

VARIABILITY OF MESOZOOPLANKTON AND ICHTHYOPLANKTON IN “EL HIERRO” ISLAND, CANARY ISLANDS.

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Temporal and spatial variation in mesozooplankton biomass and ichthyoplankton and egg abundance was studied on three neritic stations in a marine reserve leeward of El Hierro Island (Canary Islands). Monthly oblique bongo hauls were carried out during spring and autumn 2006 in a station inside the integral reserve and two others on its border. Surface temperature fluctuated from 20.0°C in April to 24.5°C in October showing a well marked thermocline from June to October. Average dry weight obtained for mesozooplankton biomass ($7.8 \text{ mg}\cdot\text{m}^{-3} \pm 4.2 \text{ SD}$) was a normal value for the Canary Islands waters. Average fish egg abundances ($1307.8 \text{ eggs}\cdot\text{10m}^{-2} \pm 1648.6 \text{ SD}$) was higher than those observed before around the islands. However, the average fish larvae abundance ($348.3 \text{ ind.}\cdot\text{10m}^{-2} \pm 333.8 \text{ SD}$) matched other estimates in the Canary Current. No significant differences were observed between stations for eggs abundance. The lowest values for total fish larvae densities were observed in the station located over the protected area, while the largest values appeared in windshear area of the island as observed for mesozooplankton in the other islands of the archipelago.

Key words: fish larvae, mesozooplankton, marine reserves, Canary Islands.