



COMMERCIAL FISHERIES REVIEW



A review of developments and news of the fishery industries
prepared in the BUREAU OF COMMERCIAL FISHERIES.

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OYSTER FAMILY TREE

Oysters in Louisiana can be found breeding from April until October and in isolated cases even during the winter months. This is why the breeding oysters are called "milky" because of the milky looking fluid they exude at that time.

The milk of the female is composed of millions of minute eggs; that of the male of an incalculable number of extremely minute spermatozoa. A large female has been estimated to contain 60 million eggs. This milk is cast out into the water where the sperm of the male drifts or swims to the egg and penetrates it. This act of fertilization begins the cycle of oyster life. After fertilization takes place the egg divides again and again forming a ball of many tiny cells. In the course of a few hours, small vibrating hairs called "cilia" appear on the developing young oyster. With these cilia it keeps itself suspended while being drifted about by the winds and currents. Presently this embryo develops a pair of tiny shells. These shells grow larger and heavier and finally the young oyster in this stage drops to the bottom and attaches itself to some hard object and gives up forever its own power of moving from place to place.

The young oyster can only attach itself to a clean surface, and after attachment while very small it is easily smothered by sediment and dies. This is why oystermen first lay beds of oyster shells as a foundation before planting the seed oysters. (Louisiana Conservationist, September-October 1962, Louisiana Wild Life and Fisheries Commission.)



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