

Salty sea slows oyster growth

United Press International

GALVESTON--A Texas A&M University marine scientist described the devastating oyster losses in Galveston Bay in recent years as "a natural phenomenon."

From 1976 to 1977, the Galveston Bay system produced a limited oyster set. The young oysters, for reasons unknown at the time, were not attaching to the reefs.

Oystermen believed there was something affecting the reproductive systems of the oysters. Also, there was the possibility there were not enough setting surfaces for the young oysters to attach themselves.

Neither theory was correct, said Dr. Sammy Ray, director of the School of Marine Technology at Moody College in Galveston.

"We are dealing with a natural phenomenon," said Ray. "I think it is a matter of salinity. Oysters can live in a wide range of saline conditions. However, the natural enemies of the oyster are much more prevalent in high salinity water," he said.

Like crops on land, there are wet and dry years for oysters. In this case, their survival is dependent on the fresh water flow into Galveston Bay from the interior of the state.

Ray's research team cooperated with the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department and local oystermen, using Texas A&M Organized Research funds to conduct the one-year study. Organized Research is a state appropriation to fund research of benefit to all Texans.

Ray said the primary difference between a good year and the two bad years was in the concentration of salt in the water during the spring of this year and the springs of 1976 and 1977.

In 1976 and 1977, there had been flooding on the Trinity River which resulted in depressed salinity during the usual spawning season in May. In 1978, a drought condition existed during winter and early spring which Ray believes helped produce a good spring oyster set.

Ray said that after a year of study the scientists know the bay's oysters did develop reproductive cells in 1976 and 1977. They did discharge the cells. The larvae did develop.

This spring there was a tremendous oyster set which was great for the oystermen, but it made the task of tracking down the cause of the previous oyster set failures much more difficult.

This year it seems the good set was due to the reduced amount of fresh water coming into the bay, Ray said. The reduced fresh water flow caused by drought conditions favored the development of a new crop of oysters, said the director.

"It does point out that Galveston Bay, as well as other bays in Texas, are all part of a dynamic system," said Ray. "The chance for a perfect oyster set every year is questionable. There are just going to be some wet years and some dry years."

The survival and growth of the oyster industry in Texas will be dependent on the weather as long as matters are left up to fate. There will be good years like this one, but there is some likelihood that there could be poor years, as we had in the two years previous," he said.

The solution is better management of the resources already there, said the Galveston-based scientist. One suggestion the marine researchers are examining is to move oysters in the fall to areas of low salinity where their natural predators and diseases are not quite so prevalent.

"I realize Texas is known for its shrimp industry. But with the right management, the oyster production could be stabilized and a more reliable market could be developed," he said.



Battalion photo by Scott Pendleton

This ostrich looks a bit bewildered, and he has good reason. He and his friends at Exotic Wildlife Unlimited don't know what their future holds, and neither do their keepers. The Bank of A&M has taken over the park and is trying to sell it. Meanwhile, veterinary students at Texas A&M University have been helping take care of the animals.

Bank, state to decide fate of animal house

By KAREN ROGERS
Battalion Staff

Animals at Exotic Wildlife Unlimited must think they are in a zoo. The Bank of A&M confiscated the property last April after a loan foreclosure on the owner and it has been trying to sell it ever since.

Patricia May, a California animal breeder, tried to buy the compound, but was asked to move her belongings off the property last Friday when she failed to come up with the down payment.

Bank officials also closed the compound to the public and fired the zoo staff that day, saying they could no longer afford to keep it open.

Prospective buyers are visiting the facility under the supervision of state and federal game wardens who are making sure regulations are being followed.

Sam DeStefano of the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department said the state is interested in the javelinas (wild pigs) and the migratory water fowl such as ducks, geese and swans.

The Austin-based department will take an inventory of the animals to determine which ones need permits before they can be sold.

Some animals already have been sold and moved to a park in Missouri. But DeStefano said there are many animals remaining.

"The jaguars cannot be sold,

period," DeStefano said. "They are on the endangered species list and the statement of their origin has been destroyed."

He explained that there must be proof of where either the animal or its parents came from before a permit can be issued. The jaguars must be donated to a zoo, he said.

A Texas A&M University veterinarian, Dr. Charles Dean Brown, who teaches exotic animal care, said, "We have taken over anything involving the animals' health and to see that they are taken care of properly." The vet school will continue this service until the animals are sold. The Bank of A&M has hired workers to feed the animals.

First joint expedition

7 men scale Everest

United Press International

KATMANDU, Nepal — Two separate parties from a French-West German team climbed 29,028-foot Mount Everest within hours of each other in the first successful ascent by a joint expedition.

Four French climbers, including a 49-year-old former cabinet minister, scaled the world's highest mountain Sunday only hours after three Germans conquered the Himalayan peak.

The Nepalese Tourism Ministry said it was the first conquest of Everest by a joint expedition and the fifth in the fall climbing season. The expedition took the normal southeast ridge route.

The French climbers were Pierre Mazeaud, former minister of sports and culture, photographer Kurt Deimberger and Alpine mountain guides Jean Afanassieff and Nicholas Jaeger.

Mazeaud is one of the oldest mountaineers to climb Everest. He failed in two previous attempts.

What began as a joint attempt to scale the peak broke up Saturday when Mazeaud and two other partners had to separate from the German group and turn back when they discovered their oxygen supply was insufficient.

Afanassieff, 25, was the first Frenchman to reach the summit, and was followed by Jaeger, 32. Mazeaud, accompanied by Deimberger, reached the top about 10

minutes later. The German climbers who reached the summit Saturday were Hubert Hillmaier, Josef Mack and Hans Engl.

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Unusual ailments reported

United Press International

"Deranged knees" and "enraged tonsils" reportedly made some Americans see a doctor last year.

Others saw a physician for "algebra in both eyes" or "confusion in the nose" or "post-natal drip" or "semimental conditions."

"Ingestion of the intestines" and "stomach clamp" are two more of 1977's bothersome medical conditions.

Those unusual maladies are among patient descriptions of ailments as reported to interviewers in the \$18 million Medical Costs Survey under way for the government by Research Triangle Institute, Research Triangle Park, N.C.

The biggest ever health survey is expected to produce millions of bits of information for planners of National Health Insurance.

The funny-sounding conditions are among 110,000 descriptions of ailments fed into the survey's computer for future reference. The inventory of unusual conditions also includes "high-pertension," "blue venus," "be-nine tumor" and "spilt lip."

Among eye conditions reported were "vibrating eyes," "eyes mattering" and "flashing eyes."

One person sought medical care for "heart hemorrhoids."

An update on the survey in "Hypotenuse," a Research Triangle Institute publication, notes that one person reported having "molds re-

moved."

Health problems cited by other individuals included a recluse spider bite, "Indian fire and chicken nails. One respondent's condition was listed as "smashed."

During the household survey spanning 18 months, the field staff traveled nearly two million miles and spent 298,960 hours, including travel time, surveying an estimated 13,500 households involving 40,000 persons.

The project leader, Dr. Daniel

Horvitz, said a chief motivation behind the massive research undertaking is to provide information needed to estimate costs and benefits of various proposals for national health insurance.

Government officials will have uses for the survey results other than assessing health insurance plans, said Horvitz. The many applications may include determining the impact of possible changes in federal income tax provisions relating to medical expenses.

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