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FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

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FISH CATCH IN 1954 SHOWS INCREASE

Commercial fishermen in the United States and Alaska made a total catch of about 4,700,000,000 pounds of fish and shellfish during 1954, Secretary of the Interior Douglas McKay revealed today.

The 1953 catch of 4,450,000,000 pounds was thus exceeded by 250,000,000 pounds, or about six percent, according to statistics compiled by the Fish and Wildlife Service.

Food fish showed more spectacular gains in 1954 than the species used for fish meals and fish oils, in contrast to the reverse situation in 1953. Food-fish items showing large increases were tuna, sardines, Maine herring, haddock, and ocean perch.

San Pedro, Calif., led the food-fish ports with a 1954 catch of about 381,000,000 pounds. Gloucester, Mass., was second with 221,000,000 pounds, followed by Boston, Mass., with 151,000,000 pounds, San Diego, Calif., with 130,000,000 pounds, and New Bedford, Mass., with 72,000,000 pounds.

From the standpoint of value, San Pedro again led all other food-fish ports with landings worth \$37,400,000 to the fishermen. San Diego's catch was valued at \$20,950,000, while the Massachusetts landings in Boston, New Bedford, and Gloucester were worth \$11,275,000, \$9,400,000, and \$7,875,000 respectively.

The chief meal-and-oil species, menhaden, set a new record for the fourth consecutive year with total 1954 landings of 1,750,000,000 pounds.

Although the catch of albacore tuna off Washington and Oregon was an almost complete failure, the national catch of all tuna species amounted to about 322,000,000 pounds as compared with 305,000,000 pounds in 1953.

Pacific sardines, which for many years yielded annual catches of more than a billion pounds but then virtually disappeared as a commercial item, staged a comeback in 1954 with landings totaling 132,000,000 pounds as against less than 10,000,000 pounds in the previous year.

Maine showed a 1954 catch of about 120,000,000 pounds of herring--used chiefly in the canning of sardines--as compared with 102,000,000 pounds in the previous year. Landings of haddock in Maine and Massachusetts came to approximately 156,000,000 pounds for a gain of 16,000,000 pounds over 1953. Ocean perch landed in these two States amounted to about 179,000,000 pounds, as against 154,000,000 pounds in 1953.

The total shrimp catch for 1954 came to about 235,000,000 pounds, roughly the same as for 1953. In recent years the catch of this species has been valued at more than \$50,000,000 annually, making shrimp the most valuable item taken by domestic fishermen.

Salmon showed an increase of about 7,000,000 pounds, with landings amounting to 320,000,000 pounds as compared with 313,000,000 pounds in 1953. The increase was due chiefly to outstanding catches of sockeye salmon from the Pacific Northwest's Fraser River and chum salmon in southeastern Alaska waters. The large catches of these items more than compensated for the normal absence of pink salmon from Puget Sound which occurs during even-numbered years.

Pacific Coast halibut landed by United States and Canadian fishermen amounted to about 70,000,000 pounds--an all-time record--as compared with 60,000,000 pounds in 1953. Steady increases during the last 30 years have resulted from conservation efforts by the Pacific Halibut Commission, established by the United States and Canada in 1924.

Decreases were recorded for anchovies and mackerels in California. Due mainly to lack of an export market, the anchovy catch dropped from 85,000,000 pounds in 1953 to about 37,000,000 pounds in 1954. A scarcity of Pacific and Jack mackerel resulted in a decline in landings of these species from 63,000,000 pounds in 1953 to about 35,000,000 pounds in 1954.

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