

**Gadus Associates'  
Bibliography of the Effects of Fishing Gear  
on the Seabed and Benthic Communities**

**2002 Edition**

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November 2002





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**Bibliography of Seabed Impacts of Fishing Gear**

This bibliography attempts to be a complete listing of all scientific literature that addresses the direct impacts of fishing gear on the seabed and on benthic communities, with global extent and covering all types of gears – from bare hands and bleach up to the most sophisticated trawls. As presented here, it is a simple listing of material but it has been cut down from an annotated version prepared for Gadus Associates' clients.

At first glance, the “seabed impacts” of fishing gear appear to comprise a well-defined topic with straightforward bounds that can clearly define the extent of a bibliography. Closer inspection shows, however, that matters are not quite so simple. The present listing includes books and papers which touch on the direct impacts of fishing gear on the seabed itself and on non-commercial species of animals and plants which live on or in that seabed. It extends (though in a very incomplete fashion) to studies that deal with the impacts of one type of fishing gear on benthic species targeted by other fisheries (such as studies of the destruction of lobsters by scallop dredges). It does not, however, include literature that is concerned with:

- Direct effects of gear on target species nor those on bycatch species similar in basic nature to the target, such as crabs caught in lobster traps or scallops in clam dredges,
- Bycatches of finfish or other vertebrates, whether commercial species or not, even if those species burrow into or live directly on the seabed,
- Damage to or mortality of uncaught target animals, even if those animals are part of the benthos,
- Ecosystem effects arising from the depletion of target or bycatch species (save for an incomplete coverage of the literature on the consequences of harvesting organisms, such as seaweeds, that provide three-dimensional structure to seabed habitats),
- Effects on midwater or surface ecosystems,
- Ghost-fishing or other negative effects from lost gear,
- Seabed impacts of non-fishing activities (e.g. harbour dredging, aggregate dredging, the mining of coral rock), though the harvesting of maerl, as a living resource, is included,
- Seabed impacts of fishing boats, such as propeller damage to seagrass beds, or
- Instrumentation for seabed studies,

except when the item in question also addresses the topic of seabed impacts as here delimited. (A few items that fall outside a strict interpretation of these limits are listed because they appeared as part of a volume that itself was dedicated to the topic at hand.)

The compiler has personally examined some 200 of the items listed. The relevance of many of the others to the issue of seabed impacts can be confirmed by inspection of their titles alone. However, some others are included here on the strength of citations of them in the works of other authors. Thus, it is likely that a handful of the entries do not belong in this bibliography.

Besides items in the primary scientific literature, this bibliography includes books, “grey literature” reports and papers which appeared in identifiable series, and contractor reports, even if they are confidential to the clients for whom they were prepared. That latter tend to be final, having to appear at the end of some contract, and contain much of interest to students of seabed impacts. Other unpublished documents, conference presentations and the like are not included, nor is any material that has only been published electronically. The listing does not generally include the copious non-scientific material that touches on seabed

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impacts, though items previously cited in the scientific literature are included (making annotations of them available, in the full version of the bibliography, to readers of the papers that cite them).

Users of this bibliography should understand its limitations. There is much to be learnt of the impacts of fishing gear on marine ecosystems by studying the effects of other perturbations, both natural and anthropogenic, of the seabed and its benthic communities. A full understanding of gear impacts certainly requires attention to much of the literature on how benthic ecosystems operate in the absence of disturbance. Knowledge of the autecology of the species affected is also crucial, as is an understanding of experimental design, statistical analysis, the technology for data collection at sea and, of course, of the commercial fisheries, their gears, their techniques and the policies and practices by which they are managed. None of the relevant literature is listed here unless, in addition to whatever other topics, an item makes some mention of an issue that falls within the narrowly-defined scope of this bibliography.

Regretfully, a further caution is necessary: The scientific literature is not the error-free statement of fact that it is sometimes represented to be. All publications in any field, no matter how prestigious the author and the journal, need to be evaluated on their merits and not blindly accepted as being above criticism. However, reports on the seabed impacts of fishing gear need particular care. In compiling this bibliography, it has become sadly clear that the literature on this topic is riddled with inappropriate statistical analyses, incorrect inferences drawn from experiments of all kinds, conclusions which appear founded in their authors' prior convictions, rather than in the data gathered, and even a distressing number of simple misrepresentations of cited work. **The inclusion of any item in this listing should not, therefore, be taken as any kind of endorsement. In the compiler's judgement, the conclusions in most of those seabed-impacts reports which he has personally examined should be rejected.**

The present listing contains 1019 items. A chronological tabulation of publication dates shows that considerably more listed items were published in each of the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s than over all time up to the start of each of those decades:

<b>Publication Years</b>	<b>Items in Bibliography</b>
Up to 1969	47
1970 to 1979	97
1980 to 1989	198
1990 to 1999	562
2000 to date	115
No Date	1

It now seems unlikely that this pattern will be continued in the first decade of the new millennium, though the total production of the years 2000 to 2009 may yet equal or exceed that of the 1990s. It follows from this distribution of publication dates that our present perceptions of the seabed impacts of fishing gears are largely products of the 1990s. Those

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perceptions essentially reversed around the start of that decade, from a general scientific consensus that seabed impacts were unimportant to a broad view that they are very serious. It is too soon to say whether or not there will be a swing back towards some intermediate conclusion by 2010 or indeed a shift to some third perspective.

The present bibliography was initially founded on a combination of Kenchington's (1995) brief summary of the then-existing literature and an unpublished list of trawling-related papers maintained by Dr. Don Gordon, Bedford Institute of Oceanography. Its annotated version was first prepared for World Wildlife Fund Canada in 1997. In 1998-99, it was reworked, updated and extended for a group of fishing-industry interests in Nova Scotia, with generous permission from the previous client. It has since been maintained and expanded by Gadus Associates as an in-house project. Preparation of the current, non-annotated version has been supported by the Fisheries Survival Fund.

During its long evolution, development of the literature list has been greatly aided though contributions supplied by John Caddy, Don Gordon, Rich and Beth Langton and Jean-Jacques Maquire, as well as thorough searching of the various published bibliographies listed below. Finally, Richard Hoffmann, of York University, provided a Medievalist's expertise to sort out the bibliographic details of the oft-cited 1376 petition to King Edward of England concerning trawling impacts. All judgements about which items to include or exclude and all inferences drawn in this introduction remain the sole responsibility of the compiler.

**This bibliography is certainly incomplete, particularly for items published in 2002, and it most likely contains errors. Users are requested to notify the compiler of any additions or corrections, by e-mail to [Gadus@istar.ca](mailto:Gadus@istar.ca).** If they are available, reprints would be greatly appreciated. They can be mailed to:

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