



DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

INFORMATION SERVICE

UNITED STATES FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

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HAWAII MAKES PROGRESS WITH ITS SPORT FISHING PROBLEMS

Smallmouth bass, one of the fine mainland game fish which finally has been established in Hawaii, is one answer to Hawaii's inland fishing problem, according to Assistant Secretary of the Interior Ross L. Leffler.

An additional objective of developing an inshore and reef sport fishery is still to be attained, but necessary preliminary studies are under way.

Because of its distance from other land areas, Hawaii has fishery problems peculiar to itself, Fish and Wildlife Service officials say. There is only one native game fish, the goby, in the inland waters of the islands. Also many of the important game and food fishes which abound in the shallow waters and around the reefs of other Pacific areas are missing from the inshore waters of Hawaii.

Fishery scientists say that the Hawaiian fish fauna is part of the Indo-Pacific fauna which had its origin in the East Indies. Apparently the fish migrated westward into the Indian Ocean and eastward across a great part of the Pacific. The Hawaiian Islands, lying on the fringe of the migration area, did not receive many of the fish common to localities throughout the western and central Pacific. It is presumed that the vast expanse of ocean separating the Hawaiian chain from the rest of the Pacific islands presented too great a barrier for many of those fishes which prefer to spend all or most of their lives in shallow water close to a shore.

The first attempt to introduce smallmouth bass into Hawaii for inland sport fishing was in February 1953 when a quantity of fingerling bass were transported by ship. The facilities on the vessel were inadequate and the entire consignment died en route.

In April of that year a second attempt was made. Seventy-five two-inch fingerlings were air-freighted to the islands. Within a week after the fish arrived more than 50 of them had died of a protozoan disease. Hawaii fish culturists were able to save a bare 20 out of the shipment.

For some time it was problematical whether the 20 fish would survive and propagate, but in the fall of 1956 the Hawaii Division of Fish and Game found that brood stock ranging from 13 to 15 inches in length was thriving in numbers in one of the reservoirs. The division has been making transplants of fingerlings into other inland waters which its biologists have found to be suitable for smallmouth bass.

Rainbow trout, bluegills and other fish popular in the United States already have been established in certain waters of the Hawaiian Islands.

As for the shallow waters of the Hawaiian shore, studies show a scarcity of game fish but large populations of small herbivorous fish which have no value from a recreational standpoint but which could be a forage crop for appropriate game fish.

Efforts to establish a suitable inshore sport fishery have been hampered by many technical difficulties and by the extreme care which must be taken to avoid introduction of poisonous strains which occur in some areas of the Pacific. Special studies on toxic fish are being conducted.

These various projects are among the several hundred which the States and Territories are conducting under the Dingell-Johnson program for the restoration of fish. Funds are secured by a tax on certain sport fishing items and are distributed by the Fish and Wildlife Service on a formula prescribed by law. Similar projects for the restoration of game are conducted under the provisions of the Pittman-Robertson Act.

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