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# DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

## *INFORMATION SERVICE*

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

For release
TUESDAY P.M., MARCH 28, 1944.

In a search for new and better sources of fish for stocking the thousands of farm fish ponds, the fishery laboratory of the Department of the Interior's Fish and Wildlife Service at Beaufort, N. C., is conducting promising experiments in transferring mullet, a salt water fish, to fresh water ponds.

This is believed to be the first time in this country that the transfer of a substantial quantity of a relatively large salt water fish to fresh water has been accomplished, although it has been done successfully with aquarium fishes.

The mullet, which is found in warm waters throughout the world, is able to thrive in brackish, or slightly salty, water and for centuries has been grown in tidal ponds in Hawaii.

First reports from the Beaufort experiments show an astonishingly high production, which was approximately equivalent to 3,000 pounds per pond acre in two years. The normal production of a well-managed farm fish pond is about 200 pounds per acre per year. A large majority of the farm fish ponds are situated in the south, and it is principally for their benefit that the experiments are being conducted.

The mullet, basis of the Beaufort experiments, is one of the choicest of the food fishes found in Southern waters. The fish are seined out of the sea when quite small and placed in a pond of brackish water which is gradually allowed to become fresh.

The mullet is a forage fish, eating microscopic vegetation, and therefore no subsidiary species for it to feed on need be placed in the ponds in which it is grown as is required when such fish as black bass are used in stocking farm ponds.

To promote the growth of vegetation off which the mullet feed it is necessary to fertilize the water. This was done at Beaufort by keeping a few ducks on the pond.

The experiments are regarded as promising since unlimited quantities of young mullet are available and also because the mullet is a hardy fish and can be transported with less danger of inury than some other species.

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Further tests are now being made at the Federal fish hatchery at Edenton, N. C. Four hundred young mullet were shipped to this hatchery in November and an additional shipment will be made in the spring. The Beaufort laboratory also is repeating its experiment.

It is not yet certain that the mullet will grow in all fresh water areas. It is believed to be probable that they will not breed in fresh water.