



DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

INFORMATION SERVICE

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

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GEORGES BANK FISH CENSUS - ALMOST COMPLETED

The first census of the Georges Bank's fishery resources will be completed on one more voyage of the Albatross III, the Fish and Wildlife Service's Branch of Fishery Biology revealed today.

By studying the population size and the birth and death rates of such valuable commercial fish as haddock, redfish, herring, cod, and the flounders, the Service hopes to discover how New England fishermen can produce more food from the sea.

Commissioned on March 19 as a Federal marine fishery research vessel, the Albatross III has made nine voyages in the North Atlantic -- investigating the stock of fish on New England's fishing banks, measuring hydrographic conditions on the banks which affect fishing, studying the effect of otter trawling on the productivity of the banks, testing improved methods of handling and preserving fish, and working on the selectivity of fishing gear and the design of trawl nets to save small fish.

Four of the voyages have been devoted to a sampling program designed to census the fish of the Georges Bank. Located off the coast of Massachusetts' Cape Cod, the Bank is the chief Atlantic commercial fishing grounds in U. S. waters.

This census program is the Albatross III's major research project. About 3,200 square miles remain to be sampled of the total 22,000 square miles in the Georges Bank. A subsequent voyage will survey this remaining area.

Before the Albatross III's census work was undertaken on the Georges Bank, the knowledge of the population size and the distribution of the fish was scanty and was restricted to the incomplete records of the commercial fishing fleets.

A "random sampling" method, designed to obtain an average, is used in the census work. The Georges Bank is divided into "stations" on which the Albatross III makes its census trawls. When a haul is made, biologists aboard the vessel segregate the fish by species and count and measure them. Scale samples are taken to determine the ages of the fish, and the stomach contents and sex organs of some specimens are examined. To study migratory habits, fish are tagged and released.

Information is collected on the number, size, and kind of fish taken on each station. It is analyzed at the Fish and Wildlife Service fishery laboratory in Woods Hole, Mass. (the Albatross III's home port) by statistical methods similar to those used in the popular public opinion polls.

The Albatross III completed its last cruise on September 11. Now in a Boston shipyard for repair of its propellor mechanism and refrigeration equipment, the vessel is scheduled to sail from Woods Hole, Mass. for its tenth cruise about September 29.

(NOTE TO EDITORS: A photograph of the Albatross III can be obtained from the Division of Information, Fish and Wildlife Service, Washington 25, D. C.)

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