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FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

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FWS EXPLORATORY FISHING INVESTIGATIONS HIGH LIGHT ANNUAL REPORT

The search for new sources of fish for food was carried on through the north and middle Atlantic, the Gulf of Mexico, and in the waters of Alaska, Hawaii, and the Pacific Coast during fiscal year 1952, Director Albert M. Day stated in the Fish and Wildlife Service annual report which was made public today.

"Accomplishments in the fields of exploration, development, and utilization of the Nation's commercial fishery resources have been varied and substantial during the past year," Day declared. As an example he cited the promising results that have been obtained from the New England bluefin tuna exploratory fishing survey. Large catches of choice 25- to 50-pound tuna, made with purse-seine gear, have demonstrated good commercial potentialities. Further investigations are being made with long-line gear and gill and trammel nets.

The Service's exploratory-fishing vessel John N. Cobb located seasonal commercial concentrations of shrimp along the Alaskan Coast. A deep-water survey off the Washington Coast located several new fishing areas to increase the catch of Pacific Coast bottom fish. Additional exploratory work on albacore tuna is being carried out to determine the availability of these fish to the trolling fleet.

The vessel Oregon, engaged in shrimp investigations in the Gulf of Mexico, expects to finish its preliminary survey early in 1953. Large schools of blackfin tuna have been observed during the summer months, indicating a potential fishing area in the Gulf.

On the Atlantic Coast a study of electronic aids for locating commercial schools of fish was started aboard the research vessel Bowdoin.

Exploration for little tuna, in co-operation with the industry, in South Atlantic coastal waters has demonstrated that quantities of this species are to be found in that area. Catching techniques, however, need to be given further attention before the resource can be utilized.

Commercial-scale tests of the new method of freezing whole fish at sea were carried out on the research trawler Delaware. Immediately after being caught, the fish were frozen in brine for later thawing, filleting, and refreezing of fillets ashore. Previous laboratory tests show the superiority of fish fillets prepared from whole fish frozen at sea over fillets from fish iced at sea in the normal commercial manner.

Commercial-scale test shipments of salmon trimmings were made from Alaska to the State of Washington. This waste is proving to be an excellent source of protein and vitamins in the diet of hatchery fish.

Home economists of the Service conducted 134 fish-cookery demonstrations for school-lunch staffs and 26 special demonstrations for homemakers, institutional managers, and educational groups. Promotion of fishery products for school lunches was carried on in co-operation with nine States, and in some of these States increases of up to 80 per cent in use of fish have resulted.

A program was started during the year to increase the sale and distribution of frozen fishery products through the 11,000 locker plants in the United States. After a trial run in Ohio, the campaign was extended to other States.

Service personnel engaged in marine fishery management and patrol activities in Alaska during 1951 used eight seagoing patrol vessels, 11 speedboats, about 60 outboard-powered small craft, and 10 airplanes in which they traveled nearly a quarter of a million miles. There were 155 cases of violations of the fishery laws and regulations involving 350 individuals and five companies. The five companies and 248 individuals were found guilty. Fines, forfeitures of bonds, and sales of confiscated fish totaled more than $73,000.

In a 3-year search for methods to control the sea lamprey in the Great Lakes, emphasis has shifted from mechanical to electrical devices. Experiments in 1951 with electrical devices showed that they can divert, trap, or destroy all adult lampreys migrating upstream to spawn. Electrical devices are now being operated in six streams that differ greatly in volume, depth, and quality of water. Feeding experiments have confirmed that the length of the parasitic phases of the lamprey's life cycle in Lake Huron is 1 to 1½ years.

Research to improve fish hatchery production and efficiency was expanded during the year. Experiments indicated that although sulfonamides are effective in controlling several common fish diseases, they are unsuitable for treating others. Antibiotics, such as terramycin and chloromycetin, have cured and prevented some diseases for which no cure was previously known.

Exploratory fishing investigations in the western seas of the central Pacific show that tuna have been found in greater abundance in the zone of converging ocean currents adjacent to the upwelling of nutrient-rich waters (where plankton abound) along the equatorial-current system. The rich tuna-fishing ground south of Hawaii, found in 1951, extends eastward at least 2,000 miles toward Central America.

Biologists, acting as official observers for the High Commissioner of the Trust Territory and for the Fish and Wildlife Service, accompanied Japanese tuna fishing expeditions to tropical waters, to record biological, commercial, and technical features of the exploratory fishing operations.

Work on the construction of new Federal fish hatcheries continued in fiscal year 1952 at McNenny, S. Dak., Millen, Ga., North Attleboro, Mass., and Pendills Creek, Mich.

The addition of a sport fisheries restoration program, complementing the successful wildlife restoration program, through Federal aid for State projects, was a notable step forward in fiscal year 1952 when funds first became available for sport fish research and development activities under the terms of the Dingell-Johnson Act. Funds apportioned to the States and territories for this work from the first year's excise-tax collections amounted to $2,694,911. At the end of its first year this program has already shown promise of making a substantial contribution to the betterment of sport fishing conditions throughout the country.

During the year the law enforcement and game management work of the Service was reorganized so as to put all activities pertaining to waterfowl regulations under the jurisdiction of the Branch of Game Management in order to assure more efficient administrative control than had been possible in the past. The enforcement staff was increased by 21 additional game management agents who were assigned to areas where they were badly needed. With an estimated 20 million Americans hunting, pressure on the Nation's wildlife resources is greater than ever before. Game law violations have risen as the hunting pressure has increased.

Food industries, farm organizations, and Government agencies have united recently in an intensive long-range food-sanitation program. During the year the Service helped many groups seeking to prevent rodent contamination at its principal sources. Numerous projects were begun to reduce rodents on farms, and thousands of copies of educational leaflets in a series "Grain is Food--Keep it Clean" were distributed to farm groups and grain-handling organizations.

The recorded catch of predatory animals included 50,661 coyotes, 1,633 wolves, 13,476 bobcats and lynxes, 714 stock-killing bears, and 197 mountain lions.

A progress report, "Fish and Wildlife Conservation in River Basin Development" was released during the year on the co-ordination of fish and wildlife interests with water-development programs.

In co-operation with the States, the Service continued its wet-land inventory which includes the location of marsh, swamp, and overflow lands, classification with respect to plant ecology, and evaluation to show existing or potential contribution to meet present and future wildlife recreational needs of the Nation. The completed wet-land inventory will have far-reaching practical applications. Principally, it will point out the high-priority wildlife areas--ones where wildlife values should be given top consideration before any drainage to promote some other type of land use is proposed.

International co-operation in conservation continued, with development of new agreements and implementation of existing ones. On May 9, 1952, representatives of the United States, Canada, and Japan signed the International Convention for the High Seas Fisheries of the North Pacific Ocean. On July 4 the United States Senate ratified this agreement.

Under the Point Four Program the Service and the Technical Cooperation Administration of the Department of State continued to give assistance to underdeveloped countries of the world. In 1951 the Service had assigned experts to two countries; in 1952 this was increased to eight countries.

The Cooperative Wildlife Research Unit Program which is carried on jointly by the Service, the Wildlife Management Institute, and the land-grant colleges and State conservation departments, has completed its 17th year. Units are located in 16 States and the Territory of Alaska. During the school year of 1951, 249 wildlife students were graduated from Unit schools. The Federal expenditure of about $129,000 for this co-operative program was matched several times by State and private funds, manpower, and equipment.

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