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A promotional banner for the CBC program 'George Stroumboulopoulos Tonight'. It features a portrait of George Stroumboulopoulos in a white shirt. To the left is the Air Canada logo with the text 'See the latest episodes and contests.' To the right is the CBC logo with the text 'George Stroumboulopoulos Tonight'. Below the main text, there are smaller names of other CBC personalities: 'The Dean, K'naan, Brian Mulroney, Amy Poehler, The Roots, Sarah Palin, Michael Biehn, James Van Der Beek, and George Lopez.'

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Expansion saps world's fishing grounds: UBC

Last Updated: Friday, December 3, 2010 | 8:04 AM PT [Comments51](#)[Recommend41](#)

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A study led by researchers at the University of British Columbia indicates maintaining the current supply of wild fish is not sustainable. (Canadian Press)

The world has run out of new fishing grounds due to the rapid expansion of global fisheries in recent years, according to a study led by the University of British Columbia.

The findings, conducted in collaboration with the National Geographic Society and published Thursday in the online journal PLoS ONE, is the first to examine how industrialized fisheries have expanded over the past 50 years.

The study indicates fisheries expanded at a rate of one million square kilometres per year from the 1950s to the early 1970s, with the rate tripling in the 1980s and 1990s.

Expansion into unexploited fishing grounds has allowed global catches to increase despite the fact that fish stocks are being depleted, according to the study's researchers.

Between 1950 and 2005, the study indicates, fisheries have been expanding southward into the Southern Hemisphere at a rate of almost one degree latitude each year.

During the same time period, the world's fish catch increased five-fold from 19 million tonnes in 1950 to a peak of 90 million tonnes in the late 1980s. That number dropped to 87 million tonnes in 2005, according to the study.

"The decline of spatial expansion since the mid-1990s is not a reflection of successful conservation efforts but rather an indication that we've simply run out of room to expand fisheries," said Wilf Swartz, a PhD student at UBC Fisheries Centre and lead author of the study.

"If people in Japan, Europe and North America find themselves wondering how the markets are still filled with seafood, it's in part because spatial expansion and trade makes up for over-fishing and fishing down the food chain in local waters."

Existing fish stocks need protection

The study indicates that less than 0.1 per cent of the world's oceans are designated as marine reserves that are closed to fishing.

"While many people still view fisheries as a romantic, localized activity pursued by rugged individuals, the reality is that for decades now, numerous fisheries are corporate operations that take a mostly no-fish-left-behind approach to our oceans until there's nowhere left to go," said Daniel Pauly, co-author and principal investigator of the Sea Around Us Project at UBC Fisheries Centre.

The researchers used a new computer model to measure the ecological footprint of fisheries, allowing them to determine the combined impact of all marine fisheries and their rate of expansion.

The program quantified the amount of "primary production" — the microscopic organisms and plants at the bottom of the marine food chain — required to produce any given amount of fish.

"This method allows us to truly gauge the impact of catching all types of fish, from large predators such as bluefin tuna, to small fish such as sardines and anchovies," Pauly said.

"Because not all fish are created equal and neither is their impact on the sustainability of our ocean."

The study is proof that further steps must be taken to protect existing fishing stocks, the researchers argue.

"The era of great expansion has come to an end, and maintaining the current supply of wild fish sustainably is not possible," said Enric Sala, co-author and National Geographic Ocean fellow.

"The sooner we come to grips with it — similar to how society has recognized the effects of climate change — the sooner we can stop the downward spiral by creating stricter fisheries regulations and more marine reserves."

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[p51mustang](#) wrote:Posted 2010/12/05

at 7:51 PM ETAt the rate that the human population is growing and consuming the oceans fish we will end up with more dead zones until the seas are bare.

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Dwarf64 wrote: Posted 2010/12/05

at 2:11 PM ET Some key figures NOT in the article are:

- How many tonnes of fish are there in the oceans?
- How many tonnes do those fish GROW each year?
- Then what is the percentage of total fish harvested compared to total fish growth?

If we had this info, we would know whether to be worried or not. Without it, all we can do is argue (see other posts!).

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What It Is wrote: Posted 2010/12/04

at 6:42 PM ET Gee really? Bigger and more boats from just about everywhere are catching more and more fish to feed more and more people?

And if it keeps up we're gong to run out of fish?

Gosh, who'd have thought?

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IrishCanadian32 wrote: Posted 2010/12/04

at 5:48 PM ET the problem is, there's no enforcement over current fishing regulations in many parts of the world. in every ocean, outside of territorial waters where each country can enforce their laws & international treaties, it's open season with little to no surveillance, let alone actual enforcement of any protections for endangered fish, or existing stocks.

the Canadian Frigate seizing a Portugese fishing vessel in the 90s is the closest (at least publicly known) incident of such a thing happening where international laws were enforced, and it almost caused a war over it between Canada & Portugal if it had escalated any further.

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dave777 wrote: Posted 2010/12/04

at 5:27 PM ET I can't say for the west coast, but for the east coast cod fishing was destroyed by illegal fishing. Not that much by Canadians but by foreign trawlers blatantly ignoring common sense. And of course our governments unwillingness to assert our rights.

Time for the Canadian navy to see if the torpedoes work.

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