

*The kingdom of heaven is like unto a net, that was cast into the sea, and gathered of every kind: which, when it was full, they drew to shore and sat down, and gathered the good into vessels, but cast the bad away. So it shall be at the end of the world.*

*Matthew 13: 47-49*



## Shrimp Booms into Most Valuable Fishery

By WILLIAM A. ELLISON JR.

The shrimping industry is of major importance in this state. In 1953 over 14½ million pounds were landed for which the fishermen received more than three and a half million dollars. This amount was over half the total paid fishermen for all edible products.

The catch in 1953 exceeded the previous high (1945) by roughly four million pounds. The total catch in 1945 was valued at less than a million dollars.

Shrimp is the most bountiful edible sea crop in the southern United States and catches in quantity are landed from North Carolina to Mexico.

While shrimp appear north of the Carolinas, there is no commercial fishery for them of any consequence. From very small beginnings this industry has become a major factor in the economy of the southern seaboard. Even in the late twenties, less than thirty years ago, there was nothing to forecast its present widespread development or the important place which shrimp has taken in the American diet.

It is one of the phenomenal developments of the fishing industry; and only ocean perch fillets, a development of the thirties and fish sticks, now less than four years old, offer any parallel to such universal acceptance.

In the late twenties the total value of the shrimp crop for the nation was only about four and one-half million dollars.

This production was centered around the Gulf states. North Carolina's production was about one million pounds and the price to the fisherman about 3 cents per pound (this summer the price to the fisherman at one time was 17 cents).

Outside the Beaufort-Morehead and Southport areas, shrimp were not considered an edible commodity and the large majority of North Carolinians had never heard of one, or if they had, they looked upon them as good bait for hook and line fishing.

**Big Business**  
In 1932, the last year for published fisheries statistics, the United States landings were 224 million pounds valued at 55 million dollars. The demand for shrimp seems to have no end, for even this enormous amount is not enough to satisfy the American shrimp-eating public.

In 1952 over 38 million pounds were imported, most of which came from Mexico. It is estimated that citizens of the United States consumed well over 260 million pounds in 1952.

These shrimp are marketed fresh, frozen, breaded and canned. The consumer pack has had wide acceptance, and with new methods of preparation, new merchandising techniques, a more standardized product and improved quality controls, shrimp are likely to maintain their position as one of the most esteemed food commodities.

In marketing methods North lags behind. Virtually all of our shrimp is shipped out fresh, but times are changing. Whereas the state had the principal markets of the nation as outlets a few years ago, only one important market is open today for any large quantity of fresh shrimp.

North Carolina's producers and dealers are square up against the fact that they may have to freeze at home or suffer a severe setback in the years to come—freeze at home and perhaps manufacture consumer packaged products. It seems that the writing is on the wall for him who will read.

As in the United States at large the industry in North Carolina was of somewhat slow growth. It actually amounted to little, and was mostly of local significance until the thirties when the abundance of shrimp in the sounds was discovered.

Prior to that time it had been largely an ocean fishery, and there were not many boats which could dependably operate in the open sea. With the increasing popularity of shrimp, however, and the opening of the sounds to shrimping, there has been a steady and well-defined development of the fishery into a large industry; and today it forms the backbone of the fisheries of the Pamlico Sound and the Southport areas.

**Booms Other Business**  
It has encouraged the construction of larger and heavier vessels which are now practically dependent upon the fishery. It has increased shore employment tremendously, and any threat to the shrimping industry would strike at the very vitals of the fishing business of the state.

While there are no data to afford proof, it is conservative to say that over half the fishermen

who seek an edible product derive the principal share of their annual income from shrimping operations which they engage in between June 1 and Oct. 1.

It is important to them that the fish dealers improve their operations to gain more efficiency and to keep a weather eye peeled for merchandising changes which might adversely affect them.

There are some who fear that the intensive fishery for shrimp will finally exterminate this valuable asset. There are no facts to give foundation to this alarm, for shrimp is an annual crop, and those taken in our sounds are less than one year old. The seed for this harvest were sowed in the open ocean months before.

The stock which is fished is not permanently in residence in the sounds but is transitory and actuality spends only a few months in the inland waters; and most of these months are spent up the brackish rivers and creeks where there is no fishery.

A brief comment of the life cycle of the shrimp is necessary for a better understanding of the

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## State's Fish Catch Totals Now Published Each Month

Another progressive step was made in the North Carolina fishing industry this summer when the first bulletin was published giving figures on the catches landed at state fishing ports.

The statistics are published by the Fish and Wildlife Service and are gathered by F&W personnel in cooperation with the State Department of Conservation and Development and fish dealers.

Charles Stewart, fishery marketing specialist, whose headquarters are the Fish and Wildlife lab, Beaufort, said that cooperation in reporting the landings has been fine.

"It couldn't be better," he commented enthusiastically. "During the past week when many of the fish houses were wrecked or partially so (because of hurricanes) men would stand in the midst of the wreckage and willingly give me the information."

When the program was started earlier this year it was feared that dealers would be reluctant to furnish the government with catch statistics.

**Good Percentage**  
But such has not been the case. Mr. Stewart estimates that his reports record 95 per cent of the total fish production for June, July and August.

In February, before the program was started, approximately 100 fishermen attended a meeting at the commercial fisheries building in Morehead City.

It was explained then that without statistics no logical recommendations can be made on conservation measures, fishermen cannot be given the opportunity — through intelligent laws — to increase their catches, and there is no way to supply buyers with information on the

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## An October Dawn

Early one morning, Jerry Schumacher, NEWS-TIMES photographer went across Bogue Sound from Morehead City to Bogue Banks where a beach crew had set its net.

As the night-time mists started to rise, and the sun sought an opening in the October sky, Mr. Schumacher took the above picture. This unique method of taking fish comes into fashion here in the fall when the north winds blow and fish hug the shore.

The technique, centuries old, was well known on the Sea of Galilee.

## Hurricanes Cut Oyster Yield

Present estimates indicate that North Carolina's oyster crop this year will be down about a third as a result of Hurricanes Connie, Diane and Ione.

Dr. A. F. Chestnut, shellfish specialist, Institute of Fisheries Research, says, "In some places the beds look bad, in others they're all right." Last year's production was cut by Hazel and as a result of the past month's storm damage, the state's oyster crop doesn't look very promising for the next few years.

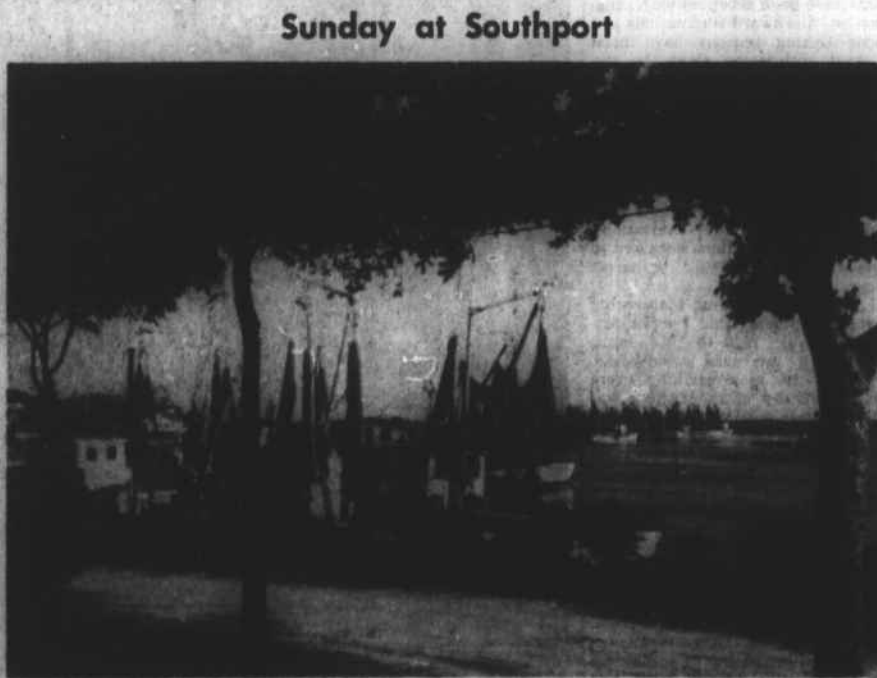
Oysters in inland rivers were killed by the deluge of fresh water and those near shoals were silted over and buried in mud.

Damage to the oyster beds in Newport River alone is estimated at \$30,000. About 30 persons depended on about a thousand dollars a year income from oyster beds in the river. Considering that it will be two or three years before those beds are back in production, the loss exceeds \$30,000.

In the Neuse River all the oysters were killed on the lumps around Oriental. It had been hoped that those beds would escape damage and help bolster the state's production.

Dr. Chestnut estimates that 65 to 75 per cent of the oysters in exposed areas are damaged and 14 to 20 per cent in the coves and protected areas are damaged. The oysters which survived the storms look good, he added.

The oyster season opened Oct. 1 and a few boats have been working in Hyde County.



The shrimp fleet, with trawls "at ease," lies at dock in Southport.

## Men Earn Living By Bringing Ashore Sea-Grown Crops

It's a fraternity — and all you have to do to belong to it is fish for a living.

Trout, spot, mullet, menhaden, flounder, shad, striped bass, croaker, herring, oysters, shrimp, spanish mackerel, crabs, scallops, turtles — take your pick. All these and more swim in North Carolina waters, but catching them is the problem.

More is needed to be a successful fisherman than owning a boat and a net. Fishermen of the sound and inlet-studded North Carolina coast must know how to translate the whispers or howls of the wind, read legends on the surface of the water and they must have a sincere and abiding faith.

Faith, above all, is necessary, for fishing is not a sure and secure business. In the lean seasons, only faith (and credit at the grocer's) keeps the fisherman going.

A close bond with nature and the Lord is his — for crops of fish cannot be regulated in Washington and the safety of the fisherman often rests in the hands of the Almighty.

### 8,000 Employed

In spite of the risk involved, almost eight thousand persons along the coast are directly engaged in or affiliated with the fishing industry.

The amount of money paid out annually to the fishermen as they land their catches at the docks approaches eight million dollars.

The latest published figures place North Carolina's total pounds landed in one year at 240,192,000. That includes menhaden, shellfish and finfish. About 31¼ million pounds were edible fish, such as flounder and trout.

The highest priced fish of that type, caught in large quantities in Tar Heel waters are shad, striped bass, spotted trout, flounder and spanish mackerel. The lowest-priced is the herring which constitutes 28 per cent of the total edible fish taken.

### Menhaden — Biggest in Pounds

In total pounds landed, the menhaden outranks all other kinds of fish, but the value is less. For example, fisheries statistics for 1952 (latest published by the United States Fish and Wildlife Service) show an annual menhaden catch of 191 million pounds for which fishermen received \$1,627,000.

The shrimp catch, close to nine million pounds in the same year, brought the fishermen almost two million, considerably more than the menhaden fishermen received for their fabulous catch.

The crab and shrimp catches, according to 1953 data yet to be published, show a sizeable increase while North Carolina's oyster and scallop fisheries dropped slightly.

### Shellfish Value High

Total shellfish catch in the state exceeds 18 million pounds annually. The shellfish (shrimp, oysters, clams, crabs, scallops, turtles) comprise about 36 per cent of the catch, but account for 45 per cent of the dollar value.

The shellfish catches bring to Tar Heel fishermen well over three million dollars annually, almost equal in value to edible finfish.

The edible seafood products landed mean more than six and a half million dollars to North Carolina fishermen each year, with the menhaden making up the balance of the total income.

Slightly more than a thousand men are regularly employed in menhaden fishing and well over 5,000 are regularly employed on boats or ashore in fishing operations. An additional 2,000 earn less than 50 per cent of their livelihood through fishing.

It's a wonderful fraternity to belong to — but most people have to be born in it. Other pages which follow this will give you a glimpse of the fishing industry and the men who supply the market with luscious seafood from North Carolina waters.

## C&GS Invests \$140,000 In Wreck Survey of Coast

The Coast and Geodetic Survey has invested \$140,000 in surveying wrecks along the North Carolina coast. This seven-month project will end Oct. 20 as the three survey vessels complete work in the Cape Fear area. They started there Thursday.

Completed last week was the survey of the Hatteras to Swansboro coastal area.

The project, which began April 18, involves checking on wrecks known to be in North Carolina waters and determining the depth of water over them.

Water depth less than 40 feet over any wreck is reported and the C&GS relays the information to the Coast Guard. The Coast Guard then places markers or buoys at the wreck. The wrecks are also indicated on charts and the number of feet of water clearance marked.

**Shoran Used**  
While the survey party was working the area from Hatteras to Swansboro, their shoran towers were located at Lennoxville Point near Beaufort, and at Broad Creek. In the Cape Fear area their shoran stations will be set up at Surf City and Oak Island.

Shoran enables the ships to determine their location with no

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