



Squid on the rise, say experts.

By SIMON BENSON.

311 words

31 July 2002

Hobart Mercury

MERCURY

10

English

(c) 2002 Davies Brothers Limited

GIANT squid are taking over the world - well, at least the oceans - and they are getting bigger.

Scientists say squid numbers around the globe are increasing at rapid rates and now exceed humans in terms of total bio-mass.

The reason has been put down to overfishing of other species and climate change.

A report in the Australian science journal Australasian Science says marine researchers now agree cephalopods have been given an advantage not available to any other sea creature.

Their growth rates are increasing, as is their ultimate body size.

The findings may offer an answer to the mysterious appearance of a giant squid on the coast of Tasmania last week, and hundreds washed ashore in California - although El Nino also is being blamed.

Overfishing of some fish species has taken away competition for the squid in finding food.

Warming of waters due to climate change has also allowed squid to expand their populations.

George Jackson, of the Institute of Antarctic and Southern Ocean studies in Tasmania, says squid thrive in environmental disasters such as global warming.

They eat anything that comes their way, breed whenever and wherever possible and keep growing until they die.

"This trend has been suggested to be due both to the removal of cephalopod predators such as toothed whales and tuna and an increase of cephalopods due to removal of finfish competitors," Dr Jackson said.

"The fascinating thing about squid is that they're short-lived.

"I haven't found any tropical squid in Australia older than 200 days."

The UN Food and Agricultural Organisation supports the theory, saying squid landings have increased during the past 25 years at greater rates than fish.

"Very few scientists dispute that the phenomenon is near universal," said Daniel Pauly, professor of fisheries at the University of British Columbia, Canada.

Document mrcury0020020730dy7v000mt