

Census of marine life shows diversity but also declines

(AP) — A massive census of all the fish and other marine life in the world's oceans has reached the halfway point with new evidence of the rich diversity under the sea along with warnings about the alarming decline of many species.

The 10-year international project that began in 2000 has already tracked the migration of tuna from Japan to California and back, along with the movement of endangered British Columbia salmon with implanted computer chips.

"We're sending animals out with the equivalent of cell phones and they're telling us where they are," said Ron O'Dor, senior scientist for the Census of Marine Life.

"What those animals are sending back is a picture that shows what seems like a blue uniform ocean to us on the surface is really very complicated," O'Dor said.

The data from the tracking program could help researchers and fishery managers conserve stocks of many species of large fish that have declined by about 90 percent over the last 50

years, O'Dor said.

"This gives us an idea about where fish go, the rate at which they migrate, and tells us where these animals live and where they die so we can understand quantitatively what happens to fish stocks so we can manage them better," he said.

Dave Fluharty, a marine policy analyst at the University of Washington, said the data likely will change international treaties on fishing rights as researchers find out how fish are distributed in the ocean.

"It's going to be easier to detect international violations, and I think that's going to change a lot of what we do over the next 10 to 20 years," Fluharty said.

Jane Lubchenco, an Oregon State University marine biologist and president of the International Council for Science, said the census will help raise awareness about the urgent need for international cooperation to preserve marine life.

"I think there's definitely increasing recognition that we can no longer think about the ocean as infinitely vast, infinitely bountiful and infinitely resilient,"

Lubchenco said. "There are problems everywhere."

But she said she was encouraged by the amount of biological diversity the census has found in the first five years.

"The expectation was there would be new discoveries," Lubchenco said. "What's blown us away is how much there is out there that we didn't know about before. It's big stuff, it's little tiny stuff that's been coming in from this project. It's been pretty sobering."

Other highlights at the midway point of the census include the discovery of tiny carnivorous sponges found in the Southern Ocean abyss, an underwater dead zone at the epicenter of the 2004 Indonesian tsunami and the first life recorded at smoking seafloor vents south of the equator in the Atlantic.

The census also is studying polar regions and the deepest reaches of the oceans. Scientists recently used the German icebreaker Polarstern to tow an underwater sled over the Southern Ocean floor near Antarctica to photograph life at the bottom.

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Berries: bill has strong support

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The Mt. Hood bill would seem to have a good chance of passing.

The proposed legislation has bi-partisan sponsorship. Republican Walden comes from the rural conservative side of the state, and Democrat Blumenauer represents the urban liberal side.

Despite past clashes over environmental issues, the two have come together on the Mt. Hood bill.

The proposed bill would put 75,000 acres of wilderness off-limits to logging on the Mount Hood National Forest, without reducing the area where logging can occur.

Besides the provision regarding traditional foods, the proposal would also guide ski resort development, reduce forest fire danger, and enhance outdoor recreation.

Lawsuit: 13 alleged violations

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The lawsuit and the \$24 million in damages were an effort "to get them to pay attention," Glass said.

The U.S. attorney's office declined to prosecute any officials at Chemawa, saying there was no evidence of a crime.

But the lawsuit cites 13 alleged violations by school officials, including torture, conspiracy, negligence and violation of the girl's civil rights.

The complaint states that Sohappay was dragged from her dormitory bed at the school "while being mocked and laughed at by staff," and dumped into the holding cell, "where she was left unattended, until discovered after her death, with bruising, blood and trauma evident."

Earl Devaney, the Interior Department's inspector general, told the Senate Finance Committee last year the school and BIA administrators were warned

about the risks to students in holding cells years before the Sohappay death.

He issued a report in September 2004 that called Indian prisons a "national disgrace," and cited the teenager's death, among others. It resulted in a BIA order banning the Warm Springs tribe from holding juveniles at its detention facilities.

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