



WORLD BRIEFING | ANTARCTICA

Half-Ton Squid Reeled In

By THE ASSOCIATED PRESS
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A New Zealand fishing boat has caught what could prove to be the world's biggest known colossal squid, said the New Zealand fisheries minister, Jim Anderton. The squid — colossal is its species name, or more scientifically, *Mesonychoteuthis hamiltoni* — an estimated 990 pounds and 39 feet long, about the length of a school bus, took two hours to land in [Antarctica's](#) Ross Sea. The fishermen were catching Chilean sea bass, and the squid was feeding on one "when it was hauled from the deep," Mr. Anderton said. The crew and a fisheries official estimated the length and weight. Now frozen, the squid awaits official measurements. But if the estimates hold, the squid would be 330 pounds heavier than the next biggest specimen ever found. Colossal squid, one of the most mysterious creatures of the deep ocean, are found in Antarctic waters and are not related to giant squid, which are found around the coast of New Zealand and are not as heavy as the colossal. "This is going to draw phenomenal interest," said Steve O'Shea, a squid expert at the Auckland University of Technology. "If calamari rings were made from the squid, they would be the size of tractor tires."

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Summary

Focus: A colossal squid (*Mesonychoteuthis hamiltoni*) – not to be confused with giant squid – was captured in the Ross Sea of Antarctica (the sea near New Zealand). It was captured by a fisherman targeting Chilean Sea Bass (Patagonia Toothfish); the article did not mention the gear type being used. The specimen is estimated 990 pounds and 39' long, making it 330 pounds heavier than the next-longest specimen.

Relation to Fish Ecology: It was captured while feeding upon an individual Chilean Sea Bass, which it is known to prey upon. Being both (1) a top-predator and (2) in the arctic where there is little seasonal change, it probably is equilibrium selected. Thus, it is probably vulnerable to overfishing.

Human Players: Commercial fishermen (trawl presumably); concerned conservationists; international treaty signatories (if any treaties apply);

Socioeconomic Issues: As the market for mid-pelagic fish expands, colossal squid will be increasingly captured as bycatch. Conservation initiatives would have to target them as bycatch in international waters, as well as prey abundance. Both would be difficult.

Reporting Unbiased? : Yes, the article had no obvious bias. However, it was extremely short, with almost no analysis of the human-dimensions of the issue which, to me, is the most interesting part.

What knowledge would help understand the issue: How much has fishing effort increased in the arctic mid-pelagic zone? What is the estimated population size of the colossal squid? What are its growth and reproduction (as ascertained from captured samples or growth studies)?

How can a fish-ecologist help: Study the species! Make recommendations regarding vulnerability to bycatch, potential population size, and possibilities for recovery. Council study or management actions because management within international waters takes a long time to orchestrate.