Seasonal migration, vertical activity and winter temperature experience of Greenland halibut Reinhardtius hippoglossoides (Walbaum) in West Greenland waters - DTU Orbit

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The deep-water flatfish Greenland halibut Reinhardtius hippoglossoides (Walbaum) is common along the West Greenland coast. In the northwestern fjords, Greenland halibut is an important socio-economic resource for the Greenland community, but due to the deep and partly ice-covered environment, very little is known about its behavior and habitat characteristics. We tagged adult Greenland halibut in the waters off Ilulissat with electronic data storage tags that collected information on depth, temperature, and time. Although clear differences between individuals in migration and vertical behavior were present, we discovered a consistent seasonal migration from the relatively shallow-water Disko Bay area into the deep waters of the Ilulissat Icefjord, where the fish resided in the winter months before returning to Disko Bay. Vertical activity was pronounced at both locations, with fish covering vertical distances of up to 100 m within 15 min. During the winter months, the fish experienced temperatures between ca. 0 and 4°C, with most experiencing temperatures of 2 to 3°C. Irrespective of year and quarter of the year, the fish experienced warmer water and a broader range of temperatures when resident in Disko Bay (mean range 2.6°C) than when resident in the ice fjord (mean range 1.4°C). Using the tagged halibut as a ‘live tool,’ we show that parts of the ice fjord are hundreds of meters deeper than previously thought. We also document the first seawater temperature measurements made beneath the Jakobshavn Isbrae outlet glacier, revealing a positive relationship between depth and temperature for the upper 600 m and a between-year variation in temperatures beneath the ice sheet in 2001, 2002, and 2003

General information
State: Published
Organisations: National Institute of Aquatic Resources, Section for Marine Living Resources, Section for Marine Ecology and Oceanography, Section for Ecosystem based Marine Management, Danish Pelagic Producers Organisation
Authors: Boje, J. (Intern), Neuenfeldt, S. (Intern), Sparrevohn, C. R. (Ekstern), Eigaard, O. R. (Intern), Behrens, J. (Intern)
Pages: 211-222
Publication date: 2014
Main Research Area: Technical/natural sciences

Publication information
Journal: Marine Ecology Progress Series
Volume: 508
ISSN (Print): 0171-8630
Ratings:
BFI (2018): BFI-level 2
Web of Science (2018): Indexed yes
BFI (2017): BFI-level 2
Web of Science (2017): Indexed yes
BFI (2016): BFI-level 2
Scopus rating (2016): CiteScore 2.4
Web of Science (2016): Indexed yes
BFI (2015): BFI-level 2
Scopus rating (2015): CiteScore 2.56
Web of Science (2015): Indexed yes
BFI (2014): BFI-level 2
Scopus rating (2014): CiteScore 2.75
Web of Science (2014): Indexed yes
BFI (2013): BFI-level 2
Scopus rating (2013): CiteScore 2.79
ISI indexed (2013): ISI indexed yes
Web of Science (2013): Indexed yes
BFI (2012): BFI-level 2
Scopus rating (2012): CiteScore 2.9
ISI indexed (2012): ISI indexed yes
Web of Science (2012): Indexed yes
BFI (2011): BFI-level 2
Scopus rating (2011): CiteScore 2.85
ISI indexed (2011): ISI indexed yes