



# NOAA FISHERIES

## Science and Technology

Monitoring and estimating marine fisheries bycatch is an important part of NOAA Fisheries' efforts to sustain fisheries and recover protected species populations. The National Bycatch Report helps NOAA Fisheries monitor bycatch trends, improve stock assessments, and set fishery monitoring priorities.

### Highlights

- This Update includes fish bycatch estimates for a total of 573 fish stocks nationwide, an increase from 480 stocks in the first edition.
- Alaska longline fishery seabird bycatch was 3,712 birds for 2010, compared to 6,353 birds for 2005.
- The bycatch ratio (ratio of total fishery bycatch to total fishery catch) for the Gulf of Mexico shrimp trawl fishery was 0.64 for 2010, compared to 0.76 for 2005.
- Northeast bycatch estimates were provided for 10 new protected species, including seals, bottlenose dolphins, and loons.

# U.S. National Bycatch Report First Edition Update 1



*Catch and bycatch on a Pacific hake vessel. Photo courtesy of Mark Lomeli, Pacific States Marine Fisheries Commission.*

The First Edition of the *U.S. National Bycatch Report*, published in 2011, documented bycatch estimates, using observer data and self-reported logbook data, for all fisheries for which this information was available in 2005.

NOAA Fisheries has now released the First Edition Update 1 to the *U.S. National Bycatch Report*. This update includes species-specific bycatch estimates for species included in the first edition, as well as updated bycatch estimates for all fisheries in the first edition with some consolidation of fisheries.

This Update, as well as the First Edition of the report, is available on the NOAA Fisheries National Observer Program website: <http://www.st.nmfs.noaa.gov/observer-home/index>

### Importance of Bycatch Reduction and Observers

Bycatch occurs when fishing operations discard fish or interact with marine mammals, sea turtles, protected fish species, corals, sponges, or seabirds. Bycatch can have significant biological, economic, and social impacts on fisheries. Excessive bycatch can prevent overfished stocks from rebuilding, and bycatch and gear interactions can lead to the decline of endangered marine mammals, sea turtles, seabirds, and fish and prevent their recovery. To help minimize these impacts, NOAA Fisheries monitors bycatch in U.S. fisheries through observers and other methods and subsequently estimates bycatch levels that are incorporated into stock assessments.

NOAA Fisheries is required to address bycatch reduction under several federal laws—the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act, Endangered

## Timeline for U.S. National Bycatch Reports and Updates

2011—Comprehensive Report (first edition): primarily 2005 data.

2013—Online Update (first edition update 1): primarily 2010 data.

2015—Online Update (first edition update 2): 2011-2013 data.

2017—Comprehensive Report (second edition): 2014-2015 data + synthesis of 2010-2015 data.

2019—Online Update (second edition update 1): 2016-2017 data.

2021—Online Update (second edition update 2): 2018-2019 data.

2023—Comprehensive Report (third edition): 2020-2021 data + synthesis of 2016-2021 data.



*This Update reports on target landings like this large swordfish, as well as bycatch. Photo courtesy of NOAA Fisheries.*

### For more information:

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Species Act, Marine Mammal Protection Act, and U.S. National Plan of Action for Reducing the Incidental Catch of Seabirds in Longline Fisheries.

NOAA Fisheries has been using observers to collect fisheries data, including bycatch information, from 1972 to the present. In 2012, NMFS carried out observer programs in each of its regions, with 974 observers and over 83,000 sea days observed in 47 fisheries nationwide. In 2012, total federal fisheries observer funding from all sources (including industry funding) was approximately \$69 million for observer coverage and program infrastructure.



*Loggerhead sea turtle exiting a trawl net. Photo courtesy of NOAA Fisheries.*

## National Bycatch Report Improvements

NOAA Fisheries has made several improvements since the First Edition of the report in 2011. The most notable improvement was to shorten the lag between the development and publication of bycatch estimates by approximately 3 years between the First Edition and this Update, which includes bycatch estimates based mostly on 2010 data. This Update also increased the number fish bycatch estimates from 480 to 573.

Individual regions contributed notable improvements to this Update. For example, the Northeast provided fish bycatch estimates for 29 fisheries, up from 25 fisheries in the First Edition. Alaska combined a large number of state fisheries to better reflect management and data collection systems, based on feedback from the Alaska Department of Fish and Game. The Pacific Islands added protected species bycatch estimates for the American Samoa-based longline fishery. The Southwest contributed fish bycatch estimates to this Update; the First Edition provided no bycatch estimates for that region.

## Expected Improvements in Bycatch Estimates

For the next Update in 2015, NOAA Fisheries plans to include additional bycatch estimates. NOAA Fisheries plans to shorten the data lag to two years (i.e., the 2015 update will include bycatch estimates for 2011, 2012, and 2013). NOAA Fisheries also plans to increase consistency regarding how bycatch is reported nationwide.

The 2015 Update should include fish bycatch estimates for the American Samoa-based longline fishery. (This update only included protected species estimates for that fishery.) In addition, the 2015 Update may include more detailed bycatch estimates for corals and sponges.