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EXPLORATORY FISHING VESSEL--WESTERN EXPLORER SAILS FOR NEW ENGLAND TUNA SURVEY

The Fish and Wildlife Service exploratory fishing vessel, Western Explorer, sailed from Boston, Mass., June 18, on the start of a four-month bluefin tuna survey in New England waters, Secretary of the Interior Oscar L. Chapman announced today.

The Explorer will search for untapped resources of bluefin tuna in waters principally off the shores of Maine and Massachusetts. Primary objectives of the cruise are to locate commercial concentrations of bluefin tuna, determine their pattern of abundance, direction of migration and potential quantities for commercial use. On their results will hinge the development of an entirely new fishery in this region.

The 85-foot, Pacific Coast type vessel carries an 11-man crew. It is fully equipped with a 28,000 pound purse seine which is 2,100 feet in length. The seine will be used to take schools of bluefin tuna in the 75-150 pound class, which is the best size for canning.

The fishing industry, especially the Maine sardine canners, is watching the bluefin project with unusually keen interest. As the sardine season usually ends in the fall, tuna canning the remainder of the year would tend to even employment levels. The bluefin could be put into freezers until the winter lag arrives, then canned with small adaptation of present canning equipment.

The entire bluefin tuna investigation is under the direction of John J. Murray, fishery engineer with the Branch of Commercial Fisheries, Fish and Wildlife Service.

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