scallops (longest tangential axis from the middle valve hinge to the opposite shell margin) and length to the first growth ring (longest tangential axis from the middle valve hinge to the edge of the first ring) were measured to the nearest 0.1 mm. Growth in the second season was taken as the difference between the two measurements. The relationship between growth increments in the first and second seasons was determined by a functional (GM) regression (Ricker, 1973).

Results and Discussion

Results of the functional regression (Fig. 2) show a negative correlation between increasing shell length at the end of the first growth season and growth during the second season. The equation that describes the line is

\[ Y = 64.20 - 1.02X \]

According to the definition of Ricker (1958), bay scallops of the 1979 year-class exhibited compensatory growth.
Acknowledgements

We thank William A. Lund, Jr., Edwin W. Rhodes, Steven T. Tettelbach and Victoria R. Starczak for reviewing the manuscript, and we are grateful to Joyce Lorensen for typing the drafts of the manuscript. This paper is the result of research sponsored by a grant to L. Stewart from the National Marine Fisheries Service, Milford Laboratory, Connecticut.

References


