



# DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

## INFORMATION SERVICE

### OFFICE OF THE COORDINATOR OF FISHERIES

For Immediate Release  
Wednesday, May 19, 1943 W

OWI-1871

The giant king crab of the Bering Sea which before the war supplied a substantial amount of the canned crab which the Japanese sold to the United States will be canned commercially by Americans this year for the first time, Harold L. Ickes, Coordinator of Fisheries, said today.

Prior to the war the Japanese were taking the king crab in sight of American territory, canning it on floating canneries, and shipping it to the United States for sale. In one pre-war year alone we imported 10,720,000 pounds of crab-meat valued at \$4,582,000 from Japan and 95 per cent of our canned crab came from this source.

Following reports that the Japanese were fishing in the Bering Sea, which lies north of the Aleutian Islands and the Alaska Peninsula, President Roosevelt requested the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service of the Department of the Interior to make a thorough investigation of the Alaska crab situation and Congress provided special funds for this research. The findings are now available to American fishing interests and it is on the basis of this report that commercial operations will begin this summer.

The king crab occurs all the way down to the southern tip of Alaska but it is much more prevalent in the waters farther north. The crab, compared to the familiar ones of the United States, is enormous in size. The average male large enough for canning weighs about five pounds but the Service's investigation staff caught many larger ones. The largest caught weighed over 22 pounds and, with legs outstretched, measured some 50 inches across. The crabs yield between 20 and 35 percent of live weight in meat. It takes from six to twenty crabs to fill a case of 48 half-pound cans.

Some previous efforts have been made to establish a crab canning industry in Alaska but these have been generally small and have failed due to lack of capital for expensive exploratory work or due to inexperience in packing the product.

One of the important jobs of the investigation was to work out proper and efficient canning methods and this has now been done. The quality of the canned product now possible is not surpassed by crab meat produced anywhere in the world.

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Not only did the expedition find large quantities of king crabs; other crabs and fish were taken in quantities which indicate phenomenal resources. Great numbers of dungeness and tanner crabs were caught as well as many varieties of the flat fish known as flounders or "sole" and gray cod, pollock, and halibut.

The Japanese began to can crab in the 1890's but this product was of little commercial importance until the floating cannery, developed under government subsidy, made possible more widespread operations. Before the attack on Pearl Harbor the export of canned crab to America was growing substantially.

It is believed that an Alaskan crab fishery can be operated on a successful commercial basis after the war and that it will effectively supplement the already well-established salmon industry.