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DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
INFORMATION SERVICE

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

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## PLANES TO RELEASE PLASTIC CLAD POSTCARDS IN GULF OF MEXICO

Several thousand postcards, each sealed in a plastic container, will be dropped into the Gulf of Mexico by United States naval aircraft during 1951 to trace complex gulf currents as well as the distribution and migrations of commercial fishery stocks, including shrimp, the United States Department of the Interior announced today.

The project is sponsored by the Fish and Wildlife Service of the Department, with the cooperation of the Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission, the Texas Game Fish and Oyster Commission, the Department of Oceanography of Texas A & M College, and the Navy Department's Office of Naval Research.

The postcards are expected to drift about in the gulf currents, and to be cast up eventually on beaches, where many of them will be found and returned to the Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission at New Orleans, La. Then they will be routed to scientists who will deduce from the returns the paths which the cards must have followed in the sea.

The postcards, called "drift cards," will carry the following wording, written both in English and in Spanish since many will probably be recovered in Mexico:

"NOTICE TO FINDER: These cards are being used to study the currents of the Gulf of Mexico. Please remove from plastic and fill in blank spaces. Mail every card you find. No postage needed in United States. In return you will be told the time and place of their release. Thank you."

The "red tide" investigations of the Fish and Wildlife Service are also expected to benefit. In these studies, according to Service Director Albert M. Day, it is necessary to determine the pattern of currents along the shore in order to learn the connection between the circulation and the production of the red tide organisms. Since the last violent outbreak of red tide (characterized by a reddish-brown discoloration of sea water caused by a minute free-swimming animal-like organism) plagued the Gulf Coast of Florida in 1946-47 and killed an estimated half billion fish worth several million dollars, the Service has been seeking ways to predict and control similar natural outbreaks in the future.

Following drifting objects is an old method of studying ocean currents, declared Mr. Day. Usually oceanographers have used sealed bottles containing cards for this purpose. However, the course followed by drift bottles is often influenced too greatly by winds, an effect which the use of drift cards is expected to obviate.

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