

# 'Wild' oceans at risk from overfishing, B.C. scientists say

## Predatory fish stocks down two-thirds

BY BRADLEY BOUZANE, POSTMEDIA NEWS FEBRUARY 19, 2011



A study challenges a widely cited theory by Daniel Pauly at the University of British Columbia who has been warning for years that we could end up eating jellyfish sandwiches because global fisheries target large long-lived fish and then move down the food web to overexploit smaller species.

**Photograph by:** Handout, Ed Melvin/Washington Sea Grant

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The overfishing of cod, tuna and other predatory fish has led to a sizable increase in smaller fish -potentially threatening marine ecosystems and the very existence of "wild" oceans as we know them, a team of British Columbia scientists is warning.

The world's predatory fish population has dropped by about two-thirds over the past century, says the group from the University of British Columbia's Fisheries Centre.

Meanwhile, the stocks of "forage" fish, such as capelin, sardine and anchovy, have increased by more than 100 per cent. The researchers call the process "fishing down the food-web" and say it could change the face of the world's oceans, in short order.

"There are still a lot of fish in the sea, but they're just smaller," lead researcher Villy Christensen said from Washington, where the findings were being presented Friday at the American Association for the Advancement of Science.

"It means we are removing the fish that control the (marine) ecosystems and we're moving toward an unhealthy situation."

Led by Christensen, a team of scientists examined more than 200 marine ecosystem models from