



Mail Buoy



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P.O. Box 30167, Seattle, WA 98103

E-mail: apo@apo-observers.org Website: <http://www.apo-observers.org>

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Mail Buoy Devoted to Observer Involvement at the 2007 IFOC

5th INTERNATIONAL FISHERIES OBSERVER CONFERENCE



Victoria, British Columbia, Canada • May 15–18, 2007

*I*n keeping with one of the primary purposes of and a valued tradition of the Association for Professional Observers (APO), we devote this Mail Buoy (like past Mail Buoy editions immediately following observer conferences/workshops), to exhibiting the involvement of **Fisheries Observers** at the 2007 IFOC.

Unless otherwise noted, each of the following contributions are abstracts (denoted with a “POSTER” or a “PANEL” heading signifying the mode of delivery) which were presented by active observers who presented at the 5th International Fisheries Observer Conference (IFOC) held in Victoria, British Columbia this past May. Please join the APO in acknowledging these valued contributions from the ground perspective of fisheries management. The 2007 IFOC proceedings are due to be published very soon. So, for these contributions and a complete manuscript of the conference proceedings, please contact the conference organizers via the [IFOC website](#).

The fall 2007 Mail Buoy newsletter will return to its regular format.



The APO House at the 2007 IFOC

*T*he house we rented at the conference was a big hit. We were able to fully fund the stay of 2 observers who had paid their own way to attend the conference and provided quality budget housing for 4 other observers who were funded by the US National Observer Program (NOP) to attend. Not only was it great for us all to get to know each other, but our house was the venue for two quite substantial impromptu evening gatherings (though you may not find them in the IFOC program). The first was devoted to pooling all past and present observers who were attending the conference, and we must have come close being that somewhere between 60 to 80 different faces funneled through... nearly getting us thrown out of the house. The second one, the evening after the close of the conference, was a bit (not much) smaller and had a great international mix of folks and some fabulous freshly-caught salmon that one very gracious soul had donated to the festivities. We are happy that we could continue this tradition on from the Sydney conference, and plan to organize something similar for the next.

POSTER: Strengthening Observer Programs through Advocacy and Education

Elizabeth Mitchell; Fisheries Observer; North Pacific

**This abstract was presented as the APO poster at the 2007 IFOC*

Though fisheries managers, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and fishermen rely on observer data to assess stocks, quotas, bycatch levels and compliance to fisheries regulations, observers are often isolated with little connection to the processes involved in the analysis of the data they collect. The Association for Professional Observers (APO) serves to educate and provide a forum for observers and other interested parties to share ideas and develop a better understanding of the nature of observer programs. The APO is a non-profit organization founded in 1995 by a small group of Fisheries Observers from the North Pacific Groundfish Observer Program with the goal to educate and support observers. As the APO became more involved in national fisheries management policy decisions pertaining to observer programs, the organization expanded to include representation from programs nationally and internationally.

The APO is committed to strengthening solidarity amongst observers, encouraging communication between various stakeholders and promoting the conservation and sustainability of marine and other aquatic ecosystems. The APO board meets annually and we publish the Mail Buoy newsletter on a quarterly basis.



OBSERVER DATA END USE:

POSTER: Who uses the data observers collect, and how?

Timothy Lescher; Fisheries Observer; West Coast

In the field, observers are frequently asked by captains and by the public where the information they are getting goes, and how it is used. Observer data has multiple users who utilize the data and the specimens collected in a variety of ways. These users include government agencies such as the National Marine Fisheries Service ([NMFS](#)) and the Pacific Fisheries Management Council ([PFMC](#)), both of whom may access the data to help them decide upon suitable fishing regulations. Graduate students also analyze specimens collected by fisheries observers to produce scientific papers. These studies may be beneficial to the fishing industry and fisheries managers to help them understand the health of target fish populations, and the health of other marine organisms that come into contact with the fisheries. It is important to **have an understanding** of why observers are collecting data, and how that data is used.

Mammals and Birds Excluding Device (MBED) in the Patagonian Toothfish Longline Fishery¹

*Ebol Rojas; Fisheries Observer; Uruguay
And*

Oscar D. Pin; National Direction of Aquatic Resources (DINARA); Uruguay

**Ebol wanted to attend the IFOC, but couldn't. We are pleased to include his shared contribution here*

When compared with bottom-trawl fishing gear, from the operational point of view, longline gear is considered relatively effective concerning target species captures while registering an inferior impact upon the marine grounds. However, when fishing zones overlap marine (sea) bird breeding and feeding areas and birds attempt to eat off of baited fishhooks, significant interactions exist between seabirds and longline gear. The mortality of seabirds is fundamentally registered during the setting of the line. Since many seabird species reach sexual maturity late in life and their reproduction capacity can be limited, the mortality of marine birds in longline fisheries is a marine conservation problem at the world level.

The Patagonian Toothfish (*Dissostichus eleginoides*) fishery exhibits an important interaction with sea birds, and, among them, the *Procelariiformes* is the seabird species group which are most affected by incidental hookings in this fishery. Fishing activities of the Uruguayan fleet spread among fishing zones located in Uruguayan waters, international waters of the south-western Atlantic Ocean (North area of Falkland Islands /Malvinas and Scotia Ridge), and occasionally Uruguayan flagged vessels fish in the [CCAMLR](#) (Commission for the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources) areas of 48.3 (Georgia Island), 88.1 and 88.2 (Ross Sea), and 58.4.3 (Banzare Bank).

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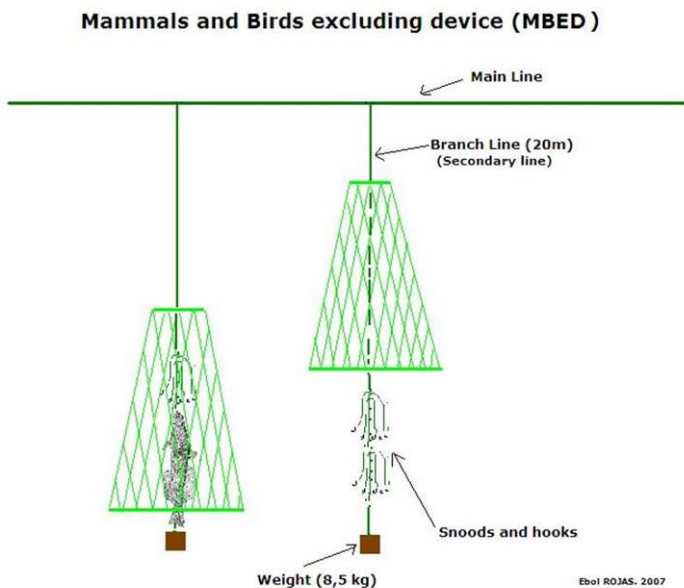
In recent years, a significant amount of mitigation measures have been designed to reduce the capture of marine birds in the longline fisheries, such as: deployment of streamer “tori” lines during setting, optimization of the sinking speed of the gear, tinting the bait, lateral “side” setting, prohibition of waste discards, employment of defrosted bait, setting of the gear at night, limitation of deck lights during night setting, setting sub-aquatically, and the puncture of the swim bladders of the bait.

From September 2006 till May 2007, while participating in the Patagonian Toothfish fishery in the international waters of the south-western Atlantic (Area FAO 41- among the latitudes 41° 40’ South and 55° 50’ South), the fishing vessels of Uruguayan flag: "Island Alegranza;" "Ave Phoenix;" and "Banzare;" all implemented the use of a new **mitigation device**, the Mammals and Birds Excluding Device (MBED). The MBED, in its developmental phase, can help avoid marine birds from being incidentally hooked while helping to avoid the loss of captured fishes via interactions with marine mammals. The MBED has been successively modified to improve upon its applied efficiency, and continues to be reported and evaluated upon by Scientific Observers placed on vessels by [DINARA](#) (Area of Antarctic Resources), Uruguay.

Methods

Over the nearly 9 month operational period of this study, of the 3 mentioned fishing vessels ("Ave Phoenix", "Island Alegranza" and "Banzare"), the total effective effort of all the units on the whole was of approximately 1,750,000 fishhooks, corresponding to 5 fishing trips. Observations were made on 845,250 fishhooks (48.3% of the total effort). The primary duties for observers in this fishery are: determining the by-catch and incidental captures of sea birds, and registering the sinking rate of the fishing gear according to the protocol of CCAMLR, which were recorded for approximately 250 sets. The species of seabirds and mammals were determined, their relative abundances were

gauged during setting and hauling of the fishing gear, and observed interactions with the fishing gear were registered.



The MBED consists of two hoops of 3 mm galvanized wire. The superior diameter is 30 cm and the inferior diameter is 100 cm. This is all covered with net mesh (180 mm), forming a sleeve and having a height of 190 cm. The superior part passes in form the end of the branch line (secondary line). Near the end of the branch line, the snoods (leaders) with fishhooks in two clusters are placed, and a bag with weight (8,5kg) provides the appropriate sinking speed.

Results

In all observed cases, the incidental capture of birds registered was absolute: no bird was captured when the MBED was used on the fishing gear (in combination with using tori lines and setting at night). During all observations, 3 birds had died by collision with the ship, but no marine bird mortalities were due to gear captures during this study. The MBED works in two aspects: 1) the weight attached causes a superior sinking rate, and 2) the mesh sleeve that surrounds the captured piece, avoids the access from mammals and marine birds to the fish or the hooks during the hauling of the gear. While using the MBED, with the weight average of 8.5 kg and approximately 40 meters distance between the next, the overall average sinking rate of the longline gear was 1.03 m/sec. This rate is markedly superior to the 0.3 m/sec demanded by the CAMLR Conservation Measure 24-02 (2004).

During sets where sperm whales (*Physeter macrocephalus*) were sighted in the proximities of the fishing gear without use of the MBED, the depredation on the pieces of the capture was 100%, fundamentally resulting in only the lips of fish remaining on hooks, and the sperm whale depredation approaches 80% of the sets that were observed. In the sets with presence of at least one sperm whale and with the use of the MBED, the cetacean depredation percentages decreased to 16%, being that lips, heads and trunks in similar proportions remained upon the fishhooks. The yield rate, the catch per unit of effort (CPUE), was determined in two forms: kilograms of capture per hour (kg/hr), and number of fish per 1000 fishhooks (n° fishes/1000 fishhooks). Each CPUE determination showed a marked improvement with the use of the MBED.

Table 1: Captures rates using the MBED with and without sperm whale depredation.

CPUE	Sperm whales depredation	Without sperm whales depredation
kg/hour	15.0	23.0
n° fish/1000 hooks	16.8	22.0

Discussion

The practical utility of the MBED should be evaluated in two different and complementary aspects: 1) the decrease of the incidental capture of marine birds, and 2) the protection of the fish pieces captured when concerning depredation by marine mammals (especially sperm whales), **improving the yields** (CPUE) for the fishers.

Seabirds in general reach sexual maturity late in life and their reproduction capacity is limited, making them very vulnerable when considering incidental mortalities. Mortality of seabirds at their first stages of mortality can stop the population's growth or cause it to decline. By making fishhooks invisible or not very accessible to seabirds during the setting operations, incidental captures of seabirds can be flagrantly reduced. With considerations to the FAO- recommended levels of incidental capture of sea birds (PAI-Sea Birds: less than 0.045 birds/1000 fishhooks and the PAN-Sea Birds: less than 0.05 aves/1000 fishhooks), when establishing the percentage of incidental captures of marine

birds and extrapolating that to the fleet-wide fishing effort, it is possible to gauge the impact that the longline fishery has on associated seabird populations.

Longline gear that sinks slowly increases the risk of mortality to seabirds. For instance, as longline gear is set into the water, it may float because of the turbulence and action of the waves, possibly remaining near the surface for 20 seconds, within 50 meters of stern before it begins to sink and the seabirds will be more apt to get captured on that gear. Good sinking speeds (> 0.3 m/sec.) prevent the seabirds from reaching the fishhooks, and birds are also deterred when crossing the area of air covered by a tori line. Although decreases of the incidental captures of seabirds among Antarctic and sub-Antarctic fisheries has been registered over recent years, possibly due to changes in fishing gear, fishing operations (i.e. setting at night), and the use of other mitigation measures, there has yet to be a completely effective method developed to exclude all incidental catches of seabirds. Though in its developmental stages, the MBED may greatly serve this purpose.



During cetacean depredation, for all observed cases, catch rates were 5% to 20% of what would be yielded without cetacean depredation. And, these numbers do not take into account the fish that were entirely removed from the hook by a whale, since that is impossible for an observer to determine if there is no evidence. For cetacean depredation upon fishing gear utilizing the MBED, the yield (CPUE) difference improves by 5% to 8%. Hence, the MBED is not only great for seabird conservation, but can also greatly improve the CPUE for the fishers.



POSTER: Field ID of roundscale spearfish (*Tetrapturus georgii*), in the northwestern Atlantic

Georg Hinteregger; Fisheries Observer; Southeast and Northeast

For more than 10 years, the Pelagic Observer Program (POP) at the NOAA Fisheries Southeast Fisheries Science Center ([SEFSC](#)) has been collecting data on a billfish, the roundscale spearfish, *Tetrapturus georgei*, previously not reported in the northwest Atlantic. Recently, a scientific paper based on POP observer data and samples² has been

² Shivji et al 2006

published that will encourage greater interest in the roundscale spearfish by fishery scientists and managers and, perhaps, especially, billfish sports fishermen. In the absence of any description in the available field guides, a poster that provides color ID photos of the roundscale spearfish, the white marlin (*Tetrapturus albidus*), and the longbill spearfish (*Tetrapturus pfluegeri*) with text and highlights of diagnostic features will be valuable for fishermen and researchers.

While the roundscale spearfish and white marlin are superficially similar, key diagnostic features such as the position of the anal opening relative to the anal fin height and even lateral scale shape can be used to distinguish these species while alive at boatside. The poster is designed so that it can be reduced to standard page size without loss of detail and reproduced on an ordinary color printer by downloading from the [POP](#) website or other NOAA Fisheries websites. The poster gives a phone number and web address where more information can be accessed and sightings, anecdotes, catch or catch-and-release information reported.

Unknown outside the tiny universe of the northwest Atlantic swordfish longliners and their observers, the road to the widespread acceptance of another billfish, a billfish that appears to be by far the most common *Tetrapturus* in some offshore areas, is bound to be bumpy. However, the case of the roundscale spearfish may provide **encouragement to observers** to realize that in the course of routine data collection, it is still possible **to make scientific discoveries** on the decks of a commercial fishing vessel.

POSTER: How can Observer Programs Contribute to Ecosystem-based Management?

Brad Justin; Fisheries Observer; North Pacific

Ecosystem-based management (EBM) is an integrated approach to management that considers the entire ecosystem, including humans. The goal of ecosystem-based management is to maintain an ecosystem in a healthy, productive and resilient condition so that it can provide the services humans want and need. Ecosystem-based management differs from current approaches that usually focus on a single species, sector, activity or concern; it considers the cumulative impacts of different sectors.³

Scientific investigations demonstrate that EBM promotes sustainable fisheries which in the long run results in more secure fishing investments, robust exploited populations, and stability for industry. Observer programs (OP's) should be designed in ways to work toward this growing approach, which would help expand various OP outputs. The ideas presented in this abstract pertain to the North Pacific Groundfish Observer Program

³ From 'Consensus Statement'

(NPGOP) in particular, but can be applied to other OP's as well. Presently in Alaska observers collect data that help us understand ecosystems, but the collection efforts need to be broader both temporally and spatially.

To accomplish this, OP's must find ways of redistributing observer duties to spend more time gathering ecosystem information while still accomplishing the necessary catch monitoring duties. Because this redistribution would create **ripple effects** across established programs, it must be done with some forethought, to minimize disturbances of the sectors, (industry, OP, etc.) Therefore, a formal study conducted by the OP (or by a consultant) would help to determine which EBM initiatives are most feasible and also help prioritize data needs. The OP could then make the necessary broader ecosystem observations. In time, these efforts would enhance ecosystem understanding and assist conservationists and managers in achieving more sustainable harvests of economically important species.

There are other ways OP's can contribute more to EBM. By incorporating ecosystem education during training, observers would develop an understanding of how observer data are used to assess the condition of an ecosystem and the impacts fishing has on an ecosystem. New designs in observer programs or augmentation of existing projects, such as year-round stomach collections in the North Pacific Program, for predatory/prey dynamics, would also enhance our understanding of ecosystems. The redistribution and expansion of observer duties to focus more on collecting detailed data for species associated with target fisheries would increase understanding of bycatch species and their role within the ecosystem (e.g., corals, sponges). Finally, reinterpreting existing data using new analytical methods or paradigms which specifically address/explore ecosystem dynamics, or which more clearly pinpoint the sources of perturbations, could also enhance ecosystem understanding and could be achieved without having to change existing observer sampling duties.

OBSERVER AND FISHER RELATIONS:

POSTER: Building an Efficient Working Relationship between Fishermen and Observers

Amanda Kardas; Fisheries Observer; Northeast, USA

Daily interactions with commercial fishermen are a major component of a fisheries observer's job. Observers are exposed to many different opinions and field a variety of questions. Oftentimes observers are unable to answer questions because they are regulatory based, while other topics such as observer job duties are easily answered. But, the overall majority of questions address the interpretation of laws and regulations. For

example, a fishing vessel was boarded by the United States Coast Guard ([USCG](#)) and the captain asked the boarding officer about Summer Flounder regulations. In this instance, not one of the Coast Guard personnel knew the answer. They proceeded to look it up and even then the interpretation was vague and there was uncertainty whether the law had come into effect. In this instance, the guidelines of how the law was written were not concise and rather confusing. If they were written in more of a **clear-cut** and to-the-point fashion this confusion and interpretation could have been eliminated. Lack of communication and outreach is another circumstance that industry encounters.

Some of the fishermen in the small ports claim that they do not receive information on law changes and closed areas. For example, on May 1st, 2006, the Northeast Fisheries Observer Program ([NEFOP](#)) implemented the USCG decal requirement for all vessels carrying a fisheries observer. Several captains in various ports did not know about the current USCG decal requirement even months after the requirement had started to be enforced. Another example is a situation that occurred when a fishing vessel was fishing in the Nantucket Lightship (management area) and was not aware of the Closed Area Scallop delineations. They were ultimately boarded by the Coast Guard and lost their entire trip for one tow over the line. Besides losing their trip, they were also sent back to their homeport, miles away from the port they were fishing from. Shortly thereafter, an observer was assigned to their boat which lead to the perception that observers are placed on fishing vessels to act as undercover fish police to catch and document fishermen's illegal fishing activities. In order to answer these questions, the observer could be required to know the regulations or the regulations and laws could be written in a more user friendly manner. **More outreach** is needed to enable the fishermen to be aware of updates and changes that often occur. This information **will allow the fishermen and observers to work much more efficiently with one another.**



PANEL: Better Communications for Harvesters

Cyril Forward; Fisheries Observer; Newfoundland and Labrador, Canada

Fisherpersoⁿs' (harvesters') attitudes, in [our part](#) of the world, have changed tremendously over the past twenty-five years. I remember many years ago when the fishers regarded the observers as the fisheries police, the bad guy. The changes in the attitudes is in no small way related to the education and training of the observer as well as the harvesters. Education and training for the observer is necessary, as the fishers become more aware of the changes taking place in the world's oceans, and are asking more questions. They expect the observers to have at least some of the answers and to be able to carry on a sensible conversation regarding their questions.

Over the past month, I have undertaken in talk in more detail with the harvesters regarding the observer program, and two trends occur. First, the fishers want more feedback from the observers' reports. Fishers are showing more interest in the observers'

work and feel the programs are necessary. They are not only interested in the stock numbers and quotas but are interested in other findings. As an example, I found that there is an interest in the work being undertaken in the coral study now being done in our region. Fishers are asking questions as to how the coral relates to the ecosystem, and the effect it has on fish and the oceans. The observers are expected to have some answers. Training and updating themselves is necessary for the observer. The second trend relates to the ongoing training for the observer. Harvesters expect their observers to be professional- professional in their work and their mannerism and how they present themselves in the work environment and even in their communities. **Professionalism** cannot be obtained without ongoing training. Conferences such as this one, where ideas are exchanged, are part of that ongoing training.



POSTER: Observers as Educators in the Fishing Industry

John Combs; Fisheries Observer; Pacific Islands and Gulf of Mexico

The goal of observer programs is to provide high quality data about the catch of target and non-target species to maintain a sustainable fishery and monitor interactions with protected and endangered species. However, resources limit coverage levels in some fisheries such that there is still some amount of uncertainty that managers must deal with. On unobserved trips, fishermen are often reluctant to share information with fishery managers because they are afraid that the consequences of reporting events may be a closed fishery. Also, fishermen are often unable to identify catch and do not have the tools to try.

In addition to data collection, having observers onboard commercial fishing vessels offers an outreach opportunity. The extensive amount of personal contact observers have with crews offers an **unprecedented opportunity** to pass on knowledge and materials to encourage fishermen to help in preserving resources. With minimal effort and cost, a large impact can be made on the knowledge base of the fishermen and can improve relationships between fishermen and fisheries managers. Observers can reinforce the importance of accurate logbook data on unobserved trips. They also have the opportunity to provide **hands-on** protected species handling **training** that cannot be provided in classroom situations like protected species workshops. While efforts by observers such as those previously described indeed exist today, they are informal at best and are likely inconsistent between observers. Therefore, a formal training should be provided to “seasoned” observers to educate crews and captains, especially in situations involving protected species. In addition, observers should be provided materials to leave with crews for reference on later, unobserved trips. These efforts will likely serve to encourage fishermen to correctly handle protected species and record more accurate information on unobserved trips, thereby allowing the observer program to have a positive impact on the fishery even when observers are not on board.

OBSERVER CHALLENGES:

PANEL: Monitoring Small Scale Commercial Fisheries

Jason Vestre; Fisheries Observer; West Coast

Small-scale commercial fisheries such as those fishing for near-shore rockfish using hook and line on skiffs or kayaks, the longline dory fishermen of Newport Beach, California or small open access longline vessels along the Pacific Coast have often been overlooked or dismissed as unobservable. While it seems individual boats in these fisheries have minimal impact, a fleet of small boats in a small area or along an entire coastline can have a substantial impact and their practices should not be disregarded.

A small-scale commercial fishery is one that has smaller vessels (two to ten meters), fishes short trips of one to two days, lands typically less than one metric ton per trip and uses many different gear types. **Many problems** occur when attempting to monitor small-scale commercial fisheries. The primary problems associated with observing small vessels are space limitations, vessel weight limits, crew size, and safety. Currently, in the West Coast Groundfish Observer Program ([WCGOP](#)), observers will monitor any vessel 18 feet or longer with adequate space and weight capacity to carry an observer.

One such small fishery, the California Nearshore Fishery, targets long-lived rockfish (*Sebastes spp.*) as well as cabezon (*Scorpaenichthys marmoratus*) and lingcod (*Ophiodon elongatus*) in shallow depths along the California coast. It is a live fishery where fishers usually land 25-250 lbs per day and less than 2000lbs in a two month trip limit period.

In 2006, the CA nearshore fishery had 329 potentially active licenses. The program selected only 129 of these vessels. This selection was made by excluding those licenses that were previously inactive, those showing landings of less than 1000 lbs in the 18 months prior to the 2006 selection and finally, any license using a vessel less than 18 feet in length. Of the 129 selected vessels, 68 vessels were not observed- excluded from observer coverage due to space constraints, size or safety concerns. The remaining 61 vessels were observed for a two-month period and landed approximately 178,000 lbs during the entire year. They landed approximately 211,000 lbs. While the total landings from this fishery figures represent only a fraction of a percent of the total west coast groundfish landings in 2006, it is some of the only at-sea data collected we have on these nearshore species.

Possible solutions for collecting data off of the excluded vessels are electronic monitoring systems, dockside monitoring and observation from alternative platforms such as industry vessels, charters or monitoring program vessels. While dockside monitoring is currently used and supplies usable and necessary landing data, it lacks any verifiable trip and discard data often attained by the observer. Electronic monitoring is being used successfully in some fisheries, often requiring 100% retention of

all catch. Logistical problems such as power source and placement of cameras are obstacles to using this method of monitoring. With alternative platform monitoring, a vessel is monitored at a safe distance and discard is transferred to the monitoring vessel directly or through a receiver. The retained catch is then sampled dockside. Though costly, alternative platform monitoring seems to be a viable option to obtain good data from vessels too small to place an observer.

RAISING THE BAR ON THE OBSERVER PROFESSION:

POSTER: Observer Professionalism and Credibility through Observer Knowledge-base Retention

Evan Bing-Sawyer; Fisheries Observer; West Coast

The cost to a fishery monitoring program of losing an experienced observer knowledge base is greater than just the burden of training new observers. Not only is this knowledge base particularly important for programs that rely on observers to contact vessels and coordinate specific ports, but a seasoned observer's experience is also a **valuable commodity** to any program. Through interactions with vessel operators and working at sea, observers develop valuable problem-solving skills that cannot be provided through classroom training. It should be the goal of each program to retain such skills.

Observer knowledge loss can be reduced in three main ways. The first method is to increase observer retention with incentives and benefits. Second, experienced observers should act as mentors of novice observers, guiding them around the port(s) in which they will be working to point out potential problems and help to build rapport with vessel operators. And finally, programs should develop a database or repository where observers can document specific vessel and port information so that new observers will have a better understanding of their role as observers. In support of these recommendations, observer responses to a preparation and training survey will be presented. The use of some, or all, of these methods by a program will promote a more **efficient and credible** program that provides the industry with consistently knowledgeable observers.



POSTER: Observing multiple fisheries in the US Southeast - Doing more “floating” than usual

Simon Gulak; Fisheries Observer; Southeast/ Gulf of Mexico

Although the idea of a **cross-trained observer** moving among different fisheries observer programs would seem beneficial to all involved, the result is often imperfect. The demand for field staff fluctuates often, making efficient sharing among observer programs complicated. Variations in methodologies, required equipment, and areas covered further hamper the logistics. Three programs in Florida have successfully utilized cross-trained observers: the shark bottom longline and shark gillnet observer program in Panama City, and the Pelagic Longline Program (POP) in Miami. The two longline programs share many data collection strategies because of similarities between the fisheries, but switching to the shark gillnet observer program provides a greater challenge. Although the longline protocols are comparable, there are major differences in deployment lengths, size of the vessels covered, and the equipment observers bring aboard for all three fisheries. Observer programs, especially the small ones like those based in Panama City, are reliant upon flexible and well-trained observers. Successfully shared observers benefit by broadening their experiences and **maximizing their time** in the field, and changing fisheries can also help alleviate boredom. Observer programs that take advantage of cross-trained observers obtain well-rounded field staff who are capable of dealing with many different situations and increase their potential for observer retention.



POSTER: Data Standardization as mode to facilitate Observer Exchange

Neil McIntosh; Fisheries Observer; Northeast

Sharing or **exchanging observers** between regions could easily be facilitated with data standardization between regional programs. With data standardization, training could be more uniform between regions with only small differences to account for issues specific to the region. This uniformity would allow for exchange of observers and other staff as they would already possess the baseline information needed to be functional in any region. An exchange program could be initiated so that once an observer had been active in their home region for a predetermined amount of time and with good data that they could be eligible. The observer could then be exchanged to the other region only needing to complete a “crash course” of regional differences instead of needing to go through a full training course meant for new observers. A program like this could achieve many things beneficial to the parties involved. From a company standpoint this could help with retention of employees and lead to the regions not needing to hold full training courses as often because they would first have the exchange program pool to work from. From an observer standpoint this would **reduce burnout** since it would appeal to the sense of adventure that most observers seem to have. While trips tend to be different from each other there is a certain amount of similarity within regions and trip types so the chance to experience something new while remaining an observer would be an excellent opportunity.

POSTER: Guardians of the Sea: Observer Short Story Book

Keith Davis; Fisheries Observer/Mail Buoy Editor; North Pacific and Pacific Islands

To help inform the general public in regards to the Fisheries Observer profession, to promote worldwide observer programs, and to **generate funding** for future observer career advancement opportunities, I propose the creation of an educational novel comprised of a collection of international Fisheries Observers' short stories. With an international Advisory Panel to coordinate and edit the book, the goal is to create a product that many can be proud of. The majority of the proceeds generated through published sales shall be reserved for helping fisheries observers attend future IFOCs and to help fund other observer **career advancement** opportunities (i.e. international observer exchange). The General Plan follows in chronological order:

- ❖ Create an international Advisory Panel to review and direct the publication. The Observer Professionalism Working Group ([OPWG](#)) of the IFOC has agreed to take on this role
- ❖ Solicit for Observer short-story authors and illustrators from around the globe, encompassing a wide variety of fisheries and exhibiting broad composition content. A poster will be available very soon.
- ❖ Gather all submissions by a designated deadline and begin to coordinate, with the Advisory Panel, appropriate selections and organization of the novel
- ❖ Coordinate with the Advisory Panel editing the submitted short stories and illustrations and create a Forward and an Afterward to complete the book
- ❖ Upon completion, the manuscript should undergo a review period (by numerous international Observer Programs)
- ❖ At the same time, the Advisory Panel (The OPWG) will solicit for publishers, assign a treasurer and make general decisions upon proceed allocations
- ❖ Observer applicants can thereafter apply to the Advisory Panel for **scholarships** extracted from the generated funds

OBSERVERS' CLOSING REMARKS:

PANEL: IFOC Observer Endnote Speech

Sandra Vieira; Fisheries Observer; West Coast

On May 17th, the observer representatives attending the IFOC all got together to discuss and share each other's opinions about the conference. At first it was slow going getting the thoughts to flow, **as we had coffee instead of beer in hand**, but we managed to formulate some opinions regarding the conference anyway.

Collectively we were thrilled to see analysis and results of our data collections be used throughout various programs. It was a way to validate what we all work so hard, out at sea, to do for the fisheries and our contribution in protecting our oceans' natural resources.

A few concerns that were discussed were the minimal observer attendance we saw at the International **Fisheries Observer** Conference. We discussed a number of ways that we might build interest within the observer community to attend future conferences and one would be to have sessions geared more towards observer exclusive topics such as methodology of sampling, its difficulties and solutions, how to deal with space constraints and hazards on the various vessels observed throughout all our programs. And how to cope with trip lengths; being out to sea for extended periods of time and not go crazy - **psychiatric evaluations** may be needed too. Discussing personal experience in conflict resolutions, stories of past experiences in confrontations with vessel crew, how the observer resolved them, sharing and maybe suggesting how another one of us might have handled it differently.

A big topic that was discussed was the interest of other observer programs throughout the world. As a like-minded group of individuals we seem to be inherently adventuresome and curious of other programs throughout the world. More precisely, **we want to travel**. Actually more so, we are curious as to the different types of observer programs. A strong suggestion was made that a grocery list of sorts could be described either in a presentation forum or probably more reasonably, in written or electronic form, of the list and description of observer programs in the world; discussing the different fisheries, their target species, their common by catch, the individual programs manner of handling the by catch whether be actual discard not effecting the fishers general quota, or deducting the discard from the fishers quota or landing all catch caught and later dissolving at the dock.

Another topic of interest was potential benefits of cross training of one program to another; ultimately, an all-inclusive certification for easy international deployment. In case you all don't already know I will tell you, **our passports are always up to date**.

Another interest was for an informal forum, a round table so to speak. A session that monitored could allow observers to speak frankly about their personal experiences and receive feedback from our counterparts throughout the world. An appropriate avenue to get this suggested forum started would be to use the already well-established [Association for Professional Observers \(APO\)](#) and [ObserverNet](#) websites.

A concern that was noticed was that, approximately 50 percent of the observers who had attended the May 17th informal gathering had originally submitted abstracts for the plenary sessions, and some were diverted towards the poster forum, thereby giving the feeling to those specific observers that their interests were not warranted for the plenary session. It is understood that there are far too many topics, that everyone here at the conference are personally passionate about and so possibly the poster forum is a way to present all of the numerous thoughts but maybe an observer specific panel of discussion is warranted too.

But I must share that we, as the observer contingent represented at the International Fisheries Observer Conference were happy to meet, speak and interact with folks of various positions within the fisheries community.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all of the sponsors and steering committee for providing us with this opportunity. I believe we all look forward to the next conference. **That does mean another trip, right?**



ACKNOWLEDGMENTS FROM OBSERVERS:

US Observers thank Bill Hogarth for the IFOC

Edited and sent by Brad Justin; Fisheries Observer; North Pacific

Dear Dr. William Hogarth:

This is a letter summarizing comments from some of the observers who were funded by the National Observer Program (NOP) to attend the fisheries observer conference in Victoria, BC:



I would like to thank Mr. Hogarth and those who helped make funding possible for observers to attend the 2007 IFOC. I felt privileged having the opportunity to meet other observers, scientists, and conservationists from around the world. I was able to exchange many business cards, abstracts, and ideas. Just as the conference itself was great practice for me in networking, I believe that the contacts I made will be helpful both in my work as an observer and in future fisheries related fieldwork and conservation projects I may pursue.

-Brad Justin (North Pacific Fisheries Observer)



Maria Parga's presentation on "Interactive Training on Techniques to Reduce Longline Related Mortality of Sea Turtles" was mesmerizing; especially in contrast to the way we have been doing it. One of the other really interesting things I learned was not even on the agenda. I learned in discussions with Reuben Beazley (Newfoundland, Canada observer of 29 years) and other Canadians that an attempt by the Canadian

government, at the request of industry, to impose an industry-funded, industry-selected, multi-provider (in competition with each other) service delivery model (like the Alaskan system) was successfully blocked when observers, their union, data users (biologists and fishery managers) spoke up. How interesting it would be to have a case study describing this struggle on a panel on Service Delivery Models at the next [IFOC] meeting.

-Georg Hinterregger (Southeast Fisheries Observer)



I truly appreciate the opportunity to go to the conference. It was the first conference that I have attended and it was great to meet people from all over the world that observe and that work in monitoring programs. I learned a good bit about how things differ in various programs and some of the issues that exist in monitoring programs. It was also interesting to see what some of the end users do with our data. Thank you very much for the opportunity.

-Neal McIntosh (Northeast Fisheries Observer)



A synopsis of the problems of other observer programs of the world, particularly in areas such as Sri Lanka (where they are trying to start up an observer program in the aftermath of the 2004 tsunami) was great. Contact information exchanged was important so that we may help other regions, and receive help as well, on dealing with the problems facing the world's fisheries today. I enjoyed especially meeting other observers, and watching how fisheries managers from around the globe work together at an international forum to exchange information.

Thank you Mr. Hogarth, the 2007 International Fishery Observer Conference was the most interesting meeting I have ever had the opportunity of attending. And, thanks Brad for taking on this task. Let me know if I can help in any other way.

-Tim Lescher (West Coast Fisheries Observer)



CREATIVE CORNER:

**Contributions to this section are not related to the dealings of the IFOC, but are included to exhibit the lighter side of the observer life.*

Poem: “Midnight Mid-Ocean Snack”

Daniel Griffin; Fisheries Observer; Pacific Islands, USA

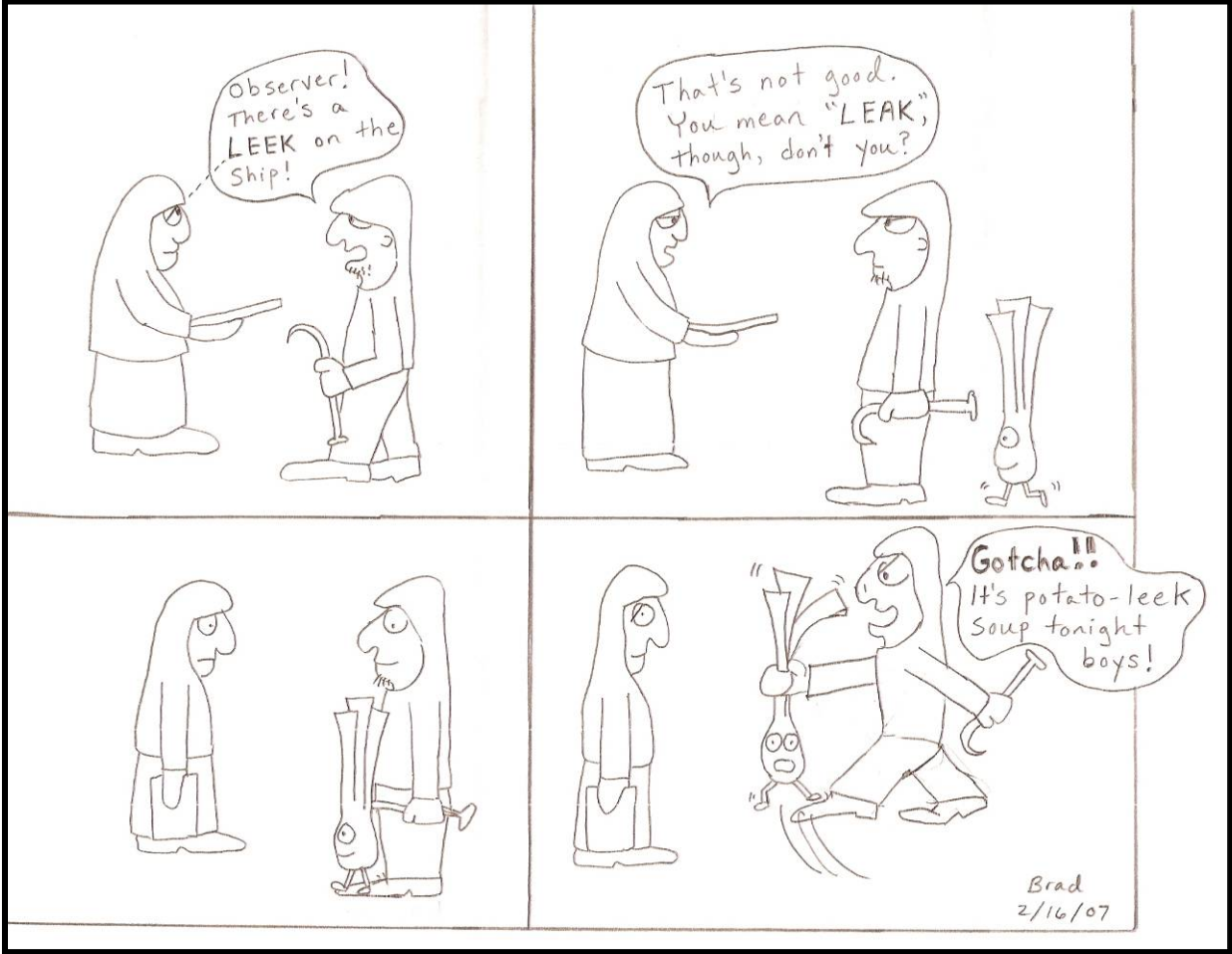
**FRESH RED APPLES
ARE DELICIOUS
NICE CRISP TART ONES
ARE SUBLIME**

STILL...

**THE EXPERIENCE
LOSES SOMETHING
WHEN YOUR HANDS SMELL
LIKE LANCETFISH SLIME**

High Sea Funnies [Chapter #2]: "There's a Leek on the Ship!"

Brad Justin; Observer/APO Board; North Pacific, USA



IMPORTANT CONTACTS AND WEBSITES:

APO:

APO website	www.apo-observers.org
APO General E-mail	apo@apo-observers.org
Keith Davis (Mail Buoy Editor)	lblegend@yahoo.com (928) 369-8764
Brad Justin (Associate Mail Buoy Editor)	bjustin@cheerful.com
Liz Mitchell (APO Board)	emitch@efn.org (541) 344-5503
David Wagenheim (APO Board/ObserverNet.org)	davewagenheim@hotmail.com
Mark Wormington (APO Board)	siberio@hotmail.com
Kim Dietrich (APO Treasurer)	kdiet@myuw.net

Links:

ObserverNet (on-line observer forum)	www.observernet.org
National Observer Program	www.st.nmfs.gov/st4/nop
International Observer Conferences	www.fisheriesobserverconference.com
AMSEA (Marine Safety Instruction)	www.amsea.org

**** Submissions for the Fall Mail Buoy are due by the middle of June 2007. The APO is currently recruiting for observer representatives from various national and international observer programs. Please, contact us if you are interested with helping with the APO.*