

## 1976 Eastern Bering Sea King Crab Survey

The eastern Bering Sea king crab survey is conducted to provide technical information on the condition of the stocks needed by agencies which allocate the catch among fishing interests. This technical information is used to determine yearly changes in stock abundance and composition due to foreign and domestic fishing, and environmental changes. An additional use for the survey data is as an aid to fishermen and processors in determining productive areas and general availability of crabs from year to year. This report is directed toward this use and is intended to provide useful information on abundance and distribution of king crabs, as determined by the 1976 survey conducted in the eastern Bering Sea by the NOAA RV Oregon.

### Survey Area and Methods

The area covered by the 1976 survey includes the region from inner Bristol Bay west to the Pribilofs and, in the north-south direction, from Unimak Island to Cape Newenham. This area is shown in the accompanying charts in which survey station locations are indicated by numbers or symbols. At these station locations, which are approximately 20 miles apart, a half-hour trawl haul was made with a 400-mesh Eastern otter trawl. The net is constructed of 3 1/2-inch web throughout and has a 1 1/2-inch codend liner. There are 15 8-inch floats on the headrope, a weighted chain footrope, 15 fathom dandy lines and 10 fathom bridles. The doors used were Astoria "V" type, measuring 6 X 9 feet. During each tow bottom profiles and traces in the water were recorded with an echosounder. At the end of each haul a surface-to-bottom water temperature profile was obtained with an XBT probe. The catch of crabs was then separated from groundfish and data such as numbers caught, size, sex, shell condition, and egg condition were recorded.

After the cruise was completed, the data were processed to provide stock size estimates and distribution over the survey area. Crab stock estimates were obtained for each station by calculating the numbers caught per square nautical mile trawled, and expanding this figure to the 20 X 20 mile area where the station is located. The estimate for the total stock in the area is made by adding the estimates for all stations. Distribution of crabs is denoted in the following charts in two ways: (1) by numbers caught per half-hour haul, and (2) by symbols indicating numbers caught per square nautical mile trawled. A questionnaire is provided at the end of this report so that you may express your preference on these two types of charts, as well as on other aspects of the report.



## Survey Results

In 1976 186 trawl hauls were made by the NOAA RV Oregon from 29 May to 9 August. King crabs were encountered in 136 of the hauls. This is a higher percentage than in past years and is due to the fact that two and sometimes more hauls were made in many of the station blocks on the king crab grounds.

The stock size estimates obtained from these hauls are shown in Table 1 for legal and pre-recruit red (P. camtschatica) and blue (P. platypus) king crabs. For all red king crabs, abundance appears to be up substantially from 1975 and the reason for this is unclear. It is possible that the increase represents an influx of crabs from outside the survey area. We know from data obtained during the 1975 Outer Continental Shelf Environmental Assessment Project (OCSEAP) survey that red king crabs occur outside our traditional survey area (Figure 1). Further analysis of these data will determine if abundance outside the survey area is sufficient to cause the increase noted.

Any theories advanced to account for the current increase depend on the reliability of the survey, which up to now appears to be adequate for legal red king crabs. Figure 2 shows the relationship between catch-per-pot lift from the fishery and Oregon abundance estimates from previous years. This indicates that through 1975 there has been good agreement between survey and fishing fleet data regarding current trends in abundance of legals. We hope to obtain further information on the validity of the survey estimates for legal red king crabs from the tagging experiment carried out in June and July of 1976 aboard the charter vessel Foremost. Tags returned during the 1976 season will allow an independent estimate of the abundance of legal crabs. We would like to stress that the more tags are turned in, the more accurate will be the estimate of the population.

The abundance of pre-recruit and legal blue king crabs is down substantially from 1975. However, not enough data is available on this species to make valid statements regarding trends in abundance. Figure 1 indicates that our survey has only recently covered the Pribilof Island stock and that additional areas of blue king crabs exist further north. However, preliminary results from the OCSEAP survey indicate that the Pribilof area accounts for about 80% of all blue king crabs surveyed from 55° to 62°N.

The 1976 summer distribution of red king crabs is shown in Charts 1-4. As in 1975, the highest catches of legal crabs were made north of Unimak Island (Chart 1). Pre-recruits were most abundant just north of the outer Alaska Peninsula (Chart 2). Legal crabs made up a higher proportion of the catches at the more northwesterly stations in the red king crab area (Chart 3) and skipmolt males were most abundant at inshore stations (Chart 4).

The distribution of blue king crabs, limited to the Pribilof Island area, is shown in Charts 5-8. Legal crabs were more numerous between Saint Paul and Saint George

Islands (Chart 5), while pre-recruits were infrequently encountered (Chart 6). As in 1975, the proportion of legal crabs was highest at the edges of the blue king crab area (Chart 7) and percentages of skipmolts were low in general (Chart 8). Positions, catch data, depth, and bottom temperatures are presented for each station where king crabs were caught in Tables 2 and 3. Chart 9 shows the distribution of bottom temperatures in the survey area.

Table 1.--Population estimates in millions of crabs for eastern Bering Sea king crabs from NOAA/NMFS surveys.

RED KING CRABS

<u>Year</u>	<u>Pre-recruits*</u>	<u>Legals*</u>
1969	19.5	8.9
1970	8.4	5.3
1972	8.3	5.6
1973	25.9	10.9
1974	31.2	20.8
1975	29.6	17.6
1976	49.3	32.7

BLUE KING CRABS

1974	3.1	1.9
1975	8.0	7.5
1976	2.1	3.9

\* The size groups 5.0"-6.25" and over 6.25" have been used for pre-recruits and legals, respectively, for comparative purposes.

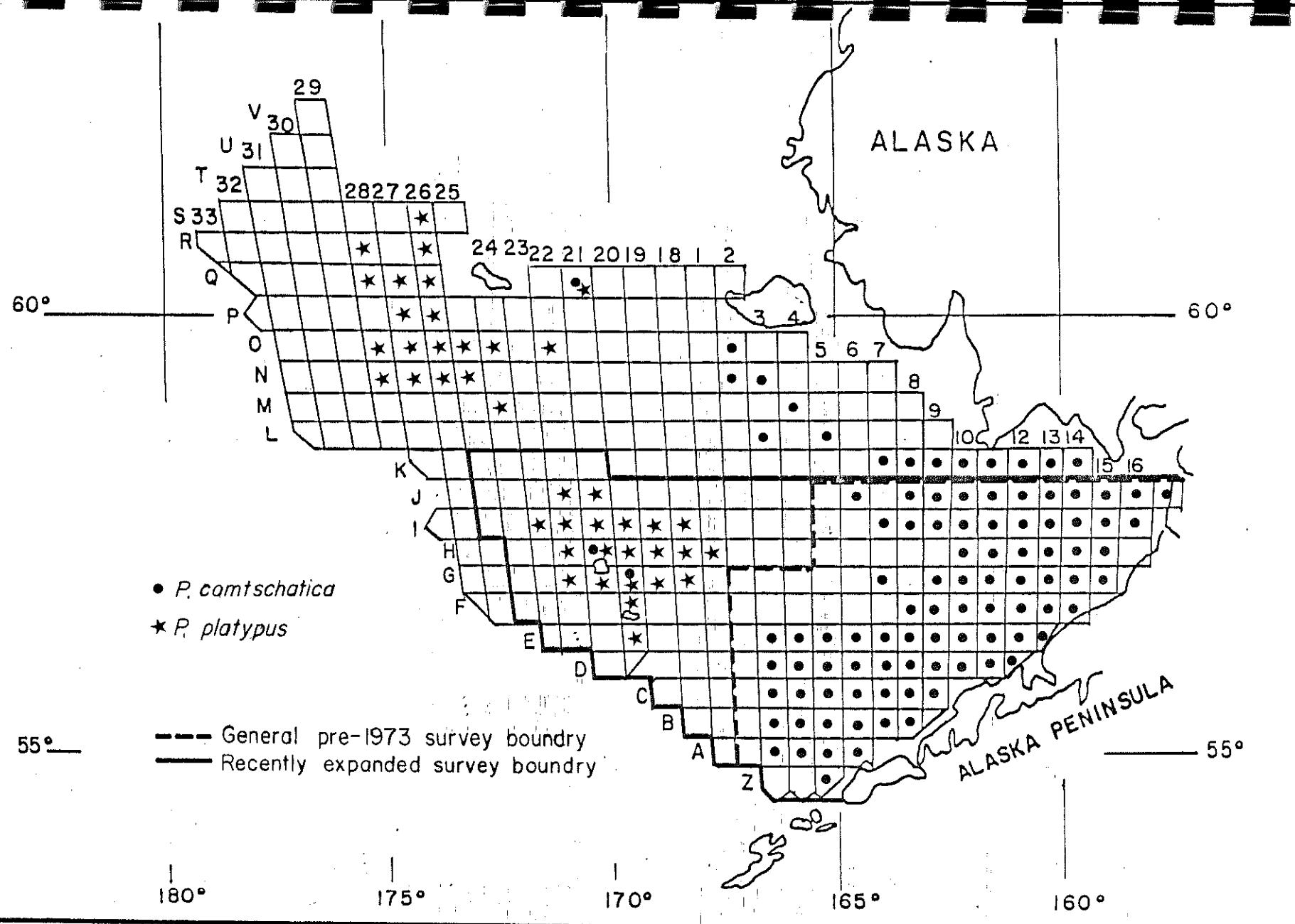


FIGURE 1 OCCURRENCE OF KING CRABS IN THE 1975 OCSEAP SURVEY.

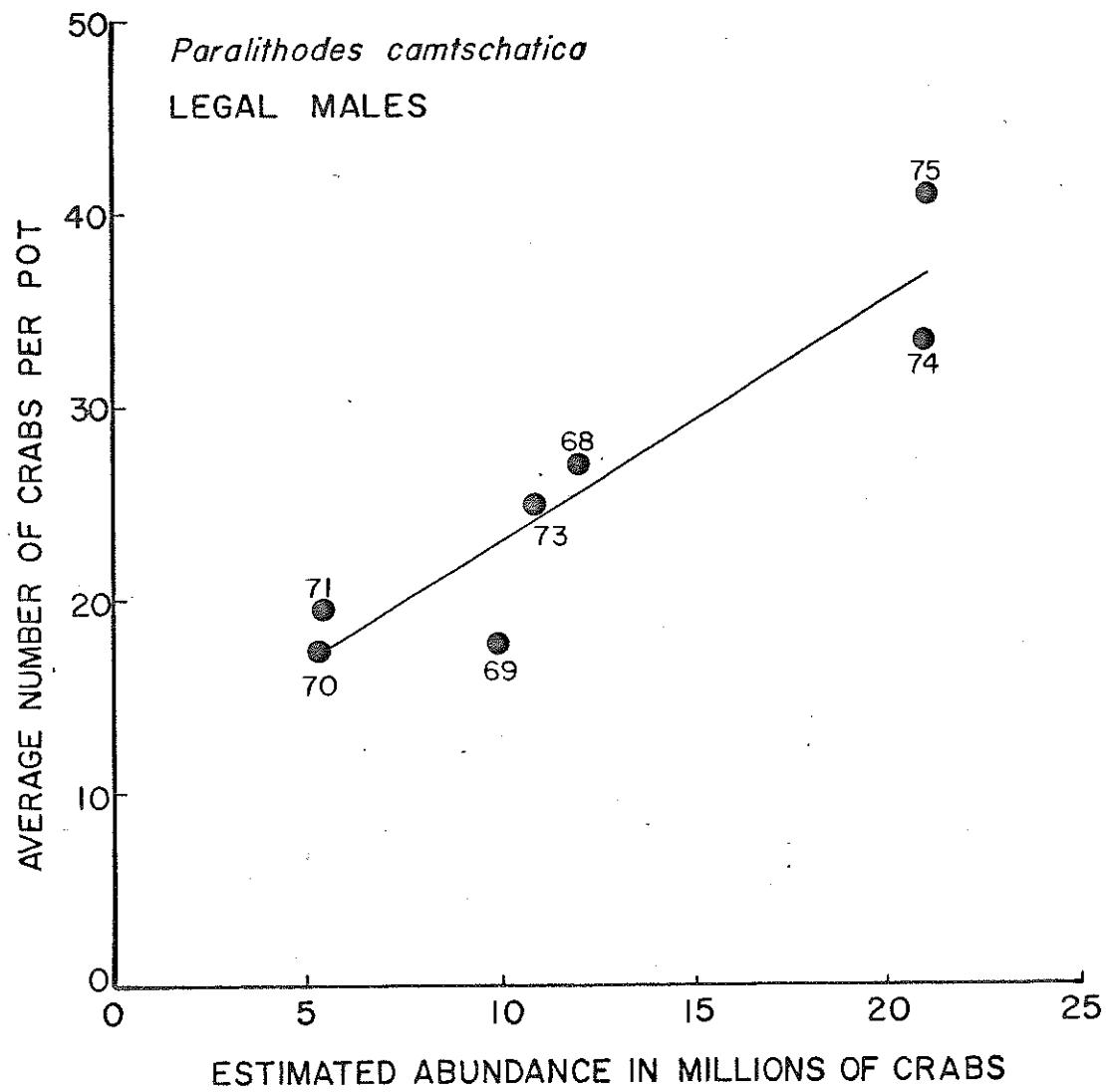
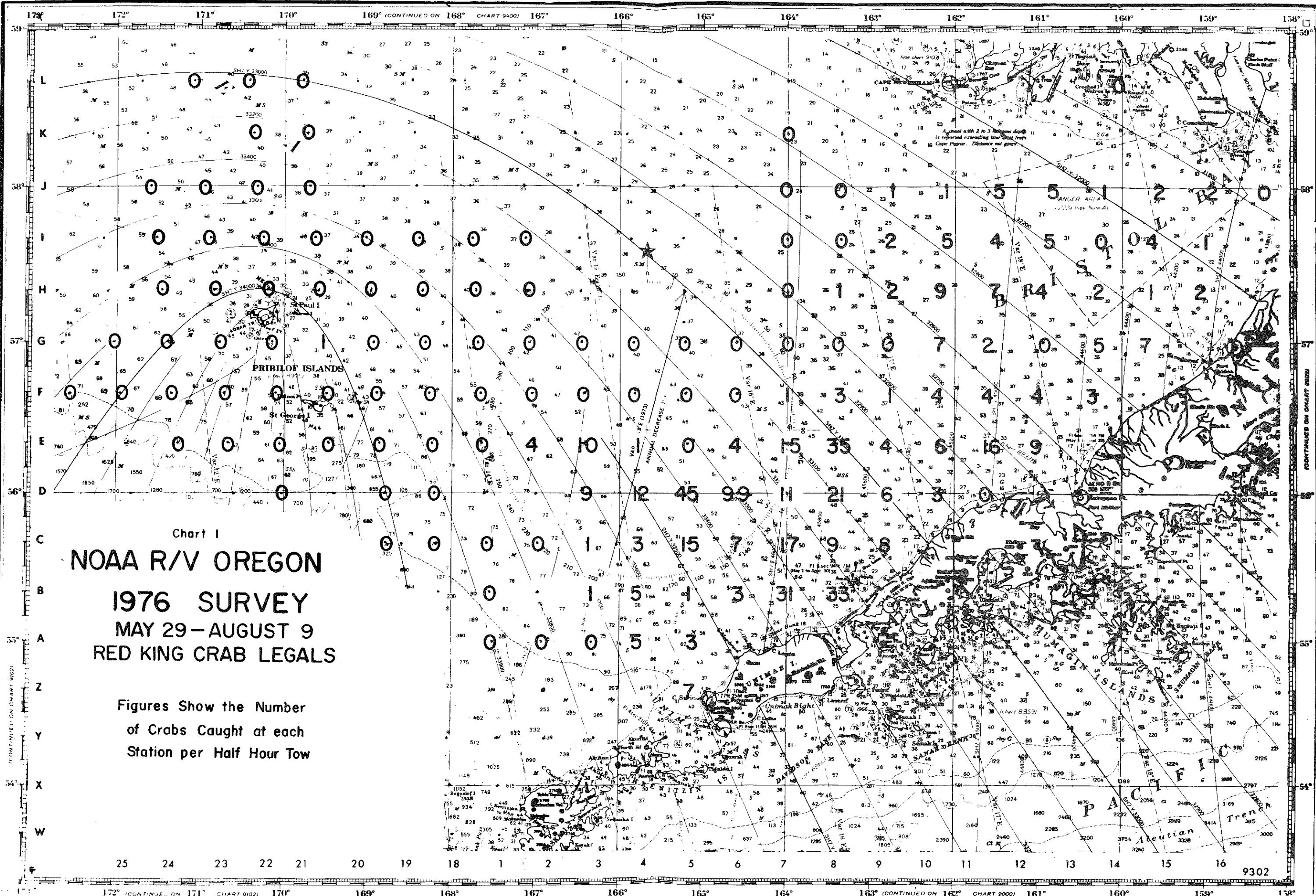
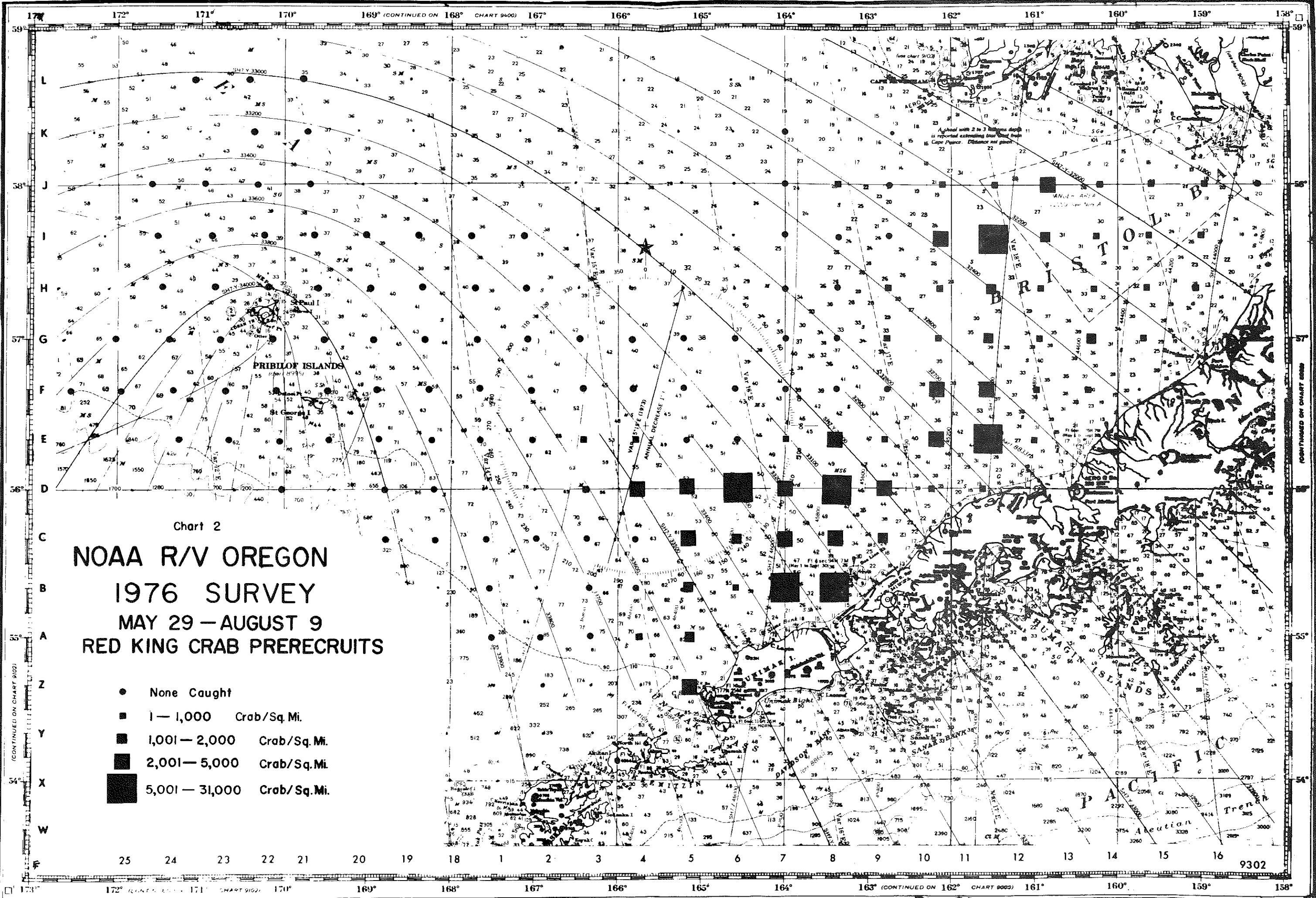


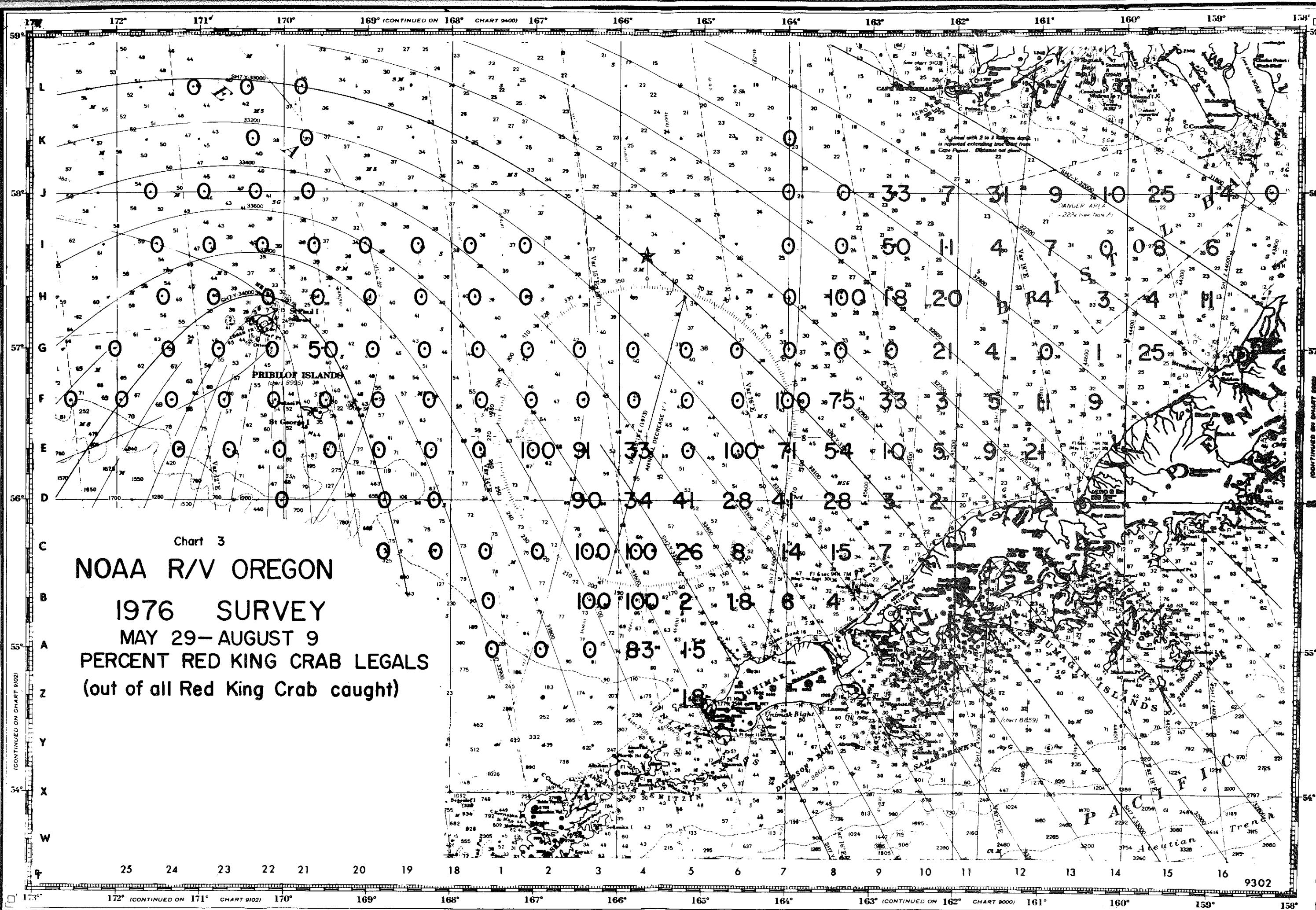
FIGURE 2 RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN AVERAGE CATCH PER POT  
(U.S. FISHERY) AND ABUNDANCE ESTIMATES.

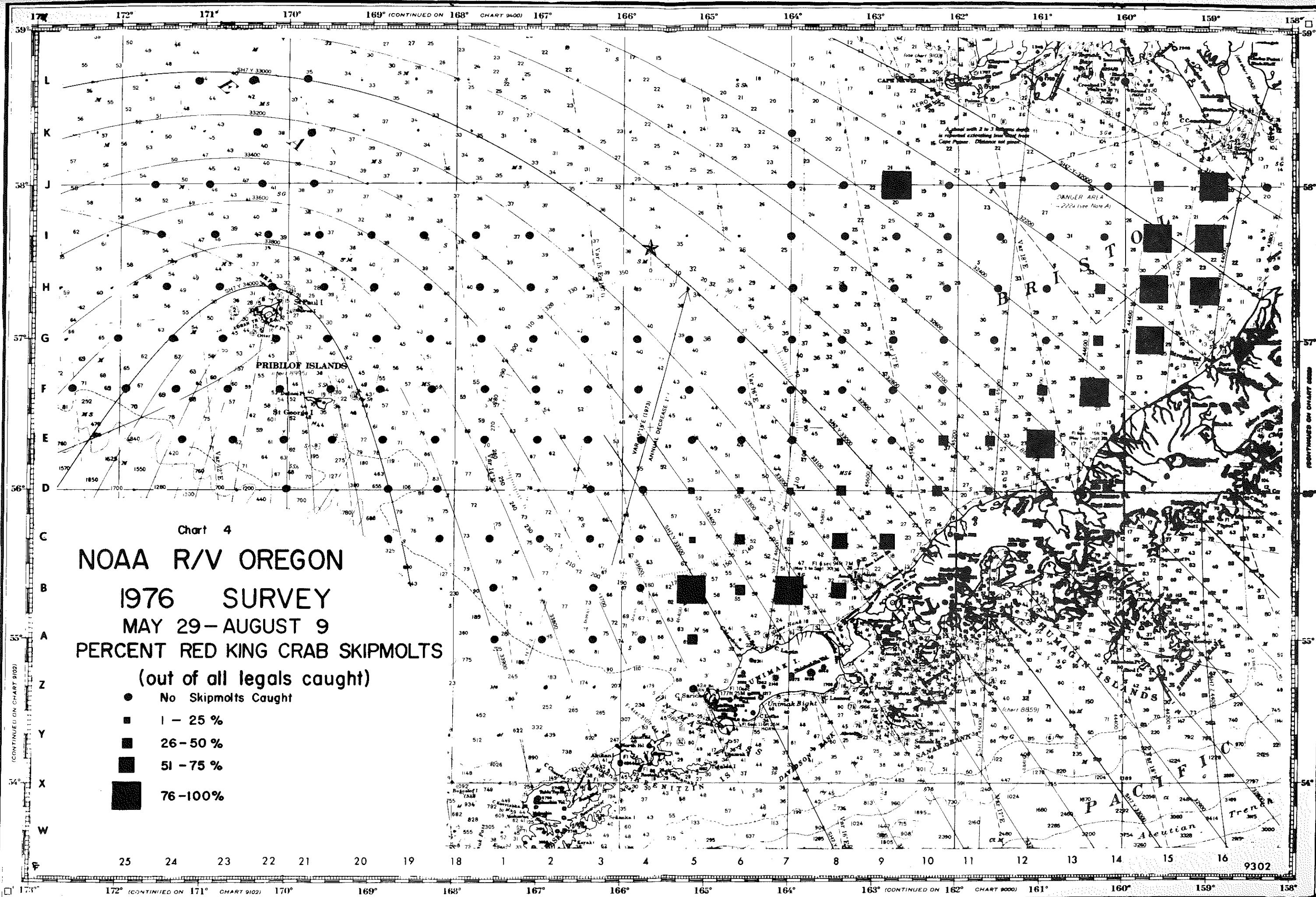


**Chart 1**  
**NOAA R/V OREGON**  
**1976 SURVEY**  
**MAY 29 - AUGUST 9**  
**RED KING CRAB LEGALS**

Figures Show the Number  
of Crabs Caught at each  
Station per Half Hour Tow







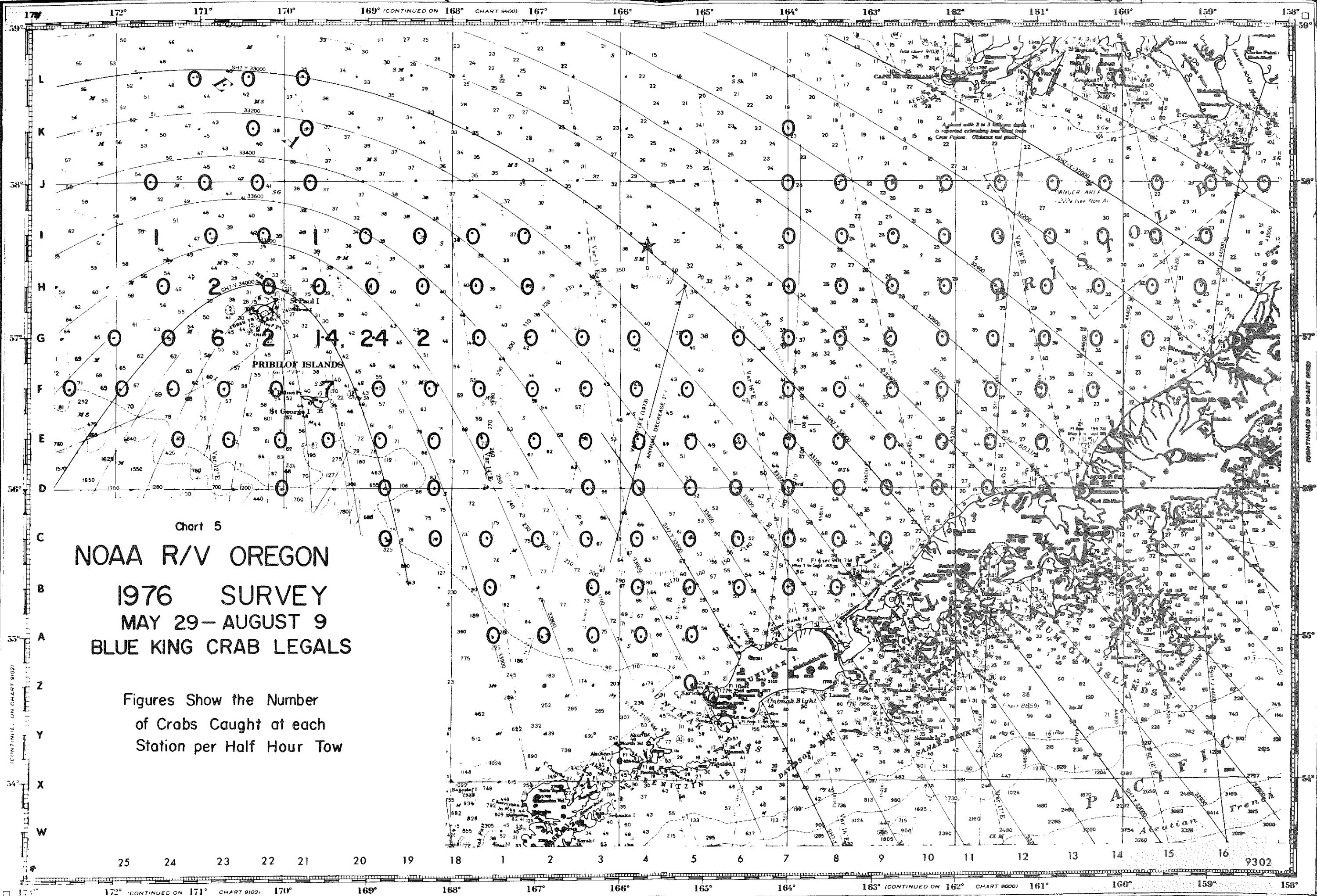
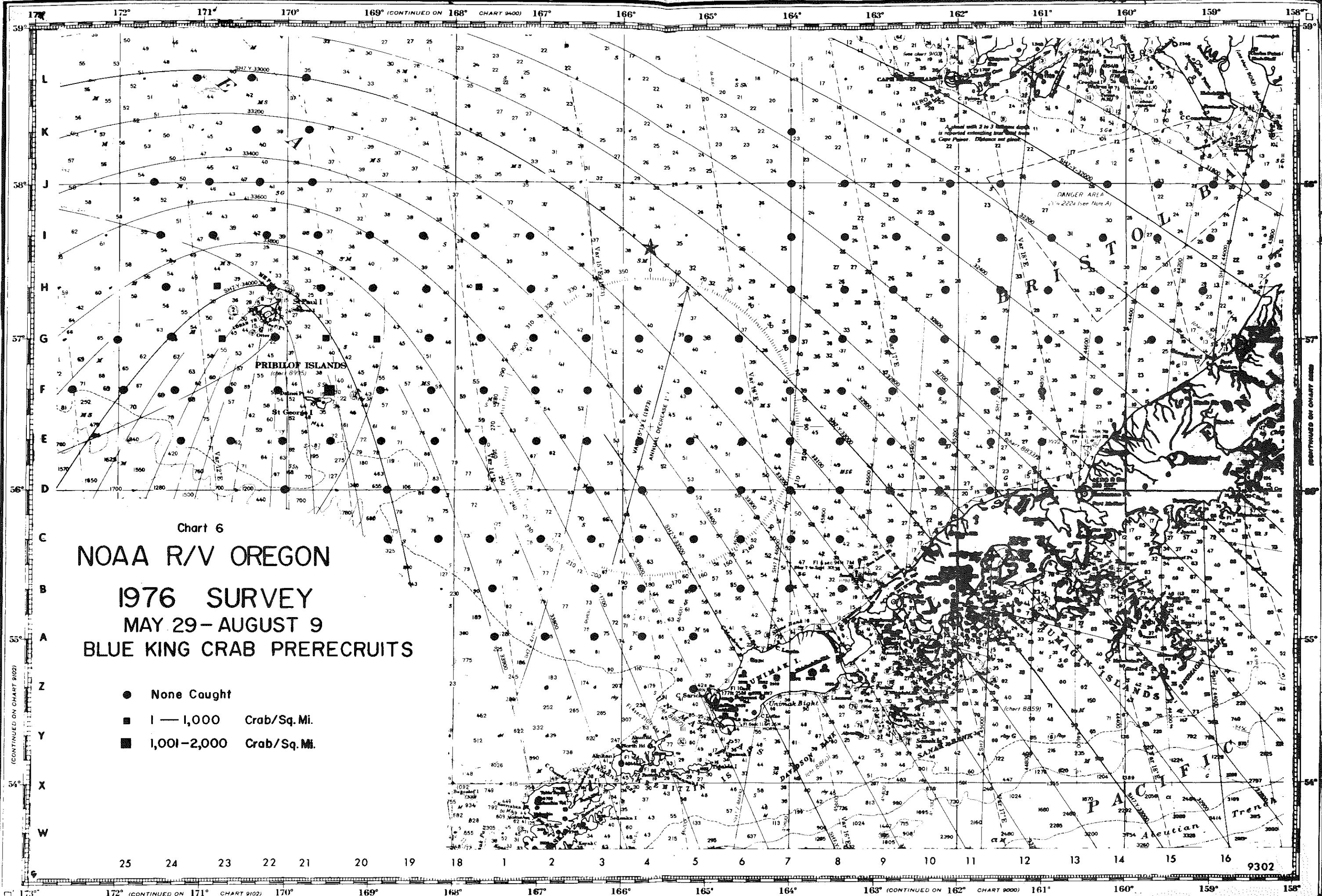
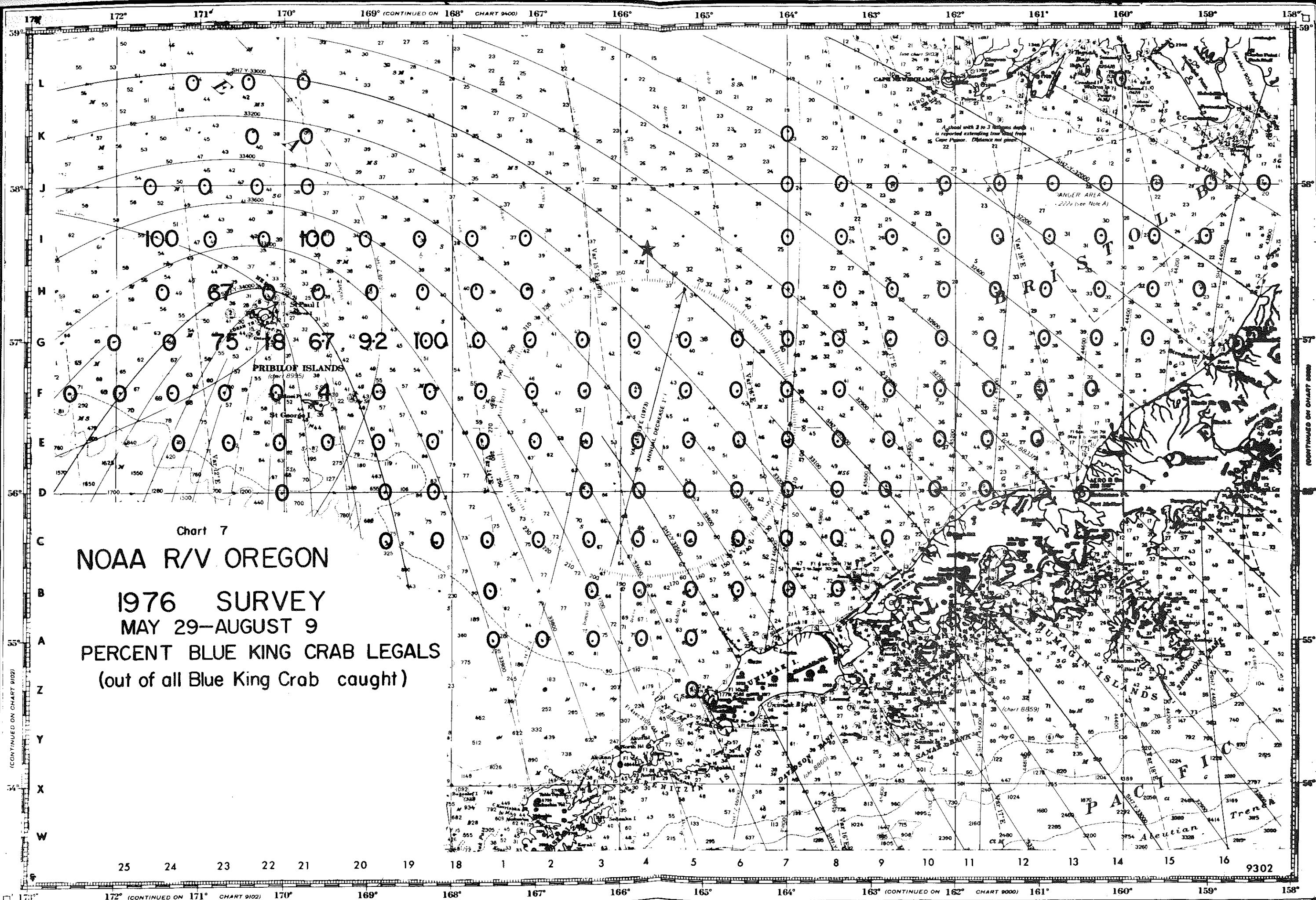


Chart 5  
**NOAA R/V OREGON**  
**1976 SURVEY**  
**MAY 29 - AUGUST 9**  
**BLUE KING CRAB LEGALS**

Figures Show the Number  
of Crabs Caught at each  
Station per Half Hour Tow

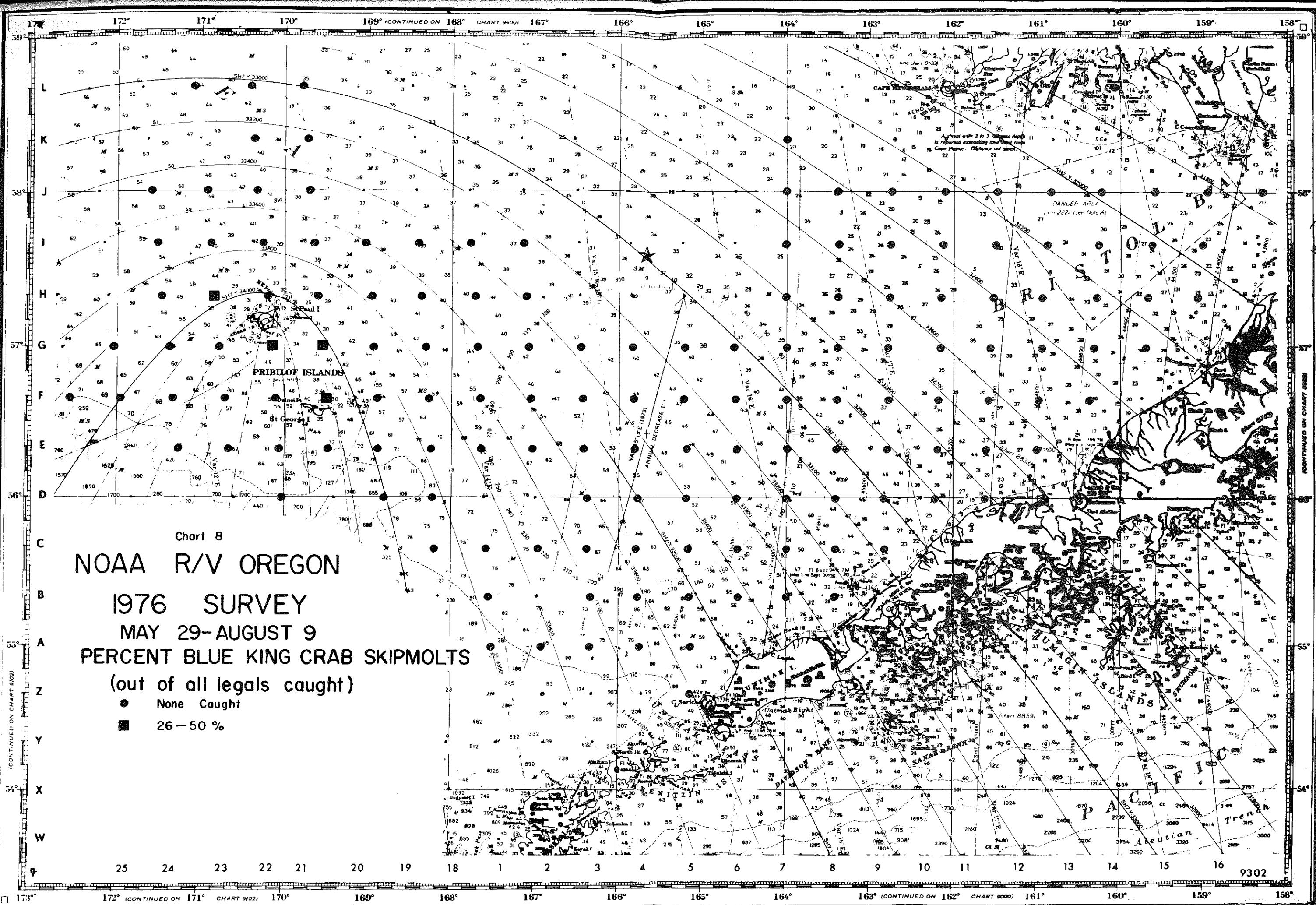




**NOAA R/V OREGON**

**1976 SURVEY**  
**MAY 29-AUGUST 9**  
**PERCENT BLUE KING CRAB LEGALS**  
**(out of all Blue King Crab caught)**





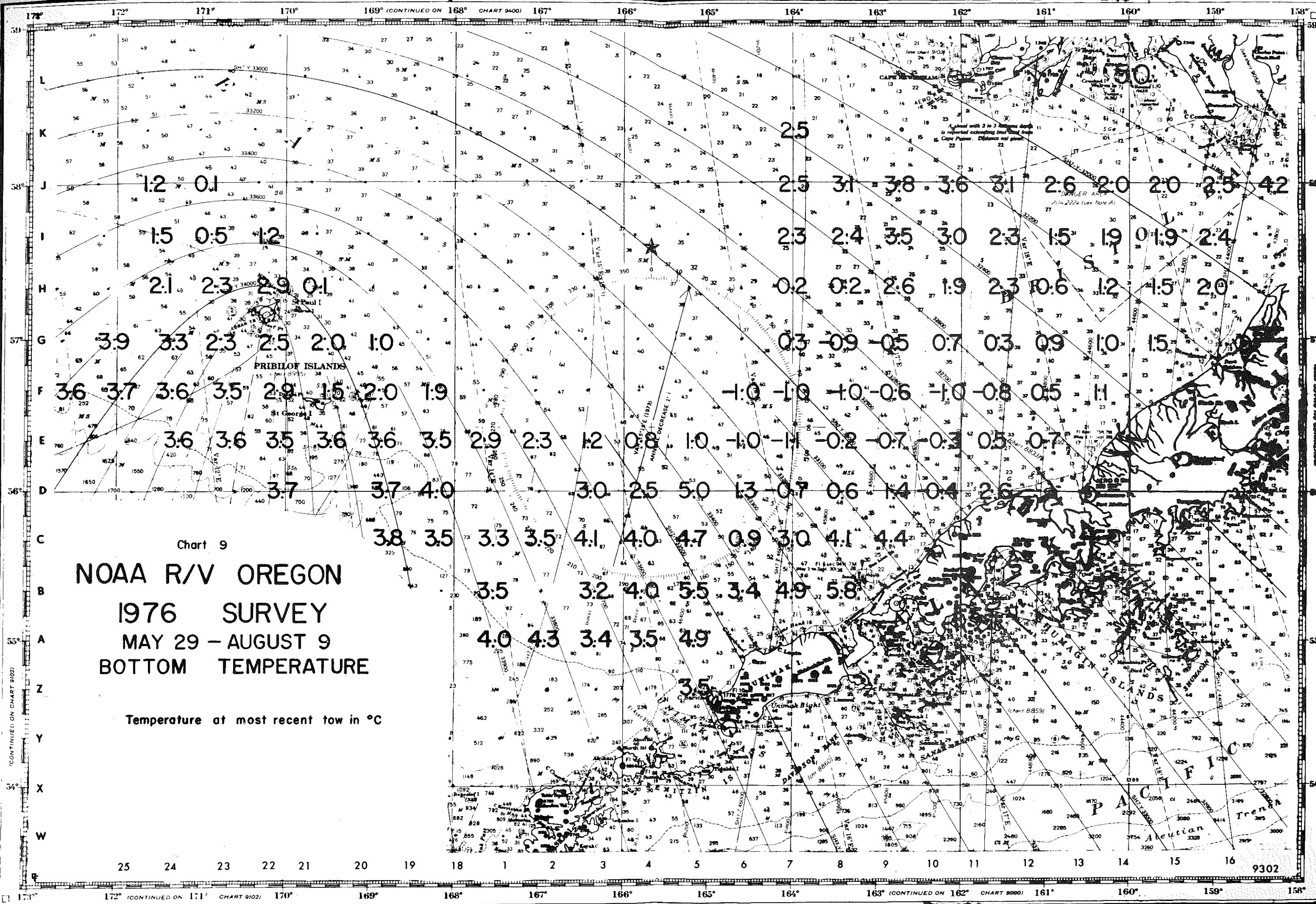


TABLE 2. RED KING CRAB (P. CAMTSCHATICA), 1976 EASTERN BERING SEA. NUMBERS OF PRE-RECRUITS AND LEGALS CAUGHT PER AREA TRAWLED, PLUS OTHER SURVEY DATA BY STATION. PRE-RECRUITS, 5 TO 6.5 INCHES, LEGALS, OVER 6.5 INCHES.

STATION	DATE	LAT	LONG	POSITION	LORAN C	DEPTH (FVS)	ROT.	TEMP. (C)	NOS/ SQM	PRE- RECRUITS		LEGALS	
										*****	*****	NOS/ SQM	PRCNT
										SQMI	SKIPS	LEGAL	PRCNT
404	5/30/76	55-03	165-47	Y33655	Z45573	70	3-5	56	1255	0	0	95	1
404	5/30/76	55-01	165-47	Y33656	Z45562	70	3-3	0	1000	0	0	80	1
404	5/30/76	55-00	165-44	Y33652	Z45545	69		0	1300	0	0	70	1
404	5/30/76	55-00	165-40	Y33642	Z45520	68		0	1300	0	0	60	1
405	5/30/76	55-00	165-10	Y33569	Z45242	58	3-5	983	536	0	0	0	1
405	5/30/76	55-00	165-11	Y33572	Z45243	59	3-1	1773	507	0	0	0	1
405	5/30/76	55-01	165-10	Y33568	Z45239	59		2280	507	0	0	0	1
405	5/30/76	55-02	165-03	Y33558	Z45232	59		750	258	0	0	0	1
405	5/30/76	55-03	165-05	Y33551	Z45220	59		135	760	0	0	0	1
405	5/30/76	55-00	165-09	Y33556	Z45234	58	4-9	1976	760	0	0	0	1
403	7/05/76	55-19	165-22	Y33704	Z45827	70	3-2	0	600	0	0	0	1
404	6/21/76	55-20	165-47	Y33613	Z45604	63	4-0	0	100	0	0	0	1
405	5/15/76	55-21	165-12	Y33515	Z45593	60	3-5	1621	253	0	0	0	1
406	8/01/76	55-20	165-11	Y33516	Z45592	59	3-5	1393	253	0	0	0	1
406	5/31/76	55-20	164-35	Y33426	Z45158	54	3-0	380	380	0	0	0	1
406	5/26/76	55-18	164-38	Y33428	Z45170	55	3-0	101	404	0	0	0	1
406	5/26/76	55-19	164-35	Y33429	Z45158	54	3-0	175	404	0	0	0	1
406	5/26/76	55-22	164-32	Y33413	Z45141	54	3-0	2532	456	0	0	0	1
406	5/27/76	55-23	164-32	Y33411	Z45144	54		1364	456	0	0	0	1
406	5/27/76	55-22	164-37	Y33423	Z45170	55		824	456	0	0	0	1
406	8/01/76	55-20	164-35	Y33421	Z45158	54	3-4	0	507	0	0	0	1
407	5/28/76	55-21	164-31	Y33335	Z45940	49	2-5	29671	1941	0	0	0	1
407	8/01/76	55-12	164-00	Y33358	Z45919	28	5-9	362	289	0	0	0	1
407	8/01/76	55-13	164-00	Y33355	Z45919	29	5-9	380	320	0	0	0	1
407	8/02/76	55-18	164-00	Y33337	Z45931	39	5-2	490	394	0	0	0	1
407	8/02/76	55-20	164-00	Y33335	Z45933	40		523	433	0	0	0	1
407	8/02/76	55-23	164-00	Y33324	Z45936	40	2-7	4342	1018	0	0	0	1
407	8/02/76	55-24	164-00	Y33322	Z45937	40		4040	1620	0	0	0	1
408	8/05/76	55-21	163-24	Y33240	Z45704	26		4040	1730	0	0	0	1
403	7/05/76	55-39	166-22	Y33662	Z46873	62		6525	6566	0	0	0	1
404	5/21/76	55-40	165-48	Y33564	Z45656	62		6525	6566	0	0	0	1
404	7/31/76	55-40	165-48	Y33564	Z46557	62		6525	6566	0	0	0	1
405	6/14/76	55-41	165-10	Y33458	Z45424	40	2-4	6525	6566	0	0	0	1
405	8/02/76	55-39	165-09	Y33461	Z46414	40	4-7	1937	214	0	0	0	1
406	5/31/76	55-40	164-35	Y33351	Z45184	38	5-7	2266	2266	0	0	0	1
406	5/31/76	55-35	164-43	Y33450	Z46235	54		1200	330	0	0	0	1
406	5/31/76	55-39	164-38	Y33373	Z46206	52		1200	330	0	0	0	1
406	5/31/76	55-40	164-32	Y33354	Z45174	41		6525	6566	0	0	0	1
406	5/29/76	55-40	164-30	Y33346	Z46159	51		6525	6566	0	0	0	1
406	5/29/76	55-40	164-27	Y33340	Z45141	51		6525	6566	0	0	0	1
406	5/29/76	55-40	164-37	Y33364	Z46201	56		6525	6566	0	0	0	1
407	5/31/76	55-40	164-00	Y33263	Z45063	50		1200	330	0	0	0	1
407	5/28/76	55-40	164-06	Y33262	Z45094	50		1200	330	0	0	0	1
407	5/29/76	55-38	164-02	Y33277	Z45970	51		1200	330	0	0	0	1
407	5/29/76	55-38	163-57	Y33264	Z45941	51		1200	330	0	0	0	1

TABLE 2. CONTINUED

STATION	DATE	POSITION			DEPTH (FMS)	ROT.	RECRUITS	LEGALS			
		LAT	LONG	LOCRAN C				TE/P. (C)	NOS/ SOVI	NOS/ SOVI	PRCNT LEGAL
C07	6/09/76	55-38	163-52	Y33253 Z45917	51		1266	632	17	32	
C07	6/09/76	55-36	163-51	Y33256 Z45909	50		508	152	100	10	3
C07	6/09/76	55-29	164-00	Y33307 Z45944	49	2+2	2026	1520	86	3	3
C07	6/09/76	55-30	164-00	Y33304 Z45946	49		1266	633	60	3	3
C07	6/09/76	55-39	164-00	Y33268 Z45952	50		6803	2171	243	14	14
C07	6/09/76	55-40	164-00	Y33263 Z45954	50		7599	2243	30	30	30
C07	6/09/76	55-49	167-00	Y33235 Z45972	50	2+3	10258	5695	1420	24	24
C07	6/09/76	55-50	164-00	Y33232 Z45971	50		6991	5167	60	30	30
C08	6/10/76	55-39	163-24	Y33172 Z45720	43		3495	1824	760	3	3
C08	6/10/76	55-39	163-24	Y33173 Z45720	41		1520	760	760	3	3
C08	6/10/76	55-30	162-46	Y33078 Z45492	29		632	1691	1691	16	16
C08	6/10/76	55-42	162-50	Y33045 Z45499	26		2487	102	102	1520	1520
C08	6/05/76	55-20	156-23	Y33010 Z45923	67		102	3040	3040	6712	6712
C04	6/21/76	56-00	165-47	Y33500 Z44696	57		3040	4974	4974	25698	25698
C05	6/24/76	56-00	165-11	Y33396 Z45452	51		8359	2072	2072	4555	4555
C05	6/24/76	56-00	165-10	Y33389 Z45443	51		60094	152	152	20	20
C06	6/14/76	56-00	164-36	Y33292 Z45219	50		152	152	152	5	5
C06	6/08/76	54-00	154-36	Y33293 Z45224	49		16579	127	127	10	10
C07	6/14/76	56-00	153-59	Y33189 Z45988	49		127	152	152	12	12
C07	6/05/76	56-59	164-00	Y33194 Z45985	43		1216	304	304	1064	1064
C07	6/05/76	56-00	164-00	Y33191 Z45994	43		651	651	651	6	6
C07	6/05/76	56-10	164-00	Y33151 Z45996	43		1216	152	152	12	12
C07	6/05/76	56-09	164-00	Y33153 Z45000	43		10	10	10	10	10
C08	6/13/76	54-20	153-24	Y33091 Z45745	47		13263	1976	1976	2487	2487
C08	6/06/76	56-00	158-24	Y33095 Z45744	47		6494	1105	1105	2736	2736
C02	6/11/76	56-00	152-50	Y33002 Z45510	43		715	715	715	179	179
C02	6/07/76	56-01	152-50	Y32999 Z45521	43		553	553	553	553	553
C02	6/11/76	56-00	142-14	Y32903 Z45269	38		17	17	17	17	17
C02	6/11/76	56-00	151-39	Y32817 Z45003	17		2+6	2+6	2+6	212	212
C02	7/13/76	54-19	167-02	Y33558 Z47217	51		3+3	3+3	3+3	912	912
C02	7/05/76	54-21	146-24	Y33528 Z46900	55		2+2	2+2	2+2	402	402
C02	6/21/76	56-20	155-47	Y33426 Z45720	49		1+1	1+1	1+1	553	553
C02	6/22/76	56-20	154-35	Y33213 Z45244	46		1+1	1+1	1+1	553	553
C02	6/07/76	56-20	154-36	Y33211 Z45253	47		1+1	1+1	1+1	553	553
C02	6/22/76	56-00	161-00	Y33159 Z45008	45		1+1	1+1	1+1	152	152
C02	6/07/76	56-20	154-01	Y33112 Z45013	45		1+1	1+1	1+1	152	152
C02	6/13/76	56-20	163-24	Y33006 Z45760	42		1+1	1+1	1+1	553	553
C02	6/17/76	56-20	152-26	Y33010 Z45777	43		1+1	1+1	1+1	553	553
C02	6/13/76	56-19	152-49	Y32913 Z45527	42		1+1	1+1	1+1	553	553
C02	6/13/76	56-20	162-12	Y32820 Z45279	44		1+1	1+1	1+1	553	553
C02	6/21/76	56-20	161-37	Y32736 Z45040	34		1+1	1+1	1+1	553	553
C02	6/12/76	56-20	141-07	Y32636 Z44797	23		1+1	1+1	1+1	553	553
C02	6/22/76	56-20	154-01	Y32807 Z45022	40		1+1	1+1	1+1	553	553
C02	6/22/76	56-40	142-24	Y32908 Z45079	40		1+1	1+1	1+1	553	553

TABLE 2. CONTINUED

STATION	DATE	POSITION			LORAN C	DEPTH (FMS)	BOT.	TEMP. (C)	NOSY SQMI	PRE- RECRUITS		LEGALS		
		LAT	LONG							***	***	PRCNT	PRCNT	
F09	6/23/76	56-40	162-47	Y32812	Z45532	38	-0.6	0	152	0	33			
F10	6/12/76	56-40	162-11	Y32719	Z45238	48	-1.0	2684	603	0	3			
F11	6/12/76	56-40	161-35	Y32631	Z45051	46	-0.8	3040	553	25	5			
F12	6/12/76	56-40	160-59	Y32540	Z44800	36	0.5	709	304	50	11			
F13	6/25/76	56-40	160-22	Y32446	Z44556	33	1.1	967	414	100	9			
F20	7/06/76	56-40	169-30	Y34057	Z48193	42	1.5	0	0	0	0			
G09	6/23/76	57-00	162-48	Y32704	Z45556	31	-0.5	101	0	0	0			
G10	6/23/76	57-00	162-10	Y32608	Z45308	31	0.7	553	829	0	21			
G11	6/24/76	57-00	161-34	Y32518	Z45058	37	0.3	1013	203	0	4			
G12	6/24/76	57-00	160-57	Y32432	Z44814	34	0.9	414	0	0	0			
G13	6/25/76	57-00	160-20	Y32339	Z44560	34	1.0	1658	691	40	1			
G14	6/25/76	57-00	159-43	Y32258	Z44312	30	1.5	414	829	100	25			
G20	7/08/76	56-59	169-32	Y34020	Z48270	32	2.0	0	91	0	50			
H09	7/03/76	57-20	163-23	Y32687	Z45800	28	0.2	0	152	0	100			
H09	7/01/76	57-20	162-46	Y32590	Z45560	26	2.5	553	138	0	18			
H10	7/01/76	57-20	162-09	Y32496	Z45309	27	1.9	855	760	0	20			
H11	6/29/76	57-20	161-32	Y32401	Z45064	30	1.5	1013	709	0	1			
H12	6/24/76	57-20	160-55	Y32316	Z44825	32	0.9	760	608	0	4			
H13	6/24/76	57-20	160-18	Y32228	Z44576	32	1.2	553	276	50	3			
H14	6/25/76	57-20	159-40	Y32146	Z44320	23	1.5	414	138	100	4			
H05	6/26/76	57-20	159-04	Y32064	Z44078	25	2.0	101	203	100	11			
I08	7/03/76	57-40	163-22	Y32559	Z45802	24	2.4	0	0	0	0			
I09	7/01/76	57-40	162-45	Y32464	Z45568	23	3.5	0	138	0	50			
I10	6/30/76	57-40	162-07	Y32358	Z45319	24	3.0	2735	760	0	11			
I11	6/30/76	57-40	161-30	Y32279	Z45071	23	2.3	4421	553	0	4			
I12	6/29/76	57-40	160-53	Y32189	Z44634	29	1.5	1382	691	0	7			
I13	6/28/76	57-39	160-16	Y32105	Z44587	27	1.9	80	0	0	0			
I14	6/28/76	57-39	159-37	Y32031	Z44344	26	1.9	414	553	100	3			
I15	6/26/76	57-40	159-01	Y31959	Z44110	25	2.4	414	138	100	6			
J08	7/03/76	57-59	163-21	Y32424	Z45816	22	3.1	80	0	0	0			
J09	7/01/76	58-00	162-45	Y32328	Z45577	21	3.8	138	0	0	33			
J10	6/30/76	58-00	162-07	Y32232	Z45320	19	3.5	329	138	0	7			
J11	6/20/76	58-00	161-29	Y32144	Z45087	28	2.1	414	553	20	31			
J12	6/29/76	58-00	160-51	Y32060	Z44846	23	2.5	2349	553	0	9			
J13	6/29/76	58-00	160-13	Y31976	Z44601	27	2.0	80	720	0	10			
J14	6/29/76	58-01	159-37	Y31904	Z44386	22	2.0	101	203	50	25			
J15	6/27/76	58-00	158-58	Y31834	Z44151	22	2.5	0	105	100	14			
Z05	6/15/76	54-40	165-09	Y33608	Z46297	44	4.3	4103	1520	0	25			
Z05	6/09/76	54-30	165-09	Y33610	Z46291	44	5.5	921	395	0	9			

TABLE 3. BLUE KING CRAB (*P. PLATYPUS*), 1976 EASTERN BERING SEA. NUMBERS OF PRE-RECRUITS AND LEGALS CAUGHT PER AREA TRAWLED, PLUS OTHER SURVEY DATA BY STATION. PRE-RECRUITS, 5 TO 6.5 INCHES, LEGALS, OVER 6.5 INCHES.

STATION	DATE	POSITION			LORAN C	DEPTH (FMS)	BOT. TEMP. (C)	NOS/ SQMI	PRE- RECRUITS		LEGALS	
		LAT	LONG						***	***	PPCNT	PRCNT
E20	7/05/76	56-40	169-30	Y34057	Z43193	42	1.5	3799	1773	29	4	
G18	5/19/76			X18717	Y33729	47		0	190	0	100	
G19	7/07/76	57-00	168-57	Y33880	Z48039	42	1.0	276	3178	0	92	
G20	7/08/76	56-59	169-32	Y34020	Z48270	32	2.0	268	1152	43	67	
G21	7/08/76	57-00	170-11	Y34132	Z48501	35	2.5	608	304	50	13	
G22	7/09/76	57-00	170-47	Y34080	Z48560	51	2.3	304	760	0	75	
H01	5/19/76			Y33472	Z47552	38		106	0	0	0	
H21	7/11/76	57-20	170-13	Y34000	Z48496	29	2.9	10	0	0	0	
H22	7/09/76	57-21	170-50	Y33941	Z48550	45	2.3	138	138	50	67	
I20	5/25/76			Y33596	Z48197	40		0	101	0	100	
I21	7/11/76	57-40	170-16	X18336	Z48294	50	3.5	0	0	0	0	