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INTERIOR'S LAMPREY CONTROL SCIENTISTS WIN CASH AWARDS

Several years' intensive research work by Department of the Interior employees which may permit revival of a major fishing industry in the Great Lakes has resulted in cash awards of $2,000 to two Department scientists.

The awards were made for discovery and implementation of methods for control of the sea lamprey which has ruined the trout fisheries of Lakes Huron and Michigan and has all but ruined that of Lake Superior.

An award of $1,250 was made to Vernon C. Applegate of Ann Arbor, Michigan, formerly in charge of chemical research in sea lamprey control for the Fish and Wildlife Service's Bureau of Commercial Fisheries. The second award, for $750, was given to John H. Howell of the Hammon Bay field station, one of the Bureau's fishery biologists who assisted Dr. Applegate in the research. Both men are assigned to the regional office at Ann Arbor.

Discovery of a chemical that could kill the sea lamprey larvae without damage to desired species of fish was made after testing of approximately 5,000 chemical formulations over a period of several years. Stream testing and development of methods for application of the chemical to streams followed the laboratory work. It was for the discovery and implementation of this chemical control measure that Dr. Applegate and Howell were given awards.

In announcing the awards, Secretary of the Interior Stewart L. Udall praised the work of the fishery scientists and said their research was "a fascinating story of painstaking efforts to save a major industry from destruction."

The Great Lakes invasion of the sea lamprey was first noticed in Lake Michigan in 1937.

In 1946, commercial fishermen took 6,500,000 pounds of trout from Lake Michigan, a catch which was not far from the average annual harvest. In 1955, only 34 pounds of trout were taken from that lake. During the first seven months of 1954, gillnet settings which totalled 1,666 miles of net brought up only 326 trout. In 1955, more than 1,400 miles of net caught only eight trout.

The life cycle of the lamprey is probably nine or more years. Approximately seven of these years are spent in the larval stages in the mud of the streams tributary to the Great Lakes. The discovery of the specific chemical permits an attack on five to seven years of lamprey reproduction at one time. In addition to the larvacide, electrical "fences" are used to kill the adult lamprey on their spawning runs or to guide them into traps from which they are netted and destroyed. Migratory fishes are also trapped at the electrical barriers and are released upstream. The migration periods of many species of fish differ from that of the sea lamprey.

All streams tributary to Lake Superior have been treated with the larvacide and attention is now focussing on Lake Michigan lamprey problems. Also, attention is being given to the biological problems of restocking the Lakes when the lamprey is under sufficient control.

In 1954, the Great Lakes Fisheries Commission was established to direct and coordinate the lamprey control work. Agencies of the United States and Canada and of the States and Provinces bordering the Lakes are active in this task.

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