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# DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

## INFORMATION SERVICE

COORDINATOR OF FISHERIES

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Arrangements are now being made between the Office of the Coordinator of Fisheries and the Navy for a full-scale test of echo-sounding devices on surface vessels as a means of locating schools of fish, Coordinator Harold L. Ickes announced today.

The tests will be made in waters off California as soon as certain security regulations can be complied with.

The echo-sounding devices now a part of the equipment of Navy patrol vessels are believed to be the finest in the world. Present devices are regarded as infinitely superior to those in use just before the war.

Tests of echo-sounding devices in locating schools of herring were begun by the British in the North Sea just prior to the war. Similar tests made in waters off British Columbia during the past fall gave promising results. The series of tests planned for the west coast will be the first experiment in American waters of this type.

Echo, or depth-sounders, are now in use on some modern fishing vessels but they are used to locate bottom. Due to the war, certain waters have been closed to fishing, causing the fishing fleets to fish in waters considerably removed from the shore at some points. Echo-sounding equipment has been of great value to vessels engaged in fishing for species known as "bottom fish" by permitting easy exploration of the floor of the ocean, thus protecting nets from rocks and locating undersea valleys where some bottom fish congregate.

With sensitive equipment and trained operators it is believed possible not only to locate schools of fish but to determine the size and direction of the schools. As soon as arrangements have been completed, representatives of the Fish and Wildlife Service will be allowed to make tests aboard the Navy's patrol vessels during their routine operations.

Already experiments have been made in sighting schools of fish from naval patrol blimps. Sighting from the air is, however, effective during only about three hours of the day since at other times reflections make sighting of fish unlikely. This method is also ineffective when the water is rough. On the other hand, echo-sounders can operate 24 hours a day in all weather.

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Chief purpose of the experiments is to aid fishermen in catching pilchards, or California sardines. The pilchard season closed this week and will not be reopened until August 1. It is hoped that by then the experiments with the sounding devices will be far enough along for effective use during the next season.

Traditionally the pilchard, as is the case with some other schooling fishes, is caught during the dark of the moon. This is due to the fact that the fish distrub the minute organisms in surface waters, causing them to phosphoresce and thereby revealing the presence of the fish to the fishermen. Due to this method of locating fish, fishing for such species as the pilchard is conducted only about half of each month. The new method, if it works out, would make it possible to fish in daylight as well as at night. Continuous fishing for pilchards would probably mean a large production as well as better utilization of canning and processing equipment.

The experiments were planned by Elmer Higgins, Fishery Coordination Officer for the West Coast, and will be directed by Dr. Lionel Walford, acting in charge of pilchard investigations for the Fish and Wildlife Service.

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