

Day 1 – 26.11.22

We got on to the DISCO on the 26th of Nov 2022. After a lot of stressing the day finally came. So let's just break down my stresses for you. Firstly the ship was delayed for the third time of its journey to St Helena and we weren't going to board until about 4pm on Sat. Then I got a false positive Covid test! I tested negative again afterward though. Then the ship was coming early again and we had to be at the office by 8am, but once again the ship got delayed and we eventually boarded at 10am on Saturday!

Once on board we got shown to our cabin, and we got settled in. I must say, my bed on board is a lot nicer than the one at home. There were multiple introductions and things that needed to get done by the pursers, but I'll just skip to the interesting parts 😊

The intros were done just in time for lunch....my favourite time of the day! It's a help-yourself service here, not like the old RMS St Helena at all. However, like the RMS there are set times for breakfast, lunch and dinner, but you can put food aside plus there is always food and drink available in the dining hall.

For my benefit my shift got changed from 12pm-12am to 4am-4pm. This way I hope to see everything, both day time work and night time work... I won't start work until 4am the next morning, but I had the whole day to familiarise myself with the ship and the crew on board.

Stay posted to our page for more on my DISCO adventures!

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Day 2 – 27.11.22

My day starts at 4am! My first task was in the cold room, sorting samples from the RMT nets (Rectangular Mid-water Trawl).

We have to process the samples in an eight degree cold room, this is to preserve the samples. Anywhere where I have to wear more than shorts and a tee shirt is too cold for me, but hey, it's really interesting to see the species that they pull up from 1000-800m and 800-0m in the nets. I was mainly taking photos of the samples and helping get them ready to be put in ethanol or formalin.

There were multiple things going on at once at about 8am, but I decided to go and have a tour of the CTD (which measures conductivity for salinity, temperature and depth of the water). I helped prep the water for the sieving of micro-plastics, which interested the National Trust team as they have a similar project happening now, so I eventually left and let them continue with the work.

The BRUVS (baited remote, underwater video system) were being pulled up at this time. This is a piece of work that the SHG marine team are hoping to complete ourselves soon, so it was good for me to get this exposure. There was five or six BRUVS out and each recorded about an hour and a half of footage, which the team has to sit and go through. Unfortunately, nothing was really attracted by the bait 😊 but there were some small jellyfish.

Another piece of work that was going on was the bait acoustics. This is basically a sonar device with different frequencies to find schooling fish (in this case the hope was for bait fish) in a transect, which this time was from Egg Island to the South West area. This work is to measure the population biomass of the bait. The rest of this work has to be carried out the next day as the local fishermen have to go and catch the various bait species.

And that was the extent of my 12 hour day, not forgetting the food and coffee breaks in-between, as I wouldn't be able to stay awake. 😊

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Day 3 – 28.11.22

I must admit, I really did not want to wake up this morning! The tiredness is catching up with me. The 4am starts are really hard, it feels like I go to sleep with sunlight and wake up in darkness, kind of upside down isn't it? The start of my day is left over croissants from yesterday's breakfast with a nice hot cup of tea, to warm my body up for the cold room again. From 4am to 7am was sorting through samples, taking pictures and weights from the species from the RMT nets.

In the last post, I mentioned about the bait acoustics. The whole of today was spent sampling all of the bait species that the fishermen caught in the morning, I was mainly observing but did help where it was possible, as I am not competent at this at all. The team collected biological samples of length, weight, sex and maturity and otolith (a bit of a fish's ear). I did get exposure to identifying the sex and maturity of the fish with the help of the team.

Myself and Kirsten were in charge of getting a small sample of the different bait species, this will be used later for stable isotopes (which I have no idea about at this moment in time, but once the work gets done I'll let you know).

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