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ALASKA KING CRAB EXPEDITION BEGINS SECOND PART OF STUDY

With the departure from Seattle of the seiners Champion and Locks, exploratory operations for the giant King crab are being resumed for the spring season in Alaskan waters, the Fish and Wildlife Service reported to Secretary of the Interior Harold L. Ickes today. The power schooner, Dorothy, preceded the seiners, and is now in southeastern Alaska waters.

To locate the areas in Alaskan waters where King crabs are found in greatest abundance is the main objective of this second part of the crab investigation, for which Congress appropriated \$100,000. The chief purpose of the entire venture is to determine the possibility of establishing an American commercial fishery for this species of crab.

Although Japanese packers have conducted a fishery for these crabs for many years off the Asiatic Coast, United States firms have not exploited a similar American fishery. This has been due principally to lack of adequate information regarding the areas in which the crabs are found, their abundance, movement, or methods by which they can be taken commercially.

The first phase of the investigation, which began last September, was concerned primarily with seeking data on seasonal migration of these crabs, their habitat and habits, as well as the most efficient and economical methods for

catching and packing them. This was concluded in December when the floating cannery Tondeleyo and the fishing boat Dorothy returned to Seattle from a successful 3-month trip to Alaskan waters, bringing back their pack of United States canned crab meat for testing in the food laboratories of the Service. Representatives of various canning concerns who have examined samples state that the pack is of exceptional quality.

The King crab grows to enormous size. During the Dorothy's three-month cruise last fall, several thousand crabs were taken, the largest of which weighed 16 pounds and measured 58 inches from tip of leg to tip of leg. This, however, is considered small for this species. Unlike other edible crabs, the King crab has no edible meat in its body but the claws contain several pounds.

This second phase of the expedition will be devoted primarily to exploratory fishing and biological observations. Through these, Service scientists hope to obtain data on the location and abundance of King crab in Alaskan waters between southeastern Alaska and Bristol Bay; the efficiency and effectiveness of various types of fishing methods; and information on the biology of the King crab.

As a result of the technological studies made on the first expedition, considerable data were obtained on successful and economical methods of canning procedure. Service officials believe this is sufficient to assure a highly satisfactory pack for any potential domestic development.

The Dorothy, an otter trawl with a displacement of 130 tons, will begin operations in southeastern Alaska, continue across the gulf exploring the vicinity around Yakutat and Capes St. Elias and Hinchinbrook, and then proceed into Prince William Sound. After leaving that port the vessel will work across the banks on the east side of Kodiak Island, continue to the Shumagin Islands and explore the bays along the peninsula to Unimak Pass, from there going into the Bering Sea where she will continue operations until early in June.

The Champion is proceeding direct to Prince William Sound to work in cooperation with the Dorothy. When its work is completed in that area, it will spend a short period in Cook Inlet and then continue down the west side of Shelikof Strait, proceeding then to the Shumagins and investigating the banks off the south side of the peninsula. At the entrance to the Bering Sea the Champion will meet the Dorothy and both boats will jointly continue the exploratory work in the Bering Sea until June.

The first stop on the schedule of the Locks will be at Alitak where she will pick up a field party, consisting of C. J. Pertuit and James Scrivner, which has been stationed in this region during the winter studying crab migrations. The vessel will investigate the waters around Kodiak Island and westward to the Shumagins, then returning toward Seattle via Shelikof Strait, Cook Inlet, Prince William Sound, Yakutat and southeastern Alaska to recheck such potential areas for crabs as may have been discovered on the outward voyages of the Dorothy and the Champion.

Although the King crab is the chief interest of the expedition, it is anticipated, however, that the exploratory fishing work will contribute information as to the potential commercial supply of fish and shellfish in general in the waters being investigated. On more than one occasion during the first half of the expedition last fall, the Dorothy picked up close to a ton or more of marketable sole and flounder, as well as quantities of shrimp and ocean scallops.

The Champion is commanded by Captain Anders Nilsen, and the Locks by Captain Harry Guffey, while Captain E. F. Trafton is again in charge of the Dorothy. Each vessel, in addition to a crew of seven men, has aboard a fisheries engineer and a fisheries biologist. The vessels are equipped for trawling, tangle net fishing, and crab pot fishing.

Roger W. Harrison, technologist in charge of the Service's Seattle technological laboratory, is directing the crab investigation. L. S. Christey, fishery economist, is in charge of field expedition, while C. B. Carlson, fishery engineer, will supervise all experimental fishing operations for the entire party.

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