

Table 1. Deployment summary for 8 PAT tags on Pacific halibut in and near Resurrection Bay, Alaska. Tag 00-0737a was recovered by a commercial fisherman and returned. After downloading the data, the tag was deployed on another fish. Boldface print denotes tags recaptured while on the fish before the scheduled pop-off date.

	PAT #							
	00-0737a	00-0738	00-0818	00-0819	00-0821	00-0737b	00-0741	01-0047
Release location	Resurrection Bay	Resurrection Bay	Cape Aialik	Cape Aialik	Cape Aialik	Resurrection Bay	Resurrection Bay	Resurrection Bay
Release date	11/21/00	11/21/00	3/16/01	3/16/01	3/16/01	7/5/01	7/5/01	7/5/01
Fish length (cm)	129.5	129.5	129.5	165.1	121.9	119.4	109.2	108.0
Recovery date	4/5/01	9/22/02	11/15/01	11/15/01	11/5/01	11/15/01	11/15/01	11/15/01
Days at large	135	670	244	244	234	133	133	133
Horizontal displacement (km)	20.3	2.5	6.5	112.1	0.0	336.9	190.7	358.3
Minimum depth (m)	2	26	4	136	174	72	96	80
Maximum depth (m)	502	466	212	212	210	436	396	404
Minimum temp. (°C)	4.3	4.5	4.8	5.4	5.4	4.4	4.8	4.8
Maximum temp. (°C)	8.6	8.3	12.2	6.4	6.3	8.8	7.4	7.8

RESULTS

The halibut appeared unaffected by the presence of the tags and their swimming was unimpeded. The captive halibut resumed feeding in 2 to 7 days and their skin coloration returned to pre-tagging color in 1 to 2 days. The insertion wounds healed in 2 to 3 weeks, at which point the fish were deemed fit to be returned to the wild.

Of the 14 halibut released with PAT tags, data were recovered from 8, a recovery rate of 57%. Three fish were recaptured by commercial longline vessels, providing archival data records, while five tags popped off the fish and reported to Argos satellites as scheduled (Table 1 and Figure 1). None of the five tags deployed in November 2000 popped off the fish because an outdated software file was loaded on the tags' microcomputers, which was not discovered until after their release. Two of those tags were recaptured by commercial fishermen while three tags remain at-large and if captured, they will provide archival data records. In summary, we have accounted for 11 tags (79%) and 3 (21%) are missing.

The tagged fish ranged from 107 to 165 cm FL and were at-large from 133 to 670 days. The maximum distance traveled from the release site was 358.3 km while the minimum was 0 km (Table 1). All of the fish released in Resurrection Bay swam east or were recovered less than 25 km from the release site.

The fish released off of Cape Aialik either migrated southwest or remained in the vicinity of their release location (Figure 1).

Daily vertical movement and behavior of the halibut were varied among fish (Figure 2). Five fish, 00-0737a, 00-0738, 00-0737b, 00-0741 and 01-0047, displayed a wide range of depths during their time at-large. All of these fish ranged in depth from less than 100 m to deeper than 400 m. Fish 00-0737a showed the greatest depth range, and it experienced the deepest and shallowest depths experienced by any of the fish as it swam from 2 to 502 m (Table 1). Fish 00-0818 displayed different vertical movement than the previous five fish. It visited shallow depths less than 100 m on several occasions during its time at-large, but did not show the amplitude of depth range as the previous five fish. The fish never visited deeper water, which may indicate that it apparently remained on the continental shelf and thus was limited in its vertical movement below 200 m. The remaining two fish, 00-0821 and 00-0819, never showed any appreciable vertical movement during their time at large.

Daily temperature minima and maxima also varied among fish (Figure 3). Fishes 00-0821, 00-0819, 00-0737b, 00-0741 and 01-0047 all remained in approximately 5.8 to 6.2°C water, but occasionally experienced water temperatures outside of this range (Figure 3). In contrast, fishes 00-0737a, 00-0738 and 00-0818 experienced a broader range of temperatures.

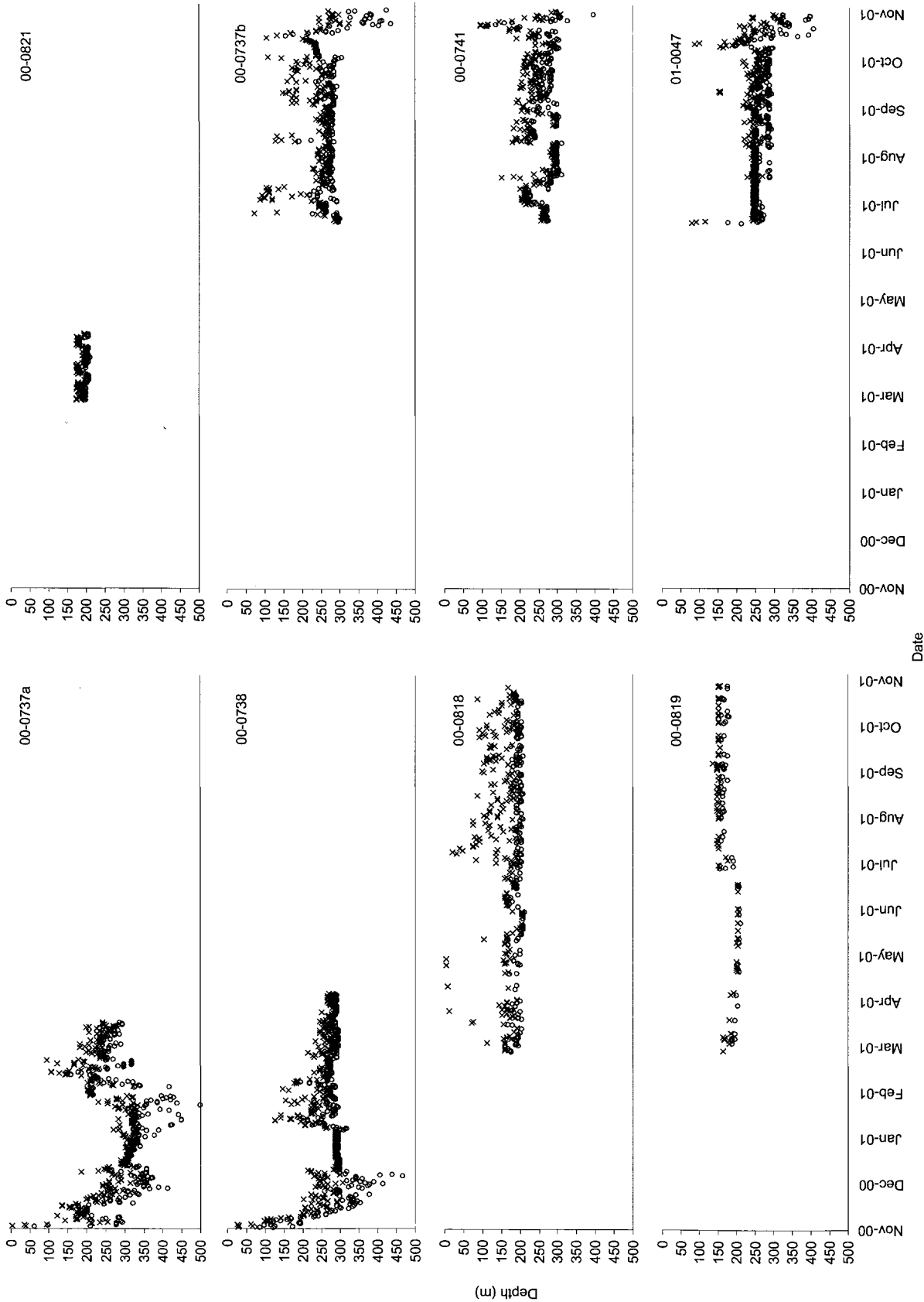


Figure 2. Maximum (x) and minimum (o) depths occupied by eight Pacific halibut within each 12-hour period. Though the same time and depth scales are used to allow comparisons among fish, data are only recorded for the time period each fish was at-large.

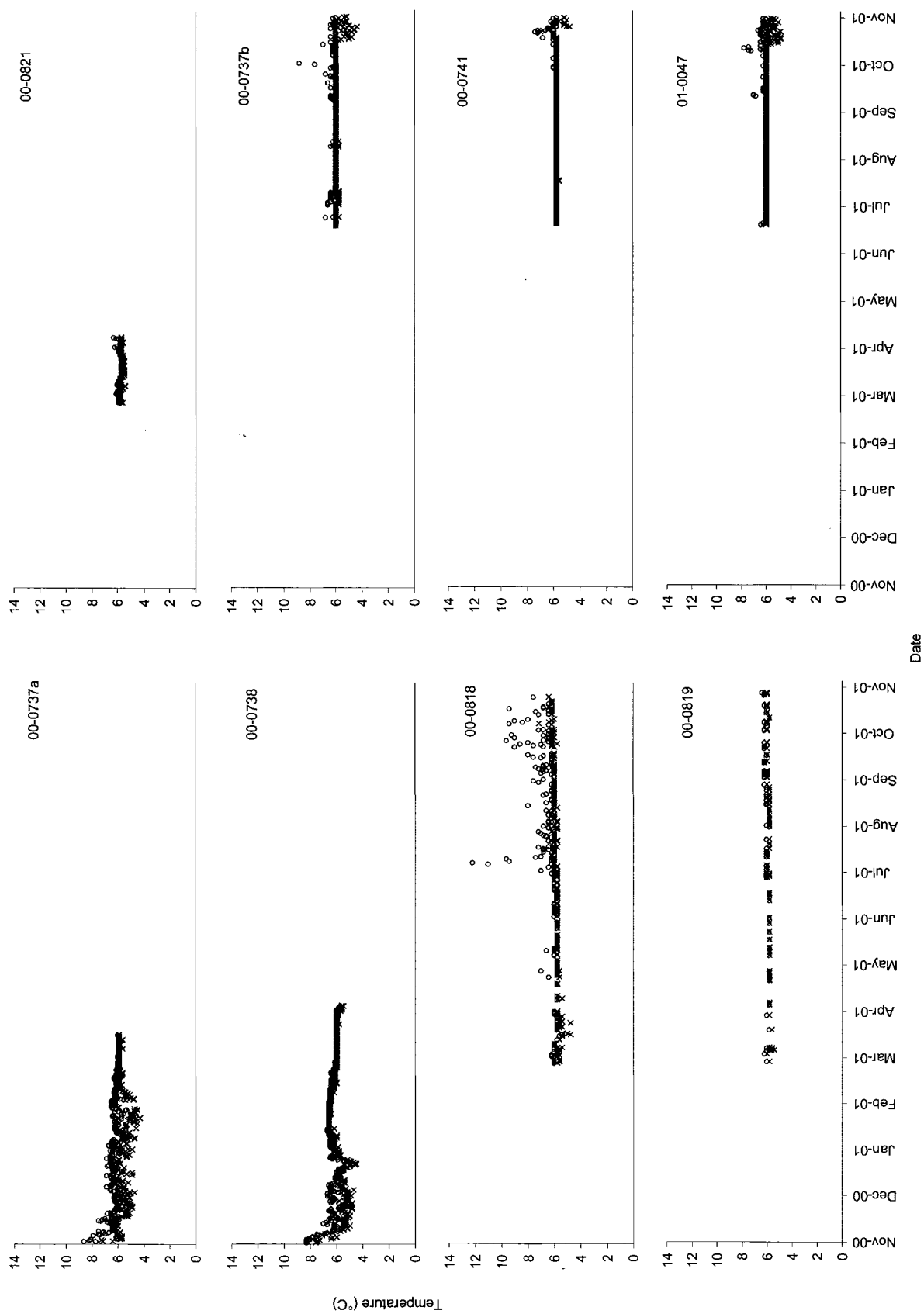


Figure 3. Maximum (o) and minimum (x) water temperatures inhabited by five Pacific halibut within each 12-hour period.

Fishes 00-0737a and 00-0738 generally remained in water between 4.5 and 8°C, while fish 00-0818 generally stayed in the 5.8 to 10°C temperature range. This fish experienced the greatest range and the warmest temperatures, 4.8 to 12.2°C. Fish 00-0737a experienced the coldest temperature of all fish, 4.3°C.

Fish 00-0818 moved vertically greater than 150 m to depths shallower than 50 m on five occasions and was the only halibut whose tag reported informative temperature-depth profiles (Figure 4). The changes in temperature encountered by this fish were directly related to water depth. The temperature between 180 and 200 m was relatively constant around 6°C while temperatures in the near-surface water ranged from 4.8 to 12.0°C.

Three PAT tags were recovered while still externally attached to the fish. Tag 00-0737a provided an archival record of temperature, depth, and light readings for the full duration of deployment, 135 days. Tag 00-0821 was recaptured after 234 days; however, it provided archival readings for only the first 42 days because the battery died for unknown reasons on 27 April 2001. Tag 00-0738 was recaptured after 670 days at-large and recorded data for the first 155 days until the tag reached its storage capacity.

The tags recovered in the commercial fishery pro-

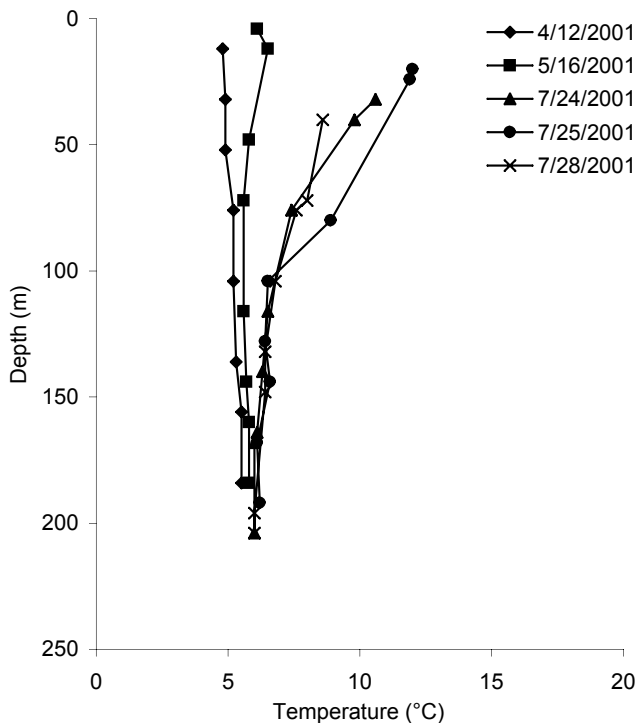


Figure 4. Water column temperature profiles sampled by a PAT tag for five days of greatest vertical movement of halibut 00-0818.

vided minutely archival records that allow examination of fine-scale vertical movement. Fish 00-0737a showed three distinct vertical migration behaviors (Figure 5). The first, (Figure 5; 27 November 2000) was a gradual vertical migration up and down during both day and night. The frequency, amplitude, and slope changed during each vertical migration. The halibut assumed this behavior immediately upon release and continued it until the end of December. On 31 December 2000, the halibut commenced the second type of behavior (Figure 5; 17 February 2001), which consisted of long periods of remaining at virtually the same depth (up to 22 consecutive days). In the third vertical migration behavior, seen only in late January and early February (Figure 5; 3 February 2001), the fish moved to deeper water, abruptly ascended 100 to 175 m in less than 5 min, returned to the pre-ascent depth in less than 7 min, and then gradually ascended. This routine occurred seven times, and after the final occurrence of this behavior in early February through its recapture in April, the fish displayed only the first two behaviors. Fishes 00-0821 and 00-0738 displayed only extended stays at the same depth and gradual vertical migrations, and not abrupt ascents.

The continuous minutely archival records also allow for the calculation of average monthly depth and temperature of the halibut recaptured in the commercial fishery (Table 2). This is in contrast to the PAT tags that reported to Argos, whose records have gaps because of discontinuous satellite coverage previously described. From these mean depths and temperatures, we can quantify monthly trends and variation in depth and temperature of the halibut.

Though we collected light data, the PAT tags estimated daily geopositions in the Gulf of Alaska only 15% of the time; thus, the results are not reported here.

DISCUSSION

PAT tags have been successfully deployed on a variety of pelagic species, but this is the first investigation evaluating their use as a method to study demersal fish. In some pelagic fish studies, pop-up tags were used primarily to determine movement patterns (Block et al. 1998; Lutcavage et al. 1999; Sedberry and Loefer 2001) while other studies investigated both movement patterns and the fishes' environmental preferences of depth and temperature (Holland et al. 2001; Boustany et al. 2002). Halibut grow to large sizes, are relatively abundant, and are easy to capture, so using PAT tags to investigate the same issues as studied for pelagic fish appeared feasible. However, for species that previously

Table 2. Monthly summaries of depth and ambient water temperature data collected once per minute for 2000–2001. Tags 00-0737a, 00-0738, and 00-0821 were recovered by commercial fishermen before the programmed pop-off date of the tags.

00-737a		Depth (m)				Temperature (°C)			
Month	Maximum	Minimum	Mean	SD	Maximum	Minimum	Mean	SD	
November	294.0	2.0	197.2	57.4	8.6	5.7	6.4	0.7	
December	414.0	134.0	272.0	56.4	7.5	4.7	6.0	0.4	
January	450.0	270.0	320.6	18.0	6.9	4.7	6.0	0.4	
February	502.0	198.0	287.2	61.0	6.5	4.3	5.7	0.5	
March	318.0	94.0	234.1	35.3	6.3	5.6	5.9	0.1	
April	294.0	198.0	265.2	21.6	6.0	5.6	5.9	0.1	
00-738									
November	262.0	26.0	156.3	57.5	8.3	5.2	6.9	0.9	
December	466.0	202.0	291.6	33.7	7.0	4.7	5.8	0.4	
January	318.0	126.0	276.7	34.4	6.6	4.5	5.9	0.5	
February	294.0	142.0	249.1	29.0	6.7	6.2	6.5	0.1	
March	294.0	214.0	272.9	12.7	6.4	6.0	6.1	0.1	
April	290.0	246.0	280.0	6.9	6.0	5.5	5.9	0.1	
00-0821									
March	206.0	174.0	192.0	7.7	6.1	5.4	5.8	0.1	
April	210.0	174.0	191.7	9.7	6.3	5.5	5.7	0.1	

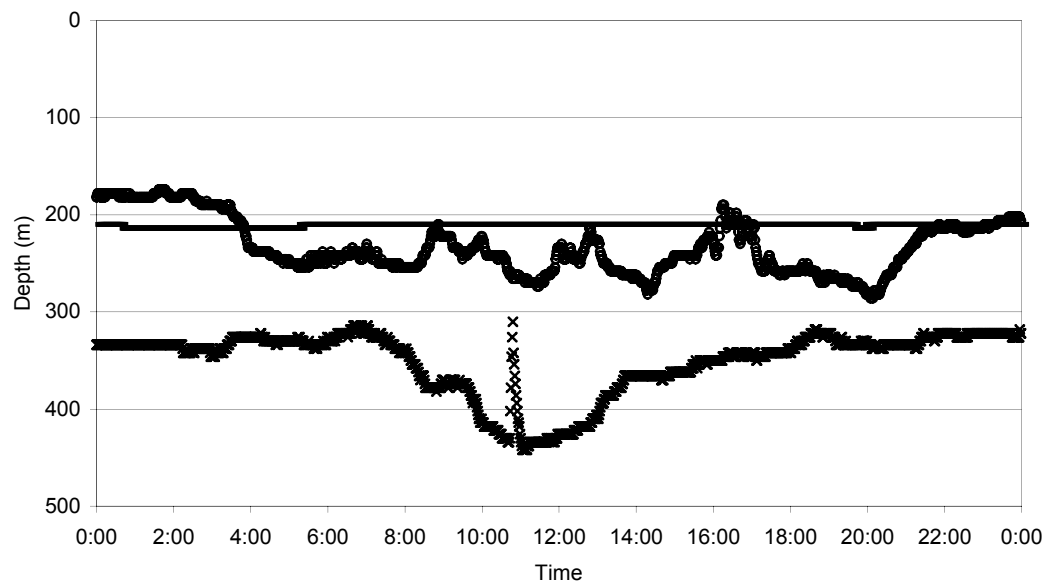


Figure 5. Three days of depth readings sampled every minute by halibut 00-0737a: 27 November 2000 (○), 17 February 2001 (—), and 3 February 2001 (×).

have not demonstrated the ability to carry PAT tags, it is necessary to evaluate the technique on the species in question (Graves et al. 2002). In this study, we evaluated PAT tags' feasibility as a method to examine mesoscale movements for future use in migration and behavior studies of halibut.

Halibut were an excellent candidate for a PAT tagging investigation in the northern Gulf of Alaska. Collection of live adult halibut was relatively easy and fish were successfully captured on each longline set. The fish were hardy and remained calm throughout the capture and transport process. Use of local and general anesthetic, developed by Malmström et al. (1993) for use on the Pacific halibut's congener, Atlantic halibut *Hippoglossus hippoglossus*, greatly facilitated tagging captive halibut, because the fish were uncooperative and struggled when tagged without anesthesia. While tagging wild halibut, anesthetic proved to be unnecessary, because the fish remained calm throughout the tagging process and were generally more cooperative than captive fish.

The methods adopted here for capturing, handling, and tethering tags to the halibut have proven successful in several studies for pop-up satellite tagging of Atlantic bluefin tuna *Thunnus thynnus* up to 450 kg (Block et al. 2001a; Gunn and Block 2001). The halibut in this study behaved similarly to captured bluefin tuna and the techniques were successful for PAT tagging adult halibut for up to 670 days, the longest known deployment of a PAT tag on any species. The relatively small size and docile nature of the halibut in this study allowed us to bring the fish on the boat and apply the tag in a controlled manner at a precise location on the fish. This technique ensures long-term tag retention because the titanium dart is locked in bony fin ray supports. Another common tagging technique, applying the PAT tag while the fish is in the water, has been used for dangerous or aggressive species such as sharks, blue marlin, and swordfish *Xiphias gladius* (Holland et al. 2001; Boustany et al. 2002; Graves et al. 2002; Sedberry and Loefer 2001). When tagging a fish in the water, the investigator is not able to control the fish, which often results in imprecise and inaccurate tagging locations on the fish. The resulting suboptimal tagging locations may result in tag shedding, if not firmly anchored, or damage to the fish. There was no indication in this investigation that halibut should be tagged while in the water and this result is promising for ensuring high return rates and long-term retention in future studies. However, we may have to reevaluate that assessment if we choose to tag very large halibut.

Finding a suitable method for determining the location of halibut from December through March

that does not rely on research or commercial vessels is important because no winter fishery is allowed and bycatch rates for halibut in other winter fisheries are typically low. PAT tags provide winter location information determined by Argos satellites (upon popping off the fish) and therefore appear to be a feasible method of investigating possible spawning locations of the fish. In this investigation, we assumed that all of the halibut, whether male or female, were sexually mature because females attain maturity at a larger size than males and virtually all females in the size range of the halibut in this study are mature (from 108 to 165 cm; Clark et al. 1999). The PAT tags show that six of the eight halibut migrated at least 100 km from their release location, and these fish probably undertook seasonal spawning migrations. Mature halibut are known to migrate annually from shallow summer feeding grounds to spawn from November to March (St-Pierre 1984; IPHC 1998). Although major spawning grounds are typically in deeper water on the shelf edge, spawning activity is not limited to these major grounds, and may occur along the entire coast in the northeast Pacific (St-Pierre 1984; IPHC 1998).

One disappointment with the PAT tags was our inability to obtain any geolocation data for the majority of days. These PAT tags were not a consistent estimator of light-based daily geolocation of halibut in their natural environment, probably for a combination of factors. The first is that light does not penetrate past 300 m, even in clear oceanic water, and some of these halibut spent long periods deeper than 300 m. Additionally, the highly productive, coastal shelf water in which the halibut live is turbid because of suspended organic and inorganic matter, thus increasing light attenuation with depth. A final factor is the low amount of ambient light at northern latitudes during winter. All of these factors inhibited the light sensor and the existing geolocation algorithms from accurately calculating daily position. Future examination of this PAT tag data will be directed towards improving the manufacturer's geolocation algorithm to accommodate low light levels characteristic of northern latitudes. Additionally, we will augment our light-based geolocation estimates by comparing the PAT tags' depth data with existing bathymetry data sets collected in and around Resurrection Bay to cross-reference the geolocation estimates.

We were able to infer approximate seasonal location of halibut by combining final recovery locations and environmental sensor data from the PAT tags. Release and recovery locations have been used in conjunction with water temperature to infer the location of bluefin tuna in the western and central Atlantic

Ocean (Block et al. 1998, 2001a; Lutcavage et al. 1999). These studies used sea surface temperature and depth-temperature profiles as an indicator of water masses, such as the Gulf Stream and Labrador Current, to determine approximate seasonal locations. In the present study, the depth record provided by the PAT tag is used satisfactorily to identify the timing and approximate extent of horizontal movement of the halibut. By using the PAT tag depth record, we assume that the halibut were in contact with the bottom at least once during the 12-hour summary periods, thus the maximum depth for each summary period represents the bottom depth. Three of the fish released in Resurrection Bay swam east to known spawning grounds on the continental shelf edge (St-Pierre 1984). The other two fish tagged and released in Resurrection Bay were recovered only 20.3 and 2.5 km from their respective release locations after 135 and 670 days respectively; however, they did not remain near their release location in the Resurrection Bay during the winter. These fish experienced maximum depths of 502 and 466 m, respectively, within two weeks after their release. Depths of this magnitude do not exist in Resurrection Bay, indicating that these two fish migrated out of the bay towards the continental shelf edge. According to their maximum depths, after spending the winter in deep water near the shelf edge, both halibut migrated back to their summer feeding grounds in Resurrection Bay. This is a common pattern because most adult fish tend to remain on the same feeding grounds every year, leaving only to spawn in deep water (IPHC 1998). In contrast to the previous fish, the halibut released off of Cape Aialik in March either migrated southwest or remained in the vicinity of their release location. None of these halibut showed any appreciable changes in maximum depth and, therefore, probably stayed on the shelf for the time they were at-large with tags attached.

In addition to providing approximate seasonal locations, archival depth and temperature records, PAT tags recaptured by commercial fishermen yield insight into the fine-scale vertical movement of the fish. Previous investigations on Pacific halibut have not addressed the extent of vertical movement or whether the fish display pelagic behavior. Confamilial species such as Greenland halibut and North Sea plaice make forays into the pelagic realm during certain seasons or life history stages (Metcalf et al. 1991; Jørgensen 1997). Pronounced pelagic behavior and variation in vertical distribution can have important implications for stock indices of abundance and on stock assessments if benthic fishing gear is the only component of the assessments. Several halibut in this investiga-

tion displayed large depth changes. However, the tags themselves do not provide direct information if the fish remained on or near the bottom and moved over the irregular bathymetry of coastal Alaska or whether they left the bottom and swam through the water column. An example is the behavior of fish 00-0737a on 27 November 2000 (Figure 5). However, from the depth and temperature records, we can infer pelagic behavior of at least one halibut, 00-0818, which almost certainly left the benthos and swam vertically through the water column. Its maximum depths indicate that the fish did not experience any appreciable changes in bottom depths and combined with the proximity of its release and pop-off locations, the PAT tag indicates that the fish did not undergo any extensive horizontal movement during its time at-large. The fish's frequent forays into shallow water are mostly likely indicative of pelagic behavior by the fish. This behavior can be confirmed with improved estimates of geolocation so we can ascertain the bottom depth where the fish is located. If halibut spend an appreciable amount of time in the pelagic environment, this may have stock assessment implications when they are surveyed using bottom trawls and longlines (IPHC 1998). Additionally, the time spent in the pelagic zone, particularly if halibut follow a diel schedule, may be important in developing strategies to reduce halibut bycatch in trawl fisheries.

PAT tags also may help identify spawning behavior in Pacific halibut. The depth data collected by PAT tags may identify spawning events and their duration, timing, and frequency. The abrupt ascent and descent behavior displayed by fish 00-0737a may be representative of spawning behavior. Because this behavior appeared to follow a routine and was found only during peak spawning season (St-Pierre 1984), this could represent a form of spawning behavior common in many flatfish (Moyer et al. 1985; Konstantinou and Shen 1995; Manabe et al. 2000; Manabe and Shinomiya 2001). The spawning behavior in other flatfish species follows a routine wherein a male courts a female by slowly swimming on top of her, which is followed by an abrupt "spawning rise" off of the seafloor where gametes are released and then an immediate return to the benthos by both the male and the female. The abrupt rise from the bottom by fish 00-0737a may be an indicator of spawning activity in halibut.

PAT tags can be used to examine the mean water temperature that the halibut inhabit, and their thermal range. Current descriptions that halibut live in water "at temperatures within a few degrees of 5°C" (Trumble et al. 1993) or they "prefer water temperature ranging from 3 to 8°C" (IPHC 1998) are vague.

A detailed description of the thermal preference and range of demersal fish is necessary to understand their spatial and temporal distributions (Kihara and Uda 1969). The PAT tags are an effective method of understanding the thermal habitat of Pacific halibut. The water temperature data from this investigation generally corroborates the previous descriptions, but additionally quantifies the range of temperature experienced by individuals which was previously unavailable. By examining these data, we can generate a predictive relationship between inhabitation by halibut and water temperature that will aid our understanding of how halibut will respond to changes in their environment.

Additionally, PAT tags attached to fish can be used to reconstruct profiles of the water column in times and places that are otherwise inaccessible (Block et al. 2001b). If the approximate location of the fish is known, temperature versus depth profiles are collected and the tag serves as an autonomous sampler of the immediate environment around the fish. The tag may serve to augment oceanographic data collected by research vessels. In contrast, if the location of the fish is unknown, the temperature versus depth profiles can be used to identify the approximate location of the fish by comparing the PAT tag data to temperature and depth data collected on research vessels. Further, these profiles may be used to identify water masses that may affect the distribution of migratory fishes (Block et al. 2001a). In this investigation, one PAT tag provided water temperature versus depth profiles for three months—providing information on the environmental conditions experienced by the fish. With larger PAT tag deployments, we can characterize the tolerances and favorable environmental conditions of halibut.

The sampling rate, length of time for histogram summaries, and the limits of the histogram bins of PAT tags are user-definable by using Wildlife Computers' software. To optimize data storage, allocation and transmission, one may wish to change any of the parameters of the PAT tags, which may yield different results. To evaluate which parameters are optimal for PAT tagging halibut in the northern Gulf of Alaska, one would have to conduct an experiment using several different PAT tag settings and compare the ensuing results. In this study, we chose to define identical parameters for each PAT tag—with the exception of two different sampling rates—to facilitate comparison among tags. We did not find any apparent differences among the data records of tags that sampled every one versus every two minutes. Additionally, the halibut did not appear to move quickly enough to need minutely sampling, thus the sampling rate of every other minute is probably more beneficial as it allows storage of a longer data record.

In this investigation, we tested the feasibility of using pop-up archival transmitting tags to study large demersal fish. The methods, adapted from investigations on large pelagic fish, proved to be effective for studying Pacific halibut in the northern Gulf of Alaska. PAT tags allowed us to obtain high accuracy locations of the fish at the end of the tag deployments as well as preliminary data to identify approximate seasonal locations and to characterize their depth and temperature characteristics. By using PAT tags, we will be able to ensure tag returns during the winter season (which is closed to fishing) and gain valuable biological information even if fish migrate large distances or to unexpected locations. General patterns of halibut behavior will emerge from larger satellite tag deployments and rigorous data analysis in the future.

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