

Few Know History Of Monterey Bay Fishing

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 By JOHN McNICHOLAS
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Commercial fishing is one of the oldest industries in the Monterey Bay area, but few of the present-day residents know much about it.

In an attempt to remedy the situation, the fifth lecture in Save Our Shores' six-part Celebration of the Coast forum concentrated on the fish, how they are caught and the cultures which have depended on them for a living.

Ed Melvin, area marine adviser for the California Sea Grant program, Dr. Michael Orbach, associate director of the Center for Coastal Marine Studies at Long Marine Lab and Mel Wickliffe, a commercial fisherman, shared their combined knowledge with some 55 people who braved the weather to come to the Nelson Center Tuesday night.

The Chinese were among the first ethnic groups to exploit the bay during the last century, according to Orbach. Various actions, both legal and vigilante, drove them out of the industry, but the Portuguese and Italians remained to dominate fishing on Monterey Bay, he said.

Indochinese refugees are becoming a part of this structure, he continued. Their different culture and fishing methods have caused some friction in Moss Landing and Monterey, and the deaths of tens of thousands of seabirds in their gill nets set for halibut prompted Sen. Henry Mello from Watsonville to sponsor a bill banning entangling nets in less than 10 fathoms of water. The bill is expected to pass before June.

Indochinese are also working on boats owned by Italians and Portuguese, taking the place of the fourth or fifth generation of those families who have moved away from fishing, according to Orbach.

Melvin said that in 1979, the last year for which figures are available, albacore tuna comprised 35 percent of the catch on the bay. Squid made up 21.3 percent, salmon 16.6 percent, sablefish 9.8 percent, rockfish 9.8 percent, sole and other flatfish, 6.8 percent, and "other" 4.2 percent.

Some \$3.7 million was paid to fishermen in Monterey that year; \$4.6 million in Moss Landing, and \$400,000 in Santa Cruz.

He described albacore as "the cadillac of tunas" because its light meat is highly prized.

Squid, the second most sought-after species, is fast becoming popular, and may be used as a fast-food-staple in the near future. A squid-cleaning machine developed at UC Davis may help help that theory along.

At present, most squid, which brings \$200 a ton, is shipped out of the country to Spain, the Philippines and a small amount goes to Japan.

Orbach said fishermen's mobility and complex distribution systems now make all fishing grounds, political and economic systems interconnected. A glut on the market of one kind of fish in Japan can make it impossible for a Moss Landing fisherman to feed his family, he said.

Wickliffe described some of the fishing methods used on the bay, including lampara nets which were used by the first Italian fishermen on the bay and still are being used. The wide "wings" of the nets are pulled together after the net is set, driving fish toward the smaller-meshed center, or bag. Hydraulics now do the work that once employed 13 men per boat.

He described setting traps for black cod at the end of 3 1/4 miles of line. If a fisherman has 60 "pots" per boat, he said, his day might start at 1 a.m. and continue until late

into the night pulling, emptying and resetting the traps. Salmon are caught on a hook and line from trolling boats, as are albacore, he said, which "gets close to a fun way of fishing."

Drag nets, a net closed except for a "door" at one end, are pulled along the bottom, and he likened their effect to that of a bulldozer cutting a swath through a forest.

The 200 mile fishing limit was established to keep foreign boats from using this equipment in U.S. waters, he said, but American boats now are equipped with this highly efficient "but maybe a little questionable" equipment.

A panel discussion followed the lecture, and one topic was offshore oil exploration and drilling.

Orbach said the lack of long-term studies made the

effect of offshore rigs difficult to assess, but reports seem to show that fish populations actually increase around the rigs.

"The big problem is risk analysis," Orbach said. "They can't show that many detrimental effects from offshore oil drilling. A lot of it hinges on the risk of a really big problem occurring. Day to day, it is not that big of a problem."

The next and last lecture in the series is titled "Discussion on Coastal Protection." County Supervisor Robley Levy, Capitola Councilman Robert Garcia and Professor Jackson Davis, an expert from UCSC on nuclear waste disposal, will speak.

The lecture is April 6 at 7:30 p.m. in the Nelson Center.



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Brown Cow Flavored Yogurt qts. (maple, vanilla) 2.41	1.99
Pure Pioneer Maple Syrup 16 oz. reg. 2.72/2.25, 29 oz. reg. 4.19	3.39
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Callitoga Water 6 packs, 2.22	1.59
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Crystal Springs Water 1 Gal. in plastic jug, 74¢	59¢
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