



Conducting scientific research projects that support sustainable fisheries, aquaculture, and agriculture

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Research Cruise Summary Report

Project Name:	<i>Seasonal Survey of Scallop Fishery on the Eastern Part of Georges Bank</i>
Vessel Name:	Concordia
Departure Date:	6/22/2026
Land Date:	6/27/2026
Port:	New Bedford, MA
Chief Scientist:	Luisa Garcia
Scientific Crew:	Farrell Davis, Cassandra Tillotson, Nathan Shivers
Report Completed by:	Luisa Garcia

BACKGROUND

The Seasonal Survey Project has been ongoing since 2012, with sampling over the last nine years focused on the eastern portion of Georges Bank (GB; **Figure 1**). Since 2020, each survey has consisted of paired 15-minute tows using two 15-foot Turtle Deflector Dredges, one fitted with a cover net and one without, at a target speed of 4.8 knots. Catch is processed separately by gear type: all organisms are sorted, weighed, and measured, with scallops subsampled for detailed biological data including shell height, meat and gonad weight, sex, reproductive stage, and meat condition. Selected flatfish species are sampled for gonadosomatic index determination.

This cruise report presents key findings from the last research cruise of the 2025 RSA Seasonal Survey, during which 49 stations were successfully sampled in June 2026. Results and analyses from all research cruises conducted as part of the 2025 Seasonal Survey are currently being compiled and will be presented in the final project report, which will be submitted in October 2026.

For more information about the project, including previous survey reports, please visit: <https://www.coonamessettfarmfoundation.org/seasonal-survey#dataItem-m2qfz3zb>

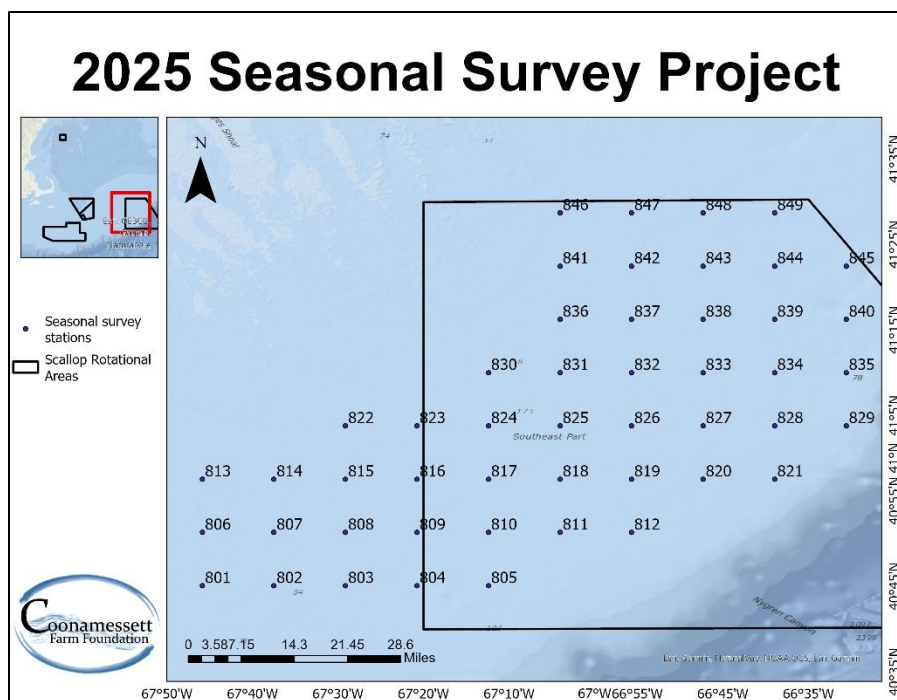


Figure 1. Location of the survey stations for the 2025 seasonal survey on the eastern portion of GB, with stations spaced ~7 nm apart.

CRUISE OBJECTIVES

The primary objective of this cruise was to conduct standardized biological sampling throughout the eastern Georges Bank study area to support seasonal monitoring of Atlantic sea scallops and associated species. Sampling focused on collecting biological, ecological, and catch composition data using established survey protocols to characterize scallop populations and bycatch species across the survey area.

The specific cruise objectives were to:

- Complete standardized dredge sampling at all designated stations within the eastern Georges Bank study area.
- Collect biological data from Atlantic sea scallops, including morphometric, reproductive, and health information.
- Characterize catch composition by identifying, enumerating, and measuring all species captured.
- Collect biological data from incidentally captured flatfish and American lobster.

OBSERVATIONS & KEY TAKE AWAYS

The cover net captured the smallest American lobster recorded (10 mm of carapace length) since the implementation of the cover net sampling protocol in 2019 (**Figure 2**), demonstrating the ability of the gear to retain small individuals that would not be captured by the standard dredge. This observation further supports the value of the cover net for documenting juvenile benthic organisms.

The cover net had a single tow with a catch of 31 ocean pout (**Figure 3**). This represents one of the highest catches of this species observed during the seasonal survey and may indicate localized aggregation or habitat use within the sampled area.

CFF's Remote Transmitter Sonde was successfully test deployed during the cruise in preparation for the next phase of the project (**Figure 4**). The instrument collected measurements of conductivity, pH, dissolved oxygen, acoustics, pressure, and temperature. The successful deployment confirmed operational procedures and will support routine environmental data collection at approximately half of the survey stations during future cruises.

All planned scientific operations, including dredge sampling, cover net deployments, biological sampling, and environmental data collection, were completed successfully, providing a complete dataset for subsequent analyses.



Figure 2. American lobster caught with the cover net during the June 2026 seasonal survey trip.



Figure 3. Ocean pouts captured in a single cover net tow. A total of 31 individuals were collected, representing an unusually high catch for this species during the seasonal survey.



Figure 4. CFF's Remote Transmitter Sonde deployed during a test deployment to evaluate field performance prior to its routine use in future seasonal surveys.

PRELIMINARY RESULTS

All planned stations were successfully surveyed during this trip. A total of 25 species were captured across all sampling gears (**Table 1**). The highest total scallop catch by weight was recorded in the uncovered dredge (2,897.9 lb), followed by the covered dredge (727.8 lb) and the cover net (408.3 lb). Among non-target species, unclassified skates accounted for the greatest biomass, with catches of 1,742.8 lb in the uncovered dredge and 547.4 lb in the covered dredge across all tows (**Table 1**).

A total of seven flatfish species were captured during the survey (**Table 1**). Summer flounder and winter flounder were the least abundant, with only two summer flounder (35 and 40 cm total length) and three winter flounder (47, 48, and 50 cm total length) collected. Moderate catches were recorded for windowpane flounder (10 individuals), yellowtail flounder (11 individuals), and gray sole (14 individuals). Total lengths ranged from 25 - 31 cm for windowpane flounder, 30 - 45 cm for yellowtail flounder, and 32 - 47 cm for gray sole. Fourspot flounder was the most abundant flatfish species, with 182 individuals ranging from 18 - 40 cm in total length. Monkfish was a prominent bycatch species, with 130 individuals captured ranging from 11 - 99 cm in total length. In addition, 16 American lobsters were caught, with carapace lengths ranging from 1.0 - 17.2 cm.

Shell height frequency distributions of scallops varied markedly among the three gear types (**Figure 5**). The cover net catch exhibited a distinctly bimodal distribution, with a dominant peak around 40 - 45 mm shell height and a smaller peak around 100 - 110 mm (**Figure 5**). This bimodality suggests the cover net retained a substantial proportion of small, likely pre-recruit or juvenile scallops that are not typically captured by the standard dredge gears. In contrast, catches from the covered dredge and uncovered dredge were unimodal and right-skewed, with size distributions concentrated in the 90 - 130 mm range and a peak around 105 - 110 mm (**Figure 5**). The uncovered dredge had a higher peak count (~1,600), reflecting a larger overall catch volume for this gear (**Figure 5**).

Table 1. Weights (lbs.) of species captured during the June 2026 seasonal survey trip.

Species Name	Uncovered dredge	Covered dredge	Cover net
Barndoor skate	320.0	100.2	2.4
Butterfish	0.0	0.0	0.7
Fourspot flounder	15.3	0.9	59.7
Gulfstream flounder	0.1	0.0	9.2
Haddock	0.0	0.0	1.0
Illex squid	0.4	0.0	1.4
Jonah crab	65.7	20.5	45.9
Longhorn sculpin	0.0	0.5	11.9
Monkfish	567.4	123.4	6.9
Northern moon snail	0.5	0.0	19.4
Northern searobin	0.0	0.0	0.2
Ocean pout	0.0	0.9	38.0
Red hake	5.7	63.9	414.1
Rock crab	1.6	0.0	1.9
Sea raven	1.6	0.0	0.5
Sea scallop	2897.9	727.8	408.3
Silver hake	1.3	13.7	54.7
Spiny dogfish	9.7	0.0	11.8
Summer flounder	1.0	1.1	0.0
Unclassified skates	1742.8	547.4	84.6
Waved whelk	0.2	0.2	8.6

Species Name	Uncovered dredge	Covered dredge	Cover net
Windowpane flounder	6.0	0.7	0.7
Winter flounder	6.4	3.0	0.0
Witch flounder	6.2	3.4	3.7
Yellowtail flounder	4.8	5.3	2.6

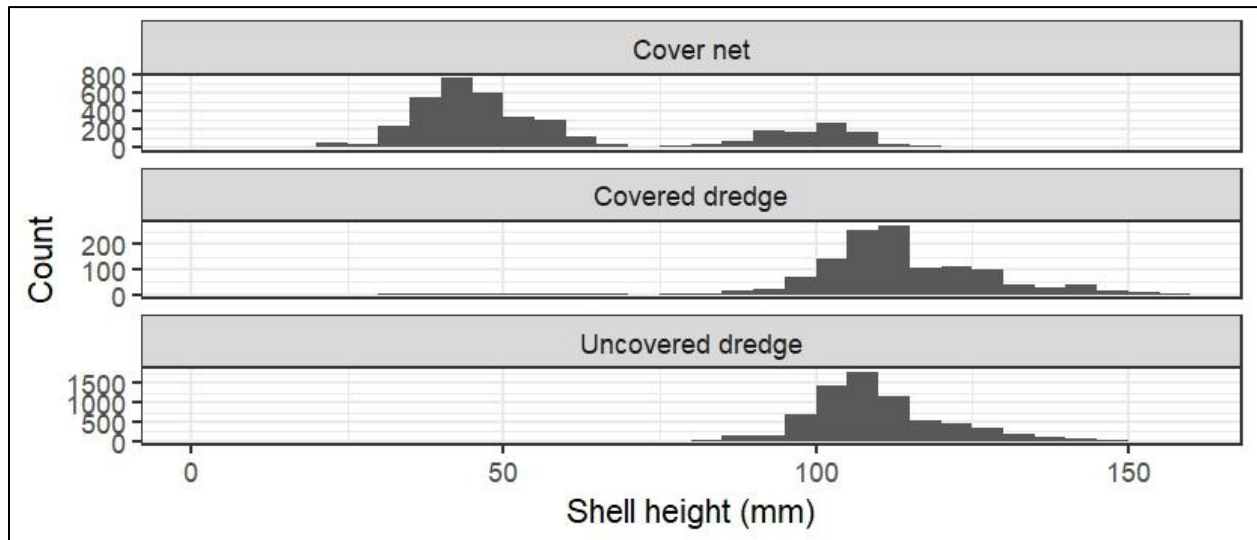


Figure 5. Length-frequency distributions of scallops collected during the June 2026 seasonal survey trip, by gear type.