Species identification workshop: fish and macro-zoobenthos

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Summary

On 13 January 2010 a species identification workshop focused on fish species and macro-zoobenthos as caught in fishing nets, was organized for IMARES employees. The workshop was organized for quality assurance of species identification. Projects influenced by the quality of species identification are the seagoing statutory task surveys (6 projects), statutory task discard projects (3 projects), PMR Vis, ZKOWAD.

The workshop was done by identifying material collected during IMARES surveys which had been stored in the freezer. Results are presented by expertise level of the employees. The expertise level was based on expertise and responsibilities during surveys and discard sampling.

From the workshop, the main problematic groups appeared to be: skates/rays and rocklings. For those groups, it is recommended to organise dedicated workshops in order to study the species thoroughly and generate agreed identification criteria.

1 Introduction

On 13 January 2010 a species identification workshop was organized for IMARES employees. The workshop focused on fish species and macro-zoobenthos as caught in fishing nets, and was compulsory for employees joining fish surveys on board of research vessels or commercial fishing vessels at sea and for employees working on sorting catches collected in the discards self-sampling project. Employees not involved in those projects, were allowed to join the workshop on a voluntary basis.

The workshop was organized for quality assurance of species identification. Projects influenced by the quality of species identification are the seagoing statutory task surveys (6 projects), statutory task discard projects (3 projects), PMR Vis and ZKOWAD.

2 Materials and Methods

2.1 Materials used

During the international bottom trawl survey (IBTS) in 2009 and the beam trawl survey (BTS) in 2009, for a great variety of species about five specimens per species were collected and stored in the freezer in separate plastic bags per species. The day before the workshop, the samples were put to unfreeze. The selection of the species to use for the workshop was done by Henk Heessen and Ingeborg de Boois.

2.2 Workshop setup

The workshop was split in two parts:

- (1) Testing (morning)
- (2) Feedback (afternoon)

During the workshop 25 fish species and 16 frequently found benthos species were identified. The species were put on two tables and numbered. For the testing, all participants filled out a form (Annex 1) with the species identified. During the testing it was not allowed to use any reference material for species identification. Participants were encouraged to mention on their forms some main identification criteria when being in doubt between two species. Since the workshop was without identification reference material, putting the main identification criteria shows if employees look at the right characteristic. In a field work situation it can be expected that in those cases employees check reference material available on board. The species list is in Annex 2.



Figure 2.2.1 Identification workshop at IMARES

36 IMARES employees joined the identification test. 11 employees declined the invitation due to other obligations. After the testing, the identification was discussed and species names were given. Since this was on a voluntary basis, less people (approx. 10) joined this meeting.

During the workshop, the participants were observed by Ingeborg de Boois.

2.3 Expertise levels

The participants were divided in three categories, based on experience and responsibilities:

1=no experience and no need to develop species identification

2=some experience

3=experienced or experience needed for quality assurance of the activities carried out in projects In Annex 3 the expertise level for each participant is listed.

2.4 Data processing

The completed forms were entered in and Excel spreadsheet. One day after the workshop, all participants received an e-mail containing the proper species list, the individual result and the average result for the category. In the Excel sheet, the number of empty fields is also registered since this might give a measure for the awareness of knowledge gaps of the employee.

When species were identified correctly to the lowest taxonomic level, 1 point was assigned. Wrong identification or empty fields were scored as 0. When the main identification criteria for two similar species was put on the list, this was scored as 0.5. For A10, herring as well as pilchard were scored as 1, since there were accidentally two species under one number.

3 Results

3.1 Results by expertise level

Table 3.1.1 contains the minimum, average and maximum score by expertise level. The maximum possible score was 40 (the number of species to identify). The pattern of the scores is clear: the less experienced employees have lower scores.

Table 3.1.1 Results per expertise level

Expertise level	Number of participants	Minimum score	Average score	Maximum score
1	14	6	12	23
2	10	17	24	32
3	12	24.5	32	38

3.2 Results by species

To identify gaps in knowledge and species that need extra attention, table 3.2.1 lists the percentage of correct identification. At the top, mackerel as the easiest species to identify, scored by 35 of 36 participants and all scored right. At the bottom, the most difficult species, *Laevicardium crassum*, only scored by 22 of the 36 participants with 2 proper identifications only. Since there were many unexperienced participants joining the workshop, in table 3.2.2 the results are listed only for the experienced level. The results per expertise level for levels 1 and 2 are in Annex 4.

Table 3.2.1 Results per species, all expertise levels

Dutch species name	Scientific species name	Sum of scores	Times filled in	%
Makreel	Scomber scombrus	35	35	100
haring (3) en pelser (1)	C. harengus/S. pilchardus	33.5	35	96
P. bernhardus	Pagurus bernhardus	29	31	94
Zeeduivel	Lophius piscatorius	33	36	92
Zeemuis	Aprhrodita aculeata	31	34	91
Kabeljauw	Gadus morhua	30	33	91
hondshaai	Scyliorhinus canicula	31	35	89
noorse kreeft	Nephrops norvegicus	31	35	89
helmkrab	Corystes cassivelaunus	29	33	88
sprot	Sprattus sprattus	28	33	85
schar	Limanda limanda	27	32	84
wulk	Buccinum undatum	27	32	84
gewone zwemkrab	Liocarcinus holsatus	27	33	82
bot	Platichthys flesus	28	35	80
dwergtong	Buglossidium luteum	25	33	76
zeekat	Sepia officinalis	24	32	75
botervis	Pholis gunellus	21	28	75
horsmakreel	Trachurus trachurus	23	31	74
gewone zeedonderpad	Myoxocephalus scorpius	25	35	71
wijting	Merlangius merlangus	20	29	69
tongschar	Microstomus kitt	23	34	68
kamster	Astropecten irregularis	23	34	68
schelvis <i>Melanogrammus aeglefinus</i>		20	33	61

fluwelen zwemkrab	Necora puber	17	32	53
dwergbolk	Trisopterus minutus	13	25	52
lange schar	Hippoglossoides platessoides	16	35	46
koekoeksrog	Leucoraja naevus	15	35	43
dwergbot	Zeugopterus norvegicus	12	28	43
vijfdradige meun	Ciliata mustela	12	28	43
noordhoorn	Neptunea antiqua	11	31	35
dikrugtong	Microchirus variegatus	12	34	35
wijde mantel	vijde mantel Aequipecten opercularis		32	34
blonde rog	Raja brachyura	9	31	29
goneplax	Goneplax rhomboides	7	25	28
engelse poon	Aspitrigla cuculus	8	35	23
sterrog	Amblyraja radiata	8	35	23
vierdradige meun	Rhinonemus cimbrius	5	27	19
Eledone	Eledone cirrhosa	5	31	16
gevlekte pitvis	Callionymus maculatus	4	28	14
blauwpootzwemkrab	Liocarcinus depurator	4.5	33	14
noorse hartschelp Laevicardium crassum		2	22	9

The results for the 12 experienced participants show 100% scores for the commonly caught fish and benthos species in the non-pelagic sampling. Lowest identification score is for *Laevicardium crassum*.

Table 3.2.2 Results per species, experienced employees

Dutch species name	Scientific species name	Sum of scores	Times filled in	%
bot	Platichthys flesus	12	12	100
botervis <i>Pholis gunellus</i>		12	12	100
dwergtong	Buglossidium luteum	12	12	100
gewone zeedonderpad	Myoxocephalus scorpius	12	12	100
gewone zwemkrab	Liocarcinus holsatus	12	12	100
haring (3) en pelser (1)	C. harengus/S. pilchardus	12	12	100
helmkrab	Corystes cassivelaunus	12	12	100
horsmakreel	Trachurus trachurus	12	12	100
kabeljauw	Gadus morhua	12	12	100
makreel	Scomber scombrus	12	12	100
noorse kreeft	Nephrops norvegicus	12	12	100
P. bernhardus	Pagurus bernhardus	12	12	100
schar	Limanda limanda	12	12	100
schelvis	Melanogrammus aeglefinus	12	12	100
sprot	Sprattus sprattus	12	12	100
tongschar	Microstomus kitt	12	12	100
zeemuis	Aprhrodita aculeata	12	12	100
kamster	Astropecten irregularis	11	11	100
hondshaai	Scyliorhinus canicula	11	12	91
lange schar	Hippoglossoides platessoides	11	12	91
wulk	Buccinum undatum	11	12	91
zeeduivel	Lophius piscatorius	11	12	91
dwergbolk	Trisopterus minutus	10	12	83
zeekat	Sepia officinalis	10	12	83

blonde rog	Raja brachyura	7	9	77
dikrugtong	Microchirus variegatus	9	12	75
fluwelen zwemkrab	Necora puber	9	12	75
wijting	Merlangius merlangus	9	12	75
dwergbot	Zeugopterus norvegicus	7	10	70
koekoeksrog	Leucoraja naevus	8	12	66
vijfdradige meun	Ciliata mustela	8	12	66
sterrog <i>Amblyraja radiata</i>		7	12	58
wijde mantel	Aequipecten opercularis	7	12	58
noordhoorn	Neptunea antiqua	6	12	50
Goneplax	Goneplax rhomboides	4	9	44
vierdradige meun	Rhinonemus cimbrius	5	12	41
engelse poon	Aspitrigla cuculus	4	12	33
Eledone	Eledone cirrhosa	3	10	30
Blauwpootzwemkrab	Liocarcinus depurator	3.5	12	29
gevlekte pitvis	Callionymus maculatus	3	12	25
noorse hartschelp	Laevicardium crassum	1	9	11

4 Discussion

4.1 Expertise level

When organising an identification workshop, it is important to decide the set of species. The expertise level should be based on the set of species. It might be that a participant is very experienced in identifying pelagic species but not in demersal ones. The results in table 3.1.1 confirms the expectation that scores of experienced employees are higher than scores of unexperienced employees. From this, the conclusion can be drawn that the expertise level was estimated properly for this workshop.

4.2 Material used

It is important to note that the quality of the material used was lower than if fresh material would have been available. This mainly influenced the identification of *Liocarcinus depurator*, where people did have a look at the coloration of the last leg but did not see any blue, and the identification of *Merlangius merlangus*, which was atypical due to the freezing.

4.3 Sources of misidentification

In this chapter, only the results of the highest expertise level will be taken into account. Less experienced employees will always be joined by an experienced employee when joining a survey or sorting samples in the lab. The experienced employees, however, are responsible for final identification and need to have the skills and knowledge to put the right names to the species.

Basically, identification can be done in two ways:

- 1. active identification: knowing the main identification criteria for the species
- 2. passive identification: using your reference framework of species to identify the species

Method 1 will be used when not having any experience in the field or when obvious unknown species are present in the catch. In this case, reference material will be used to identify the species. This method will also be used when similar species are often present in the sample. Mostly the identifier knows by heart the criteria to look at although it might be necessary to use references to decide which criteria matches which particular species. This applies for *Callionymus* species. Misidentification for those species will (and did) occur in this workshop but will be less when reference material is available, as it usually is on board and in the lab when sorting samples. Active identification will also increase the number of times a species is filled in on the list, since people are aware that they do not know the species.

Method 2 will be used by everyone who has to do the first selection when seeing a species. This identification is mainly based on *habitus* of the species and also on the geographical area. When seeing an less familiar species, one will start to exclude a number of species and if there is a species left in the reference framework which basically matches the criteria of the species in the sample, it will be identified as such. This happened e.g. for *Microchirus variegatus*, a sole species, misidentified as *Pegusa lascaris* by employees mainly sampling in the southeastern North Sea: it's no sole, it's no solenette, so it has to be Information on the catch location will decrease the error, but not exclude the possibility of misidentification. Additionally, being in the field will result in more than one occurrence of the 'reference species' (in this case *Pegusa lascaris*) and increase the chances to identify other -unknown- species as 'something else'. However, even then, there has to be awareness on the possibility to catch similar species outside the known distribution range of the species. It is assumed that the misidentification of *Aspitrigla cuculus* originates from the same source.

4.4 Problematic species

Most pregnant are the problems in identifying rays and skates. The maximum score for the 12 experts was 8 proper identifications. It is clear that people tend to know which species they are dealing with, but are not completely sure. Good reference pictures are available and will perhaps improve identification, but there is a general need for a workshop on rays and skates (perhaps combined with sharks and dogfish in an Elasmobranch workshop), to study the species thoroughly and generate agreed identification criteria.

The identification of rocklings (in this case *Ciliata mustela* and *Rhinonemus cimbrius*) is internationally known to be problematic (ICES, 2007, 2009a, 2009b). To improve identification quality, a workshop has to be organised to study the species thoroughly and generate agreed identification criteria.

Misidentification of *Neptunea antiqua* (mixing with *Buccinum undatum*) and *Aequipecten opercularis* (mixing up with *Pecten maximus*) is mainly a matter of awareness for all employees that there are more than one species looking alike, and to put the right name to the species. It will need discipline to look up the species and to learn the identification criteria by heart, but this should not be difficult.

The misidentification of *Eledone cirrhosa* is mainly caused by differences in naming: in all misidentified cases, it was noted as 'Octopus'. Since there is no other *Octopus* species in the demersal sampled area, it is a matter of discipline for all employees to put the right name to the species. This problem is known by data-managers and is checked on in the regular data quality check.

Zeugopterus norvegicus and *Goneplax rhomboides* are both very characteristic species for which the risk of misidentification is low when reference material is available.

Laevicardium crassum is often taken home from discard sampling trips or surveys. It is clear that people know 'it is something different' but do not know the name.

Normally, a cruise leader takes home specimens where identification problems occur. When sorting samples in the lab, there is always someone available to have a second look at a species. However, not all species are easy to take home, so priority to increase identification quality has to be given to identification problems in the larger species.

5 Conclusions

The identification workshop for fish species and macro-zoobenthos was a success. All participants were eager to identify the species according to their knowledge. Participants wanted to have a better score than their colleagues and really put an effort in identifying the species.

From the workshop, a number of problematic species occurred. For skates/rays (maybe in combination with other elasmobranch species) and for rocklings it is highly recommended to collect material during the coming surveys and organise a workshop on the specific group of species to generate agreed identification criteria and to discuss the species.

The workshop results show that for the experienced employees, most species are identified to the correct lowest taxonomic level.

6 Quality Assurance

IMARES utilises an ISO 9001:2000 certified quality management system (certificate number: 08602-2004-AQ-ROT-RVA). This certificate is valid until 15 March 2010. The organisation has been certified since 27 February 2001. The certification was issued by DNV Certification B.V. Furthermore, the chemical laboratory of the Environmental Division has NEN-AND-ISO/IEC 17025:2005 accreditation for test laboratories with number L097. This accreditation is valid until 27 March 2013 and was first issued on 27 March 1997. Accreditation was granted by the Council for Accreditation.

References

ICES. 2007. Report of the Workshop on Taxonomic Quality Issues in the DATRAS Database (WKTQD), 23-25 January 2007, ICES, Copenhagen. ICES CM 2007/RMC:10. 45 pp.

ICES. 2009a. Report of the International Bottom Trawl Survey Working Group (IBTSWG), 30 March—3 April 2009, Bergen, Norway. ICES CM 2009/RMC:04. 241 pp.

ICES. 2009b. Report of the Working Group on Beam Trawl Surveys (WGBEAM), 9–12 June 2009, La Rochelle, France. ICES CM 2009/LRC:04. 196 pp.

Annex 1. Workshop form

Determinatie vis- en benthossoorten 13 januari 2010 Fish and benthos species identification 13 January 2010 Tafel/table A

Nlaama	/												
maam,	/name.	 											

Nummer	Soort	Evt. onderscheidend kenmerk tov
Number	Species	andere soort(en)
A1		
A2		
A3		
A4		
A5		
A6		
A7		
A8		
A9		
A10		
A11		
A12		
A13		
A14		
A15		
A16		
A17		
A18		
A19		
A20		
A21		

Determinatie vis- en benthossoorten 13 januari 2010 Fish and benthos species identification 13 January 2010 Tafel/table B

Naam,	/name	 								

Nummer	Soort	Evt. onderscheidend kenmerk tov andere
Number	Species	soort(en)
B1		
B2		
В3		
B4		
B5		
B6		
B7		
B8		
B9		
B10		
B11		
B12		
B13		
B14		
B15		
B16		
B17		
B18		
B19		
B20		

Annex 2. Species list

Number	Dutch species name	Scientific species name
A01	schar	Limanda limanda
A02	tongschar	Microstomus kitt
A03	dwergtong	Buglossidium luteum
A04	botervis	Pholis gunellus
A05	dwergbolk	Trisopterus minutus
A06	schelvis	Melanogrammus aeglefinus
A07	gevlekte pitvis	Callionymus maculatus
A08	engelse poon	Aspitrigla cuculus
A09	zeeduivel	Lophius piscatorius
A10	haring (3) en pelser (1)	C. harengus/S. pilchardus
A11	horsmakreel	Trachurus trachurus
A12	hondshaai	Scyliorhinus canicula
A13	koekoeksrog	Leucoraja naevus
A14	wulk	Buccinum undatum
A15	kamster	Astropecten irregularis
A16	helmkrab	Corystes cassivelaunus
A17	blauwpootzwemkrab	Liocarcinus depurator
A18	noorse hartschelp	Laevicardium crassum
A19	fluwelen zwemkrab	Necora puber
A20	P. bernhardus	Pagurus bernhardus
A21	zeekat	Sepia officinalis
B01	lange schar	Hippoglossoides platessoides
B02	bot	Platichthys flesus
B03	dikrugtong	Microchirus variegatus
B04	dwergbot	Zeugopterus norvegicus
B05	wijting	Merlangius merlangus
B06	kabeljauw	Gadus morhua
B07	vijfdradige meun	Ciliata mustela
B08	gewone zeedonderpad	Myoxocephalus scorpius
B09	sprot	Sprattus sprattus
B10	makreel	Scomber scombrus
B11	sterrog	Amblyraja radiata
B12	blonde rog	Raja brachyura
B13	noordhoorn	Neptunea antiqua
B14	gewone zwemkrab	Liocarcinus holsatus
B15	goneplax	Goneplax rhomboides
B16	wijde mantel	Aequipecten opercularis
B17	zeemuis	Aprhrodita aculeata
B18	noorse kreeft	Nephrops norvegicus
B19	Eledone	Eledone cirrhosa
B20	vierdradige meun	Rhinonemus cimbrius

Annex 3. Participants and expertise level

Name		Category
Daniel	Benden	1
Doug	Beare	1
Erwin	Winter	1
Esther	van den Braak	1
Harriet	van Overzee	1
Ineke	Pennock-Vos	1
Marieke	Keller	1
Michiel	Kotterman	1
Niels	hintzen	1
Peter	van der Kamp	1
Rian	Schelvis-Smit	1
Silja	Tribuhl	1
Stijn	Bierman	1
Tobias	van Kooten	1
Adriaan	Rijnsdorp	2
Bram	Couperus	2
Edwin	van Helmond	2
Gerrit	Hoornsman	2
Hanz	Wiegerinck	2
Jakob	Asjes	2
Jan	van Willigen	2
Lorna	Fässler-Teal	2
Oscar	Bos	2
Tim	Huijer	2
André	Dijman Dulkes	3
Betty	van Os-Koomen	3
Cindy	van Damme	3
Frans	van Beek	3
Gerrit	Rink	3
Kees	Groeneveld	3
Peter	Groot	3
Ralf	van Hal	3
Remment	ter Hofstede	3
Ronald	Bol	3
Sieto	Verver	3
Twan	Leijzer	3

Annex 4. Results per species by expertise level, for expertise levels 1 and 2

Annex 4.1 Results per species by expertise level for level 1.

makreel Scomber scombrus haring (3) en pelser (1) C. harengus/S. pilchardus zeeduivel Lophius piscatorius wulk Buccinum undatum P. bernhardus Pagurus bernhardus hondshaai Scyliorhinus canicula noorse kreeft Nephrops norvegicus zeemuis Aprhrodita aculeata			%
zeeduivel Lophius piscatorius wulk Buccinum undatum P. bernhardus Pagurus bernhardus hondshaai Scyliorhinus canicula noorse kreeft Nephrops norvegicus	13	13	100
wulk Buccinum undatum P. bernhardus Pagurus bernhardus hondshaai Scyliorhinus canicula noorse kreeft Nephrops norvegicus	13.5	14	96
P. bernhardus hondshaai noorse kreeft Pagurus bernhardus Scyliorhinus canicula Nephrops norvegicus	12	14	85
hondshaai Scyliorhinus canicula noorse kreeft Nephrops norvegicus	9	11	81
noorse kreeft Nephrops norvegicus	8	10	80
	10	13	76
zeemuis Aprhrodita aculeata	10	13	76
	9	12	75
helmkrab Corystes cassivelaunus	8	11	72
kabeljauw Gadus morhua	8	11	72
bot Platichthys flesus	9	13	69
sprot Sprattus sprattus	7	11	63
zeekat Sepia officinalis	8	13	61
schar Limanda limanda	6	10	60
wijting Merlangius merlangus	5	9	55
gewone zwemkrab Liocarcinus holsatus	5	11	45
botervis Pholis gunellus	3	8	37
gewone zeedonderpad <i>Myoxocephalus scorpius</i>	4	13	30
kamster Astropecten irregularis	4	13	30
fluwelen zwemkrab Necora puber	3	10	30
dwergtong Buglossidium luteum	3	11	27
horsmakreel Trachurus trachurus	2	10	20
schelvis <i>Melanogrammus aeglefinus</i>	2	11	18
wijde mantel Aequipecten opercularis	2	11	18
blonde rog Raja brachyura	2	12	16
tongschar Microstomus kitt	2	12	16
goneplax Goneplax rhomboides	1	9	11
noordhoorn Neptunea antiqua	1	9	11
dwergbot Zeugopterus norvegicus	1	10	10
lange schar Hippoglossoides platessoides	1	13	7
koekoeksrog <i>Leucoraja naevus</i>	0	13	0
engelse poon Aspitrigla cuculus	0	13	0
sterrog <i>Amblyraja radiata</i>	0	13	0
Eledone Eledone cirrhosa	0	12	0
dikrugtong Microchirus variegatus	0	12	0
blauwpootzwemkrab Liocarcinus depurator	0	11	0
gevlekte pitvis Callionymus maculatus	0	7	0
vierdradige meun Rhinonemus cimbrius	0	7	0
vijfdradige meun Ciliata mustela	0	7	0
dwergbolk Trisopterus minutus	0	6	0
noorse hartschelp Laevicardium crassum	0	6	0

Annex 4.2 Results per species by expertise level for level 2.

Dutch species name	Scientific species name	Sum of scores	Times filled in	%
dwergtong	Buglossidium luteum	10	10	100
Gewone zwemkrab	Liocarcinus holsatus	10	10	100
hondshaai	Scyliorhinus canicula	10	10	100
kabeljauw	Gadus morhua	10	10	100
Makreel	Scomber scombrus	10	10	100
zeeduivel	Lophius piscatorius	10	10	100
Zeemuis	Aprhrodita aculeata	10	10	100
P. bernhardus	Pagurus bernhardus	9	9	100
horsmakreel	Trachurus trachurus	9	9	100
Gewone zeedonderpad	Myoxocephalus scorpius	9	10	90
helmkrab	Corystes cassivelaunus	9	10	90
noorse kreeft	Nephrops norvegicus	9	10	90
Schar	Limanda limanda	9	10	90
Sprot	Sprattus sprattus	9	10	90
tongschar	Microstomus kitt	9	10	90
haring (3) en pelser (1)	C. harengus/S. pilchardus	8	9	88
Zeekat	Sepia officinalis	6	7	85
Kamster	Astropecten irregularis	8	10	80
Wulk	Buccinum undatum	7	9	77
Botervis	Pholis gunellus	6	8	75
Wijting	Merlangius merlangus	6	8	75
Bot	Platichthys flesus	7	10	70
koekoeksrog	Leucoraja naevus	7	10	70
schelvis	Melanogrammus aeglefinus	6	10	60
fluwelen zwemkrab	Necora puber	5	10	50
dwergbot	Zeugopterus norvegicus	4	8	50
vijfdradige meun	Ciliata mustela	4	9	44
dwergbolk	Trisopterus minutus	3	7	42
engelse poon	Aspitrigla cuculus	4	10	40
lange schar	Hippoglossoides platessoides	4	10	40
noordhoorn	Neptunea antiqua	4	10	40
dikrugtong	Microchirus variegatus	3	10	30
goneplax	Goneplax rhomboides	2	7	28
Eledone	Eledone cirrhosa	2	9	22
wijde mantel	Aequipecten opercularis	2	9	22
noorse hartschelp	Laevicardium crassum	1	7	14
gevlekte pitvis	Callionymus maculatus	1	9	11
blauwpootzwemkrab	Liocarcinus depurator	1	10	10
sterrog	Amblyraja radiata	1	10	10
blonde rog	Raja brachyura	0	10	0
vierdradige meun	Rhinonemus cimbrius	0	8	0