

# MUN researchers link coral and early fish habitat

BY ANDY VEILLEUX

SPECIAL TO THE TELEGRAM

Researchers at Memorial University say recent findings could have major implications for fisheries and marine resource conservation around the world.

Sandrine Baillon and Annie Mercier are part of a larger team that recently published an article on deep-sea coral.

Baillon, a PhD candidate in biology at MUN, says the project was about finding evidence for what many researchers figured was the truth — but nobody has been able to substantiate.

"Everybody thinks deep-sea coral can be used as necessary by fish, but nobody really had any evidence of that," Baillon says. "So that was just amazing to finally show that to people."

The article, titled "Deep cold-water corals as nurseries for fish larvae," took a multi-year approach to studying the subject to ensure the results were accurate. The study concludes that the evidence presents a "strong argument" that cold-water coral (CWC) is essential fish habitat.

"In multi-year surveys, fish larvae were consistently found closely associated with five species of sea pen in April and May," the article



**Sandrine Baillon, a PhD candidate in Biology at MUN, was the lead author on the study titled "Deep cold-water corals as nurseries for fish larvae."**

— Photo by Andy Veilleux/Special to The Telegram

states.

Evidence of the role of CWCs in the early life history of some fish species provides the strongest argument yet for the categorization of CWCs as essential fish habitat in the design of management programs.

Mercier, an associate professor

with the Ocean Sciences Centre of MUN, hopes the evidence will have an effect outside of the field of science.

She hopes stakeholders and resources managers will apply the findings of the study to take better care of CWC ecosystems, "and perhaps give more consideration to

previously neglected types of corals."

The ecosystem-based approach to ocean management is being adopted by many countries, she said. "I hope that Canada can play a leading role in this field."

Mercier argues the best research is being conducted in Canadian waters, but the impact of the studies is global.

"Some of the best evidence for the role of CWC as (early habitat) now comes from research carried out in Canadian waters. However, the species involved (redfish and Anthoptilum sea pen) have worldwide distributions, which makes it relevant to a wide range of stakeholders."

Baillon, a Belgian who spent much of her life in France, knows the strength of Canadian research first-hand. She first ventured to Canada to improve her English and do some graduate research under Mercier.

"When I came in 2008, I just looked at all the labs in English countries to improve my English. I was to spend six months in a country."

She chose to work with Mercier because they both spoke French.

Baillon chose Memorial when it was time for her to consider her PhD options.

"I think it's a good step for me to

come back here. My English is still not perfect. I know I'm fluent in English, and I can do everything in English and it's quite important with research in the fisheries."

The team had access to the coral thanks to research being carried out by the Department of Fisheries and Oceans (DFO), which also helped fund the study.

"(DFO does) some surveys to look at the fish population," Baillon says.

"So they do some trolling, and trolling you catch everything that's on the floor of the ocean. Since 2005, they look at all the coral they bring back to know what they have, and they keep them frozen. Therefore, we have access to all those samples."

Mercier says the study of the deep-sea coral is ongoing at MUN, and there are many projects slated for the future.

"Our efforts to study the deep sea — important and fragile coral and sponge ecosystems in particular — are ongoing. Moreover, together with colleagues at MUN and DFO (and other institutions), we have planned deep-sea expeditions for next September and for July or August 2013."

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## MUN steps up for students, academics on copyright

The issues surrounding copyright have been a hot topic at Canadian universities over the past few months.

Bill C-11 was passed in the House of Commons in late June and by the Senate last week, just before Parliament finished for summer vacation.

The bill, which has been dubbed the Copyright Modernization Act, has been in the works for more than a decade, according to the president of the Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada (AUCC), Paul Davidson.

Bill C-11 is critical for its role in addressing digital copyright issues, which were becoming embarrassingly outdated.

The news of Bill C-11 was massive, but the real battle lies with an agency called Access Copyright (AC) and its new model for licensing agreements. Universities, media and the public have strongly weighed in on both sides of the issue over whether or not to accept the agreement.

Memorial University has not been a silent observer of all the ruckus.

MUN catapulted itself into the forefront of the battle with AC last week by deciding not to sign the model license agreement between the AUCC and AC.

MUN is not alone. Other universities to snub the agreement include the University of British Columbia, University of Windsor, York University, the University of New Brunswick and many others.

Two of the major issues cited by opponents of the agreement are privacy issues and the increase in per-student fees.

MUN sought advice on the new agreement from around the MUN community and provincial and national organizations. It had

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extensive consultations from the Senate Committee on Copyright and Memorial's copyright action committee.

David Wardlaw, provost and vice president academic, said the MUN community was almost unanimous in its advice to not sign the agreement.

I think MUN made the right decision by not signing the agreement.

Signing the agreement would have been the easy way to go for the university. AC has been putting mountains of pressure on universi-

ties to sign on, and there is an air of fear surrounding the agreement.

The term "bully" came out several times in conversations I had concerning AC and its stance on copyright.

The B.C. Library Association called Access Copyright's demands "unfair and unreasonable." Memorial University of Newfoundland Students' Union executive director of external affairs Erin Edwards called it "unnecessary, intrusive and costly."

The most condemning account of AC came from Canadian writer Brian Brett in a recent editorial he wrote for The Tyee.

Brett referred to AC as an "ugly regime," guilty of collecting fees for copyright, but rarely paying out the fees to the appropriate authors of the work.

This fight is not a one-sided affair for Brett, who also takes

shots at universities for not paying appropriate copyright fees to authors.

AC is worse than an "ugly regime." Its home page currently features a story about AC taking the owner and operator of a copy centre to court for copyright infringement. T&T Copy Centre, which is located near the University of Toronto's St. George Campus, was caught infringing copyright through AC's "monitoring."

The owner has been sentenced to six months of jail time for evidence he was illegally "photocopying ... course packs and textbooks" for students.

There is some twisted idea of justice when a multimillion dollar corporation takes a small copy centre to court for helping students.

AC is a monopoly for copyright in Canada. A monopoly.

According to its website, they

"help businesses, academic institutions, copy shops, and other users of copyrighted materials comply with copyright through (their) range of licensing solutions."

Launching a court case and having a small copy centre owner sentenced to jail time does not seem like much help from where I am sitting.

Every university that opts out of the new agreement increases the scope of the copyright war. MUN is not a small university, and its decision to join the fight is a shot in the arm for the revolution.

Maybe it is not fair to call it a revolution, but there is certainly a lot of momentum growing against AC and its unrealistic notion of controlling copyright.

Andy Veilleux is a graduate student at MUN. Email him at andyveilleux@gmail.com.



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