**Not So Many Fish in the Sea**

*by Janna Palliser*

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| When you see the ocean, massive and seemingly never-ending, it is hard to imagine there could ever be a shortage of seafood, or that any one species could be in decline. Yet modern technologies have allowed for massive harvests, often with bycatch of unwanted fish and other animals, leading to the overfishing of certain species. *Ocean overfishing*, the taking of wildlife from the seas at rates too high for the fished species to be replenished, has become a global problem (National Geographic 2012a). This month’s column will address the issue of overfishing, and what you can do.Every year, 77.9 million metric tons (170 billion lbs.) of wild fish and shellfish are harvested from the oceans (National Geographic 2012b). China leads in seafood harvesting, with Peru, the United States, Japan, Chile, and Indonesia following (National Geographic 2012c). About 85% of the world’s fisheries are either fully exploited, are overexploited, or have collapsed. The global fishing fleet is operating at two and a half times the sustainable level (Monterey Bay Aquarium 2012a).**Brief History**The earliest overfishing occurred when whale populations were decimated in the early 1800s as whales were hunted for their blubber (for lamp oil). Atlantic cod, herring, and California sardines were also overfished to the brink of extinction in the mid-1900s. In the mid-20th century, to increase the availability of protein-rich foods, international efforts were made to increase fishing capacities. These efforts included favorable policies, loans, and subsidies, which led to the rise of large-scale fishing operations. These aggressive, commercial, large fishing operations replaced small, local fishing operations on a global scale (National Geographic 2012a). | 193653718597115129144161171188204221235251265 |
| Excerpted from “Green Science,” *Science Scope,* Jan. 2013, p.10. |  |
|  |  |