

Deep sea fish in critical danger

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New research suggests deep sea fish species in the northern Atlantic are on the brink of extinction.

Canadian scientists say some species have plummeted by as much as 98 percent in a generation, meeting the World Conservation Union's definition of "critically endangered," the BBC reported.

Scientists and conservation bodies are pressing for a global moratorium on bottom-trawling, in which ships drag heavy trawls across the ocean floor, destroying coral and other ecosystems.

"Deep sea fish are highly vulnerable to disturbance because of their late maturation, extreme longevity, low fecundity and slow growth," the study, published in the journal *Nature*, said.

The study was led by Jennifer Devine of Memorial University in Newfoundland.

Devine and colleagues examined records from Canadian Atlantic waters spanning the period 1978-1994 --roughly a single generation-- and found that populations of roundnose grenadier, onion-eye grenadier, blue hake, spiny eel and spinytail skate all declined spectacularly over the period.

Populations fell by between 87 and 98 percent. Projections show that some would be completely eliminated within three generations.

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