

South African Squid Fishermen Discover New Sonar Application

WESMAR HD800 Sonar System Becoming The Sonar of Choice

South African squid fishermen have traditionally used downsounders to search for ideal conditions for their prized catch. Covering a vast territory, these experienced fishermen have historically relied on their good senses rather than specialized equipment. They primarily use good instincts and catch the fish with manual jigging equipment. Their success is well documented.

Recently, a local fishing company began investigating the possibility of using scanning sonar to search for squid. After reading about the outstanding ability of WESMAR units to pinpoint targets against the bottom, they were further intrigued. Consulting with technical experts at Radio Holland, they settled on a WESMAR HD800 sonar system featuring a frequency of 160 kHz and a 6" soundome.

After purchasing the unit and having it installed onboard the 20 meter Girl Diana, in Port Elizabeth March 1998, they sought to test their theory. Captain Festus, who heads up the vessel, was immediately able to paint the bottom in a distinguishing color of red. Following the assistance of Radio Holland and advice from WESMAR sonar expert Dennis Soderberg, the sonar was programmed to search for dispersed squid targets close to the bottom.

Operating on the grounds south of Port Elizabeth, Festus and his crew covered

tremendous ground in water 40 to 50 meters deep and were astounded to view squid in blue and yellow colors over the brilliant red of the bottom. After his first run with the new sonar, the captain reported being able to quickly locate concentrations of squid. Anchoring on the spots indicated by the sonar as a productive area, and turning on their lights to attract the squid, they could monitor the squid as they surfaced towards the bright lights and catch them according to the depth shown on the monitor.

Upon reflection, Captain Festus was able to congratulate himself for believing in the use of sonar for squid fishing and WESMAR sonar for the unit's incredible performance. "Today I am very proud of myself and our WESMAR sonar," he says. "No other boats are using sonar to do the same thing."

After reports of the success of the crew on Girl Diana circulate, Captain Festus may find that he started a trend.

