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In-season forecast for Atlantic salmon (*Salmo salar* L.) returning to Campbellton River in 1998

by

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ABSTRACT

This document summarizes techniques used for in-season forecasts of Atlantic salmon returning to Campbellton River in 1998. Three techniques were examined: proportional, simple regression and regression with environmental correction. Data is limited to six years, 1993-98, of complete adult counts at a counting fence. The low degrees of freedom may have contributed to the high correlations. Regression with environmental correction gave the most accurate forecasts with a standard error of less than 10% of the forecasted value. While thermal habitat was used as an environmental variable in the regression model to good effect, there are other climate data that could also be used.

RÉSUMÉ

Ce document résume les techniques utilisées pour les prévisions, en cours de saison, des remontes de saumon de l'Atlantique dans la rivière Campbellton en 1998. Trois techniques ont été examinées : proportionnelle, régression simple et régression avec correction environnementale. Les données sont limitées à six années, 1993-1998, de dénombrements complets d'adultes à une barrière de dénombrement. Les faibles degrés de liberté peuvent avoir contribué au niveau élevé de corrélation. La régression avec correction environnementale a donné les prévisions les plus exactes avec une marge d'erreur normale de moins de 10 % de la valeur prévue. Bien que la température de l'habitat ait été utilisée avec succès comme variable environnementale dans le modèle de régression, d'autres données climatiques pourraient être utilisées également.

INTRODUCTION

In-season forecasts of Atlantic salmon returns to individual rivers have been provided to fisheries managers in Newfoundland since 1990. In-season forecasts are typically based on cumulative counts to a specific date to a counting facility adjusted in some way to predict or forecast the total count at the end of the season. There are several techniques for in-season forecasts, one of the simplest is to divide the current-year count by the proportion to the same date from other years or an average of data for other years. Another method is to generate in-season forecasts from regressions of counts to date versus total count to the end of the year (Dempson et al. 1998; Harvie & Amiro 1998). Other variables, such as those influencing run timing, can also be included in this approach as shown by Harvie & Amiro for climate data (1998). In-season forecasts are used by fisheries managers to make in-season adjustments to fishing plans in order to achieve management objectives based on maintaining some level of spawning escapement for conservation purposes. At the assessment meetings in 1998, it was decided to review the techniques used as well as their accuracy and precision in order to standardize and improve them. The purpose of this paper is to review methodology used to provide in-season forecasts and estimates of returns to the counting fence at Campbellton River.

METHODS

Two techniques of forecasting in-season salmon returns are examined for Campbellton River salmon. The first technique, labelled the proportional technique, forecasts returns in a given year from the proportional distribution of returns in an average series of years applied to the current year count to the same date. The second technique examines regressions of count to date on end of season count to provide an in-season forecast of returns. Environmental parameters are examined for their potential in improving accuracy of the forecasts by inclusion in the regression technique. Data from 1998 are used as an example of how the techniques might be applied in a specific year.

Sources of data

A counting fence for upstream migrating salmon has been operated every year since 1993 on Campbellton River (Downton & Reddin 1998). The counting fence and counting procedures carried out with an underwater video camera have been fully described in Downton & Reddin (1998). Since there have been no washouts or other problems that would result in incomplete counts and because there are no legal removals in the short distance from the counting fence to the sea, the counts described herein are considered an accurate measure of the total number of salmon entering Campbellton River exclusive of poaching. The daily count data was summed into standard weeks with the first week being that week which ends on June 7. This week was chosen so that forecasted returns would be as complete as possible for managers at the first of each week and would change annually.

In-season forecasts

In-season forecasts of small salmon returns to Campbellton River were generated from regressions of counts to date versus total count for the year, following an approach by Dempson et al. (1998). The count less an expectation of angling catches or other removals is then an estimate of spawning escapement which can be compared with the desired conservation requirements for the river or some other management goal. In total, five years of data (1993-97) were available. In-season dates chosen were the standard dates described above. In order for an in-season forecast to be useful to managers, the forecast must be provided in a timely fashion so that fisheries can be adjusted either upward or downward depending on the circumstances. The further into the season before making an in-season forecast the less useful any management action becomes because a higher proportion of removals by angling will have already taken place.

A retrospective analysis examining the predicted value versus the actual one was used to determine the accuracy of the forecasts. The 1998 data were not included directly in the regression analysis so as to provide an example of how the method works in the current year.

Environmental parameters

The accuracy and precision of any in-season forecast degrades due to variability in annual run timing. Variability in run timing is thought to be mainly under environmental control (Narayanan et al. 1995; Harvie & Amiro 1998). If run timing could be accurately predicted then more accurate forecasts could be made and then fisheries adjusted accordingly. Several authors have demonstrated that water temperature, presence of ice and amount can delay entry of salmon into freshwater (Reddin & Shearer 1987; Narayanan et al. 1995). Several environmental parameters have been examined for their usefulness in determining whether runs were going to be early or late (Drinkwater et al. 1998). One such parameter is thermal habitat, a measure of ocean suitability for salmon growth and survival in the northwest Atlantic (Reddin & Friedland 1993). The thermal habitat data used was the sum of monthly values for April and May. In order for the resulting forecast to be useful to fish management, I assumed that the chosen regression model must provide a forecast of end of season count at the earliest possible date while maintaining a standard error (bias) of the estimate of, at most, one-tenth of the 1993-98 average end of season count of small salmon (Harvie & Amiro 1998). For this analysis, the entire dataset including 1998 was used in the regressions. Even so there is only six years of data for model building and testing which may lead to overspecification of model parameters and artificially high coefficient of determinations.

RESULTS

The daily run timing of small salmon to Campbellton River varies considerably from year to year as shown by the daily counts at the counting fence (Table 1 and Fig. 1). Variability in run timing is shown with up to an 11 day difference in the 25th percentile

and a 12 day difference in the 75th percentile of small salmon returns to the counting fence (Fig. 2a). Median dates were later in 1994 and 1997 than in 1996 and 1998 which was the earliest on record. The length of the season also varies from year to year as shown by the magnitude of the difference between the 25th and 75th percentiles or the 10th and 90th percentiles. The 1997 run was the longest on record while the 1998 run was one of the shortest.

Smolt run timing is also variable with most of the variation occurring in the last three years (Fig. 2b). Variability of the smolt run is apparent with up to a 15 day difference in the 25th percentile and a 14 day difference in the 75th percentile. Median dates were later in 1997 and earliest in 1996 and 1998. The length of the run also varies from year to year as shown by the magnitude of the difference between the 25th and 75th and 10th and 90th percentiles. The 1996 run was the longest on record while the 1997 run was the shortest.

Survival data from smolt to adult is also available for Campbellton River salmon as both smolts and adult returning salmon are counted (Downton & Reddin 1998). Examination of the relationship between survival and adult run timing and smolt and adult run timing indicated that neither were significantly correlated at the 5% level of significance. For survival and adult run timing the correlation coefficient (Spearman r) was 0.39 with degrees of freedom (df) of 3 and for smolt and adult run timing the correlation coefficient (Spearman) was 0.79 with df of 4. This is a very short time series and it would be inappropriate to be overly conclusive as these results may change as a longer time series becomes available.

Figure 3 illustrates the sequential regressions of in-season counts to various dates with the corresponding total run for the year beginning with June 7 (week 1) and progressing to July 26 (week 8). The first week with a reasonable relationship between total count and in-season count is week 5 with an R^2 of 0.55 at which time 57% (range of 31% in 1994 and 72% in 1996) of the small salmon on average had entered the system. The next week which is week 6 (July 6-12) has a much improved R^2 of 0.90 which increases to 0.93 in week 7 and 0.99 in week 8. Therefore, it would appear possible to provide a fairly accurate in-season forecast for Campbellton River adult returns by July 5. Since about 60% of the run had entered the river by July 5 leaves enough time for fisheries managers to make changes to fishing plans if warranted.

Residuals from the sequential regressions indicate a trend to increasing negative residuals in the last few years for weeks 4, 5 and 6 (Fig. 4). For 1998, the forecast is about 1,250 fish higher in week 4 and almost 1,000 fish higher in week 5 than the actual values. The residual pattern also declines with time for week 6 but with lower residuals in recent years. For 1998, the forecast is about 150 fish higher than the actual value. For weeks 6 and 7, the residual pattern is erratic from year to year with no trend. For 1998, forecasts for week 7 are only 200 fish too high and about 70 in week 8.

If expressed as a percentage of the actual value then residuals for week 5 are the highest at about 30% declining to about 5% for week 6, 6% for week 7, and 3% for week 8 (Fig. 5). All were negative except those for week 8. The negative residuals indicate an over-

forecast of returns suggesting that management decisions based on these forecasts might tend to forestall action when it was actually warranted.

Comparison of residuals from linear regression and proportional forecasts demonstrates that linear forecasts are more accurate than proportional forecasts (Fig. 6). Linear forecasts were consistently better than proportional for all weeks from week 1 to week 6. The residual pattern for the proportional method shows much large residuals in the warm years, viz. 1996 and 1998 than in the colder years viz. 1993-94 and 1997. This is not the case with the linear method which shows a pattern of increasing residuals with time and not an abrupt shift to higher residuals in 1998 only. Forecasts for 1998 returns are much better for the linear than the proportional method.

The addition of an environmental parameter into the regression technique also seems to improve the forecasted values. The coefficient of determination for weeks 1 to 6 regressions with no environmental parameter ranged from 0.02 to 0.90 and with an environmental parameter, in this case thermal habitat, range from 0.57 in week 2 to 0.99 in week 6. Also comparison of the predicted versus observed values indicates that under-forecasting is more common than over-forecasting returns (Fig. 7A). All regressions for weeks 1 to 6, averaged over the 1993-98 period, maintained a very acceptable standard error of the regression estimate (Fig. 7B). When expressed as a percent of the standard error of the forecasted value it was always less than 15%. A note of caution is required here due to the small sample size. The Campbellton River counting fence has only been operated for six years and additional data may alter the relationship between variables and hence the precision of the estimated number of salmon returns.

DISCUSSION

In-season reviews of salmon abundance have been done annually in Newfoundland and Labrador since about 1990. In some cases, the reviews have resulted in alterations to fishing plans and openings or closures of angling in some rivers. An example of the alteration of fishing plans due to an in-season review occurred in 1997 in insular Newfoundland (O'Connell et al. 1998). It was shown during in-season review that many rivers were not going to achieve conservation requirements without some alteration to fishing plans to reduce potential catches. As a result most rivers were closed to angling in mid-July and remained that way to the end of the fishing season (O'Connell et al. 1998).

Although in-season reviews of fish abundance are common in several jurisdictions, little is available in the literature describing the techniques and accuracy of the results. A couple of exceptions are Dempson et al. (1998) and Harvie & Amiro (1998). Harvie & Amiro (1998) stated that in order to be useful to managers forecasted values should maintain a standard error of the estimate of, at most, 25% of average values. Forecasts shown herein for Campbellton River adult salmon returns after week 6 show standard errors that are consistently less than 15% of the estimates. Harvie & Amiro (1998) further demonstrated that inclusion of environmental parameters in the predictive

relationship greatly improved the forecasts which was also the case for Campbellton River. In my paper, I have shown that:

- Regression technique performs better than proportional techniques;
- Inclusion of an environmental variable improves accuracy considerably;
- In-season reviews for other systems should consider testing the regression technique to see if it leads to improvement in forecasts. Similarly, inclusion of an environmental variable may also help to improve forecasts by acting as a predictor of run timing.
- Run timing variability if not accounted for will degrade forecasts in years with very early or late runs compared to average. While the forecasts may still work most of the time, inclusion of an environmental parameter in the regression may improve forecasts considerably.

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Table 1. Campbellton River upstream migration of adult salmon through the counting fence from 1993 to 1998.

Date	1993			1994			1995			1996			1997			1998		
	Grilse	accum	total	Grilse	accum	total	Grilse	accum	total	Grilse	accum	total	Grilse	accum	total	Grilse	accum	total
03-Jun	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
04-Jun	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
05-Jun	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
06-Jun	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
07-Jun	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
08-Jun	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
09-Jun	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
10-Jun	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
11-Jun	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
12-Jun	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
13-Jun	4	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	35	117	6	21	0	0	6	57	9
14-Jun	1	1	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	19	125	0	21	0	0	0	50	2
15-Jun	4	9	0	1	1	0	0	1	1	114	249	5	26	3	3	31	97	2
16-Jun	0	9	0	2	3	0	0	1	2	116	365	20	46	7	10	24	121	3
17-Jun	5	14	0	0	3	0	0	2	4	73	438	5	51	6	16	62	183	2
18-Jun	3	17	0	1	4	0	0	8	12	129	567	7	58	12	28	194	377	4
19-Jun	8	25	0	10	14	4	4	6	18	37	604	1	59	15	43	257	634	11
20-Jun	8	33	0	17	31	1	5	45	63	164	768	18	77	19	62	341	975	6
21-Jun	24	57	0	9	40	0	8	69	152	7	17	25	81	63	126	457	1432	11
22-Jun	20	77	3	29	69	3	8	31	183	1	18	81	94	38	163	294	1726	11
23-Jun	50	127	0	3	28	97	3	11	58	241	5	23	94	86	229	115	1841	9
24-Jun	104	231	3	6	140	237	17	28	85	326	7	30	139	104	333	3	22	155
25-Jun	103	334	0	6	119	356	7	35	103	429	9	39	150	51	384	90	2086	5
26-Jun	191	525	3	9	78	434	1	36	53	482	1	40	107	27	411	82	2168	6
27-Jun	44	569	0	9	92	526	1	37	248	730	9	49	43	45	456	135	2303	0
28-Jun	12	612	7	15	51	671	0	31	24	524	4	52	92	106	502	63	2246	1
29-Jun	172	824	12	28	71	678	0	37	119	943	3	56	66	83	655	1	33	65
30-Jun	136	960	7	35	44	722	1	38	85	1028	1	57	166	81	736	38	2489	6
01-Jul	294	1254	11	46	40	762	1	39	165	1193	3	60	113	47	783	32	2521	5
02-Jul	279	1533	12	58	35	797	0	39	109	1302	4	64	149	36	819	70	2591	1
03-Jul	234	1767	5	63	10	807	0	39	71	1373	1	65	103	68	887	14	2805	1
04-Jul	200	1967	9	72	40	847	0	39	170	1543	3	68	84	41	928	7	2612	5
05-Jul	96	2087	1	73	58	837	1	40	101	1616	1	69	66	35	963	0	34	7
06-Jul	285	2342	9	82	145	1042	7	47	104	1750	2	71	67	43	1006	4	48	2867
07-Jul	137	2479	3	85	343	1385	9	56	68	1818	1	72	115	39	1045	1	35	41
08-Jul	126	2605	3	88	98	1483	5	61	68	1886	1	73	61	22	1087	0	35	12
09-Jul	102	2707	3	91	88	1571	4	65	27	1913	1	74	31	22	1085	2	37	33
10-Jul	165	2872	3	94	38	1609	2	67	40	1953	0	74	83	11	1096	1	38	168
11-Jul	100	2972	2	96	66	1675	3	70	65	2018	0	74	52	17	1113	1	39	41
12-Jul	124	3013	4	100	59	1713	3	72	22	2054	1	75	22	16	1128	0	39	1
13-Jul	119	3190	5	105	41	1766	0	73	21	2115	0	75	21	9	1138	1	40	8
14-Jul	69	3259	2	107	36	1802	2	75	37	2152	1	76	182	7	1145	0	40	6
15-Jul	73	3332	6	113	34	1836	1	76	13	2165	1	77	42	35	1180	14	54	9
16-Jul	1	3333	0	113	26	1862	3	79	75	2240	9	86	10	11	1191	4	58	7
17-Jul	77	3410	3	116	41	1903	1	80	106	2346	12	98	14	6	1197	0	58	1
18-Jul	106	3516	5	121	3	1906	0	80	77	2423	8	106	21	5	1202	0	58	36
19-Jul	21	3589	2	122	6	1912	1	81	47	2479	1	107	19	2	1204	1	59	15
20-Jul	36	3625	0	123	34	1946	1	82	43	2513	3	110	6	4	1208	2	61	6
21-Jul	19	3644	0	123	53	1999	8	90	29	2542	1	111	5	10	1218	2	63	13
22-Jul	28	3672	2	125	52	2051	5	95	17	2559	1	112	18	4	1222	1	64	8
23-Jul	40	3712	3	128	150	2201	12	107	25	2584	1	113	4	62	1284	7	71	10
24-Jul	39	3751	3	131	268	2469	18	125	41	2625	1	114	9	55	1339	19	90	15
25-Jul	31	3782	1	132	53	2522	7	132	82	2707	15	129	12	13	1352	5	95	28
26-Jul	19	3808	0	132	66	2588	0	133	58	2764	0	130	7	24	1366	0	96	6
27-Jul	14	3819	0	132	15	2571	4	140	36	2777	6	142	13	13	1399	5	112	12
28-Jul	12	3822	0	132	10	2581	0	140	41	2838	11	153	13	1	1400	1	114	10
29-Jul	5	3827	0	132	8	2589	2	142	18	2856	4	157	11	2	1402	1	115	9
30-Jul	6	3833	0	132	12	2601	1	143	10	2866	3	160	12	6	1408	2	117	12
31-Jul	12	3845	0	132	7	2608	1	144	8	2874	1	161	4	5	1413	4	121	8
01-Aug	8	3853	0	132	4	2612	1	145	13	2887	2	163	6	1	1414	0	121	8
02-Aug	6	3859	1	133	41	2655	8	155	10	2897	1	167	7	2	1416	0	121	0
03-Aug	8	3867	0	133	42	2695	7	160	24	2921	12	179	3	1	1417	0	121	7
04-Aug	17	3884	0	133	6	2701	0	160	10	2931	1	180	3	1	1418	1	122	0
05-Aug	2	3886	0	133	6	2707	0	160	3	2934	0	180	2	2	1420	2	124	1
06-Aug	9	3895	0	133	32	2739	6	166	3	2937	1	181	1	5	1425	6	130	4
07-Aug	11	3906	0	133	52	2791	7	173	14	2951	13	194	0	3	1428	1	131	0
08-Aug	5	3911	1	134	6	2797	1	174	10	2961	9	203	2	2	1430	0	131	3
09-Aug	14	3925	2	137	3	2808	8	174	2	2965	0	203	3	2	1432	0	131	2
10-Aug	7	3932	0	137	6	2806	1	175	1	2966	0	203	2	2	1433	0	131	1
11-Aug	4	3916	0	137	8	2814	2	177	6	2972	0	203	0	0	1437	0	131	0
12-Aug	3	3939	0	137	7	2821	0	177	1	2973	0	203	2	2	1439	1	132	4
13-Aug	7	3946	0	137	1	2822	1	178	2	2975	1	204	1	54	1492	46	178	5
14-Aug	1	3947	0	137	2	2824	1	179	3	2978	4	208	1	19	1511	7	185	2
15-Aug	8	3955	1	138	2	2826	0	179	27	3005	5	213	3	14	1525	6	191	2
16-Aug	3	3958	1	139	4	2830	1	180	1	3006	0	213	2	2	1526	2	193	4
17-Aug	3	3963	1	140	3	2833	0	180	4	3010	1	214	1	21	1528	14	207	2
18-Aug	1	3964	0	140	1	2834	1	181	2	3012	0	214	3	91	1640	23	230	2
19-Aug	0	3964	0	140	3	2837	3	184	1	3013	0	214	0	56	1696	11	241	1
20-Aug	4	3968	0	140	3	2840	0	184	5	3018	0	214	0	8	1704	0	241	1
21-Aug	3	3971	0	140	2	2842	0	184	2	3020	0	214	0	3	1707	0	241	2
22-Aug	4	3975	1	141	1	2843	0	184	2	3022	1	215	0	1	1708	0	241	1
23-Aug	3	3979	0	141	1	2844	0	184	6	3028	1	216	0	0	1710	0	242	2
24-Aug	3	3981	0	141	2	2846	1	185	1	3029	2	218	0	11	1724	9	251	2
25-Aug	0	3981	1	142	3	2849	0	185	2	3031	0	218	0	2	1726	0	251	1
26-Aug	0	3981	0	142	1	2850	0	185	1	3032	0	218	0	4	1730	1	252	1
27-Aug	3	3984	0	142	1													

Fig. 1. Daily upstream migrating salmon counts for Campbellton River, 1993-98.

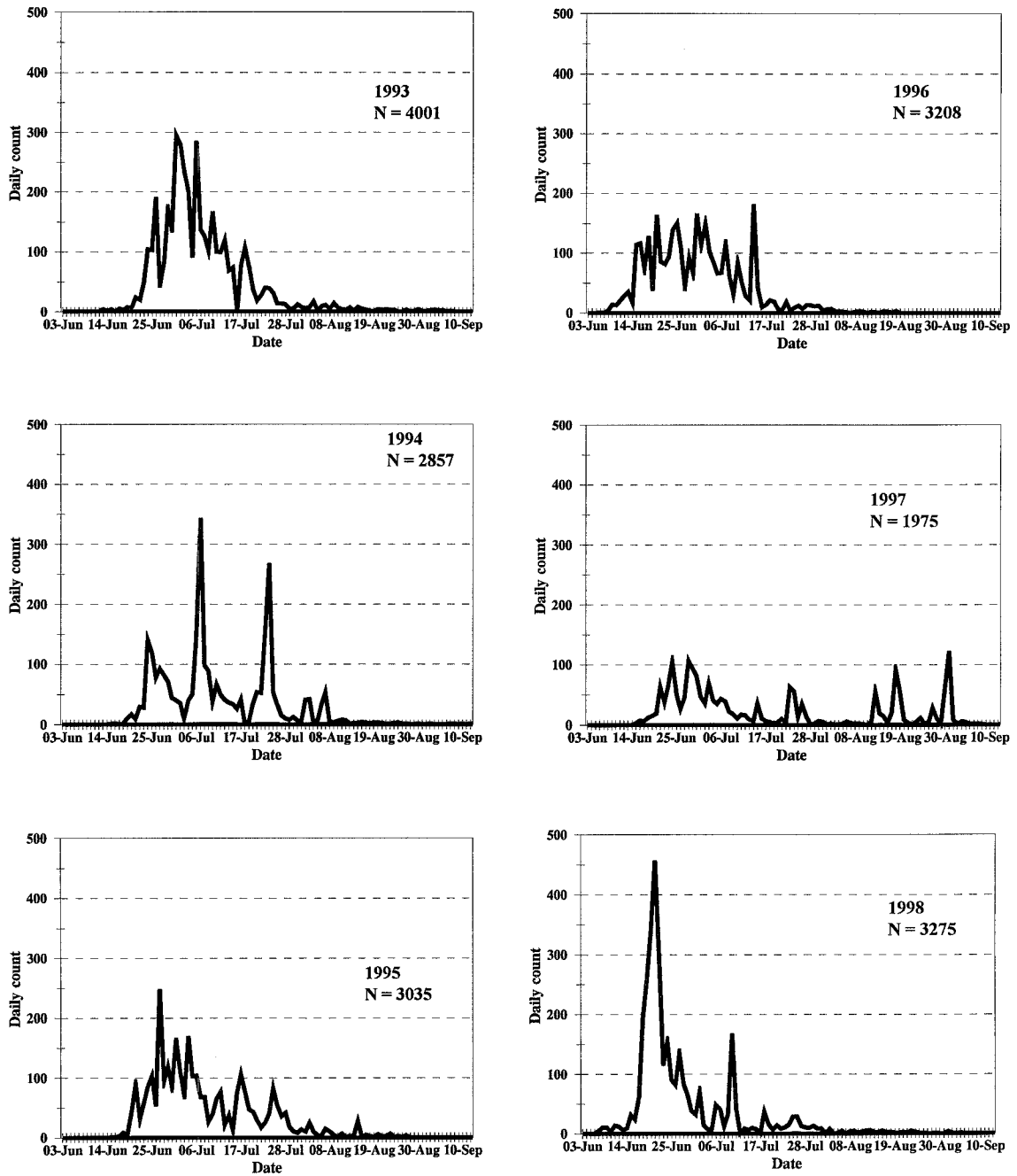


Fig. 2a. Annual variation in run timing for small salmon at Campbellton River, Nfld. Vertical lines represent the 10th and 90th percentiles of the day of the year of migration, the rectangle is the 25th and 75th percentiles, and the marker within the rectangle is the median run timing value.

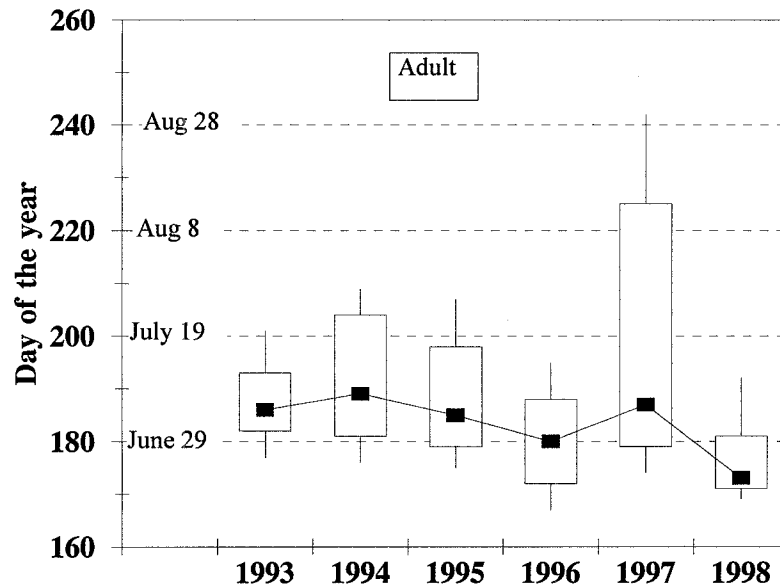


Fig. 2b. Annual variation in run timing for smolts at Campbellton River, Nfld. Vertical lines represent the 10th and 90th percentiles of the day of the year of migration, the rectangle is the 25th and 75th percentiles, and the marker within the rectangle is the median run timing value.

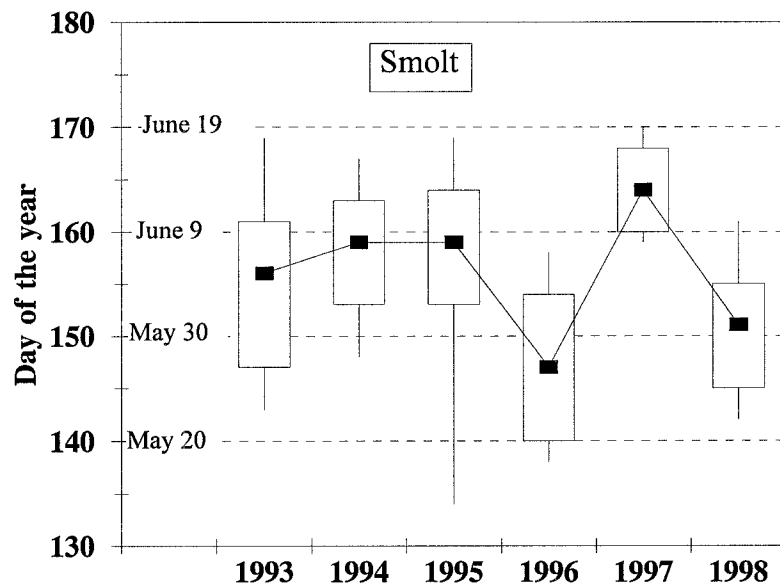


Fig 3. Relationships between count to end of season on count to the end of various weeks at Campbellton River, Newfoundland, 1993-97. 1998 value is shown for comparison.

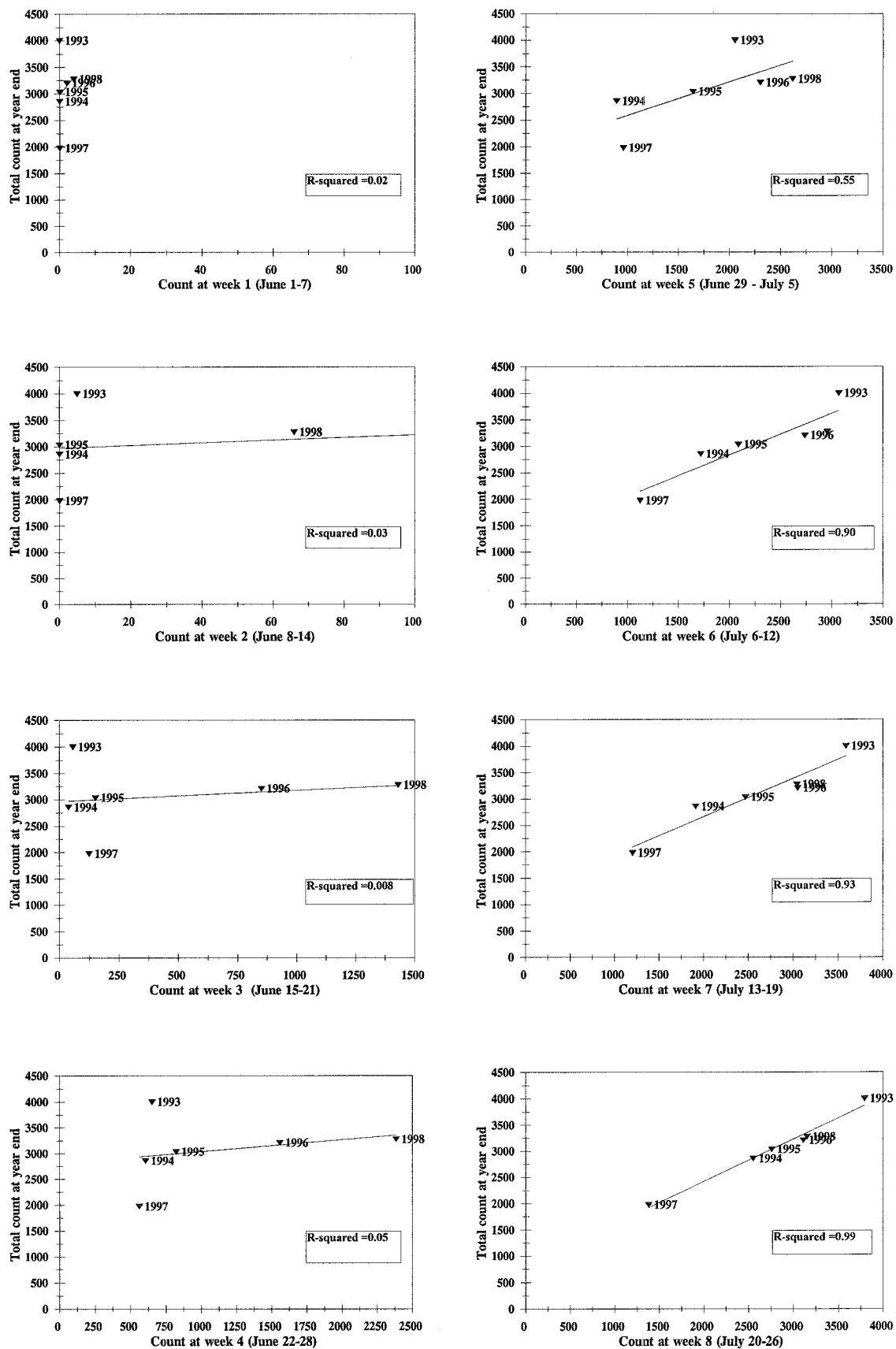


Fig 4. Residuals from regression of count to end of season on count to the end of the week.

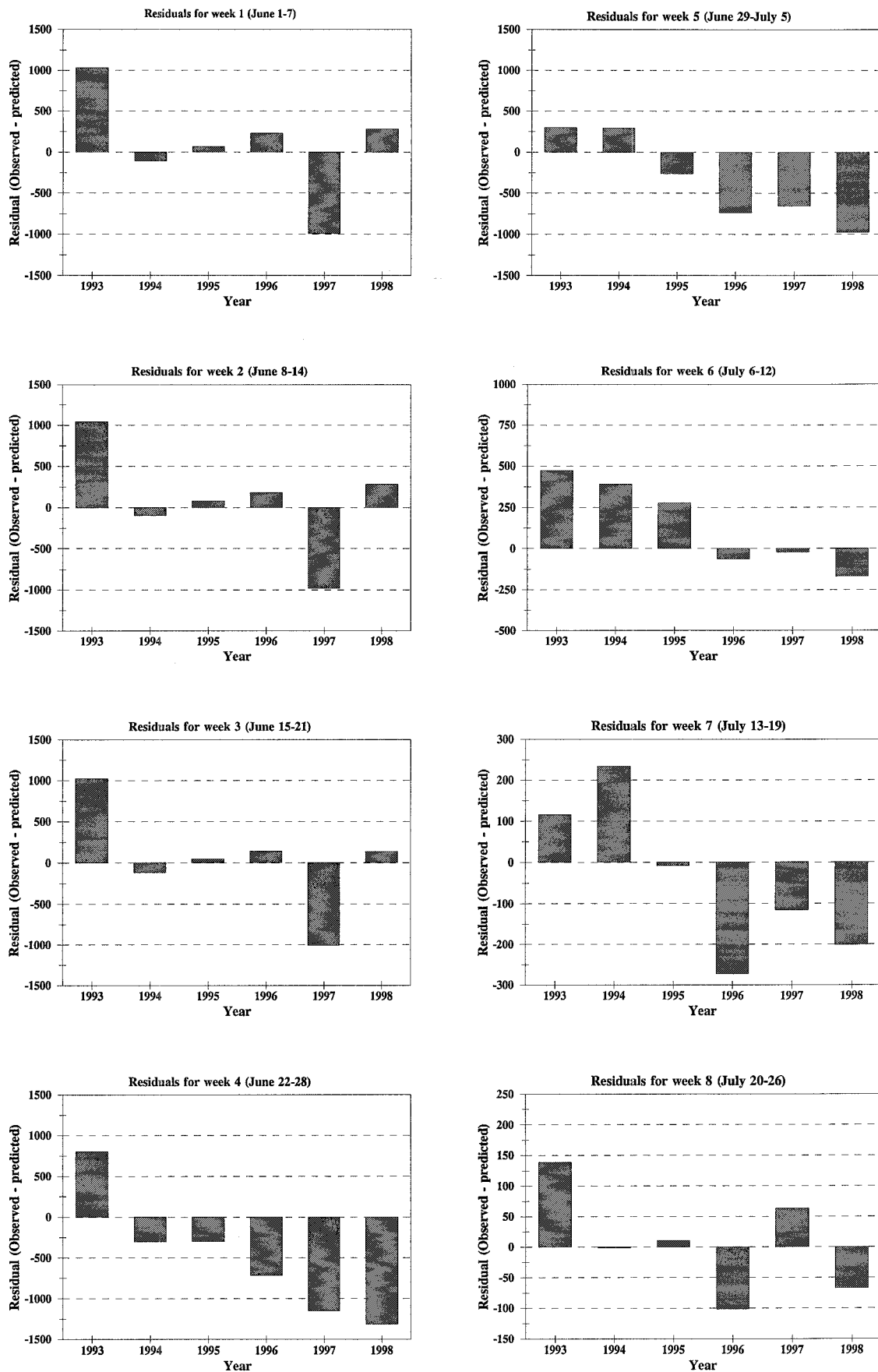


Fig 5. Comparison of the residual vs observed expressed as a percentage of the observed value.

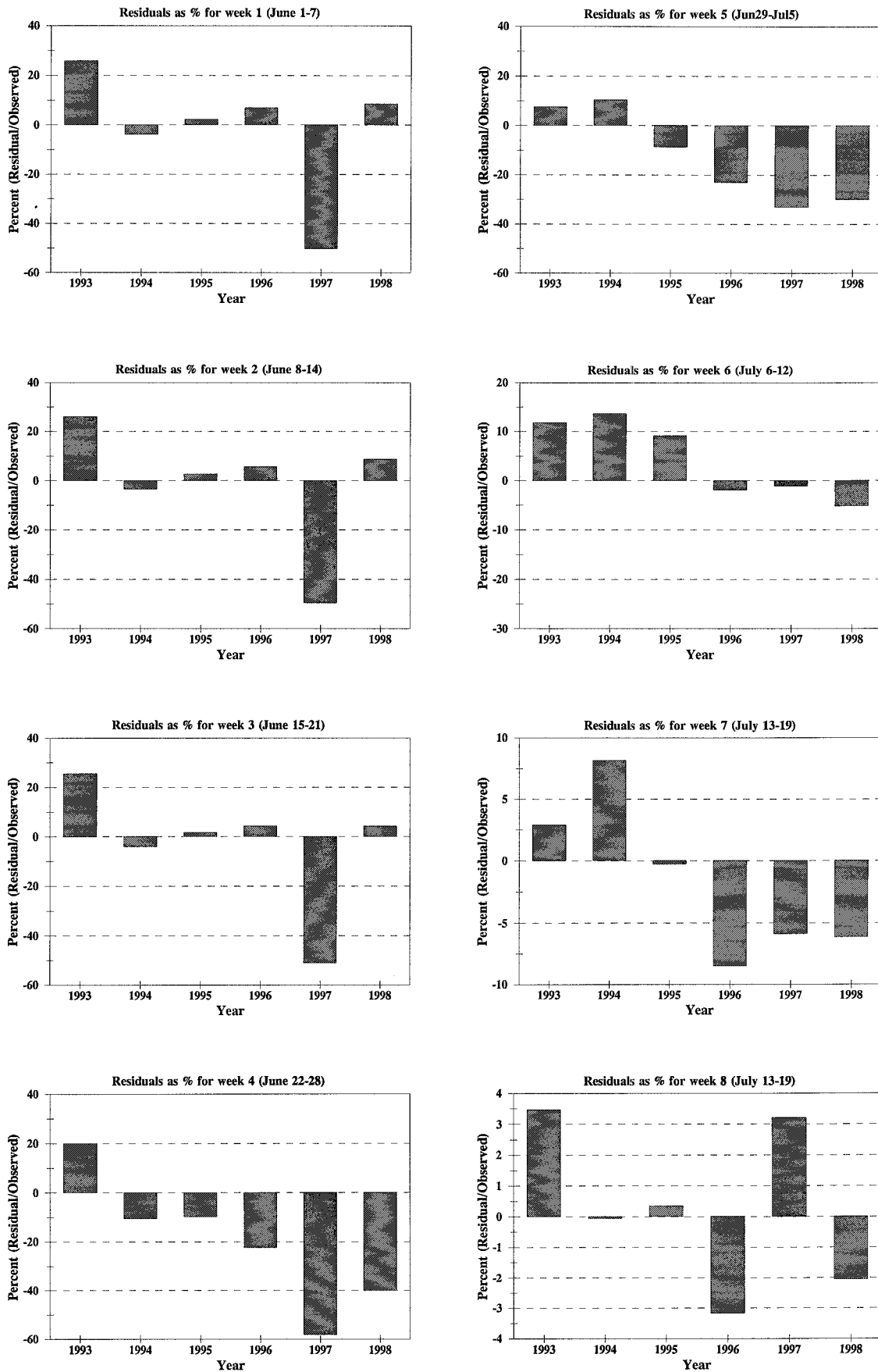


Fig. 6. Comparison of residual percents from forecasts based on linear (left side) and proportion (right side) methods for adults at Campbellton River, Nfld.

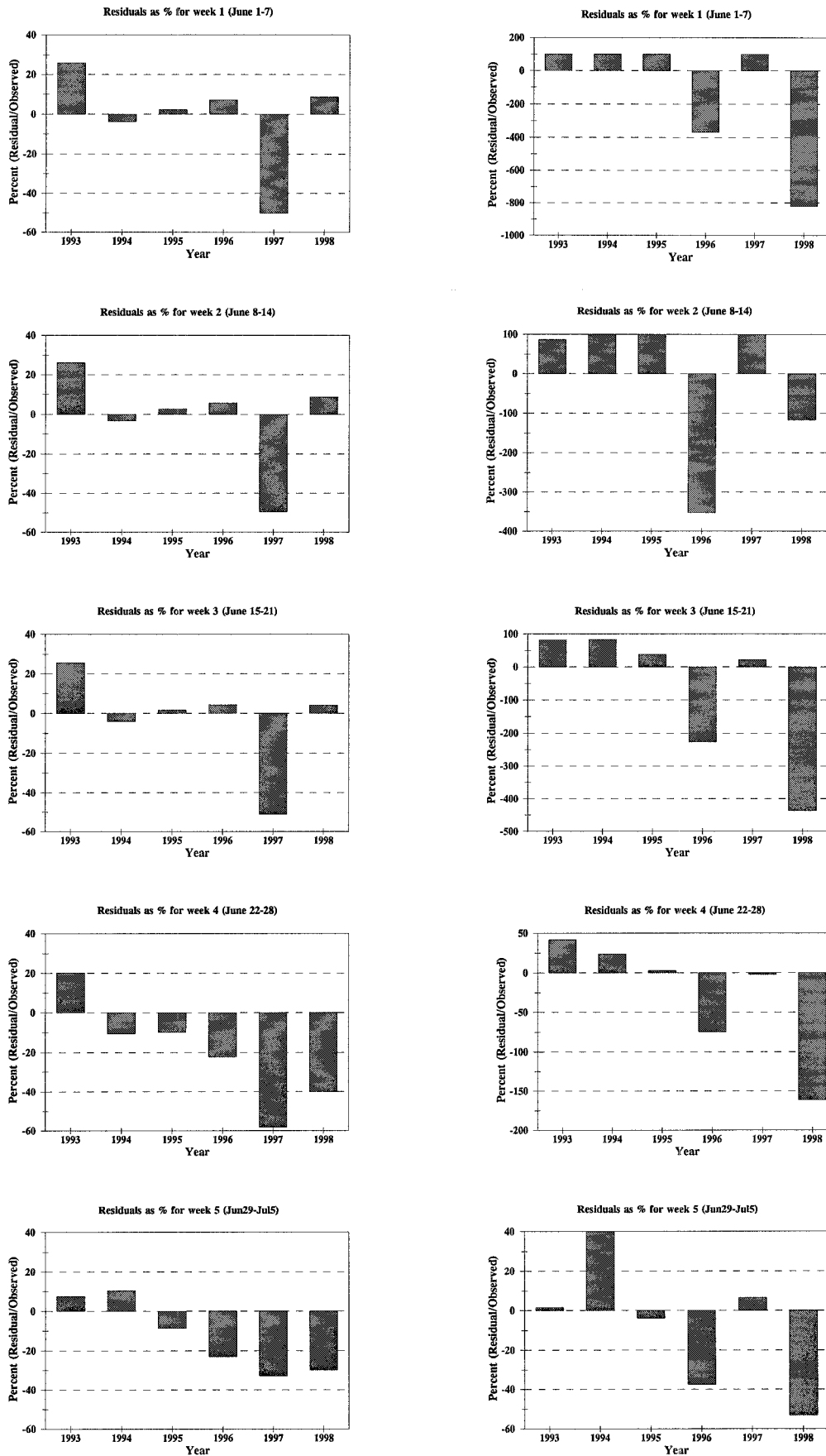


Fig. 7. A - is a comparison of end of season count on week 1 - 6 cumulative counts and thermal habitat. B - Average weekly (1993-98) standard error of the estimate in percent.

