

Reports

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Efforts to find small crabs

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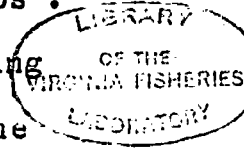
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On January 22, 1943 an effort was made to secure small crabs. Using the boat "Agnes Hope" the entire afternoon was spent dredging in Back Creek from O. R. Mill's crab house to the entrance in the bay. A small hand dredge was used and was tried first with the bag lined with hardware cloth of $\frac{1}{4}$ inch mesh and later with the hardware cloth removed and using only the regular bag of the dredge which is about $1\frac{1}{2}$ inch stretch mesh. The latter means was the most successful as ~~the~~ by the use of the hardware cloth the dredge quickly filled with mud so that nothing at all was obtained.



The efforts made gave results but they were mainly negative. The dredge was used about every 200 yds. from the crab house to the bay and several types of bottom were encountered. Of the various types of bottom in the creek at first there was mud that was fairly soft and nothing at all was found. Just below the state pier fairly hard bottom was found with abundant growth of weedy brown algae and red sponge. Near the mouth of the creek fairly hard bottom was encountered that contained a few oysters, More oyster shells and some sponge. As to the results it may be repeated they were mainly negative.

Back Creek is a small creek that has its mouth just below the mouth of the York River and bounds Tue's Point on the South. It extends inland about 3 or 4 miles and drains a large swamp. To the north about $\frac{1}{2}$ mile from the mouth it communicates with the York River by what is known as the "sand ^{box} ~~bag~~". This makes an island of the land that forms Tue's Point and this is known as Goodwin's Island. The salinity at the mouth is about 21 ppm. At the state R pier

which is about 1 mile from the mouth the salinity is about 20 ppm. At the crab house the salinity averages about 19 ppm. At the head of the creek the salinity drops to 0 ppm. ~~At the head~~ and the water is "black" swamp water. The creek is fairly deep, about 15 to 20 feet and gradually gets shallow until at the head there is less than one foot of water.

On the trip dredging with the "Agnes Hope" one small crab of 1942 hatch was caught. This crab measured 42 mm. from spine to spine on the carapace. It was caught just below the state pier. A scattering of crabs were caught from crab house to mouth of creek.

Mostly virgin females and ^{immature} ~~mature~~ males, one large mature ^{male} crab, and two female crabs that had been fertilized were caught. About one dozen of immature 1941 hatch were caught. These crabs were 85 to 115 mm. The mature crabs were 140 to 175 mm.

On January 29, 1943 another effort was made to secure small ~~xxx~~ crabs. Again a dredge with a covering of 1 inch mesh wire was used. This time an outboard motor was used and the creek was dredged at intervals of about 200-300 yards from ~~xxxxx~~ crab house to about two miles up where the depth of the water was only about one foot at low tide and though no records were taken the water tasted only slightly brackish. The water was black like swamp water.

One virgin female was caught about one mile above the crab house. The bottom was rather soft mud except where the crab was caught where the mud was not so soft.

No definite conclusions can be drawn. From the information obtained a scarcity of crabs are to be found in the creek especially the hatch of 1942. In the fall of 1942, however a small pond at Seaford was drained and approximately 50 of these small crabs were taken from it. This pond on several occasions was so that crabs from the creek could gain entrance to it. About two dozen mature and immature crabs were also taken.