

Theme Session R Report

2024

Scientific advances under ICES Science Plan

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Session synopsis

The theme session “*Scientific advances under ICES Science Plan*” is a recurring session hosted by ICES Science Committee (SCICOM) representatives. Its main purpose is providing a stage for contributions (in poster or oral format) on topics that do not fit the themes of the other theme sessions but do address topics identified under ICES Science Plan. As such, this session is slightly different in nature from the other theme sessions: The range of topics presented is much broader and the session is therefore not thematically focused.

The theme session was subdivided into four smaller blocks, each consisting of 3 to 4 8-minute presentations, followed by a discussion or Q&A session of approximately 15 minutes with the presenters of that block on the stage. At the end of the session, poster presenters were offered the opportunity to hold a two-minute pitch on stage to help them showcase their work and draw an audience to their poster during the poster session. The session consisted of 13 oral presentations and 2 poster pitches. The theme session was kicked off with a small presentation by the session conveners on ICES Science Plan.

Having the presenters and the audience not focused on a particular scientific topic/theme has some implications for the discussion sections of the theme session, as the attendants of the theme session are less likely to gravitate towards interactive engagement. Still, all the discussion/Q&A sections featured questions to most of the presenters. At times, though, the conveners had to actively advance the discussion/Q&A sections.

Despite the heterogeneous nature of the collection of contributions, the presentations could be roughly divided into three themes. Half of the presentations were focused on fisheries (including biology behind fish stock trends, software development for fisheries scientists, and fisheries management). There was a block of talks discussing blue carbon and the role of fish (and cephalopods) in marine carbon cycling, and the final talks included more ecosystem/ecological oriented talks on ecosystem-based management, keystone species and marine protected areas (MPAs).

Conclusion

The theme session “*Scientific advances under ICES Science Plan*” has a unique position in ICES Annual Science Conference due to its miscellaneous nature. By providing presenters the option to present material not easily placed under the regular theme sessions, it adds value to the conference by increasing the diversity of science being exchanged. The theme session featured presentations of good quality, some of which addressed issues that are very topical and current, and some provoked extended discussion. Engaging the audience in discussion was easier in some blocks than in others, so it is recommended that future conveners prepare alternative formats and/or discussion items to facilitate the flow of the theme session.