

# FISHBYTES

Volume 3 Issue 1

Jan 1997

## THE NEWSLETTER OF THE FISHERIES CENTRE AT UBC

### ECOPATH Training Course in Mexico

By Daniel Pauly

An ECOPATH training course was held from October 21-27, 1996 at CICIMAR (Centro Interdisciplinario de Ciencias Marinas), La Paz, Mexico, under the framework of the recently signed Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between CICIMAR and the Fisheries Centre, UBC (See *FishBytes* Vol.2 Issue 4).

The course, taught by Dr. Villy Christensen of ICLARM (with whom the Centre also has an MOU), and Dr. Francisco Arreguin-Sanchez of CICIMAR and myself was attended by 38 participants, mostly staff of regional centres of the Mexican National Institute of Fisheries (INP), but also from Costa Rica (3 participants), USA (2 NOAA/NMFS staff) and one participant from Columbia.

Many of the participants had brought data from "their" ecosystem, and were grouped with other participants for the hands-on exercises that followed the mostly bilingual lectures (mostly good English by Villy Christensen and broken Spanish by yours truly). This led to 15 preliminary models being assembled by the time the course was ready, with a promise of more to come when the proceedings (to be published next year as an edited INP Technical Report) are assembled.

ECOPATH 3.0 (for Windows) performed well, though a few opportunities for improvement did emerge. Particularly interesting was the use by Dr. Joan Browder, of NMFS, of the several detritus boxes allowed in ECOPATH 3.0 to enable a rigorous description of the fate of discarded bycatch, including serving as food, e.g. for birds, sharks or crabs. This development enables explicit consideration in ecosystem models of a phenomenon (discarding by-catch) which so far has tended to be ignored in fisheries ecology.

This will be particularly helpful when the follow ups to this course are

implemented, which will involve assembling existing models of parts of the Gulfs of Mexico and of California into metamodels, through a series of workshops that will involve the above listed institutions into formal agreements (more on this later).

Other highlights include a precourse boat and snorkeling trip among sea lions, catching a giant squid (well - it was about to die, but still...), glorious food and lots of sun. Quite a shock to return to the cold rains of Vancouver!

### WWF Marine Stewardship Council Ecolabelling Meeting

By Uli Reinhardt

This two-day meeting on 14/15 Jan. 1996, hosted by the Pacific Fisheries Think Tank and held in the Sty-Wet-Tan Hall of the First Nations House of Learning on UBC campus, was one of eight around-the-globe workshops the Marine Stewardship Council (MSC), an initiative of the WWF and the seafood processing giant Unilever, organised as follow-ups to the initial workshop held last September in Britain (*FishBytes* Vol. 2, Issue 5). The aim of the meeting was to comment on the draft of a set of principles to ensure fish products have been caught in fisheries certified as sustainable. Panel members included representatives of the MSC and the Pacific fishing industry, including processors and wholesalers, fisheries consultants, standardizing agents and environmentalists, plus a handful of observers including, from the Fisheries Centre, Daniel Pauly, Tony Pitcher, John Sproul, Peter Pearse, Gordon Munro and Uli Reinhardt.

The drafting of principles and criteria for certification had been planned for the second day. One fishers' representative initiated a hot debate on the motives of the WWF and its commitment to fair co-operation, particularly in light of a recent full-page *Time* Magazine International ad in which the WWF had made controversial claims regarding bycatch in some

North American fisheries. It became clear that it will take the MSC more than playing the "trust me" tune to persuade the industry, which is used to boycotts and blockades from environmentalists, to join. Particularly, the MSC will have to improve the flow of information on the status of the initiative to the prospective partners the council is courting. Other concerns voiced by the industry were the potentially high cost of the certification process which would make "green" fish products overly expensive, and the prospect of the MSC eventually becoming a powerful and, as someone stressed, "undemocratic" regulating agency.

How complex and involving the whole certification and labeling process will be became very obvious when panel members were asked to suggest units of certification, i.e., which entity should eventually have to apply for certification. Suggestions ranged from individual vessels over gear types, fish species, species by area, and fisher's organization to whole countries. Obviously, each fishery will require its own tailor-made procedure involving designing guidelines, certification procedure, surveillance of compliance etc. This complexity makes the initiative of eco-certification on a global scale appear a truly Herculean task. Drafting principles on a round table was just a minor step in this daunting but certainly promising initiative.

### Role of Forage Fishes in Marine Ecosystems

By Doug Hay

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On 13-16 Nov. 1996, an international symposium entitled 'Role of forage fishes in marine ecosystems', the 14th symposium in the Lowell-Wakefield series, was held in Anchorage, Alaska. It was sponsored by a number of agencies in the U.S., including the Univ. of Alaska Fairbanks (Alaska Sea Grant College program, Fisheries Division), Alaska Dept. of Fish and Game, Exxon Valdez Oil Spill Trustee Council, North Pac. Fish. Man-