



Word on the Waves

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

Observer Spotlight:

Tony Ventola

Observing since 2002

Currently in the At-Sea Hake fishery

Observers are unconventional. It's in their blood. At-Sea Hake observer Tony Ventola has been observing for 15 years. He has unconventional down to an art form.

Born in Athens, Greece to a military family, Tony calls Columbus, Ohio home. He was introduced to fisheries work on his grandfather's commercial fishing boat. Tony spent his childhood summers gillnetting mullet, trapping blue crab, and shrimping. After a stint in the Navy and 13 years in the landscaping industry, Tony pursued his fisheries interest by getting a science degree from Ohio State University. He worked for Ohio's Division of Wildlife before finding a job posting for observers on the Internet. His first observer contract was with Alaskan Observers Inc. in the North Pacific fisheries in 1999. He's been observing ever since.

Tony has observed in the North Pacific and with the West Coast groundfish Observer Program. Although he enjoyed working in the other fisheries, he "like(s) the Hake fishery because it presents unique sampling challenges and the weather is usually decent." He also appreciates the fishery's unique perks: sporadic cell phone reception and satellite TV. The ability to take two to three months off every year for traveling and pursuing his other interests (backpacking, camping, fishing, etc.) is a draw as well. And in case he gets bored while on land, he also owns a tree farm in Ohio. On the flip side, Tony dislikes the instability that comes with observing in terms of having a permanent location. He's moved every three months for the last 16 years. This has made staying in touch with family and friends challenging.

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From the Program

Hello Observers –

I hope you all have had a good summer and a good busy fishing season. It's hard to believe it's already October and we're approaching the end of 2014. Up here in Washington on the Skykomish River we've seen a very sunny summer with lots of tubing and swimming, friends and family, BBQs, and great gardening. I'm now looking forward to the fall and winter salmon and steelhead seasons.

The fall season is a busy time for me. I'll attend several council and national committee meetings where our program and our data will be highlighted and scrutinized. Through all of this, I am reminded again and again that integrity in our work is crucial. Integrity is defined as "adherence to moral and ethical principles; soundness of moral character; honesty." It is imperative that our data has integrity, that our scientific methods are sound, and that we are providing the most accurate data that we possibly can. I am very proud of the integrity of our program and the data we collect. If our data or the people representing our program lacked integrity, then our work would be questioned and we would fail in our mission of fisheries stewardship. As an observer you represent NOAA Fisheries and the observer program. Your role as an independent scientist working side by side with the fishing community is crucial to the mission of NOAA Fisheries. Doing so with integrity helps maintain our reputation as a reputable science organization.

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact me. As always, thank you for all your hard work and be safe out there.

Sincerely,

New Species of Rockfish?

Cassandra Donovan, At-Sea Hake Observer Program Trainer/Debriefer

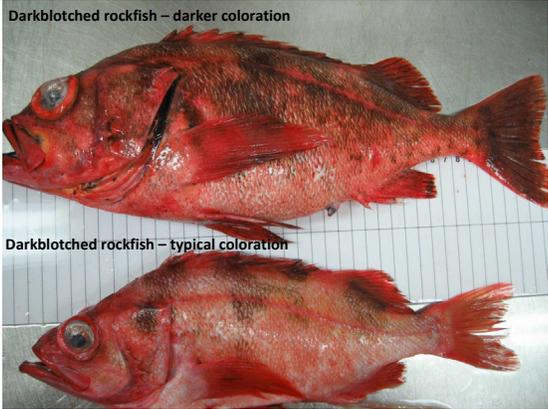
Even though some folks still refer to all red rockfish as red snapper, there are actually over 70 species of rockfish found on the West Coast. New species are still being discovered today. As genetic sampling advances, it is being increasingly utilized to differentiate species. Just as genetic samples have been collected from Chinook salmon for decades, A-SHOP observers have begun to collect genetic samples from both rougheye (*Sebastes aleutianus*) and darkblotched (*S. crameri*) rockfish.

“The depth and geographic distribution of blackspotted rockfish (*S. melanostictus*) overlaps with rough-eye rockfish and it is very difficult to visually distinguish between the two species. It has only been from recent genetic studies in the early 2000’s that two separate species have been identified and described.” (Hicks, et al). Observer sampling protocol is to collect a pectoral fin clip from each rougheye randomly selected for otolith collection. The genetic samples

confirm species identification and will provide assessors with a ratio of rougheye to blackspotted populations.

In recent years, hake observers have been noticing a darker color variation of darkblotched rockfish. It looks kind of like a cross between a darkblotched and a blackgill rockfish, with darker body coloration and black on the branchiostegal membranes (see photos). We started the 2014 hake season asking A-SHOP observers to collect whole specimens of both the ‘typically-colored’ darkblotched and the ‘darker-colored’ darkblotched, to be used as voucher specimens. For the fall fishery, we have added genetic sampling at sea — same as for rougheye — namely, a fin clip from each otolith fish. It’s too early to say whether a new

The Black-Blotched Rockfish?



Have you seen one of these darker colored darkblotched rockfish?

The fish on top looks like a cross between a darkblotched and a blackgill. These specimens have a somewhat darker coloration than a typical darkblotched and also have black on the branchiostegal membrane, much like blackgill rockfish do.

- ✓ Sample and record data for both color variations as darkblotched. Please collect sex/lengths and otoliths according to protocols.
- ✓ **If you see one, collect it!** Please collect up to 5 specimens of both the darker colored darkblotched, and the lighter colored more typical darkblotched, per boat.
- ✓ Ideally, we would like some specimens of these fish completely un-cut, so if you see one **outside of your sample, please collect it.**

species (the “Black-Blotched”?) will be genetically determined from observer samples, but it’s certainly exciting to be on the forefront of fisheries science. Thanks so much for all of the hard work you do, collecting data on species old and new!



Featured Observer — continued

Tony doesn’t have a Bucket List. He explains: “Due to the observing lifestyle, I have had a wonderful and full life. I have gotten to do a lot more than most people get to in their lifetimes so I really have no bucket list.” His one wish: to settle on the west coast and work in fisheries. For a guy who’s spent his life on the go, settling down sounds unconventional. Until that happens, keep up the good work Tony. We appreciate your dedication and ongoing efforts.

Contact Us

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

Jon McVeigh, Program Manager
Jon.McVeigh@noaa.gov

Rebecca Hoch, newsletter editor
Rebecca.Hoch@noaa.gov

Program Snapshot

We thought you’d like to know how this season is going in terms of trips made, overall sea days, etc. Here’s a snapshot for the period of January 1st to October 1st.

Total Trips*

2013: 2463	2014: 2403
Catch Share: 1824	Catch Share: 1741
Non-Catch Share Limited Entry: 162	Non-Catch Share Limited Entry: 166
Open Access: 475	Open Access: 487
EFP: 2	EFP: 9

* These numbers do not include A-SHOP trips.

From the Galley

John LaFargue, CA Coordinator

Fall is here whether we like it or not. The ocean salmon season is winding down, the river fishing picking up, tuna are offshore and it's the last of the tomatoes, cucumbers and peppers from our gardens and farmer's markets. How better to showcase Fall's bounty than blackened fish and gazpacho. I first had the combo while I was in Portland, Maine attending the International Fisheries Observer and Monitoring Conference. I was sitting at the bar of a high-end seafood restaurant. The bartender recommended mixing the two dishes. He pulled a few strings in the kitchen and the next thing you know I have a new, staple recipe at my house.

This time I used yellowfin tuna, since that's what my recent catch was. Salmon or albacore works well, as does halibut or rockfish. If you use a tuna you can get away with just searing the outside leaving the middle rare. If you are using a white fish you should cook it through.



Gazpacho

- 1 large cucumber or 3 lemon cucumbers-seeds removed
- 2 red bell peppers - seeds removed
- 3 large tomatoes
- 2 cloves garlic
- 1 sweet onion
- 3 cups tomatoes juice
- ¼ cup white wine vinegar
- ¼ cup good quality olive oil
- ½ tablespoon kosher salt
- 1 teaspoon ground black pepper

Finely chop vegetables one type at a time by hand or in a food processor. Mix vegetables in a bowl and stir in liquid ingredients and seasoning. Adjust acid and salt. Chill and let the flavors develop.

Blackened Fish

- 4 portions of fresh fish
- 1 stick melted butter
- Chopped avocado, red bell pepper, and cucumber for garnish
- Gas mask
- Store bought Blackening seasoning or mix up:
 - 1 Tablespoon paprika
 - 1 teaspoon garlic powder
 - 1 teaspoon onion powder
 - ¼-½ teaspoon cayenne powder
 - 2 teaspoons kosher salt
 - ½ teaspoon dried thyme
 - ½ teaspoon dried oregano

Rub fish with melted butter and season with blackening spice. Heat cast iron skillet on high until smoking hot. You will have to re-season the skillet after this. I usually blacken on a burner outside...you will generate a lot of smoke. Once the skillet is smoking, place the buttered, seasoned fish in skillet. If I am doing tuna, I'll leave it for 30-60 seconds then flip and repeat. If I am using white fish I'll turn the heat down a bit and cook for several minutes a side until cooked through. Thinner cuts of fish work better if you want to cook it through. Thicker cuts work great if you want to keep it rare in the middle like tuna.

Once fish is cooked to your liking, pour a little gazpacho on a deep plate or bowl, place fish on top, drizzle with a little more melted butter and garnish with chopped cucumber, red bell pepper and avocado.

Fisheries News

Check out this recently released NOAA Technical Memo highlighting the [Fisheries Release Mortality](#) report. It shows the results of bycatch reduction in US Fisheries. NOAA also released this report on a [Humpback whale rescue](#) and a report on [corals](#), announcing new additions to the Endangered Species List.

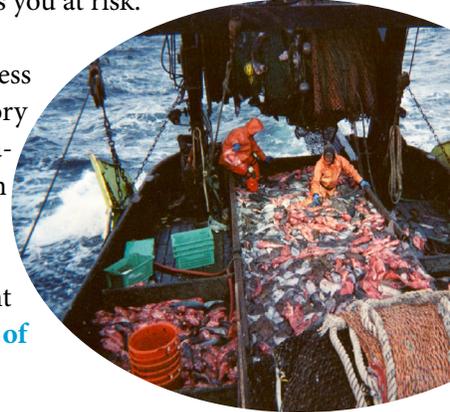
Oregon Deck Boss Arrested for Assaulting an Observer

Observer safety is always a priority — on and off the water. OLE recently arrested an Oregon-based deck boss for “allegedly assaulting, impeding and interfering with a federal fishery observer while the vessel was at sea in May.” The man faces a hefty fine and time in prison if convicted.

Obviously, this is big news not just on the west coast, but around the country: fisheries observers are not to be tampered with. Please remember there are many people in FOS, OLE and other federal programs committed to making sure you are safe and able to do your job. They can't do this without your help and participation. If you encounter harassment, verbal abuse or any other form of obstruction,

please contact your debriefer, coordinator or someone in the Program so we can take the necessary steps. Staying silent helps no one and keeps you at risk.

Click [here](#) to read the full press release on the arrest. This story was also featured on OPB Radio on August 20th. Program Manager Jon McVeigh was a guest on their “Think Out Loud” program for a segment called [A Look Into the Role of Fishery Observers](#).



Don't Pack That Banana!

You passed the fish lab, you survived safety training, you have your laptop and gear. You are ready to deploy. Or are you? Do you know what brings fair winds? Do you know why crewmen are throwing quarters in the sea? And why is the captain frowning at your banana? In other words, do you know your seafaring superstitions? Though not believed by all, and not consistent across all fisheries or regions, many fishermen believe in or follow some of these superstitions:

- Sailors who wear earrings or have tattoos won't drown.
- Fishermen throw quarters or half dollars over their shoulders to “buy up” some wind when crews are overworked.
- Silver dollars are put underneath the mast when a boat is being built to bring good luck.
- It is bad luck to see an albatross or hear a loon cry.
- Saying the words “alligator” or “pig” bring bad luck.
- Never whistle because it will bring a gale.
- Never start a trip on a Friday. The best day to start a trip is on a Sunday, “Sunday sail, never fails.”
- Avoid people with red hair when going to the ship to begin a journey.
- Never say good luck or allow someone to say good luck to you.
- Disaster will follow if you step onto a boat with your left foot first.
- Flowers are unlucky onboard a ship.
- Don't look back once your ship has left port as this can bring bad luck.
- A dog seen near fishing tackle is bad luck.
- Black cats are considered good luck and will bring a sailor home from the sea.
- Dolphins swimming with the ship are a sign of good luck.
- Cutting your hair or nails at sea is bad luck.
- If you carry a fishing pole into the house before a fishing trip you will not catch any fish.
- If you play a fiddle or guitar, the fish will come to the surface because they love the music.
- The person who swears while fishing will not catch a fish.

Bananas bring bad luck to fishing and could mean disaster for the trip.

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Voices of the Bay: voicesofthebay@noaa.gov; <http://sanctuaries.noaa.gov/education/voicesofthebay.html> (Nov 2011)

Fisheries Observation Science (FOS) Team Members Lend a Helping Hand

Summer is synonymous with camp if you're a school age kid. Oregon's Siletz Tribe and Sea Grant put on a marine science career camp for Siletz high school students in August. FOS team members Toby Mitchell and Bo Whiteside were on hand to walk students through a one-hour lab showing students fish ID, biological sampling and talking about what it takes to be an observer. They each ran an identification station and talked about observing. The lab was a hit with students, many of whom went home with a pair of otoliths. Toby and Bo were key to the event's success. Kudos also go to Eric Brasseur for photographing the event and Scott Leach for setting everything up.



photo credit: Eric Brasseur

Strengthening Ties

The Fisheries Observation Science (FOS) Team held a program meeting in early September. Although much of the three-day session involved sharing industry information and discussing Program issues, one day was spent team building. This full day event revolved around telling our Program story and strengthening our ties with one another. The story-telling portion

challenged us to zero in on our mission and how to effectively convey it to our diverse audience. The tie-strengthening portion included an afternoon geotrekking through downtown Seattle. Armed with handheld GPS devices, a list of clues and cameras, teams were let loose on the streets. Overall, it was a productive event.

The entire Fisheries Observation Science Team at the Seattle Montlake Station.



Team Building

As mentioned on page 5, the FOS team used geotrekking as part of their team building event. Here are some Kodak moments from their adventures.



1. John LaFargue, Jennifer Cramer and Tom Holland preparing to trek.
2. John LaFargue "hangin".
3. Cassandra Donovan, Jim Benante and Phillip Bizzell exploring Pike Place Market.

4. Phillip Bizzell visiting the Pike Place Market pig.
5. Eli Coplen, Christa Colway, Tim Peretti and Jason Jannot contemplating a pit stop.
6. Rebecca Hoch, John Bieraugal and Jon McVeigh putting their feet up.

7. Eric Brasseur, Toby Mitchell and Neil Riley on the waterfront.
8. Ryan Shama, Yong-Woo Lee, Vanessa Tuttle and Jason Vestre preparing to head out on their adventure.
9. Cassandra Donovan inside the Westlake Park fountain.
10. Kayleigh Somers, Scott Leach and Jason Eibner out and about.