For Immediate Release
November 16, 2018
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New research suggests "Goldilox" effect in monkfish seeking "just right" conditions in a warming ocean.

East Falmouth, Massachusetts—A new study by the Cape Cod-based Coonamessett Farm Foundation (CFF) suggests that the American monkfish—a popular menu item often dubbed the "poor man's lobster"—are on the move from season to season. The study suggests the fish are searching for "just right" conditions in an increasingly warming ocean driven by climate change.

Liese Siemann, PhD., who led the three-year study explains, "Scientists have known for years that oceans are warming due to climate change. But what we have yet to understand is how fish will adapt."

"**Summering on the bank: Seasonal distribution and abundance of monkfish on Georges Bank,** by Liese A. Siemann, Carl J. Huntsberger, Jasper S. Leavitt, and Ronald J. Smolowitz, took place over 27 off-shore survey trips on commercial scallop fishing boats. Researchers captured more than 6,000 monkfish to observe changes in the seasonal distribution and relative abundance of monkfish in the area. Analysis of that data shows clear, seasonal changes in the ocean areas studied.

"Just like the storybook character, Goldilox, they're seeking waters that are 'not too hot, not too cold," says Siemann. In spring and summer, monkfish were widely distributed throughout the Georges Bank, but in fall and winter, they largely moved to deeper waters, away from cooler air temperatures.

The American monkfish is an important commercial species that is widely found from North Carolina to southern Nova Scotia. Siemann's findings are important to the

commercial fishing industry, particularly commercial scallop fishers who are permitted to land, but do not necessarily target, monkfish. She explains, “Our study shows that data collected by dredge surveys primarily used by scallop fishers provides a full and accurate assessment of monkfish movements driven by seasonal changes in bottom temperature.”

The study also presents important findings for understanding shifts in the species’ movement and distribution of due to climate change. “Our findings should be useful in the development of management strategies that address changes in thermal habitat due to climate change,” Siemann adds.

Read the full CFF study here:

Cooonamessett Farm Foundation (CFF) is a non-profit research organization that conducts scientific research in support of sustainable fishing, farming, aquaculture and renewable energy. For more information about CFF, visit: www.cfarm.org.

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