



DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

INFORMATION SERVICE

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

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The average price of sponges sold on the Tarpon Springs, Florida, Exchange in 1943 was \$13.24 a pound, believed to be the highest price for which sponges have ever sold, according to the Fish and Wildlife Service of the Department of the Interior.

Total value of sponges sold at the exchange was \$2,305,078, a record figure, although the number of sponges sold reached a new low.

Sponges are sold by the bunch, the bunches varying from a pound and a half to about ten pounds. Last year 41,773 such bunches were sold; the total weight being about 175,000 pounds.

In 1940 the average price per pound of the sponges sold on the Tarpon Springs Exchange was \$3.65. That year 56,491 bunches weighing a total of about 232,000 pounds were sold.

Current U. S. sponge production is low due to a blight which began in 1939 and destroyed vast beds of the animals and because of the effect of war conditions on the fishery.

While the sponge is most familiar for its household uses, industrial uses are of considerably greater importance. Thought by many to be of vegetable origin, the sponge as marketed is the skeleton of one of the most primitive of animals.