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Ransom A. Myers, 54, Dies; Expert on Loss of Fish Stocks

By [CORNELIA DEAN](#)

Ransom A. Myers, a fisheries biologist whose work brought wide attention to collapsing fish stocks around the world, died on Tuesday in Halifax, Nova Scotia. He was 54.

His death was announced by Dalhousie University in Nova Scotia, where he ran a research laboratory focusing on the effects of industrialized fishing. He had been suffering from glioblastoma multiforme, a brain cancer, since last fall, the university said.

Dr. Myers, known as Ram, led a team of scientists who reported in 2003 that 90 percent of the world's stocks of large fish, open-ocean predators like tuna and swordfish and groundfish like cod and flounder, had been lost to overfishing. The scientists said fishing pressure on these species was so great that relatively few fish were living long enough to attain full size or even to reproduce.

The study drew criticism from fishery managers and others who took issue with what they called its overly gloomy outlook. But the work was widely praised by environmentalists and marine ecologists, and it put the fishery question onto the front pages of newspapers.

Although that work was spectacular, said Daniel Pauly, who heads the Fisheries Center at the University of British Columbia, Dr. Myers's colleagues will remember him for more basic work. Dr. Pauly cited, in particular, Dr. Myers's efforts to solve "the major problem in fisheries science," predicting in one season how many fish larvae will survive to young adulthood in the next.

Scientists call this "the recruitment problem," and because fish produce immense and highly variable numbers of larvae and because mortality is so high, good predictions have been hard to come by.

Dr. Myers solved the problem, Dr. Pauly said, by assembling a large base of stock data and developing a complex mathematical model to sort it out.

"Out of that came the conclusion that a female in general produced three to five recruits per year for most fish," Dr. Pauly said. "It is the definitive study."

Ransom Aldrich Myers was born on June 13, 1952, in Lula, Miss. He received a physics degree at [Rice University](#) in 1974 and a doctorate in biology at Dalhousie in 1984. Before joining the Dalhousie faculty, he was a research scientist in the Canadian Department of Fisheries and Oceans.

Surviving are his wife, Rita Myers, and five children, Emily, Rosemary, Sophia, Carlo and Gioia.

He was a lead author of an article on the overfishing of sharks, scheduled to appear in the issue of the journal *Science* to be released tomorrow.

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