NOAA FISHERIES

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Word on the Waves

a publication of the Fisheries Observation Science Program at the Northwest Fisheries Science Center

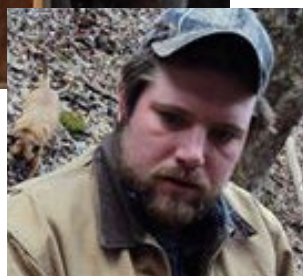
Observer Spotlight: Ben Briggs

Observing since 2015

Currently stationed in Astoria, OR

Working aboard vessels at-sea comes with inherent risks. Ben Briggs experienced this firsthand when the vessel he was deployed on, F/V Patty AJ, capsized.

Not a normal day at the office by any means (see page 4). And yet, Ben's love for fisheries science and observing remains intact.



Born and raised in Ft. Worth, Texas, Ben has the Texan propensity for few words. His interview answers are short and to the point. However, even without elaboration, it's obvious he's passionate about fish. In practically every answer he says, "I love fish."

Ben earned his degree in fisheries science at Tennessee Tech University. He found observing soon after graduating and hasn't looked back. "Observing is my dream job," he says. "I became an observer because I love working with fish."

Ben likes to keep busy. He's not a fan of of the amount of down-time on hake vessels. He'd rather be beach dragging, which has consistent work and more diversity in the caught species.

And you can't talk to such an avid fish lover without asking what his favorite fish is. Ben says: "My first fish love is Longear Sunfish (*Lepomis megalotis*), but on the west coast Green Sturgeon or Starry flounders."

When he's not observing, Ben likes working the farm he and his wife own in Brownsmead, OR. (Surf and turf?) Being agriculturally-oriented, he's an active participant in his local Grange, a national agricultural advocacy organization. Yes, he owns a tractor.

As with everything else about Ben, his bucket list is concise: visit the British Museum's natural history collection and start a small dairy farm.

Ben is an outstanding example of an observer who's continual perseverance and unflagging passion ensures the program has a strong, reliable data stream. Thank you, Ben, for your ongoing efforts.

From the Program

Greetings Observers,

Unbelievably, this is the second newsletter in a row where I'm expressing gratitude for the safe return of one of our observers. Ben Briggs and two crew members were rescued after the Patty AJ capsized coming in to Coos Bay, OR on March 23rd. Thankfully, they were unharmed. Sadly, the vessel's captain, Jerry Barkley, did not survive. Our sincere condolences go out to his family.

This incident is a grim reminder that we must be continually vigilant in regards to safety at-sea and situational awareness. It also reaffirms our commitment to provide the highest quality safety trainings and briefings possible. We'll be garnering lessons from this tragedy and using them to improve our safety policies and trainings. As always, we're open to your suggestions. Please let us know how we can better support you and help mitigate the inherent dangers associated with working on commercial fishing vessels.

Summer is officially here which means the busy season is upon us. The entire Program, both observers and staff, experience an up-tick in workload. The debriefing/training team turns their focus from our comprehensive trainings and briefings to data quality and observer support. The increased fishing activity keeps the coordinators busy with the logistics of getting observers on vessels, often on short notice. In Seattle, our team of analysts is assembling bycatch reports and getting 2015 observer data into the hands of fishery scientists and managers. All these focused efforts resulted in the 2015 data being finalized and available for widespread use even earlier than previous years. Again! Excellent work, everyone!

This summer also brings the 8th International Fisheries Observer and Monitoring Conference (IFOMC) held Aug 29 – Sept 2 in San Diego, CA, which means many observers and staff will be pulling together presentations. I've reviewed a

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This publication is intended for FOS observers and associated individuals.

Sampling for (e)DNA in the Hake Fishery

Vanessa Tuttle, NOAA Research Fisheries Biologists, At-Sea Hake Observer Program Lead

Environmental DNA, or (e)DNA, is a developing field and applications for its use are becoming more apparent. The premise behind (e)DNA is detecting an organism's DNA from a sample from the environment – think water or soil - rather than collecting a sample directly from the organism. Recently, Scott Baker from OSU approached us to inquire about the feasibility of doing a study to collect (e)DNA samples from the fishery, as a "proof of principal" for this type of genetics to be used to combat Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated (IUU) fishing.

It might not seem obvious at first, but the hake fishery provides an ideal place to get these samples from. Not because the fishery has any issues with IUU fishing, but because there are big tanks full of fish and water sloshing around, which provide the perfect source of a sea-water slurry – full of scales and slime and tiny bits of the organisms. And, of course, 100% observer coverage means the observers are sampling the species composition of fish being transferred to those same tanks, providing a validation for the sequencing results.

From the observer prospective, perhaps the best part of this project is the pure simplicity of just filling up a small vial with water. Surely this is one of the easiest special projects to date and also rewarding, as techniques from this study may someday have an impact on helping reduce IUU fishing, hopefully contributing to the conservation of species at risk.

For more on using (e)DNA for detecting IUU fishing, read Ben Shouse and Scott Baker's article **here**. (http://blogs.scientificamerican.com/guest-blog/policing-seafood-with-dna/)

Call for submissions: Species ID Guide Cover Art

Eric Brasseur and Toby Mitchell are finishing a new species ID guide. They're looking for cover art. To participate, design an 8.5"x11" cover with the title "WCGOP Species ID Guide, Version 2016". Submit your entry as a JPEG or PNG file to Eric at: eric.brasseur@noaa.gov. Deadline is September 1, 2016.

We're also looking photos of observers working on back decks for an outreach project. For more information, contact Rebecca at rebecca.hoch@noaa.gov. **Hats for prizes!**

Year-to-Date Progress

Ryan Shama, Lead Debriefer.

As we begin the second half of the year, it's fun to see how the fishing season is progressing overall. Below are numbers for the West Coast Groundfish Observer Program only from January 1st thru June 24th.

	2016 WCGOP trips 1/1/16 to 6/24/15	2015 WCGOP trips 1/1/15 to 6/24/15
Total	882	1102
Catch Share	435	559
Non-Catch Share	431	496
EFP	16	7

Total sea days: 2,446 Catch Share: 1516 Non-Catch Share: 930

Observer with most sea days: Vanessa Fleming (69)

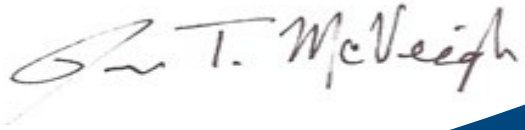
Observers with highest vessel count: Steve Samana and Russel Adams (13)

From The Program - continued

and am very excited that we're poised to be well represented at this outstanding conference. In case you've missed my many emails regarding the conference, you can learn more at ifomc.com.

Even though this is a busy time for everyone, please make sure to take your time when performing your safety checks on vessels and with your gear. It is time well spent.

As always, stay safe



From the Galley

John LaFargue, CA Coordinator

Summer is here! With it comes schools of yellowtail (*Seriola lalandi dorsalis)* devouring baitfish up and down our southern California coast.

I dreamed of catching Yellowtail growing up. I remember watching them being offloaded from party boats, glimpsing them just beyond my spear gun's range, spending hours trying to catch them. It wasn't until my teenage years that I was finally able to connect with one. Yes!

Since then, they've become a staple in my diet. The firm meat lends itself well to most forms of cooking. It's excellent as sashimi (Hamachi) and the collars are amazing grilled/broiled with teriyaki or ponzu.

Recently, while looking for a new, exotic seasoning, I stumbled on a new spice mix, Hawaii. No not the island – although I wish!

Hawaii is a Yemen spice combo traditionally used in soups, stews and rubs for grilled meats, fish and vegetables. It's become one of my go-to flavor boosters for the grill. It was a no-brainer to try it on Yellowtail.

This is a super easy recipe for a low-effort dinner. Perfect for summertime. If you've never made a spice mix, it's not hard. A coffee grinder sees to that. I recommend using quality spices for best results.

Enjoy!

Hawaii Grilled Fish

Yellowtail or other firm fish – as much as you want
1/4 cup coriander seed
1/3 cup cumin seed
1/4 cup black peppercorns
2 tbsp. green cardamom pods
1 tsp. cloves
2 tsp. cinnamon
1 1/2 tbsp. ground turmeric

Directions

1. Heat the whole spices (not the ground turmeric) in a pan on medium heat. Toast for 2-3 minutes. They should be popping and smell great. Do not overdo it and burn them.

2.Once the spices have cooled, place them into a coffee grinder or a mortar and pestle. Grind into a fine powder.

3. Mix in the ground turmeric.

4. Lightly rub fish with olive oil.

5. Liberally rub spice mix into fish.

6. Season with salt and let the flavors mingle for an hour or so.

7. Grill fish until desired doneness.

The extra rub will keep for a month or more in a sealed jar.
Try it on other types of meats for an exotic twist.

At-Sea Tragedy: The F/V PATTY AJ Capsizes

Scott Leach, OR/WA Coordinator

photo credit: Lou Sennick/The World via AP

On March 23, 2016, WCGOP observer Ben Briggs was on the back deck of the 60-foot fishing vessel, F?V PATTY AJ, returning from a Catch Share trip. The weather was sunny, the seas calm. The boat had just crossed the Charleston, OR bar and was traveling past the Coast Guard tower on its way into port. The two deckhands were securing the stabilizers, readying the boat for docking.

Suddenly, the boat took a hard turn to starboard. This unexpected maneuver caused the vessel to list. Water quickly came up to the scuppers and, then, as the list worsened, began flowing through the scuppers and onto the deck.

Ben and the deckhands scurried to the high side of the vessel as the list rapidly increased. Within seconds, the boat capsized. Ben found himself underwater trapped under the vessel. Instinctively, he pushed floating bin boards out of the way and made his way to the surface.

After catching his breath, Ben climbed onto the ship's upside down hull. The deckhands, who had climbed onto the overturned hull without entering the water, helped him up. They began pounding on the hull yelling for the skipper, Jerry Barkley. Jerry had been in the wheelhouse when the boat capsized.

A nearby recreational vessel witnessed the capsize and pulled up to assist. They took Ben and the deckhands aboard. A U.S. Coast Guard rescue vessel soon arrived on scene. Ben and the deckhands provided a description of the missing skipper.

The Coast Guard directed the recreational vessel to take Ben and the deckhands back to the port launch where paramedics waited to assess their condition. Fortunately, neither Ben nor either deckhand suffered any injuries. Tragically, Jerry Barkley, did not survive. His body was later recovered from the wreckage.

It's unlikely we'll ever know what caused the F?V PATTY AJ to capsize. However, this tragic event illustrates how quickly things can go wrong and how easy it is to become complacent, especially in calm conditions.

Please remember that, until you are back on land, accidents and marine casualties can - and do - happen. Be vigilant. Wear your PFD, remain alert, test your equipment, brush-up on at-sea emergency scenarios if necessary. If you have questions or concerns, contact your debriefer.

Stay safe out there.

Tips and Tricks: Handy Ways to Make Your Job Easier

Andrew Corr, AOI Observer ● Stationed in Moss Landing

Observing is a unique profession. Whereas most jobs are conducive to collaboration among colleagues, observers work solo. We interact with fishermen and crews more than we do than with each other. This limits our ability to swap ideas, share tips, exchange tricks of the trade. Although we're all essentially doing the same job, we develop our own ways of doing things to make the job a little easier. It's time to share! Here are a few handy ways to make observing a little easier.

Transporting gear. Forget your dolly? Toby Shewan (Costa Mesa, CA) keeps a skateboard in his car for just such occasions. It's a nimble, lightweight replacement.

Managing tally counters. Can't find your dang tally counter again? Or is it occupying a much needed hand? Or does it keep breaking? I use a longline gangion to attach a counter to each suspender strap. This keeps the counter close at all times making it easy to differentiate between the two for different species etc.. It also frees up my hands for collecting and weighing fish, writing on forms, etc., and makes the counters last a lot longer as they aren't getting constantly exposed to salt and slime.

What if two tally counters aren't enough? Jason Whitney (Half Moon Bay, CA) glues four tally counters to a small, wooden garden stake. This allows him to accurately track multiple species. Sylvia Pauly (Newport, OR) keeps her tally counters close at hand by tying them to the ship's rail near her sampling area.

Moving scales. Since Catch Share's inception, we've had really nice, REALLY heavy scales. This can make getting the scale from your car down the harbor ramps and onto your assigned vessel's deck precarious. To make this less nerve-wracking, Duncan Fry (moved on…) made himself a sling he could throw it over his head and shoulder to help take the load.

And then there's that nice length of rope we're issued for lowering the scale. After losing several lengths on longliners and constantly fearing my knot would fail and I'd drop it on the skipper's head, I finally made a big loop. Now there's no chance the knot will loosen, it's less likely to be mistaken for ship line (especially if it's old crab line), and it's less likely to slip through my hands on the way down.

Do you have a tip or trick for making observer life easier, safer or more efficient? We want to hear it! Submit your idea(s), preferably with pictures, to Rebecca Hoch at rebecca.hoch@noaa.gov.

Contact Us

Word on the Waves is published quarterly by the **Fisheries Observation Science Program** at the Northwest Fisheries Science Center to maintan communications with current observers. We want to hear from you! Please send submissions, suggestions and questions to the newsletter editor.

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Fisheries News

NOAA released the **2015 US Status of Stocks** in April. Good news! Two stocks are rebuilt and those subject to overfishing or are overfished are at an all-time low. (http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/sfa/publications/feature_stories/2016/status_of_stocks_2015.html)

In New Bedford, MA, fisherman Carlos A. Rafael, a.k.a. the Codfather, has been indicted on 27 criminal accounts surrounding his fishing practices. Read the story **here**. (http://www.gloucestertimes.com/news/fishing_industry_news/fish-mogul-indicted-on-criminal-counts/article_e2d45526-e7ed-5694-af7c-434a2a5632fd.html)

The Seattle Times recently ran **this article** about the Dungeness crab decline along the West Coast. Take a look. It directly affects our work. (http://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/environment/noaa-dungeness-crab-in-peril-from-acidification/)

NOAA Chief Science Advisor Richard Merrick was recently interviewed about climate change, advanced technology and how they're modifying fisheries management. Read the interview **here**. (http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/stories/2016/05/11_merrick-qa.html)

NOAA also released its **draft climate science action plan** for the West Coast. "It outlines a strategy and specific actions for increasing understanding, preparing for, and responding to climate change effects on the region's species... including marine and anadromous fish, invertebrates, marine mammals, sea turtles and seabirds." (https://www.nwfsc.noaa.gov/news/features/climate_science_action_plan/index.cfm)

In a **press release** from the State Department, the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) announced 29 countries and the European Union joined the Port State Measure against Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated (IUU) fishing. (http://www.state.gov/secretary/remarks/2016/05/257297.htm)

Whale Entanglement: A Reminder

Team A-SHOP

This spring during hake fishing, a catcher vessel and a mothership spotted a humpback whale entangled in fishing gear. The mothership launched an improptu rescue effort: a skiff with two people on board. Amazingly, they were successful. The whale was freed and no one was hurt.

We're glad this story has a happy ending. However, it could easily have gone very differently, both for the whale and its recuers. Handling entagled mammals is dangerous work. It needs to be done by properly trained people.

Please! If you or a crew member spot an entangled marine mammal, report it to the **NOAA Fisheries Entanglement Reporting Hotline** at **1-877-SOS-WHALe (1-877- 767-9425)**. This information can also be found in your training manual or on the NOAA **website**. (http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/stories/2016/07/whale-entanglement.html)

NOAA Fisheries released **this article** on whale entanglement in July. More information on marine mammal entaglement can be found **here**. (http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/stories/2016/07/whale-entanglement.html; http://www.westcoast.fisheries.noaa.gov/protected_species/marine_mammals/disentanglement_network.html)

photos by Kristi Kuipers.