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F142

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Trip Report

Background

Personnel of the Honolulu Laboratory (HL) have attended the annual Hawaiian International Billfish Tournament (HIBT) for the past 13 years and have collected data related to various aspects of the biology of billfishes, of blue marlin primarily. They have also presented workshops, seminars, demonstrations, and exhibits on marine research for public information and education. The scientific and educational activities of HL at the HIBT over the years have, I believe, exerted an influence in the thinking of the sponsoring group. The group has become very conscious of science and education. It has, in fact, recently restructured its organization...accompanied by a name change to Hawaiian International Billfish Association (HIBA)...to support scientific endeavors related to recreational fishing. Funding of research projects and scholarships are examples of the type of support under consideration by the HIBA.

This trip on which I am reporting turned out to be the first support grant of HIBA. Mr. Richard Boone of movie and television fame initially suggested that HIBA send me to the Bay of Islands Billfish Tournament (BOIT). It is my understanding that he in fact financed my trip by a contribution to HIBA for that purpose. Eventually HIBA decided that the trip would ^{include} BOIT in New Zealand and the Mini Concours International du Haura Club in Tahiti.

The purpose for my attendance at these tournaments was to promote interest in participating in research on recreational fisheries among fishery scientists, especially those associated with the government.

All my travel arrangements were made by Mr. Peter Fithian, Chairman of HIBA. He organized and led a group of sports fishermen from Hawaii to compete in both tournaments. I traveled with this group which numbered 12 including Mr. Fithian and myself.

Itinerary

- March 3 - Departed Honolulu.
- 4 - Arrived Auckland (1 day lost in crossing date line).

- March 5-7 - In Wellington, conferred with various scientists.
 8-15 - In Russell, attended Bay of Islands Billfish Tournament.
 15 - Departed Russell.
 14 - Arrived Papeete (1 day gained crossing date line)
 15-18 - In Papeete, attended Mini Concours International du Haura Club.
 18 - Departed Papeete.
 19 - Arrived Honolulu.

Activities

I engaged in two types of activities to accomplish my purpose. One was meeting and conferring with fishery scientists. The other was examining the catch and monitoring the activities of the tournaments.

In New Zealand I went to the Capitol, Wellington, to confer with biologists of the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries (MAF). My visit there was well managed by Mr. Bert Brun, Chief Fisheries Management Officer, who took on the responsibility of making arrangements for me to meet with people in related work.

I conferred with B. T. Cunningham, who is Director of the Management Division of MAF, and B. Brun on various aspects of research in recreational fisheries. I left with the distinct impression that the Management Division would be actively doing research in recreational fisheries in the near future. Slightly over a week later when Mr. Brun appeared at BOIT he proposed a cooperative venture of creating and maintaining a recreational fisheries data center for the Pacific Ocean. The proposal is an indication that the New Zealand Government is ready to get involved far beyond the local level.

The possibilities of using the PEACESAT project as a means of communicating data in the event of a cooperative program was pursued with Doug Gordon of MAF and PEACESAT Terminal Manager Tony Hanley of Wellington Polytechnic.

I had a lengthy discussion with Don York on the acoustolure. As the originator of the device he was unhappy at the shabby product that was manufactured and sold commercially by a company in New Zealand. The commercial item was so bad that some that York had tested had outputs that could not be detected beyond a few meters. He urged experimenting on our own, that is obtaining some high quality equipment and recording the sounds of a school of feeding skipjack tuna for later playback as an attractant. Although the basic idea appears sensible enough some of the figures he mentioned, e.g., a range of 3 miles, are not compatible with present acoustic equations. Mr. York took me on a field trip outside

of the Bay of Wellington to demonstrate the acoustolure but the water was too choppy to get to the area of the fish schools. He demonstrated convincingly, however, that the acoustolure attracted and held the dolphin, Delphinus delphinus.

Don York, furthermore, presented papers and charts on the hydrographic conditions of the Bay of Islands area to me to provide me with background material for BOIT.

Other fisheries personnel I had discussions with in Wellington were: David Eggleston, Len Tong, Don Coombs, and Gavin James of the Research Division of MAF; and John Moreland of the Wellington Museum.

In Tahiti my scientific conversations were with Mr. Philippe Sis, a dynamic, young biologist with the Tahitian Government. He expressed a definite interest in carrying on research on large game fishes with or without the support of his government.

At both tournaments all the fish caught were measured and examined. Data recorded were: species, length, weight, sex, stage of maturity, the number of various food items found in the stomachs, and observations of anything noteworthy about the specimens. The catch at BOIT consisted of two striped marlin, one blue marlin, five mako shark, and one hammer-head shark. In Tahiti five blue marlin and four yellowfin tuna were caught.

In the New Zealand tournament radio reports from each of the 22 competing teams were scheduled for three times daily - 10 a.m., noon, and 3 p.m. Team identity, fishing area, number of strikes, hookups, and fish boated were reported. Data from all radio reports were recorded. In Tahiti government regulations forbade radio reporting.

In New Zealand two of the five scheduled fishing days were cancelled because of high winds. As mentioned earlier 22 teams competed in this tournament. The tournament in Tahiti was more modest; 10 teams fished for 2 days.

I was joined on various days by Lew Ritchie, Peter Saul, Kim Walsh, and Bert Brun, all of MAF, at BOIT and by Philippe Sis in Tahiti. They observed my activities and assisted in making and recording observations.

Miscellaneous

Tournament officials John Chibnall of New Zealand and Leo Langomaxino of Tahiti supported me fully. They supplied whatever I requested in equipment and services to get the job done.

While at BOIT I had the opportunity to inspect the records of the Bay of Islands Swordfish Club which date back to 1926. The records are of a quality and quantity that, in my opinion, they can be processed for information, e.g., growth rate of the striped marlin. There are probably other clubs throughout the Pacific Ocean with similar types of records.

One of the obvious shortcomings of the records of the Bay of Islands Swordfish Club...and this would probably be true of the records of other clubs...from a fishery biologist's point of view was the lack of data on fishing effort. I think that the climate is such that with the proper approach and presentation a logbook system to get these data recorded would be universally accepted.

Finally, although my enjoying the trip was not one of the purposes of the trip, I did that, too.

cc: Office of International Fisheries, F4