



DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

INFORMATION SERVICE

UNITED STATES FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

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INTERIOR OFFICIALS INSPECT LONG ISLAND OYSTER BEDS

Assistant Secretary of the Interior Ross Leffler and Arnie J. Suomela, Commissioner of Fish and Wildlife, today began a two-day inspection tour of oyster beds in Long Island Sound to obtain first-hand information on starfish depredations which are threatening the oyster industry.

Mr. Leffler and Mr. Suomela, under the guidance of J. Richards Nelson, of Madison, Conn., a member of the American Fisheries Advisory Committee, today will go on the hydraulic dredge Frank M. Flower to see a demonstration of starfish control and some of the results of their depredations in Oyster Bay. A short tour of some of the oyster plant facilities at Greenport, L. I., follows, after which the Department officials are to meet with a group of Long Island oyster planters.

On Wednesday, the party plans to embark from Milford, Conn., on the Bureau of Commercial Fisheries vessel, the Shang Wheeler, for a short trip to view oyster cultivation activities in Long Island Sound in the Milford area, returning to the Bureau's laboratory at Milford around noon. While at the laboratory, Mr. Leffler and Mr. Suomela will review some of the research projects now in progress.

The starfish, usually just another marine animal, has developed again into a threat to the Long Island Sound oyster industry because of a "bumper crop" which has increased the starfish population about 10 times normal size. A similar crisis occurred eight years ago when invading starfish wreaked havoc upon oyster beds up and down the Connecticut coast.

The 1958 starfish invasion, which has ruined from 60 to 90 percent of the oyster crop in some beds, is the latest of a series of problems which have beset the oystermen of the area. The Bureau of Commercial Fisheries and the oyster industry have joined forces to attack the problems.

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