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CANADIAN AERIAL OBSERVATIONS OF THE NORTH PACIFIC DRIFTNET FLEET

by

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ABSTRACT

During July, 1989, offshore surveillance aircraft, operated by Canadian Maritime Forces Pacific, conducted observation flights to the northern boundary (43⁰ Latitude) of the regulated squid fishing area. A total of 17 vessels was observed; 8 were found north of the July boundary. Five of these vessels were 100 nautical miles north of the boundary. Sea surface temperature in that area was 13.0 C.

INTRODUCTION

The Asian squid driftnet fishery has been operating in the central North Pacific Ocean since 1978. Due to the location of the fishery and the ability of the gear to capture non-target species, several issues have arisen. Within the regulated geographical boundary of the fishery, the interception of North American salmonids is possible (LeBrasseur et al. 1987). The rate of interception will vary from year to year according to the distribution and abundance of the vessels and salmon.

The proportion of the Asian driftnet fleet that targets on salmonids by fishing in areas outside the regulated squid driftnet fishery is of concern to Canada. This issue is a major concern to Canadian fishermen as this fleet could compete directly with Canadian fishermen for the Canadian salmon resource. Aerial surveillance has provided some information on the location, description, and activities of vessels fishing outside of recognized boundaries, and this information is summarized in the present report.

METHODS

During the normal activities of offshore surveillance, aircraft operated by Canadian Maritime Forces Pacific examined the region near the July northern (43° Latitude) boundary of the regulated squid fishing area for evidence of vessels fishing outside the boundary.

Unclassified information about driftnet vessels was made available to the Department of Fisheries and Oceans by the Maritime Forces Pacific Headquarters and forms the basis of this report. The activities of the fishing vessels observed were noted and XBT (expendable bathythermograph) probes were launched from the observation aircraft when vessels were observed.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Observation flights in July, 1989, to the area of the squid fishery recorded 17 vessels (Fig. 1-3). Of these, eight vessels were observed north of 43° N (Fig. 1, 3) and five of these eight vessels were observed north of 44° N (Fig. 3), as much as 100 nautical miles north of the northern boundary. The five vessels found 100 miles north of the boundary were apparently of recent construction and approximately 38 to 43 m long. Nationality or registration number were not discernable. Immediately after the overpass, the vessels steamed away in a southeasterly direction. Sea surface temperature recorded by the XBT at the location was 13.0 C.

LITERATURE CITED

LeBrasseur, R., B. Riddell, and T. Gjernes. 1987. Ocean studies in the Pacific Subarctic boundary area. 16 p. (Document submitted to the Annual Meeting of the International North Pacific Fisheries Commission, Vancouver, Canada, October 1987). Department of Fisheries and Oceans, Biological Sciences Branch, Pacific Biological Station, Nanaimo, B.C. V9R 5K6.

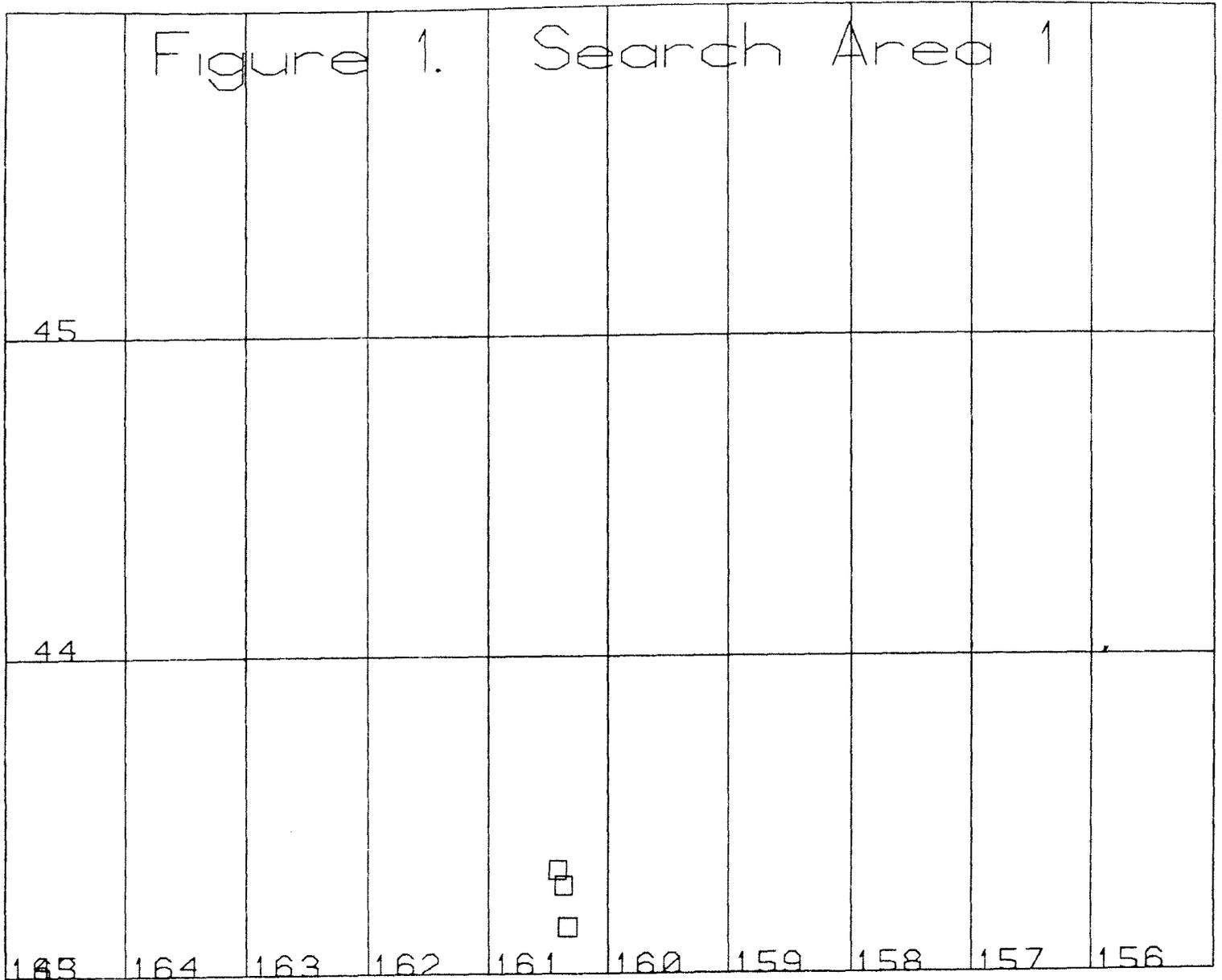


Fig. 1. Observed locations of squid fishing vessels during July, 1989, surveillance flights by Canadian Maritime Forces Pacific aircraft.

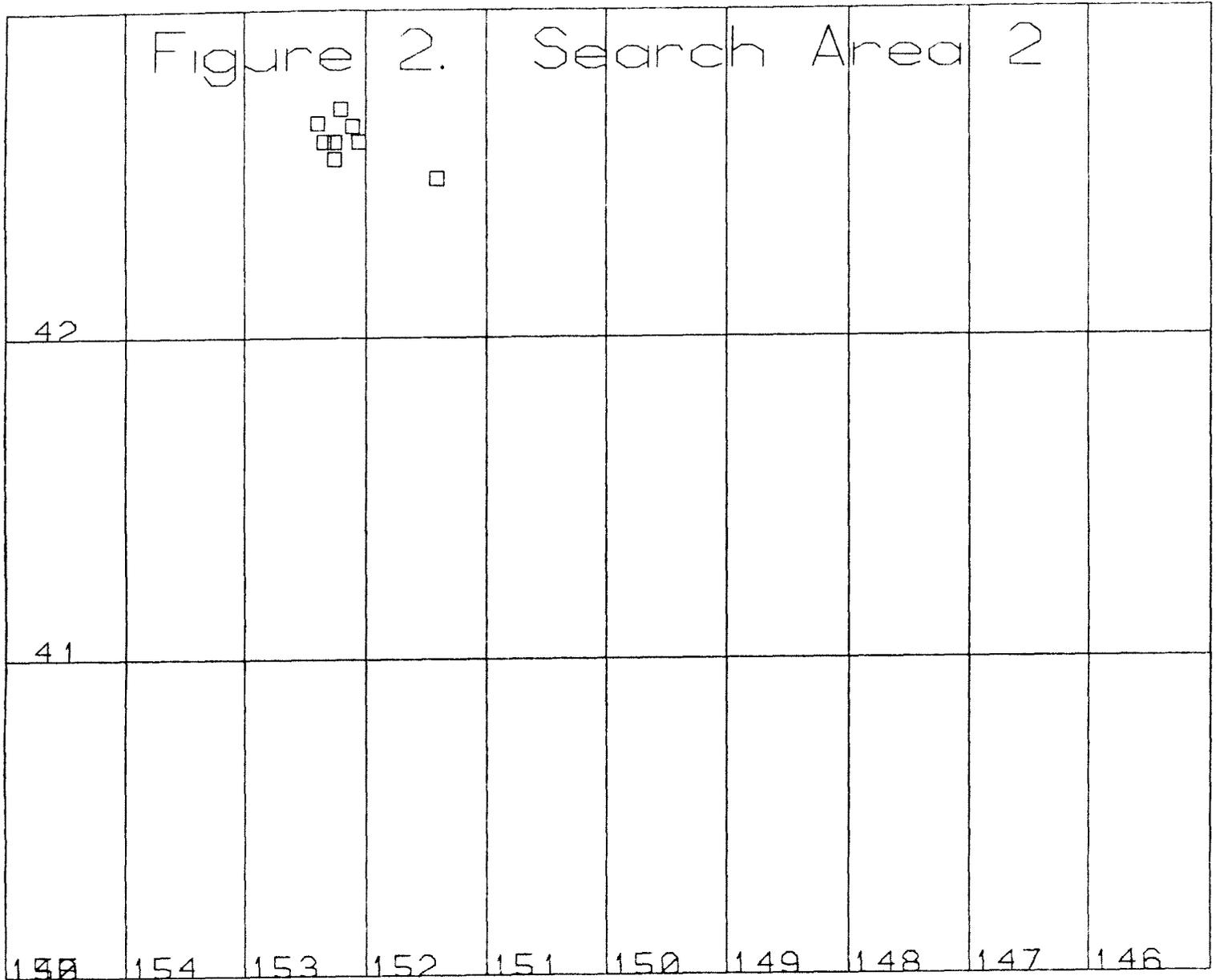


Fig. 2. Observed locations of squid fishing vessels during July, 1989, surveillance flights by Canadian Maritime Forces Pacific aircraft.

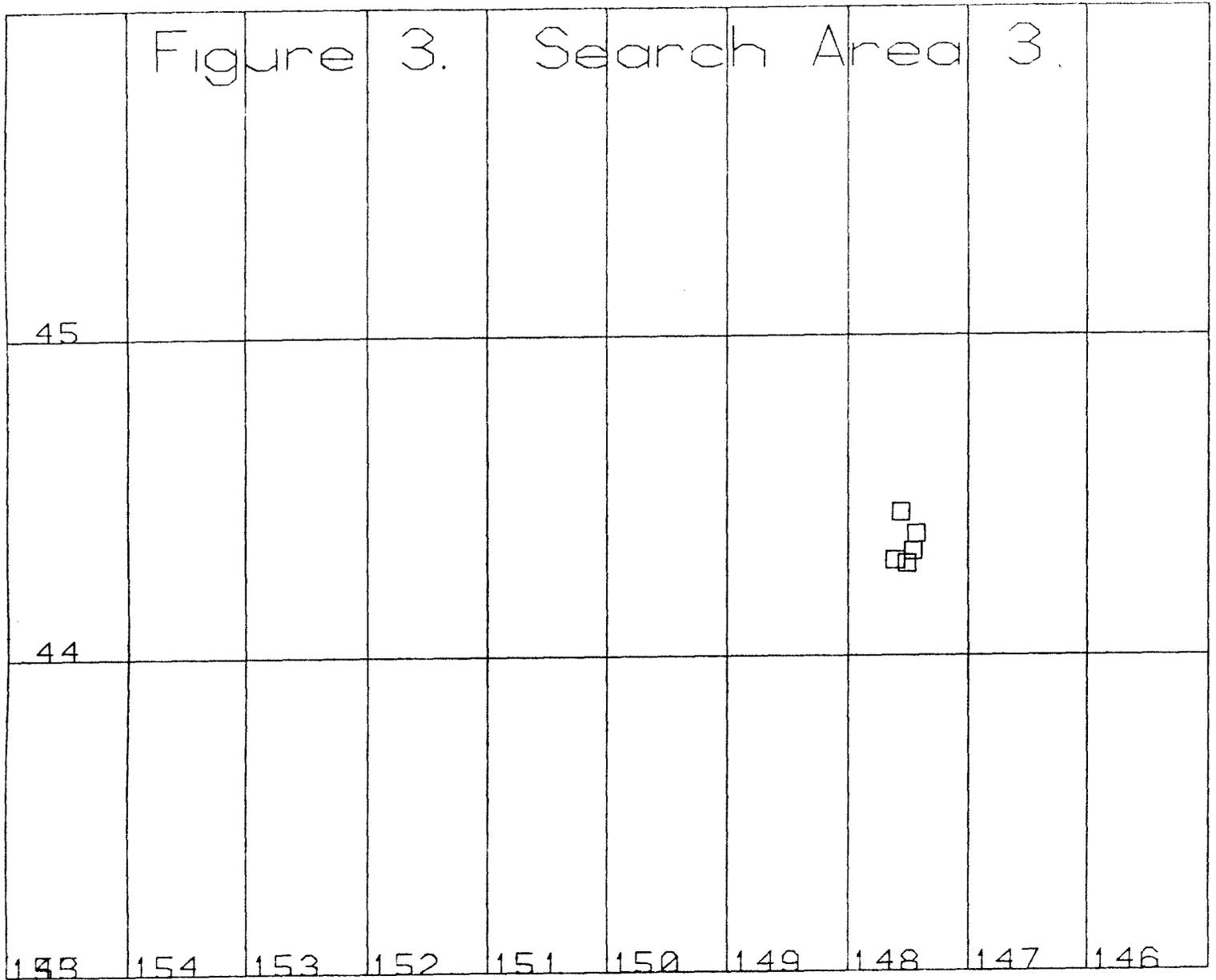


Fig. 3. Observed locations of squid fishing vessels during July, 1989, surveillance flights by Canadian Maritime Forces Pacific aircraft.