

# NOAA Ship *David Starr Jordan*



The ship is named after Dr. David Starr Jordan (1851-1931), who was one of the best known naturalists and educators of his time. Dr. Jordan was a member of the California State Fish Commission, and his investigations of the exploitation of salmon and fur seals helped save those species.

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Ship *David Starr Jordan* conducts fisheries and oceanographic research in support of the National Marine Fisheries Service Southwest Fisheries Science Center (SWFSC) Laboratory in La Jolla, California. The ship normally operates in California and Central American waters.

*David Starr Jordan* is a western-rigged stern trawler that conducts mid-water and bottom trawling, longline sets, plankton tows, oceanographic casts, bottom sample grabs, scuba diving, and visual surveys of marine mammals and seabirds. In a typical year, the ship spends more than 240 days at sea.

One of the ship's longstanding missions is dolphin population assessment in the Eastern Tropical Pacific. This survey, which is required by Federal law, aims to determine whether the yellowfin tuna purse seine fishery is adversely affecting dolphin populations. NOAA's MD-500 helicopter works with the ship on this mission, providing aerial photography capability. From aerial photographs, scientists measure the length of individual animals and count

the number of dolphins in selected schools. These counts are used to calibrate school-size estimates made by the ship-based observers.

Another long-term project, and the first ever conducted by the ship in January 1966, is the California Cooperative Fisheries Investigation (CalCOFI). Quarterly CalCOFI surveys are made jointly by NOAA and the Scripps Institute of Oceanography. The CalCOFI program, a consortium of state and Federal research agencies, conducts integrated research on the physical, chemical and biological makeup of the California Current. CalCOFI was established in 1949 to investigate factors relating to the collapse of the sardine fishery off California, but has expanded over the years to include other species.

Other projects include the annual juvenile rockfish survey, shark surveys, and occasional special research work required by SWFSC.



NOAA scientists tag and measure sea turtles



The helicopter gets more fuel before takeoff



Taking oceanographic measurements

## Ship Specifications

Length (LOA): 52.1 m (171 ft.)  
Breadth: 11.2 m (36.6 ft.)  
Draft: 3.8 m (12.5 ft.)  
Displacement: 993 tons  
Cruising Speed: 10 knots  
Range: 7,500 nm  
Endurance: 30 days  
Hull Number: R 444  
Call Letters: WTDK  
Commissioned Officers: 4  
Licensed Engineers: 3  
Crew: 11  
Scientists: 15 (Max)  
Launched: December 19, 1964  
Delivered: November 5, 1965  
Commissioned: January 8, 1966  
Builder: Christy Corporation  
Designer: Harco Engineering,  
Sturgeon Bay, WI  
Special Features:  
Bow Observation Chamber;  
Helicopter Flight Deck - by  
request only, requires removal  
of gantry and net reel;  
Flying Bridge Observation  
Station



Stern trawl operations



Collecting plankton samples

## Office of Marine and Aviation Operations

Since NOAA's beginning, NOAA ships and aircraft have played a critical role in the collection of its oceanographic, atmospheric, hydrographic, fisheries and coastal data. This fleet of platforms is managed and operated by NOAA's Office of Marine and Aviation Operations (OMAO), an office composed of civilians and officers of the NOAA Commissioned Officer Corps, one of the Nation's seven uniformed services.

NOAA's fleet of research and survey ships is the largest fleet of federal research ships in the Nation. The fleet ranges from large oceanographic research vessels capable of exploring the world's deepest ocean, to smaller ships responsible for charting the shallow bays and inlets of the United States. The fleet supports a wide range of marine activities, including fisheries research, nautical charting and mapping, and ocean and climate studies. Many of NOAA's research vessels are unique in their ability to conduct scientific research.

NOAA's fleet of aircraft operates throughout the world providing a wide range of capabilities including hurricane prediction research, marine mammal and fisheries assessment, and coastal mapping. NOAA aircraft are modified to carry scientists and specialized instrument packages to conduct research for NOAA's missions.

In addition to research and monitoring activities critical to NOAA's mission, NOAA ships and aircraft provide immediate response capabilities for unpredictable events. NOAA survey ships found the wreckage of EgyptAir Flight 990, TWA Flight 800 and John F. Kennedy Jr.'s aircraft. Our ships, aircraft and personnel have also conducted damage assessments after major oil spills, such as the Exxon Valdez and Persian Gulf War, and after land-falling hurricanes. Following Hurricanes Katrina and Rita, NOAA ships conducted emergency surveys for navigation hazards that helped Gulf ports reopen quickly, and tested the waters for contamination to ensure seafood safety. Aerial images of disaster-torn areas taken by a NOAA aircraft were posted on the Web with a Google interface, enabling residents and emergency workers to see if houses, bridges and roads were still standing.

## NOAA Commissioned Officer Corps

The NOAA Corps is one of the seven uniformed services of the United States. It is composed of commissioned officers who provide NOAA with an important blend of operational, management, and technical skills that support the agency's science and surveying programs at sea, in the air, and ashore. NOAA Corps officers, in addition to managing and operating ships and aircraft, are also scientists and engineers. Corps officers serve in NOAA's research laboratories and program offices throughout the Nation and in remote locations around the world. For example, an officer serves as station chief at the South Pole, Antarctica.

## About NOAA

NOAA conducts research and gathers data about the global oceans, atmosphere, space, and sun, and applies this knowledge to science and service that touch the lives of all Americans.

NOAA warns of dangerous weather, charts our seas and skies, guides our use and protection of ocean and coastal resources, and conducts research to improve our understanding and stewardship of the environment that sustains us all.

A Commerce Department agency, NOAA provides these services through five major divisions: the National Weather Service, the National Ocean Service, the National Marine Fisheries Service, the National Environmental Satellite, Data and Information Service, and Office of Oceanic and Atmospheric Research; and numerous special program offices. More information about NOAA can be found at <http://www.noaa.gov>.

Visit the ship's Web site at [www.moc.noaa.gov/ds/](http://www.moc.noaa.gov/ds/)  
For more information, contact OMAO at 301-713-1045  
or visit our Web site at [www.oma.noaa.gov](http://www.oma.noaa.gov)