

**CHARACTERISTICS OF ZOOPLANKTON COMMUNITY OF THE OKHOTSK SEA
IN AUTUMN: A COMPARISON WITH OYASHIO REGION**

YAMAGUCHI, Atsushi, Yasuhiro UENO, Jiro SEKI, Tsutomu IKEDA

Graduate School of Fisheries Sciences, Hokkaido University, 3-1-1 Minatomachi, Hakodate,
Hokkaido 041-8611, Japan; a-yama@fish.hokudai.ac.jp

Based on the vertical stratified zooplankton samples collected during autumns (September-December) of 1996 to 1998, vertical distribution, biomass, community structure and body size of dominant copepods in the southern Okhotsk Sea were evaluated and compared with that of the same period in the Oyashio region. In terms of fauna, zooplankton in the Okhotsk Sea is similar to that in the Oyashio region. However, their biomass, community structure and vertical distribution patterns are quite different between these two regions. Zooplankton biomass near surface layer (0 m-thermocline) in the Okhotsk Sea was less than that of the Oyashio region. As part of reasons, distribution of large copepods in the mesopelagic layer in the Okhotsk Sea (this is epipelagic in the Oyashio region) may be considered. Larger body size of zooplankton in the Okhotsk Sea suggests that their development occurred in cooler mesopelagic zones of this region. Standing stocks of the most zooplankton taxa were smaller in the Okhotsk Sea, while only copepod *Metridia okhotensis* showed an opposite pattern. Abundance of *M. okhotensis* in the Okhotsk Sea was 30 times greater than that in Oyashio region, and they predominated (60% of the total copepod number) in the Okhotsk Sea. The development of strong pycnocline in Okhotsk Sea may be a key feature which affecting to these regional differences in zooplankton community in the Okhotsk Sea and Oyashio region.