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★ news release

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

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NEW OCEANOGRAPHIC VESSEL TO BE COMMISSIONED TO PROVIDE RESEARCH AID TO COMMERCIAL FISHERMEN

When the Fish and Wildlife Service's new vessel, Albatross IV, is commissioned in December at Woods Hole, Mass., the event will signal the increasing efforts of the Department of the Interior to help this Nation's commercial fisheries and to accelerate the Department's oceanographic research.

Commissioning of the all-season Albatross IV will be followed by the addition to the research fleet of two large Naval tugs, now being converted into seagoing laboratories, and completion of fisheries research laboratories at La Jolla, Calif., Ann Arbor, Mich., Beaufort, N. C., and Seattle, Wash.

The accelerated research program has been termed by Secretary of the Interior Stewart L. Udall as "long overdue recognition of the value of oceanographic research."

"We have lagged behind other nations that have provided their fishing industry with the latest in equipment and scientific knowledge," he reported to Congress recently. "We are determined to overcome that lead."

Until a few years ago, the United States was second only to Japan in world fish production. Today it has dropped to fifth place--topped by Japan, the U.S.S.R., Red China and Peru.

Albatross IV, the largest, trimmest and best-equipped of the Bureau of Commercial Fisheries' oceanographic vessels, is specifically designed to help change this trend. She is lighter and faster than the original Albatross I, placed in service in 1882--the sea-going lady whose name she perpetuates. She is also incredibly better equipped with modern research devices.

Designed as a base for fisheries and oceanographic research in the northwest Atlantic, the all-season Albatross IV is loaded with equipment to facilitate collection and evaluation of data vital to the Nation's commercial fishing industry.

The 187-foot single-screw stern trawler, first of its kind ever to be built in the United States, is the floating laboratory from which scientists will:

(1) chart the distribution and abundance of groundfish and scallops;

(2) study the environmental factors which cause seasonal and long-term changes in fish stocks;

(3) collect data on the bottom organisms which form the food supply of groundfish;

(4) investigate plankton populations and oceanographic conditions generally.

To facilitate this research, Albatross IV is equipped with a variety of special features. A stern ramp for hauling loaded nets and other gear aboard will permit operations even during heavy weather.

A controllable-pitch propeller at the bow will enable the vessel to "hold station" and maintain a vertical wire angle--one of the greatest problems of oceanographic research vessels. In addition to making it possible to remain stationary at sea, the special propeller increases the ship's maneuverability when docking and undocking.

Twin diesel engines will push the floating laboratory through the sea at 12 knots, over a range of 9,000 miles. Reinforcement against ice and complete air-conditioning make the Albatross IV usable in any navigable waters in the world, in all seasons and under all reasonable conditions of weather and temperature.

Complete research facilities are provided, including wet and dry laboratories, photographic and electronic laboratories, an open deck laboratory for examining fish immediately upon catch, and a variety of electronic equipment such as underwater sonar, underwater television, closed-circuit aboard-ship television and an underwater electromagnetic log.

Scientists will work in this safe and stable laboratory as it ploughs across the surface of the sea and at the same time be able to study ocean life and conditions several hundred feet below them--relayed to their viewing screens from a cable-suspended underwater television camera.

Comfortable quarters and mess space are provided for a maximum crew of 22, in addition to 16 scientific personnel. Facilities are laid out in such a manner that the crew and the scientists can carry out their separate functions with a minimum of confusion. Laboratory spaces have been arranged to provide good communication between them and with the rest of the ship.

Albatross IV will carry on a proud tradition in the history of U.S. fishery research . . . a tradition that dates back to 1882 when the Albatross I was commissioned.

The first Albatross was a 234-foot, twin-screw iron steamer, whose career extended to 1921 and took in both coasts of the United States, Alaska, South and Central America, the Galapagos Islands, Hawaii, Japan, the South Pacific and the Philippines.

Albatross II, a 148-foot former Navy tug, operated from 1926 to 1932, her main research efforts concentrated on the mackeral and haddock populations.

Albatross III was acquired from the General Seafoods Corporation in 1939 for one dollar. Before she could be equipped for research, World War II began and she went to war. Returned to the Fish and Wildlife Service in 1944, she was fitted out as a research vessel and commissioned in 1948.

Among the accomplishments of Albatross III were the overall census of commercial fish on the New England banks, experiments on refrigeration of fish at sea, development of "savings" gear (nets with mesh sized to allow escape of unmarketable young), determining effects of waste-acid disposal off New York and location and charting of wrecks and other obstacles destructive to New England commercial fishermen's gear. She was deactivated in 1959, because of age and the high cost of maintenance.

Albatross IV, designed by Dwight S. Simpson & Associates of Boston and built by Southern Shipbuilding Corporation of Slidell, La., differs from her predecessors in another respect--her keel was never "laid." Albatross IV began her life upside down. Her keel was raised rather than laid, more in the manner of installing the ridge pole of a house.

It took three massive floating cranes to turn the ship right side up--a maneuver performed on November 4, 1961, before an admiring throng and providing the vessel with a dramatic construction milestone to compensate for the lack of a keel-laying ceremony.

On April 19, 1962, Albatross IV was launched into the Bayou Bonfouca--a bright sunny day and a perfect launch. The ship was completed in October.

New dock facilities built by the Bureau of Commercial Fisheries at its Biological Research Laboratory at Woods Hole, Mass., will constitute the home port of Albatross IV.

The first scheduled assignment for the newly commissioned vessel is on the George's bank off Cape Cod.

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