WILDLIFE SOS



FROM THE SUN YESTERDAY

WORLD - WIDE investigations have started in a bid to find the mysterious killer which is slaughtering thousands of birds, fish and seals off Britain's coast.

The Government-run Nature Conservancy has asked all world animal health organisations for details of similar wildlife destruction.

And the World Wildlife Fund yesterday called for an independent investigation.

A spokesman for the fund, which raises money for conservation, said: "When we read the disclosures in The Sun we realised how serious the situation is.

"We want to see a group of experts go thoroughly into the matter."

One theory being examined is that the mystery killer might be a man-made chemical, polychlorinated biphenyl known as PCB.

By SUN REPORTER

Scarred cod check

A fishery inspector is being sent to Deal, Kent, to try to get samples of diseased fish caught there, an Agriculture Ministry spokesman said last night.

And the Kent Fisheries Officer, Mr A. V. Richardson, warned that the English Channel had received as much pollution as it could take.

He said he believed porpoises and dolphins had been driven away from the area by pollution.

TESTS

Laboratory tests on the chemical are now being made at the Nature Conservancy experimental station in Huntingdonshire.

Large concentrations of what looks like PCB have been found in carcases of 10,000 guillemots -- sea birds -- found in the Irish Sea.

Similar discoveries have been made in the tissues and eggs of birds and fish in the Baltic area and in Holland.

PCB is used as a lubricant and raw material in the paint and plastics industry, and also to treat electrical components.

The only manufacturer of PCB in Britain is Monsanto Chemicals, a subsidiary of an American company with headquarters in London.

A spokesman for the firm said yesterday that the process it used produced no waste.

DUMPED

He added: "We can think of no reason for anyone to dump PCB in the sea. We have never dumped any."

If there had been dumping, it could have been done by foreign ships outside territorial waters, he said.

Another theory is that some other material as yet unidentified—has been thrown into the sea.

There it has undergone a chemical change to produce a substance similar to PCB.

Chemicals known to be toxic have to be dumped in more than 2,000 fathoms. But others can be disposed of at will, the Agriculture Ministry said yesterday.

Although the truth of the heartbreaking slaughter has yet to be found, there has been enough evidence of chemical and pesticide poisoning of wildlife to cause world-wide concern.

TOXIC

In Ontario, thousands of fish have been poisoned in the lakes by DDT.

This pesticide is also responsible for deaths of partridge and wild pheasants in Hungary.

Around the inland Great Lakes of Canada and the United States, thousands of seagulls have died from mercury poisoning.

Even our inland rivers are slowly being poisoned.

Mr Ronald Towns, water protection officer in Lee River Conservancy Catchment Board, estimates that about 1,000 miles of British rivers are so polluted that nothing can live in them.

In the Commons tomorrow Mr Peter Mills (Con., Torrington) will question Mr Cledwyn Hughes, Minister of Agriculture, about the destruction of wildlife.

The Ethics of our Affluence

15m. ITALIANS HIT BY 'FLU

ROME, Monday—Drug-stores and hospitals were swamped with flu victims as the number of Italians hit by the bug topped 15 million.

Medical men fear the epidemic could affect half the country's 54 million.

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