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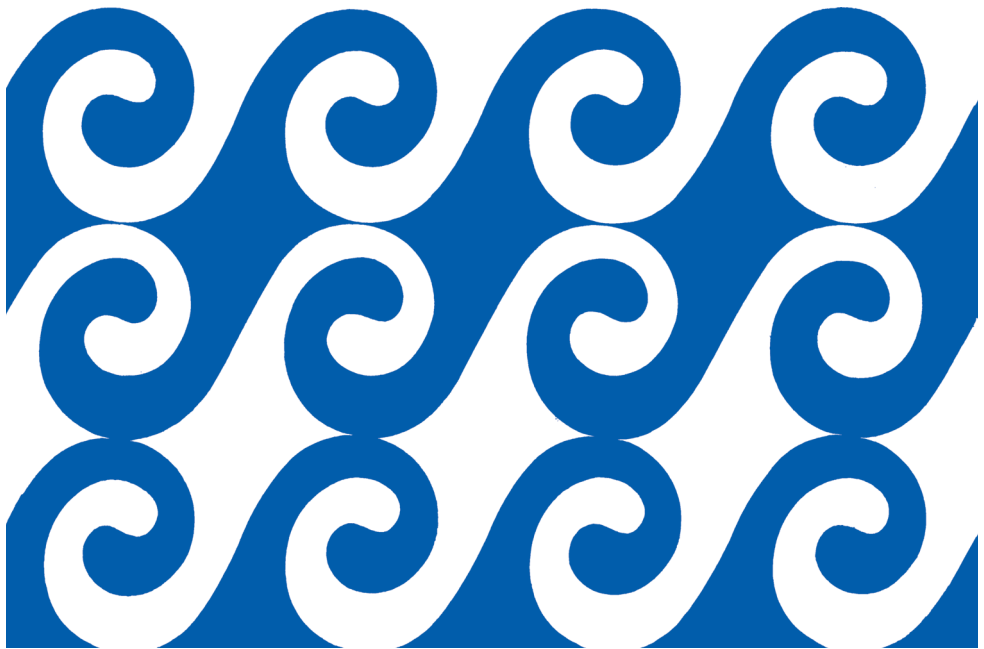
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CONTENTS

- 99 Classic article: Editor's commentary
by Kenneth H. Brink
- 101 A bathythermograph
by Athelstan F. Spilhaus
- 107 Classic article: Editor's commentary
by Kenneth H. Brink
- 109 On the process of upwelling
by H. U. Sverdrup
- 119 Classic article: Editor's commentary
by Kenneth H. Brink
- 121 On properties of seawater defined by temperature, salinity, and pressure
by George Veronis

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Journal of Marine Research Classic Articles

A bathythermograph

by **Athelstan F. Spilhaus**

Originally published April 9, 1938, in the *Journal of Marine Research* 1(2), 95–100.

EDITOR'S COMMENTARY

In this classic, Athelstan Spilhaus reports on his progress on a prototype of the mechanical bathythermograph, a project that C.-G. Rossby encouraged him to pursue. Although now most often seen in museums or on movie sets (they look a bit like rockets), bathythermographs were extremely influential from the later 1930s into the 1950s. These remarkable, durable instruments allowed continuous traces of temperature versus depth (previously measured as bottle temperatures at typically 50-m separations), and so opened up an entirely new vision of what ocean thermal structure actually looks like. Spilhaus further provides some actual data.

The bathythermograph proved to be extremely useful for submarine warfare during the Second World War, when it became understood that the sharp thermal structures observed with a bathythermograph strongly influenced sound propagation and its diurnal variability in the ocean.

Spilhaus had a distinguished academic career at Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution and at the University of Minnesota. Many of us remember his weekly newspaper comic strip “Our New Age,” which introduced scientific concepts to the general public.

—*Kenneth H. Brink*