8 Roundnose grenadier (Coryphaenoides rupestris)

8.1 Stock description and management units

ICES WGDEEP has in the past proposed four assessment units of roundnose grenadier in the NE Atlantic:

- Skagerrak (Division 3.a);
- The Faroe-Hatton area, Celtic sea (Divisions 5.b and 12.b, Subareas 5, 7);
- the Mid-Atlantic Ridge 'MAR' (Divisions 5.b, 12.c, Subdivisions 5.a1, 12.a.1, 14.b.1);
- All other areas (Subareas 1, 2, 4, 8, 9, Division 14.a, Subdivisions 5.a.2, 14.b.2).

This current perception is based on what are believed to be natural restrictions to the dispersal of all life stages. The Wyville-Thomson Ridge may separate populations further south on the banks and slopes off the British Isles and Europe from those distributed to the north along Norway and in the Skagerrak. Considering the general water circulation in the North Atlantic, populations from the Icelandic slope may be separated from those distributed to the west of the British Isles. It has been postulated that a single population occurs in all the areas south of the Faroese slopes, including also the slopes around the Rockall Trough and the Rockall and Hatton Banks but the biological basis for this remains hypothetical.

In 2007, WGDEEP examined the available evidence of stock discrimination in this species but, on the available evidence, was not able to make further progress in discriminating stocks. On this basis WGDEEP concluded there was no basis on which to change current practice.

In the 2010s, genetic analyses have brought forward information regarding the stock discrimination in the roundnose grenadier. White *et al*. (2010), investigating a limited geographic area in the central and eastern North Atlantic, found evidence of population substructure and local adaptation to depth. Knutsen *et al*. (2012) covered a larger geographic range including East and West Atlantic as well as Artic areas and found significant genetic structure. Parts of this structure, notably in peripheral (Canada) and bathymetrically isolated basins (Skaggerak and Trondheimsleia (off Norway)), was found to represent distinct biological populations with limited present connectivity with central Atlantic and West European slope. Off the British Isles (Irish slope, Rockall, and Rosemary Bank), the magnitude of genetic structure was found weak. This lack of definition could reflect that samples from this area represent a single, widespread population. On the other hand, a study of coastal Atlantic cod (Knutsen *et al*., 2011) reported highly restricted connectivity (less than 0.5% adult fish exchanged per year) among two populations that were only weakly differentiated at microsatellite loci. This level is similar to that found between Greenland, Mid-Atlantic Ridge, Rockall, and Rosemary Bank for grenadier. These sites may therefore represent distinct demographical populations, where there is a sufficient gene flow to maintain genetic similarity in terms of allele frequency but the demography is driven by local/regional recruitment and growth with a minor contribution of large scale migrations of juveniles and adults or transport of larvae. .

The current stock units are consistent with the study from Knutsen *et al*. (2012) except that the unit covering subareas 1, 2, 4, 8, and 9, Division 14.a, and subdivisions 14.b.2 and 5.a.2, should not be considered as a demographic stock or a genetic population because it includes Artic and Atlantic areas in which roundnose grenadier was found to be genetically different. This unit might be only considered as an aggregations of areas where roundnose grenadier occurs at low to moderate density and is not subject to significant continuous exploitation.

8.2 Roundnose grenadier (*Coryphaenoides rupestris*) in Division 3.a

8.2.1 The fishery

From the late 1980s until 2006 a Danish directed fishery for roundnose grenadier was conducted in the deeper part of Division 3.a. Until 2003 landings increased gradually, from around 1000 t to 4000 t with fluctuations. In 2004 and 2005 exceptionally high catches were reported; reaching almost 12 000 tonnes in 2005. This directed fishery stopped in 2006 due to implementation of new agreed regulations between EU and Norway.

At present, there are no directed fisheries for roundnose grenadier in Division 3.a.

8.2.2 Landing trends

The total landings by all countries from 1988–2020 are shown in Table 8.3.0 and Figure 8.3.0.

The landings from the directed Danish fishery ceased in 2007 and the total landings have since been minor (<2 tonnes). The landings are now by-catches from other fisheries.

8.2.3 ICES Advice

The 2021 and 2022 advice for rng.3a was: "ICES advices that when the precautionary approach is applied, there should be zero catch in each of the years 2021 and 2022".

8.2.4 Management

The directed fishery for roundnose grenadier was stopped in April 2006 based on agreements between Norway and the EU. The directed fishery has then been prohibited since 2006. Norway and the EU has introduced a mandatory use of sorting grids in shrimp fisheries in order to minimize the bycatch of fish.

In Council Regulation (EU) No 2021/91 of 28 January 2021, fixing for 2021 and 2022 the fishing opportunities for EU vessels for fish stocks of certain deep-sea fish species, a precautionary TAC was set to 5 tons for each years, for EU vessels in EU waters and international waters of Subarea 3. Since there is no area outside national jurisdiction (international waters) in 3.a, this regulation applies to EU waters unless other agreements are negotiated with Norway. There is no TAC for Norwegian vessels in Norwegian waters but the agreed regulation between EU and Norway apply for this area.

8.2.5 Data available

8.2.5.1 Landings and discards

Landings data from 1988-2020 are presented in Table 8.3.0. Discards have been reported from both the Swedish and Danish fishery since 2014 (Table 8.3.2).

8.2.5.2 Length compositions

Since the Danish directed fishery has stopped there is no new information on size compositions from commercial catches other than the data given for the period 1996–2006 (see stock annex for further details).

Updated information on size distribution from the Norwegian shrimp survey is provided in Figure 8.3.1.

8.2.5.3 Age composition

Age data are available from a deep sea species survey in 1987 and from the Norwegian shrimp survey in 2007-2019 (Table 8.3.3).

These age data are presented in Bergstad *et al*., 2014.

8.2.5.4 Bycatch effort and cpue

Data from the Norwegian reference fleet have been analysed from 2013-2019 to estimate the catch of roundnose grenadier in the shrimp fishery (Table 8.3.5).

Earlier, there has been estimated bycatch of roundnose grenadier in Norwegian shrimp fishery in ICES Division 4.a and 3.a (see Stock Annex). These bycatch estimates were not obtained by sampling of the commercial catches but derived using the mean annual Norwegian shrimp trawl survey catches of grenadier at depths <400 m and annual effort in the shrimp trawl fishery. The shrimp fishery in this area is mainly conducted shallower than the primary depth range of roundnose grenadier. It should be noted that commercial vessels fishing in the relevant areas use sorting grids to reduce bycatch, a device not used in the survey, hence survey-based estimates of bycatches are likely to be overestimates.

8.2.5.5 Survey indices

The Norwegian annual shrimp survey conducted since 1984 samples deeper parts of the Skagerrak and north-eastern North Sea (3.a and 4.a), including the depth range where the roundnose grenadier occurs (mainly 300–600 m) (Bergstad, 1990b). The minor area >600 m is an ammunition and warship dumping ground with warning against fishing. The survey is considered to adequately sample the main distribution area of roundnose grenadier, and the sample sizes by year (no. of tows at depths >300 m and >400 m) are presented in Table 8.3.1. The survey indices from the shrimp survey where updated with new information (Table 8.3.4 and Figure 8.3.2). The indices are given as biomass (kg/h) and abundance (number/h).

8.2.6 Data analyses

An earlier study analysed the time-series of abundance of roundose grenadier through the time-series (Bergstad *et al*., 2014). Catch rates in terms of biomass (kg/h) and abundance (nos/h) were calculated for stations 300 m and deeper (Figure 8.3.2). Stations with zero catches were included, and the catches at non-zero stations were standardized by tow duration. The published analysis also includes a time-series of small grenadier, i.e. <5 cm PAL, illustrating variation in recruitment.

8.2.6.1 Trends in landings, effort and estimated bycatches

Collated information on landings and estimates of bycatch from the Norwegian Reference fleet suggest that the removals of roundnose grenadier are now at low levels in Division 4.a and 3.a. For 2020, there were no discards and all catches were landings. Although the discards from the fishery in this area from recent years was reported to be at the same level as the landings, the level on reported total catch was still low and in the range of what it has been since 2007.

There is no longer a directed fishery for grenadier in this area and data on effort and CPUE is therefore not available from the commercial catches. The earlier evaluation of the Danish CPUE data were presented in ICES (2007) but these CPUE data do not provide any clear indications of stock status nor stock development for the time of the directed fishery, which ceased in mid–2006.

Landings and discards are now insignificant and have been represented as bycatches from other fisheries. Data from the Norwegian reference fleet show that catches of roundnose grenadier in the Norwegian shrimp fishery is low (Table 8.3.5). Discards from Danish and Swedish fishery is zero for 2020.

8.2.6.2 Size compositions

The recent length distributions from the Norwegian shrimp survey data contrasts with the 1991–2004 distributions by not having a distinct mode of small fish as seen in the early 1990s (Bergstad *et al*., 2014). The pulse of juveniles appearing in the early 1990s appears to have represented the only major recruitment event through the time-series 1984–present. Recently some small juveniles appear every year in the survey, but there is no indication of a pronounced recruitment pulse as observed in the early 1990s.

The Danish and Norwegian length distributions, sampled from commercial landings and survey catches, respectively, agree well for those years covered by samples from both countries (1987 and 2004–2006) (See stock annex for information on the Danish length distributions from the directed fishery). Note that both in 1987 and 2004 there appear to be two clearly distinguishable components in the Danish length compositions. In the Norwegian data, several years show two modes and it is possible to follow the more abundant occurrence of juveniles<5 cm (PAL) through several years.

8.2.6.3 Biomass and abundances indices from survey

The survey catch rates in terms of biomass (kg/h) and abundance (nos/h) varied strongly through the time-series, but elevated levels were observed from 1998 to 2005. The indices have declined since 2004 with both biomass and abundance being lowest on record in 2017. The index for 2021 show a small increase since the lowest record in 2017. Since the directed fishery is stopped and the bycatches from other fisheries are expected to be low, it is uncertain why the survey catches still are very low compared to the levels before 2000.

8.2.6.4 Age data

The age frequency distributions from recent years contrast with distributions from the 1980s (Bergstad, 1990b) in terms of proportions of old fish (e.g. >20 years) (Table 8.3.3). After the exploitation pulse in 2003–2005, the proportion of old fish has declined to very low levels (Bergstad *et al*., 2014). In recent years, i.e. after 2006 the mean age in the catches has increased somewhat, but the proportion of fish >20 years remains low.

Analyses of size distributions and the time-series of survey abundance of small juveniles by Bergstad *et al*. (2014) suggested that only a single very abundant recruitment event occurred during the period 1984–2020, perhaps only a single major year class. This event rejuvenated the stock and enhanced abundance in subsequent years.

8.2.7 Comments on assessment

In 2018, the working group decided to upgrade this stock to a 3.2 category using the biomass index from the Norwegian shrimp survey, derived from the relevant depth range of the species in this area.

8.2.8 Management considerations

The decline in abundance after 2005–2006 suggested by the Norwegian shrimp survey catch rates probably reflect the combined effect of the enhanced targeted exploitation in 2003–2005 and low recruitment in the years following the single recruitment pulse in the early 1990s. The percentage of fish >15 cm is at a lower level as in the late 1980s and early 1990s, and there is no suggestion of a new recruitment pulse as seen in the 1990s. Recent age distributions almost lack the >20 years old component which was prominent in the 1980s.

Since the targeted fishery has stopped and the bycatch in the shrimp fishery seems low, the potential for recovery of the roundnose grenadier in Skagerrak may be good. Abundance levels has declined since 2004 and in 2017 it was the lowest recorded during the survey period 1984–2021. However, there has been a small increase in the index since 2017 but still at very low levels. Rejuvenation and growth of the population would at present seem unlikely due to low recruitment during the recent decade.

8.2.9 References

Bergstad, O.A. 1990b. Distribution, population structure, growth and reproduction of the roundnose grenadier *Coryphaenoides rupestris* (Pisces:Macrouridae) in the deep waters of the Skagerrak. *Marine Biology* 107: 25–39.

Bergstad, O.A., H.Ø. Hansen and T. Jørgensen. 2014. Intermittent recruitment and exploitation pulse underlying temporal variability in a demersal deep-water fish population. ICES Journal of Marine Science, 71: 2088–2100.

8.2.10 Tables and Figures

Table 8.3.0. Roundnose grenadier in Division 3.a. WG estimates of landings.

Year	Denmark	Norway	Sweden	TOTAL
1988	612		5	617
1989	884		1	885
1990	785	280	2	1067
1991	1214	304	10	1528
1992	1362	211	755	2328
1993	1455	55		1510
1994	1591		42	1633
1995	2080		1	2081
1996	2213			2213
1997	1356	124	42	1522
1998	1490	329		1819
1999	3113	13		3126
2000	2400	4		2404
2001	3067	35		3102
2002	4196	24		4220
2003	4302			4302
2004	9874	16		9890
2005	11 922			11 922
2006	2261	4		2265
2007	+	1		1
2008	+	+		+
2009	2	+	+	2
2010	1	+	+	1
2011		0		0
2012	1	0		1
2013	1	0		1
2014	0,6	0	0,4	1

Year	Denmark	Norway	Sweden	TOTAL
2015	0,6	+	+	0.6
2016	1,1	0,3	0,01	1,4
2017	0,7	0,03	0,03	0,76
2018	0,3	0,06		0,36
2019	0,9	0,09	+	1
2020*	0.4	0.8	+	1.2

*** Preliminary data.**

Table 8.3.1. Summary of data on bottom-trawl survey series from the Norwegian shrimp survey, 1984-2021. Rg-rock-hopper groundgear. 'Strapping'maximum width of trawl constrained by rope connecting warps in front of otter doors. MS-RV Michael Sars, HM-RV Håkon Mosby. Data from 2019 survey are included. All trawls were fitted with a 6mm mesh codend liner.

YEAR	Survey month	Vessel	IMR Gear code	Additional gear info.	No. trawls >300m	No. trawls >400m	No. trawls survey
1984	OCT	MS	3230	Shrimp trawl (see text)	10	1	67
1985	OCT	MS	3230	"	21	5	107
1986	OCT/NOV	MS	3230	"	24	9	74
1987	OCT/NOV	MS	3230	"	35	14	120
1988	OCT/NOV	MS	3230	"	31	11	122
1989	OCT	MS	3236	Campelen 1800 35mm/40, Rg	31	7	106
1990	OCT	MS	3236	"	26	5	89
1991	OCT	MS	3236	"	28	9	123
1992	OCT	MS	3236	"	27	10	101
1993	OCT	MS	3236	"	30	10	125
1994	OCT/NOV	MS	3236	"	27	10	109
1995	OCT	MS	3236	"	29	12	103
1996	OCT	MS	3236	"	27	11	105
1997	OCT	MS	3236	"	25	6	97
1998	OCT	MS	3270	Campelen 1800 20mm/40, Rg	23	6	97
1999	OCT	MS	3270	"	27	8	99

YEAR	Survey month	Vessel	IMR Gear code	Additional gear info.	No. trawls >300m	No. trawls >400m	No. trawls survey
2000	OCT	MS	3270	"	25	10	109
2001	OCT	MS	3270	"	18	4	87
2002	OCT	MS	3270	"	24	6	82
2003	OCT/NOV	HM	3230	Shrimp trawl (as in 1984–1988)	13	0	68
2004	MAY	HM	3270	Campelen 1800 20mm/40, Rg	17	6	65
2005	MAY	HM	3270	"	23	8	98
2006	FEB	HM	3270	"	10	0	45
2007	FEB	HM	3270	"	11	1	66
2008	FEB	HM	3271	Campelen 1800 20mm/40, Rg and strapping*	18	5	73
2009	JAN/FEB	HM	3271	"	25	7	91
2010	JAN	HM	3271	"	24	7	98
2011	JAN	HM	3271	"	22	7	93
2012	JAN	HM	3271	"	20	5	65
2013	JAN	HM	3271	"	28	8	101
2014	JAN	HM	3271	"	16	7	69
2015	JAN	HM	3271	"	28	9	92
2016	JAN	HM	3271	"	28	9	108
2017	JAN	KB	3271	"	30	9	128
2018	JAN	KB	3271	Campelen 1800 20mm/40, Rg and strapping**	27	8	111
2019	JAN	KB	3296	Campelen 1800 20mm/40, Rg and strapping***	27	8	119
2020	JAN	KB	3296	""	26	7	106
2021	JAN	KB	3296	""	27	8	113

*** Path width of the tow constrained by a 10 m rope connecting the warps, 200 m in front of otter boards. ** Path width of the tow constrained to a 15 m rope connecting the warps, 100 m in front of the otter boards. *** Same trawl and strapping but from 2019 there are inserted several floaters on the trawl to lighten the trawl (Nordsjørigging).**

Table 8.3.2. Discards (tons) reported for roundnose grenadier in 3a from 2014-2020.

Year	Denmark	Sweden	Norway	TOTAL
2014		0.4		0.4
2015	1			1
2016	0.1	0.9		1
2017		1.6		1.6
2018	2.9	0.01		2.9
2019	0,5	0,08		0,6
2020	0	0		0

Table 8.3.3. Cumulative percentages (%) for selected ages from the deep-sea species survey in1987 and from the Norwegian shrimp survey in 2007-2019

	Age				
Year	5	10	20	30	50
1987	9	21	45	75	96
2007	10	23	83	94	96
2008	22	40	92	99	100
2009	14	30	88	93	100
2010	12	29	71	96	99
2011	6	23	65	94	99
2012	10	28	48	96	100
2013	14	28	56	92	99
2014					
2015	7	17	48	95	100
2016					
2017	14	52	81	94	99
2018	23	50	77	99	100
2019	8	37	64	92	100

Table 8.3.4. Mean biomass index and mean abundance index from the Norwegian shrimp survey 1984-2021. Missing data are from surveys that are not representable according to roundnose grenadier catches (less stations > 300 m). Data from 2016 are considered unreliable according to gear inconsistencies.

Mean biomass (kg/h), Mean abundance (n/h), Number (n) and Standard error (2SE)					
Year	**n**	**(kg/h)**	**SE(kg/h)**	**(n/h)**	**SE(n/h)**
1984	10				
1985	21	108.12	38.32	149.95	49.43
1986	24	83.75	32.16	117.83	46.99
1987	35	76.15	13.56	125.80	24.60
1988	31	72.14	13.92	105.19	21.22
1989	31	122.69	43.48	195.94	73.07
1990	26	49.81	18.20	72.66	27.55
1991	28	107.14	22.27	176.86	38.75
1992	27	188.54	67.53	698.52	337.67
1993	30	58.59	19.42	190.33	74.15
1994	27	87.19	21.21	372.96	143.56
1995	29	118.30	32.36	440.62	144.41
1996	27	99.63	31.68	268.01	116.92
1997	25	113.86	66.47	362.72	222.08
1998	23	255.54	87.80	812.82	336.85
1999	27	149.30	42.85	388.83	122.54
2000	25	129.27	30.39	389.06	107.71
2001	18	105.33	51.84	272.99	151.99
2002	24	174.77	66.27	371.70	129.97
2003	13				
2004	17	324.38	125.48	1143.35	487.33
2005	23	193.65	93.81	550.42	260.94
2006	10				
2007	11				
2008	18	95.58	65.81	259.10	208.53
2009	25	72.72	39.81	207.41	121.84
2010	24	33.24	21.47	77.21	54.81

Mean biomass (kg/h), Mean abundance (n/h), Number (n) and Standard error (2SE)					
Year	**n**	**(kg/h)**	**SE(kg/h)**	**(n/h)**	**SE(n/h)**
2011	22	26.84	12.61	54.76	27.05
2012	20	16.69	11.97	34.40	23.83
2013	28	11.48	4.92	35.06	16.90
2014	16	25.62	15.76	49.56	28.69
2015	28	7.28	4.59	21.19	12.14
2016	28				
2017	30	6.64	2.41	15.74	6.73
2018	27	12.88	6.60	41.91	26.13
2019	27	14.59	5.77	40.09	18.05
2020	26	18.72	11.48	63.02	38.07
2021	27	9.59	5.03	26.14	14.19

Table 8.3.5. Proportion of tows with shrimp trawl that caught roundnose grenadier. Data from Norwegian Reference fleet

Year	Total number of shrimp trawl	Number of trawl hauls that caught roundnose grenadier	Catch of roundnose grenadier (kg)	% of the total catch
2013	243	0		0
2014	288	2		0,69
2015	1489	14		0.94
2016	4811	23		0,48
2017	3798	20	29	0,53
2018	2849	19		0,67
2019	1233	4	80	0,32

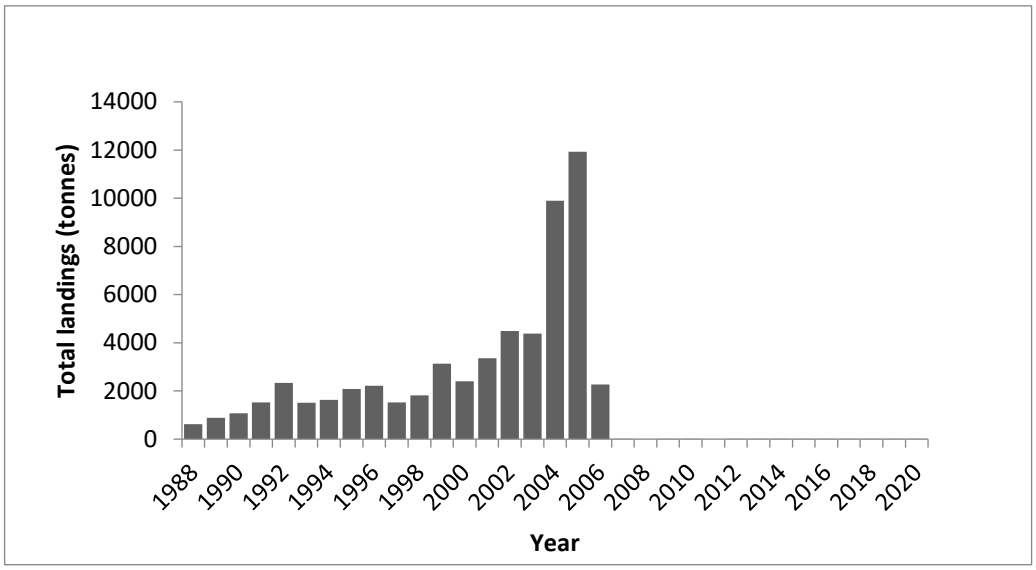

Figure 8.3.0. Landings of roundnose grenadier from Division 3.a. Landings from 2007–2020 are insignificant.

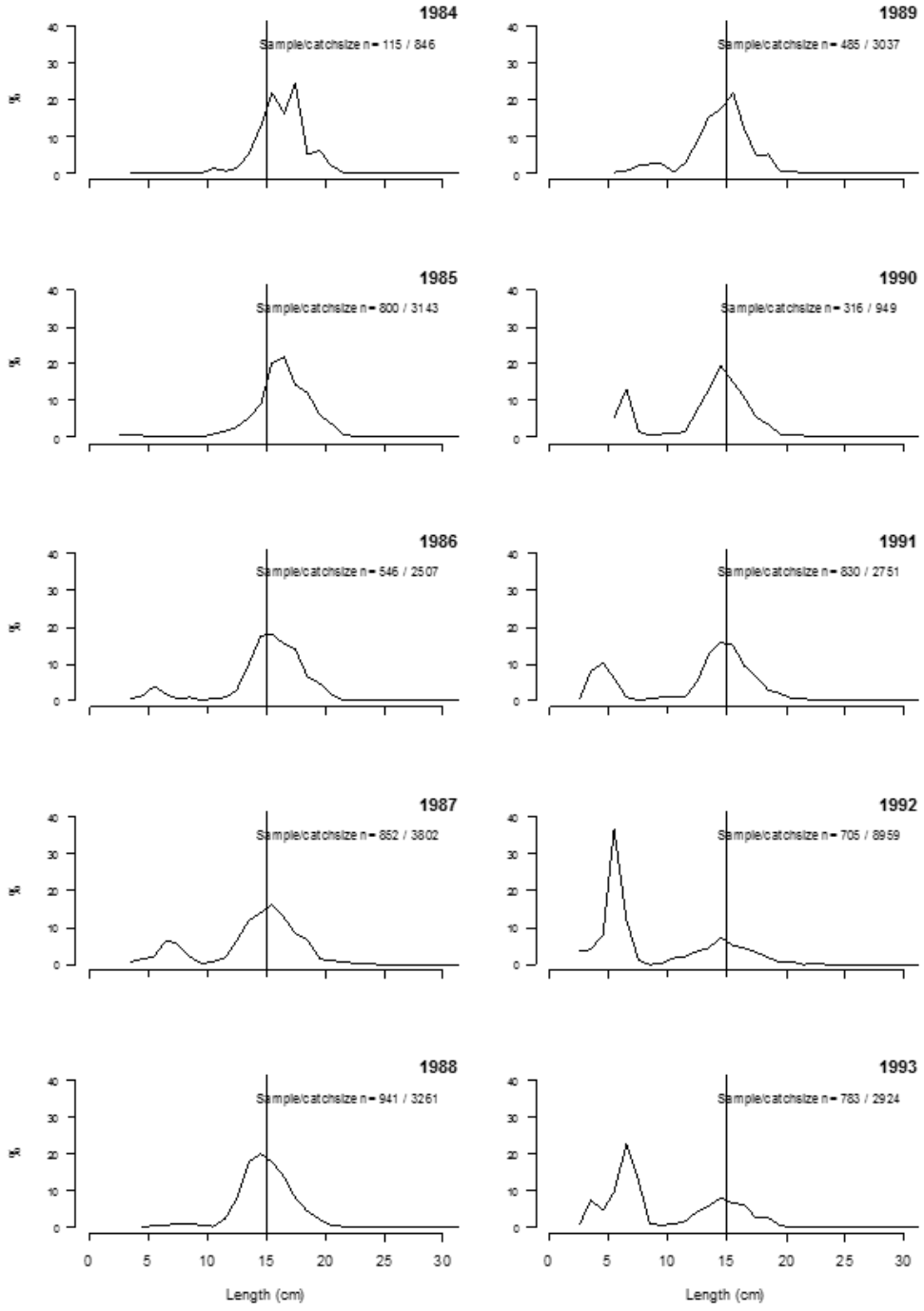

Figure 8.3.1. Length–frequency distributions for roundnose grenadier, 1984–2021. Data from Norwegian shrimp survey, all catches deeper than 300 m. Length is measured as pre-anal length in cm. The distributions are calculated as percent-number of fish in each cm length interval standardized to total catch number and trawling distance for each station each year.

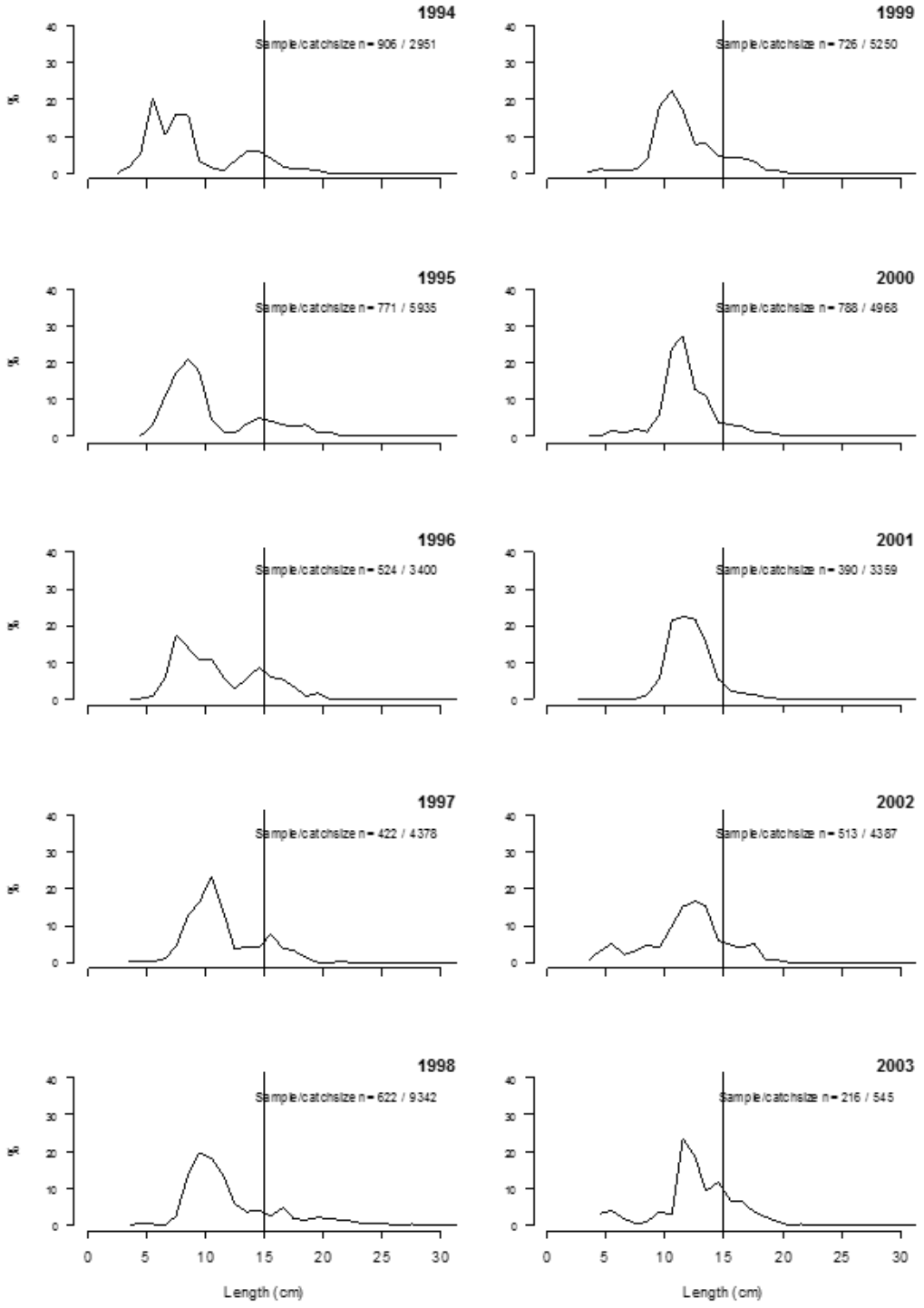

Figure 8.3.1. (Con't).

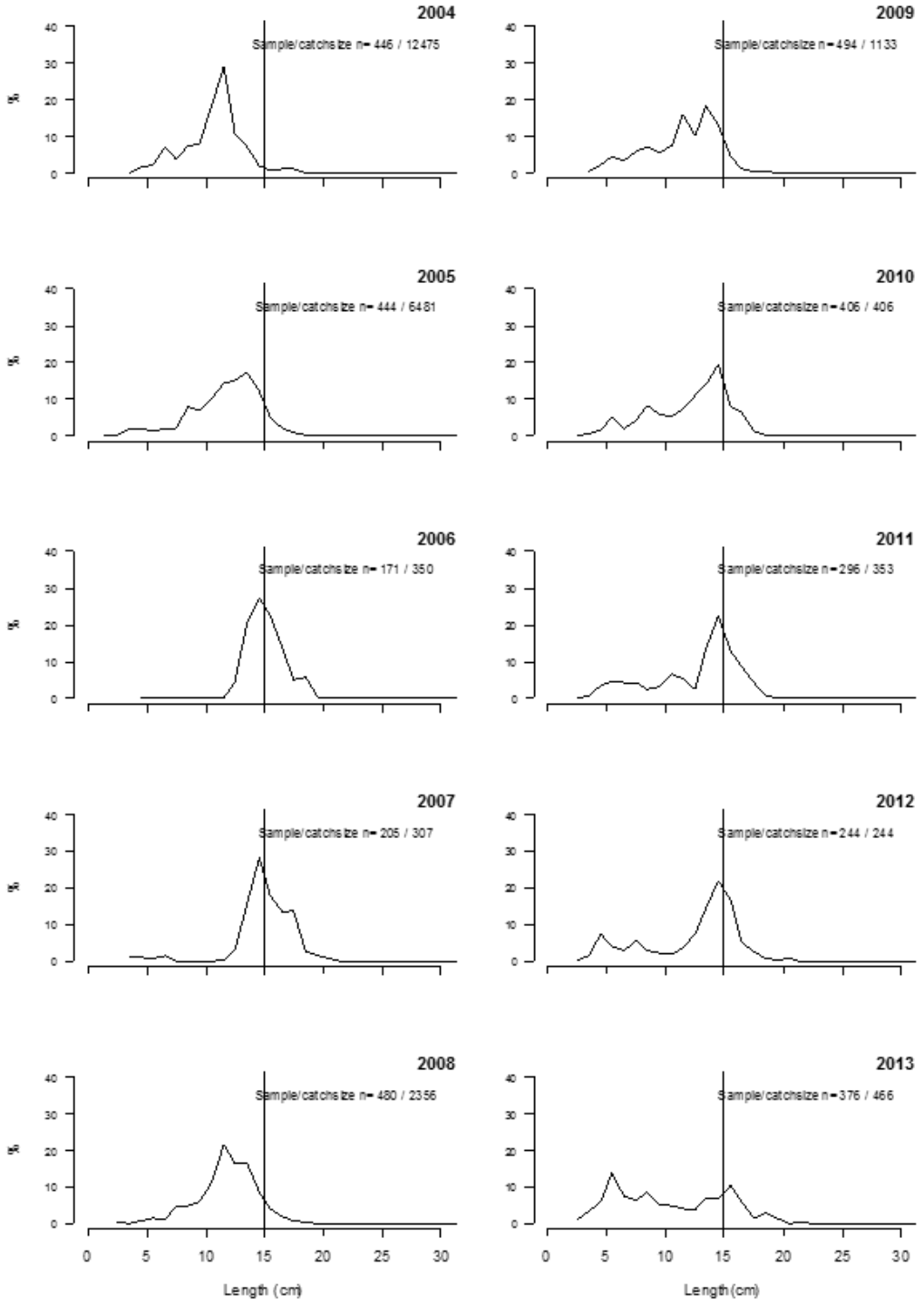

Figure 8.3.1. (Con't).

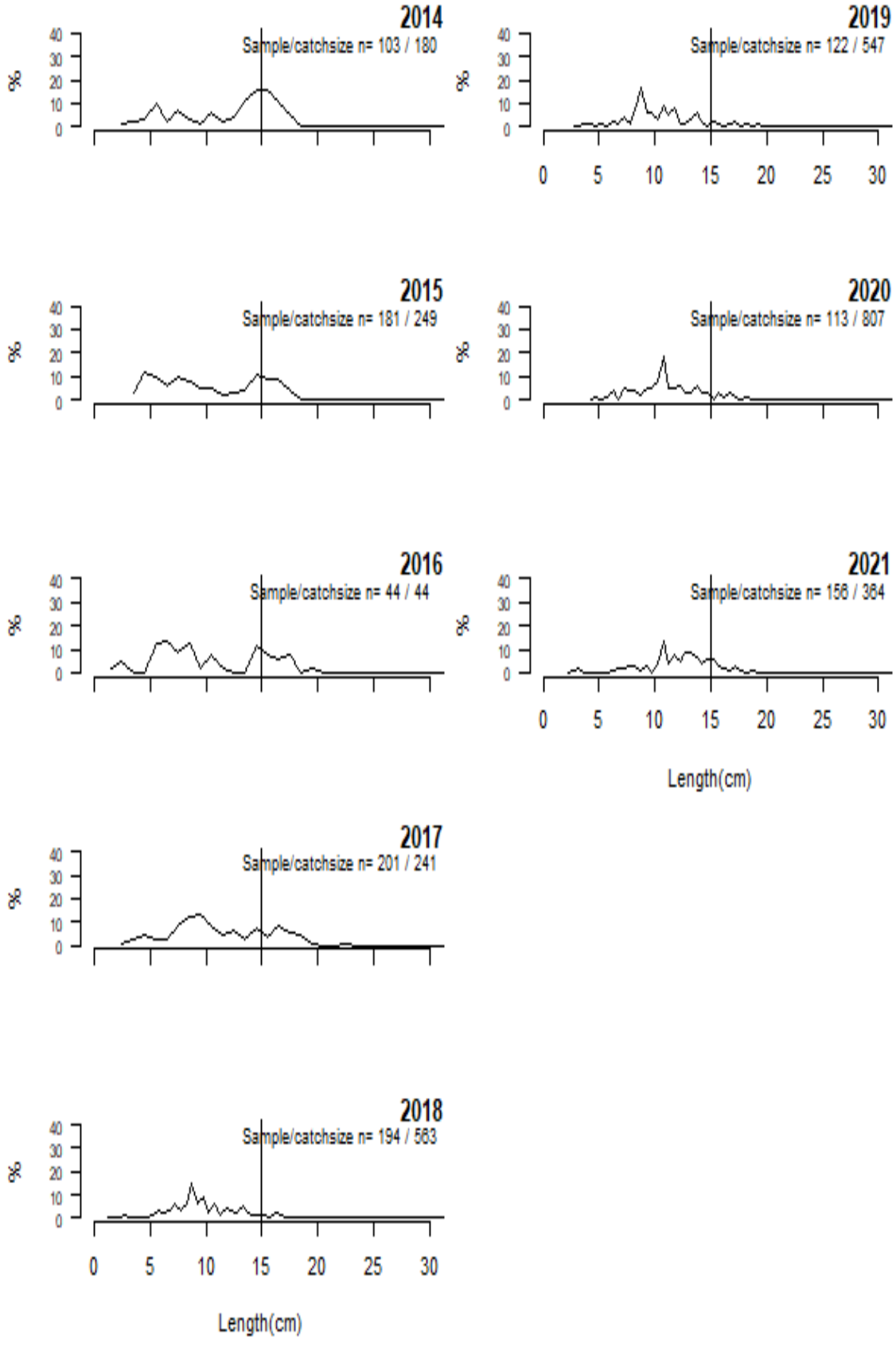

Figure 8.3.1. (Con't).

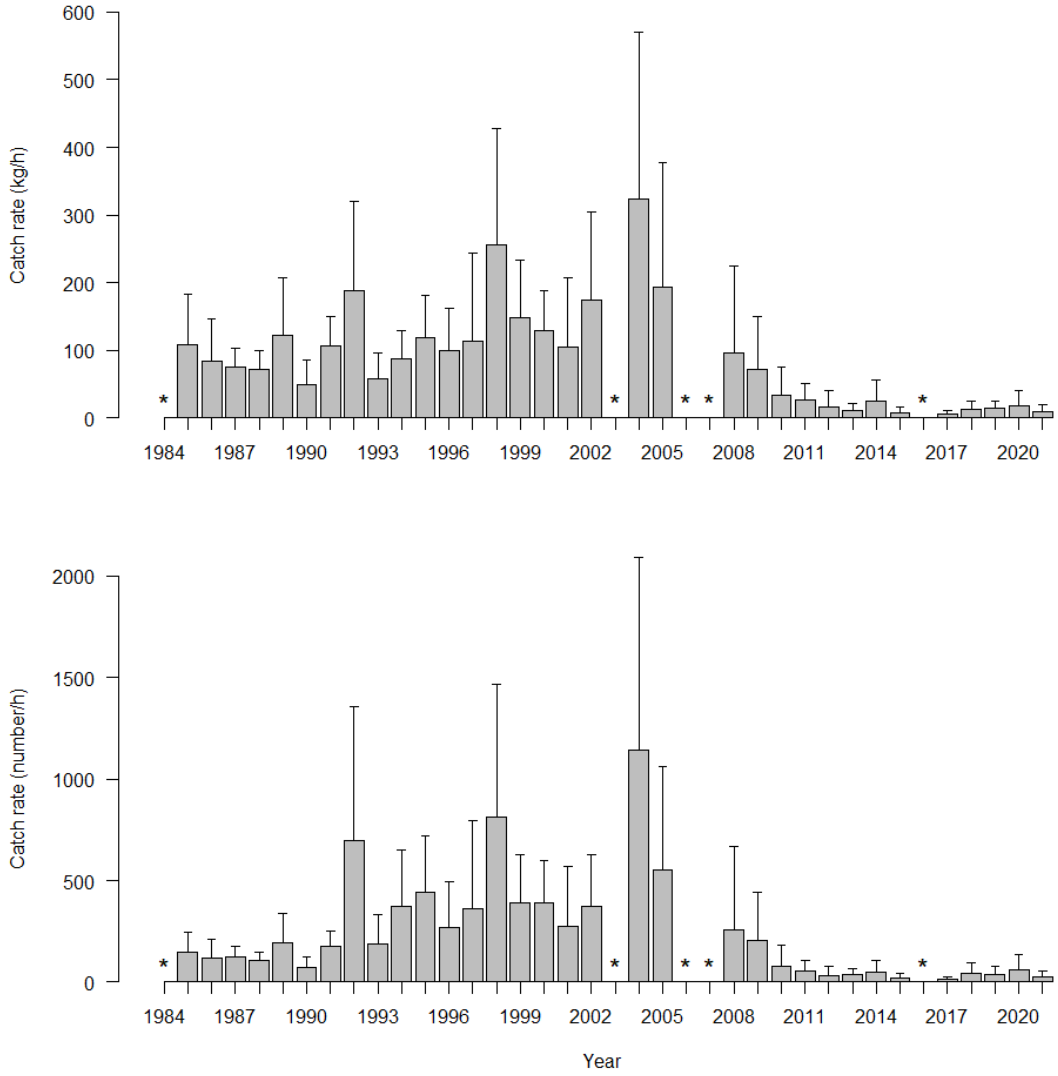

Figure 8.3.2. Survey catch rates in biomass (kg/h) and abundance (nos/h) of grenadier 1984–2021 in the Norwegian shrimp survey. Note: in 1984, 2003, 2006, and 2007 only a single or no trawls were made deeper than 400 m, thus the primary grenadier habitat was not sampled for those years. For 2016 data from the shrimp survey is regarded as unreliable due to inconsistencies with trawling gear and data from that year should be excluded. For the other years the survey is thought to cover the distribution area of roundnose grenadier Lines indicate estimates of 2SE (Updated from Bergstad *et al.*, 2014).