

A STUDY OF THE SPAWNING CYCLES OF *AEQUIPECTEN OPERCULARIS* AND *PECTEN MAXIMUS* IN THE IRISH SEA, UNITED KINGDOM.

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Monthly samples of *Aequipeecten. opercularis* and *Pecten.maximus* were collected over the period of two years from two areas in the Irish sea. Three methods were used to assess the spawning cycle; a subjective staging method and two objective methods namely, the gonadal index and gonad dry weight.

For *Aequipeecten opercularis* there were three more or less distinct peaks of spawning each in the Laxey Bay population (Winter, Summer, Autumn) but only two in the Port St. Mary population (Winter, Summer). For *Pecten maximus* there were two peaks in the Laxey Bay population (Summer, Autumn) but only a single summer peak in the Port St. Mary population.

The most important spawning period of both species was in the summer but there was probably also some continuous low-level release of gametes throughout the spring and summer. In the small number of annual spawning peaks and the absence of an autumn spawning, the offshore Port St. Mary populations resembled other populations further north in the geographical range, for both species. In contrast, the spawning patterns of the Laxey Bay populations were generally similar to those described for other Irish sea and more southerly populations.

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