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MASSEFOREKOMST AV Gyrodinium aureolum Hulburt
OG FISKEDØDELIGHET LANGS SYDKYSTEN AV NORGE
I SEPTEMBER – OKTOBER 1981

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Mass occurrence of <u>Gyrodinium aureolum</u> Hulburt and fish mortality along the southern coast of Norway in September-October 1981

[Masseforekomst av <u>Gyrodinium aureolum</u> Hulburt og fiskedødelighet langs sydkysten av Norge i september-oktober 1981]

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## FORORD

Dette arbeidet ble presentert på Det internasjonale Havforskningsråds årsmøte i København i oktober 1982. (ICES Report C.M. 1982/L:56). Arbeidet er derfor skrevet på engelsk, men er her forsynt med et norsk sammendrag og norske figur- og tabelltekster.

#### SAMMENDRAG

Gyrodinium aureolum, en brun dinoflagellat uten skall ble første gang oppdaget og beskrevet i 1957 på nordøstkysten av USA. I Europa ble algen først kjent i 1966 da den blomstret opp i store mengder og ga sjøen tildels en kaffebrun farge langs sør- og vestkysten av Norge, og fiskedødelighet så ut til å ha tilknytning til masseforekomstene av denne algen. Siden har algen flere ganger opptrådt i masser som har brunfarget sjøen og forårsaket fiskedød i Europa, bl.a. rundt De Britiske Øyer, i Nordsjøen og i Skagerrak. I Norge fant det sted en oppblomstring også i 1976.

I slutten av september 1981 ble sjøen utenfor Sørlandet kaffebrun på grunn av masseforekomst av <u>G. aureolum</u>. Under den største utbredelsen dannet algen et nesten sammenhengende brunt belte fra Oslofjorden til Flekkefjord opptil 30 km ut fra kysten (Fig. 1). De største konsentrasjonene, mer enn ca 8 mill. celler pr liter sjøvann, ble funnet nær overflaten i de øvre 2-3 meter (Tabell 1 og 3, Fig. 2). Algekonsentrasjonene dypere ned varierte noe fra sted til sted, men stort sett var det mindre enn 1 mill. celler pr liter dypere ned enn 10 m. Kraftig vind og bølger bevirket at det ble funnet 1-2 mill. celler pr liter noe dypere på enkelte stasjoner (Fig. 2).

Algenes vertikalvandring ble studert gjennom et døgn i Flødevigen 28.-29. september i meget rolig vær. Algen samlet seg i overflaten i den øverste meteren om dagen, men var mer jevnt fordelt med dypet om natten ned til mer enn 10 m dyp (Fig. 3).

Under et tokt med F/F "G.M. Dannevig" ble det i begynnelsen av september registrert konsentrasjoner av <u>G. aureolum</u> på 300.000 celler pr liter i 20-30 m dyp utenfor Hirtshals i Danmark. Det antaes at masseoppblomstringen av algen langs vår kyst skyldtes at denne store utgangsbestanden fra vestkysten av Danmark fikk rikelig næringstilførsel og gunstige hydrografiske og hydrokjemiske forhold på grunn av oppstrømning av dypvann og kraftig nedbør og avrenning fra land.

I forbindelse med masseforekomsten av <u>G. aureolum</u> kom det inn rapporter fra hele den berørte kysten om massedød blant fisk. Særlig døde fisk innestengt i teiner, nett, steng og mærer, men også frittsvømmende fisk døde. Særlig var det et tilfelle av betydelig dødelighet blant frittsvømmende fisk i Rosfjorden 2. oktober (Tabell 2 og 3). Hundrevis av død fisk drev i land, og døde fisk ble fanget i reketrål lenger ute i fjorden. I Rosfjorden ble det også funnet et stort antall døde sjøstjerner, sjøpinnsvin, skjell, mark og døende strandsnegler. Konsentrasjonen av <u>G. aureolum</u> i overflaten var da 70 mill. celler pr liter og sikten i vannet bare 10 cm.

Dødeligheten langs kysten så ut til å komme først utenfor Øst-Norge og litt senere lenger syd og vestover, svarende til at algeforekomstene ble transportert langs kysten med kyststrømmen. I juni 1982 forårsaket <u>G. aureolum</u> ganske uventet også stor dødelighet ved to oppdrettsanlegg på Senja. Det er ikke usannsynlig at startbestanden for oppblomstringen ved Senja var alger fra høstoppblomstringen i 1981 lenger syd, som hadde overlevet vinteren og blitt ført nordover med kyststrømmen.

Årsaken til at fisk som blir utsatt for store konsentrasjoner av G. aureolum får problemer og dør, synes ikke å være at algen fysisk tilstopper gjellene eller at det oppstår oksygenmangel. Det er sterke indikasjoner på at algen, direkte eller indirekte, ødelegger bl.a. gjellenes overflate slik at disse ikke fungerer som de skal.

## ABSTRACT

At the end of September 1981 the sea appeared "coffee brown" along the southern coast of Norway due to mass occurrence of <u>Gyrodinium aureolum</u> Hulburt. The maximum cell concentration observed was  $70 \cdot 10^6$  cells·1<sup>-1</sup>. When most abundant, the algae formed a more or less continuous, brownish belt from the Oslofjord to the Flekkefjord area, extending up to 30 km off the coast. From all along the coast fish mortality associated with brown water was reported. The mortality was mainly among fish kept in nets and cages, but dead wild fish and invertebrates were also observed. Measurements

of oxygen and light microscopy on gills from moribund fish indicated that neither lack of oxygen nor physical clogging of the gills caused the mortality.

## INTRODUCTION

Gyrodinium aureolum (Hulburt) was orginally described from the northeast coast of U.S.A. (HULBURT 1957). It was first recorded in European waters in 1966 (BRAARUD and HEIMDAL 1970) when a bloom along the southern and western coast of Norway discoloured the sea and was associated with fish mortality. Since then G. aureolum has bloomed several times in Northern European waters, and mortality among fish and invertebrates has often coincided with the blooms (HANSEN et al. 1969, HELM et al. 1974, TANGEN 1977, BOALCH 1979, FORSTER 1979, GRIFFITHS et al. 1979, OTTWAY et al. 1979, CROSS and SOUTHGATE 1980, LEAHY 1980 and JENKINSON and CONNORS 1980).

At the end of September 1981 the sea along the southern coast of Norway appeared "coffee brown" due to mass occurrence of <u>G. aureolum</u>. From all along the coast fish mortality associated with the brown water was reported. This communication reports some results from studies during the bloom.

## MATERIAL AND METHODS

Water samples were collected along the coast from the Oslofjord to the Flekkefjord area (Fig. 1). Temperature and salinity were measured. The number of <u>Gyrodinium aureolum</u> cells were counted after fixation with formaldehyde in a Palmer-Maloney slide (PALMER and MALONEY 1954) without any concentration of the samples.

At Borås Fish farm and in the Rosfjord (Fig. 2) where heavy fish mortality occurred, water samples for oxygen determination were taken. Intensive sampling in Flødevigen Bay (Fig. 2) over a 20 hour period on September 28-29 also included measurements of oxygen.

The horizontal and vertical distribution of the bloom and the hydrographical and hydrochemical situation was studied during a cruise on October 4-7 (Fig. 2).

Dead and moribund fish, and gills from moribund fish were examined to see if there was any obvious explanation to the mortality. Some fish were frozen and sent to Veterinarian authorities for closer studies. The gills from a few fish were cut away and fixed for electronmicroscopy studies.

#### RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

# The distribution of the bloom

September 7 1981 on a routine cruise along the section Torungen (Arendal)-Hirtshals at a station about 10 nautical miles off the Danish coast (Hirtshals), 0.3·10<sup>6</sup> cells·1<sup>-1</sup> of <u>Gyrodinium aureolum</u> were recorded at 20-30 m depth.

Fishermen along the coast observed patches of brown water between September 21-27 which may have been the first appearance of the Gyrodinium aureolum bloom. On September 28 the algae formed a more or less continuous, "coffee brown" belt along the coast from the Oslofjord to the Flekkefjord area, extending up to 30 km off the coast according to fishermen's information (Fig. 1).

On and after that day reports of mortality among fish kept in nets and cages and also among fish in the sea came from the same stretch of the coast. The reports seemed to correspond to the very peak of the bloom moving westwards with the coastal current (AURE 1981). Northwest of the Flekkefjord area the continuous belt of brown water ended, but patches of brown water due to mass occurrence of <u>G. aureolum</u> were observed north to Bergen causing local fish mortality (AURE 1981). Compared to the rest of the coast, the <u>G. aureolum</u> bloom penetrated somewhat delayed into the Oslofjord (KARL TANGEN, Univ. of Oslo, pers. comm.). Quite sensationally the algae bloomed further north along the Norwegian coast in June 1982 and two fish farms on the island Senja (Northern Norway) lost more than 50 000 salmon altogether (ANON 1982). It seems likely that this bloom was based on initial populations of <u>G. aureolum</u> from the bloom along the coast of Southern

Norway in the autumn 1981 which had survived through the winter.

The cruise on October 4-7, (Fig. 2), was just after the very peak of the bloom. The sections A and B were taken on October 4 in a variable, gentle breeze. Brownish water, with more than 2.106 cells·1<sup>-1</sup> extended nearly 20 km off the coast along section A. Along both sections the highest cell concentrations, more than  $8 \cdot 10^6$  cells·1<sup>-1</sup>, were observed in the upper 2-3 m. The vertical distribution of the cells seemed to fit the isohalines rather well, (Fig. 2), i.e. the cell concentration decreased with depth as the salinity increased. Section C was taken October 5 during a strong breeze from the WNW. Because of the heavy waves G. aureolum was mixed more homogeneously in the upper 10 m especially at station C2 (Fig. 2). When sampling along section D, on October 6, the wind had turned to ESE and decreased to a fair breeze. G. aureolum was fairly homogenously distributed in the surface layer along the whole section with concentrations from 1 to 2.106 cells.1-1. The data from the cruise indicate that the horizontal and vertical distribution of G. aureolum may change rapidly due to prevailing winds and currents.

The temperatures were  $12-15^{\circ}C$  in watermasses discoloured by G. aureolum during the whole blooming period.

The causes of the bloom are thought to be the presence of an initial population of <u>G. aureolum</u> together with rich nutrient supply and favourable hydrographical conditions due to upwelling, heavy precipitation and fresh water run off (DAHL <u>et al.</u> in prep.).

# Vertical migration

During a 20 hour period on September 28-29, the <u>Gyrodinium aureolum</u> bloom was studied in Flødevigen Bay (Fig. 2) by sampling down to 18 m depth every fourth hour. In the evening on September 28  $30 \cdot 10^6$  cells·1<sup>-1</sup> was recorded at the surface, but only  $2 \cdot 10^6$  cells·1<sup>-1</sup> at 1 m depth. At 5 and 8 m depth  $0.7 \cdot 10^6$  cells·1<sup>-1</sup> were recorded (Fig. 3).

During the night the cell concentrations decreased to less than  $5 \cdot 10^6 \cdot 1^{-1}$  at the surface and increased significantly at 5 and 8 m depths to  $3 \cdot 10^6$  cells· $1^{-1}$ . The following day the highest concentration,  $22 \cdot 10^6$  cells· $1^{-1}$ , was observed at 0.5 m depth, and the cell concentration decreased rapidly with the depth to less than  $0.1 \cdot 10^6$  cells· $1^{-1}$  at 5 m depth and deeper.

The weather during the study was calm, and the salinity (Fig. 3) indicate only minor vertical mixing. Thus the change in vertical distribution of <u>G. aureolum</u> observed during the 20 hour study strongly indicated positive phototaxis. Phototaxis has been noticed also during previous blooms of <u>G. aureolum</u> (see TANGEN 1977 and references therein).

There was no evidence of serious deoxygenation during night in the Flødevigen Bay (Fig. 3). It was never less than about 90% saturation at the bottom (18 m), and supersaturation was recorded in the surface layer through the whole night.

# Observations on fish and invertebrates

According to fishermen observations the fish avoided the brown water and, for example, fishing for mackerel was locally spoiled for some days.

Cod and eel in nets died within 24 hours when influenced by heavily brownish water. Some fishermen succeeded in keeping their eels alive by lowering the nets to 10 m depth or more before the eel were seriously affected by the brown water.

When rainbow trout were dying at Borås Fish farm on September 28, there were about  $16\cdot10^6$  cells· $1^{-1}$  of Gyrodinium aureolum outside the cage and about  $6\cdot10^6$  cells· $1^{-1}$  inside (Table 1). The chlorophyll <u>a</u> concentration was 311 and 139  $\mu$ g· $1^{-1}$  respectively. This is up to 10 times more than found during the spring bloom peak in the Skagerrak (DAHL and DANIELSSEN 1981). There were significant supersaturation of oxygen, 110-180%, both inside and outside

the cage in the upper 2 meters (Table 1). Low levels of dissolved oxygen, which have been suggested as a cause of previous fish mortality associated with <u>G. aureolum</u> blooms (TANGEN 1977) was certainly not the reason for this fish mortality. Physical clogging of the gills due to mass occurrence of <u>G. aureolum</u> has also been suggested as a possibel explanation of fish mortality (PARKER 1980 cited in PYBUS 1980). However, when observing gills from moribund fish in the light microscope, only small traces of <u>G. aureolum</u> cells could be seen. The cell concentration inside the cage was about at the level one would expect from the salinity data (Table 1) and was mainly caused by vertical mixing due to movements of the fishes.

On October 2 a lot of dead fish drifted ashore in Rosfjord (Fig. 2). The next day the species listed in Table 2 were identified; altogether several hundreds individuals on a small part of the beach. A large number of dead starfish, sea urchins, cockles and bristle worms were also observed. Moribund common periwinkle closed themselves only very slowly when touched with a needle.

The concentration of <u>G. aureolum</u> in the Rosfjord on October 2 was extremely high, about  $70 \cdot 10^6$  cells· $1^{-1}$  at the surface (Table 3) which caused a "Secchi-depth" of 0.1 m. The cell concentrations decreased with the depth to  $5 \cdot 10^6$  cells· $1^{-1}$  at 3 m and only  $0.04 \cdot 10^6 \cdot 1^{-1}$  at 10 m. The oxygen level was reduced to about 60% saturation at the surface, but increased with depth to a slight supersaturation at 5 and 10 m depths (Table 3). The watermasses below 10 m were also rich in oxygen. Thus a possible lack of dissolved oxygen in the Rosfjord causing fish mortality is unlikely according to the present observations. October 5 the algae concentration had decreased to  $11 \cdot 10^6$  cells· $1^{-1}$  at the surface decreasing with depth, and the levels of oxygen was about the same as on October 2 except for supersaturation at the surface.

A fisherman caught dead ballan wrasse, cod and pollack when trawling for prawns at about 150 m depth in the Rosfjord on October 2. On October 5 he also trawled and all seemed again normal to him except

for lack of pollack in the catch. The reason why Gyrodinium aureolum caused mass death of wild fish especially in the Rosfjord was probably due to the particular topography and hydrography in this fjord. It has a deep sill at about 70 m and receive only small amounts of fresh water. BROCKMANN et al. (1981) observed a total change of watermasses down to more than 50 m in the course of one day only in the fjord. Thus the dead fish might have been enclosed by a sudden influx of brown water from the sea outside without any possibilities to avoid.

Previously fish mortality along the Norwegian coast associated with mass occurrence of <u>G. aureolum</u> mainly affected fish enclosed in nets and cages (BRAARUD and HEIMDAL 1970 and TANGEN 1977).

HANSEN et al. (1969) reported, however, mass mortality among wild fish along the west coast of Denmark associated with mass occurrence of a naked dinoflagellate, which was determined as <u>Gymnodinium breve(?)</u>. According to their photos and description of the algae, it is likely that it was <u>G. aureolum</u> (TANGEN 1977). JENKINSON and CONNORS (1980) also observed various dead wild fishes on a shore during a bloom of <u>G. aureolum</u> in Ireland.

The reason why mass occurrence of <u>G. aureolum</u> cause mortality among fish and invertebrates is not clear. We suppose, however, that neither physical clogging of the gills nor lack of dissolved oxygen are probable explanations. Studies by WIDDOWS <u>et al.</u> (1979) suggest that <u>G. aureolum</u> either produces or contains a substance which is cytotoxic to <u>Mytilus edulis</u>. Thus also fish mortality may be due to such a toxin.

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Table 1. The distribution of Gyrodinium aureolum and salinity, temperature and oxygen measured at Borås fishfarm September 28 1981 when fish mortality occured. [Vertikalfor-delingen av Gyrodinium aureolum og saltholdighet, temperatur og oksygen ved Borås fiskeoppdrett 28 september 1981 da det forekom fiskedødelighet]

Depth m	G. aur. mill·1 <sup>-1</sup>	Chl. <u>a</u> ug·1 <sup>-1</sup>	Sal.	Temp.	$o_2$ $ml \cdot 1^{-1}$	0 <sub>2</sub> %-sat.
0		314	23.59	14.4	11.30	180.9
0.5	16	311	23.67	14.5	9.79	157.2
1	-	191	23.71	14.4	9.04	144.8
2		144	23.85	14.4	7.56	121.3
3	-	25	24.05	14.4	6.55	105.2
5	<u> -</u>	7.5	24.68	14.3	5.94	95.4
7	ein	3.7	25.16	14.3	5.69	91.8
10	<b>-</b>	1.8	27.27	14.4	5.13	83.9
0.5 <sup>x</sup>	6	139	23.74	14.4	8.71	139.6
2 <sup>x</sup>	<b>-</b> .	54	23.97	14.4	7.00	112.4

x - data from the cage

Syngnathus typhle

Table 2. Species of dead fish observed in the Rosfjord. [Døde fisk observert i Rosfjorden]

Carlotte Control of the Control of t		•		
Agonus cataphractus	-	pogge	-	panserulke
Anguilla anguilla		eel	_	ål
Ammodytes sp.		sand eels	_	sil
Belone belone	_	garfish	-	horngjel
Ctenolabrus rupestris	_	gold-sinny	_	bergnebb
Gadus merlangus	-	whiting	-	kviting
Gadus minutus	_	poor cod	_	sypike
Gadus morhua	_	cod	_	torsk
Gadus poutassou	-	blue whiting	_	kolmule (blågunnar)
Gadus pollachius	-	pollack	-	lyr
Labrus berggylta	<b>6</b> 00	ballan wrasse	_	berggylte
Labrus ossifagus	-	cuckoo wrasse	-	blåstål/rødnebb
Merluccius merluccius	-	hake	****	lysing
Molva molva	-	ling	-	lange
Myoxocephalus scorpius	-	sea scorpion	-	ulke
Pleuronectes flesus		flounder		skrubbe
Raniceps raninus	_	lesser fork-beard	_	paddetorsk

- broad-nosed pipefish - tangsnelle

x - data fra mæren

Table 3. The distribution of Gyrodinium aureolum and salinity, temperature and oxygen measured at the farthest end of the Rosfjord October 2 1981 one day after fish mortality.

[Vertikalfordelingen av Gyrodinium aureolum og saltholdighet, temperatur og oksygen innerst i Rosfjorden 2 oktober 1981, en dag etter fiskedødeligheten]

Depth m	G. aur. mill·1 <sup>-1</sup>	Chl. <u>a</u> ug·1 <sup>-1</sup>	Sal.	Temp.	O <sub>2</sub> ml·1-1	<sup>O</sup> 2 %-sat.
0	70	1840	19.87	13.8		
1	35	560	24.19	14.0	5.71	90.9
2	15	130	25.06	14.0	5.96	95.4
3	5	75 ~	25.22	14.0	6.17	99.0
5	1.3	26	25.36	14.1	6.35	102.1
10	0.04	4	25.76	14.1	6.75	108.7
15	0.01	1.0	30.63	13.9	5.10	84.3
20	0.01	0.9	32.15	13.2	5.12	84.4
28	0.01	0.4	32.66	11.8	5.14	82.4
$0^{\mathbf{x}}$	65	-	_	13.8	4.03	62.3

x - data from a near by quay

x - data fra sildesalgslagets kai

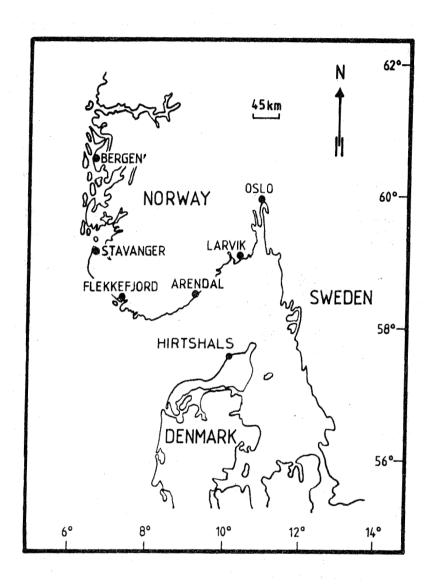


Fig. 1. The southern coast of Norway. Sydkysten av Norge

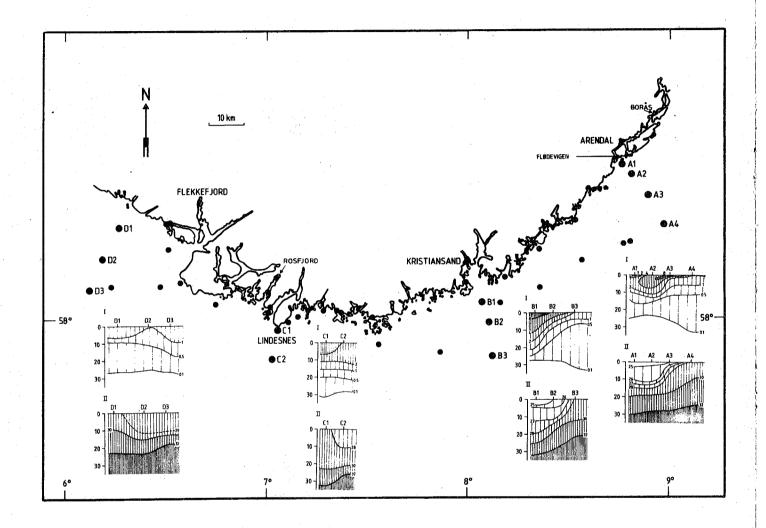


Fig. 2. The sections A, B, C and D and other stations (smaller dots) sampled during the cruise October 4-7 1981. The isopleths down to 30 m depth show:

I - Gyrodinium aureolum (106 cells·1-1)

II - the salinity (o/oo)

[Snittene A, B, C og D og andre stasjoner (mindre prikker) som ble tatt på toktet 4-7 oktober 1981. Isoplettene ned til 30 m dyp viser:

I - fordelingen av Gyrodinium aureolum (106 celler·1-1)

II - saltholdighet (o/oo)]

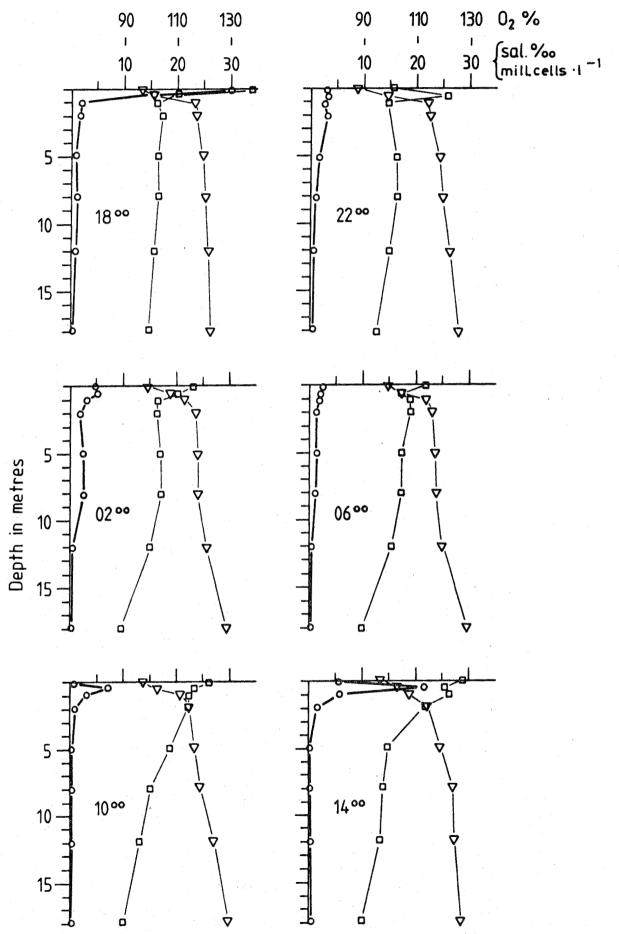


Fig. 3. The vertical distribution of Gyrodinium aureolum (o), salinity (V) and oxygen saturation (D) in the Flødevigen Bay September 28-29 1981. [Vertikalfordelingen av Gyrodinium aureolum (o), saltholdighet (V) og oksygenmetningen (D) i Flødevigen fra kl 1800 28 september til kl 1400 29 september 1981]