

Stalking wild transplanted abalone: Are they sticking around?

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The northern abalone has been listed as a *threatened* species in Canada since 1999. Abalone are broadcast spawners and recent studies in abalone and sea urchins have pointed to reduced fertilisation success caused by dilution of gametes through reduced adult spawner densities. Moving and aggregating mature abalone from poor to more productive habitats to increase their reproductive potential could help in their rehabilitation. Pilot studies were initiated to determine the feasibility of aggregating abalone. One of the objectives was to determine if the transplanted abalone will stay within the recipient new habitat. Two thousand abalone were marked with individual unique tags at 3 experimental and 2 control sites in the Broken Group Islands, Barkley Sound during 2002-03. Two methods with SCUBA divers were used to determine the straight line distance moved by the tagged abalone. Forty-four tagged abalone were re-measured in 2002 and 104 in 2003. All the recovered abalone were re-measured within 50m of the release location, indicating that some of the transplanted abalone stayed in their new habitat. Results to date suggested that aggregating mature northern abalone may be a feasible rehabilitation approach. Further diving is required to look at the extent of dispersion of abalone.