

Letter: Stunning picture of Chinese trawlers with mud trails misleading, says fisheries gear expert

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John:

Re: [Stunning Picture of Chinese bottom trawler mud trails](#) Friday, May 11th.

It's a stunning picture, but the mud trails can't be from trawls as we know them, as there is no gap between the boat and the plume.

They might be butterfly nets that are pushed ahead or beside the boats. It is also clear from the image that the water is very shallow. One boat out of formation is likely steaming, not fishing, and it's propeller alone is kicking up a mud cloud.

Most troubling about this misrepresentation is that it was published in the journal Nature with no indication of any on-scene ground-truthing. Nor is there any evidence presented on the actual consequences of this disturbance on this particular type of bottom.

An obvious question is how this activity compares to naturally occurring disturbances such as sediment deposition from the river waters, storms, or the burrowing activities of the shrimp themselves. To offer this photo as an argument to halt all bottom trawling suggests Van Houtan and Pauly have wandered from the scientific method into unsubstantiated advocacy.

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