

Fish Aging at the Northeast Fisheries Center

by

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Laboratory Reference No. 78-17
March 15, 1978

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One of the key requirements for analyzing fishery and research cruise data for use in assessments is the aging of the fish caught. The aging staff at the Northeast Fisheries Center consists of five permanent persons with two cooperative work-study college student assistants and one part-time high school student.

Table 1 lists the numbers of fish and shellfish aged in 1977. For species with large yearly harvest the numbers aged for the best assessments possible should range between 5,000 and 10,000 individuals per year. The group is also involved with cooperative studies on aging silver hake with the USSR and Canada and on sea herring with Canada. In 1978 work has been expanded by contracts for aging sea herring with the State of Maine, surf clams with the University of Maryland Eastern Shore, and scup, butterfish, sea herring, and fluke with Southeastern Massachusetts University. A contract with the State of Massachusetts is in the process of being let with the State of Massachusetts for cod. The university contracts provide minimum aging using students while those with the states are full-scale production efforts. Furthermore, an exploratory study is being made into the development of automated age scaling using image analyses. A contract investigating initial feasibility was completed by Texas Instruments in 1977 and a second phase pilot study is almost ready to go out for bids.

Table 1. Fish Age Determinations During 1977
by the Northeast Fisheries Center.

Species	Number
Redfish	2,032
Yellowtail	9,587
Mackerel	1,089
Cod	1,824
Haddock	4,183
Scallops	1,600
Pollock	649
Goosefish	30
Scup	200
Fluke	2,148
Silver hake	3,982
Blackback	916
Sea herring	7,728
Alewives	1,000
Red hake	8,901
Total	45,869