

BOOK - REVIEWS

Study of the Sea, edited by E. M. Thomassan, Fishing News Books Ltd., Farnham, Surrey, London, 1981. Price £ 25, pp. 256 + xii.

The International Council for the Exploration of Seas or ICES as it is commonly known, is by far the oldest (founded in 1902) intergovernmental marine and oceanographic organization. From the year of its inception, until after the Second World War and the birth of the UN, the Council was the all important forum for international cooperative research for the study of the sea and its living resources.

What had begun as a small group of scientists representing eight northern European countries has grown over the years to the point where it is today a leading organization involving hundreds of scientists from eighteen member countries on both sides of the North Atlantic and its neighbouring seas, like the Baltic and the North Seas; the Norwegian and Greenland seas and the Barents Sea. Over the years, ICES has contributed most significantly to the development of our knowledge concerning the seas and its living resources. Many of the doyens of marine fisheries and oceanography, have published valuable works under the aegis of ICES, and many of such publications are rather inaccessible to a reader.

In the book under review, the editor, E. M. Thomasson, Librarian at the headquarters of the ICES at Copenhagen has conceived and compiled a selection of papers in oceanographic and fisheries sciences from the founding of the council to the present day.

A glimpse through the contents—40 titles—contributed by many of the all time great marine scientists is aweinspiring. The titles concentrate on problems, such as, overfishing, migration, transplantation, pollution, dynamics of marine populations: mathematical ecology, sea farming and so on. Thus, the book provides a panoramic picture of what scientific research is carried out under the auspices of an international cooperative research organization that concerns itself with one of mankind's most important resources.

A good blend of editorial and documentation skills are evidenced in the selection of papers from voluminous publications and archives of ICES. The editorial attempts are not merely for providing a comprehensive survey of oceanographic and fisheries research, but rather for presenting the best in the relevant field, both basic and applied of oceanography, fisheries and conservation of marine living resources. Some of the prophecies and relevant hypotheses and theories, profounded by the pioneers inspite of the long passage of time and also because of great strides in the marine sciences research, are most relevant even today. Some of the paper, especially of fish migration and overfishing, published as early as 1903 and 1905, respectively, clearly indicate that despite the collection of voluminous data in the intervening years, the inferences and the principles spelt out, long ago, are still valid and are being augmented. Similarly, the singularly invaluable work of Sir Alister Hardy on plankton and its role in the herring fisheries of the North Sea, as reproduced in the book under review provides a classic example of how a long-term in-depth investigation can serve as the unerring guiding force in the fishery management, throughout the world oceans.

The book while providing a valuable reading for oceanographers and fisheries scientists alike, is a source of everlasting inspiration to the world tribe of marine scientists. The pages are enriched with some of the rare photographs, quite a few action packed, of illustrious marine scientists of past and the present time as also of some of the well known oceanographic research vessels. The printing and getup is impressive, while the price of £ 25 is seemingly more than reasonable. However, the cost of the book need not be a bottleneck for its acquisition by libraries and individuals, as such classics are rareities in the present times of so-called specialization.

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