

## Happenings....

### Jumbo Squid Continue to Invade California

'Jumbo' Humboldt squid are swarming off the U.S. West Coast

#### Angler Chair Diaries:



Scientists say the animals' northern migrations could endanger fisheries along the U.S. West Coast. Southern California has been invaded by hordes of Humboldt squid in recent years, a bizarre onslaught for a deep-sea creature that normally keeps a low profile.

And while surfers and beach-goers marvel at all the red, alien bodies littering the coast, fishermen have been reeling in live ones by the thousands.

"They're kind of everywhere, from the shore to the islands and anywhere in between.

Humboldt's live in the Eastern Pacific at depths of 660 to 2,300 feet and normally gravitate south of the equator. They're named after the Humboldt Current, located in their historic habitat off South America's west coast. They've been venturing farther and farther into the Northern Hemisphere, periodically swarming around California and even as far north as Sitka, Alaska. This, according to the Smithsonian Zoo, is "raising alarm about ecological problems possibly underlying the northward migration."

What kind of ecological problems? Scientists aren't sure, because Humboldt squid are so elusive and mysterious that little is known about their biology or behavior. Their eggs have never been observed in the wild, for example, and we don't even have an estimate of their global population size. But because the northerly invasions are so unusual for these reclusive creatures, many experts believe some kind of environmental change has triggered the behavior.

Some oceanographers suggest that warming oceans are at fault, while others speculate that declining numbers of the squid's predators due to overfishing may have allowed Humboldt's to expand their range.

Scientists have also floated the possibility that these migrations are spurred by El Niño-related shifts in ocean currents, and may even represent "an attempt at permanent colonization... What is clear is that the squid make themselves at home while vacationing up north, feasting on a wide array of native fish. Humboldt's do grow up to 6 feet long and can gain 100 pounds in a year, requiring voracious appetites that experts worry will cause long-term damage to West Coast fisheries. It is estimated their life cycle is 1-2 years. The Humboldt's can vanish as suddenly as they appear.

*Tight lines to all!*

*Vic Jedlicka, Angler Chair*