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UBC study says Arctic fishing under-reported

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VANCOUVER - University of British Columbia researchers say the world's Arctic waters are no longer a pristine frontier when it comes to fisheries.

Researchers with UBC's Fisheries Centre and Department of Earth and Ocean Sciences have crunched the numbers and revealed catches from Arctic waters are 75-times higher than reported to the United Nations.

Report author Daniel Pauly says data ranging from limited government reports to anthropological records show small scale, often subsistence fisheries in Russian, U.S. and Canadian Arctic waters totalled 950,000 tonnes between 1950 and 2006.

That is dramatically higher than the declared catch of just under 13,000 tonnes and Pauly says the study reveals a lack of care by the Canadian, U.S. and Russian governments in understanding northern food needs and fish catches.

In the report, published in the journal Polar Biology, lead researcher Dick Zeller says ineffective reporting and a lack of credible data on small-scale fisheries has created a false sense of security about the state of Arctic waters.

Data shows the U.S. claimed no catches to the UN during the study period, but 89,000 tonnes were actually hauled in, Canada also reported no catches but netted 94,000 tonnes, while Russia reported 12,700 tonnes but took a staggering 770,000 tonnes between 1950 and 2006.

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