



## DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

### INFORMATION SERVICE

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

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#### YELLOWFIN TUNA DISCOVERED IN GULF

Important catches of yellowfin tuna were made in the Gulf of Mexico during recent Fish and Wildlife Service exploratory fishing operations, Secretary of the Interior Douglas McKay announced today. This is the first time yellowfin catches of any proportions have been made in Gulf waters.

The existence of this valuable commercial species in the Gulf opens up inestimable possibilities for commercial fishermen, the Secretary declared. Substantially increased income to the fishing industry as a whole, he pointed out, could result.

When the Service's exploratory fishing vessel Oregon returned to its home port, Pascagoula, Miss., last week after a 2,500-mile, 6-week cruise for tuna and shrimp, more than 3,000 pounds of yellowfins were unloaded. Of considerable significance is the fact that the tuna averaged 118 pounds, a good weight for this species. Yellowfins, moreover, were found over a wide expanse of the western Gulf, thus indicating a broad distribution at this season of the year.

Because the mature tuna taken during the cruise were in spawning condition, and many specimens of small yellowfins were collected, fishery biologists aboard the Oregon concluded that the species may be found regularly in western Gulf waters.

The tuna were caught on 14 out of 20 sets made with a modification of Japanese type long-line gear, fished at various depths down to 45 fathoms.

Arrangements are being made to have some of the tuna test-canned at Government laboratories and commercial canneries for quality evaluation.

The catches made during the cruise were intended only to indicate distribution. No attempt to estimate the number of tuna in any one location was made. Plans are now being formulated, however, for a cruise to the better fishing areas for a determination of the quantities in which Gulf yellowfin may be caught.

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