From dusk till dawn: Diversity and similarities in the movement patterns of eastern Baltic cod from DSTs

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From dusk till dawn: Diversity and similarities in the movement patterns of eastern Baltic cod from DSTs

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The eastern Baltic cod stock is in distress, but the underlying mechanisms are still poorly understood. Data storage tags (DSTs) implanted in cod (Gadus morhua) in the eastern Baltic Sea between 2016 and 2018 revealed new insights into the vertical and horizontal movements.

While all individuals showed vertical movements triggered by dusk and dawn, their horizontal migration varied between cod released in Germany, Denmark or Sweden.

Vertical migration: Triggered by dusk and dawn!

A clear twilight-triggered pattern emerged year-round: with the onset of sunset, cod swam to shallower water or rose in the water column (up to 30 m within 30 minutes) and returned to deeper water at sunrise.

These vertical movements resulted in temperature changes of up to 9.6 °C during single excursions crossing the thermocline. Does this lead to an unknown bias in standard bottom trawl surveys?

Release location Germany
- Days at liberty: 277
- Arkona Basin
- Migratory cod
  - Migration to feeding and spawning grounds
  - Migration to Bornholm Basin once a year for extended period
  - Continuously remaining in deep waters during spawning period

Release location Denmark
- Days at liberty: 285
- Bornholm Coast
- Stationary cod
  - Close to the spawning area all year round
  - Intermittently moving to shallower waters during spawning period

Release location Sweden
- Days at liberty: 195
- Hanö Bay
- Migratory cod
  - Migration to feeding and spawning grounds
  - Migration into Bornholm Basin outside spawning period