

Name of person Interviewed: Amy Van Atten [AVA]

Facts about this person:

Age (if known) Born 1968

Sex Female

Occupation NOAA Observer Program Operations Coordinator

If a fisherman (if retired, list the ports used when fishing),

Home port, and

Hail Port (port fished from, which can be the same)

Residence (Town where lives)

Ethnic background (if known) European American

Interviewer: Janice Gadaire Fleuriel [JGF]

Transcriber: Janice Gadaire Fleuriel

Place interview took place: New Bedford Harbormaster House

Date and time of interview: Sept. 22, 2007

## INDEX / KEYWORDS

KEYWORDS: Women; Fisheries observation; NOAA; Regulations

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[00:00]

AVA born in Worcester, Massachusetts, 1968, one of five children, oldest female; two other siblings in environmental work; Mother's background in teaching/science interest; Father was a finance manager; Family lived other places growing up—Australia, France; Finished high school back in Shrewsbury, Massachusetts; Knew study, some kind of, controversial [laughs] animal-related and human use issues; Initially interested in whaling, marine mammals, impacts of whaling, why people whaled in the first place; Turned into interest in fisheries and accidental interactions with whales.

[02:34]

Interested on controversial aspects because always wanted a challenge; Always fascinated by dolphins; Desire to be with them, see them, touch them wore off after a few whale watches; Then more interested in the long-term survival of the stocks, on a population level vs. individual animal level; Worked for a little while as an assistant trainer for the New England Aquarium, realized benefits of captivity allowing public to have access to animals otherwise wouldn't see; Wasn't fulfilled by that; Majored in wildlife and fisheries biology with a minor in forestry, U Mass Amherst; Master's, from University of Maine in Orono, wildlife management; Mostly terrestrial wildlife, but same issues—managing resources, sustainability, interacting with/respecting different views on resource use; Worked at a deer check station though not a hunter—did tick collecting/other sampling from the deer

[05:55]

Same kind of thing whether terrestrial animals, fish, timber; Controversial issues pop up—endangered species, habitat protected areas, need to balance a lot of different concerns in ways to use public resources; Lived overseas because of father's work; JGF relating how controversial issues topic reminds her of difficult bear trapping law that came up for vote a few years ago, controversial for western Mass; AVA interested in things like Green Peace, but through schooling you learn to look at bigger picture, lose that sense of concern of individual animal vs. overall welfare of population, accept that people have different views

[08:33]

Got involved in fisheries observer work right out of undergraduate school, 1991; Before that, one summer job working as a mate on a bluefish charter boat, Barnegat Light, New Jersey; Made more money, worked harder than friends who waitressed; Big boat, started collecting environmental logs, would see the NOAA boats off shore doing fish population surveys; Started working for NOAA on a harbor porpoise survey, 40-day trip, line transect survey to estimate population size Gulf of Maine and Bay of Fundy

[10:40]

Line transect survey methodology; Can end up being able to predict a detection factor, with different environmental conditions/animal characteristics to come up with

a total population estimate area surveyed, extrapolate to entire area; That was a temporary position, came back and worked with the observer program, now mostly doing work in office at Woods Hole; Fisheries covered during that period—drift gill net fishery for large pelagics, sword fish and tuna, pelagic long line, pelagic pair trawl (two boats towing a net in between); Large pelagic fisheries no longer in existence, New Bedford had been pretty active port for sword fish, but fishing right at the same depth that marine mammals tended to aggregate in, lot of different stocks impacted, and resource, was being depleted; Law put in place to stop it early nineties; Office work was initially reviewing observer logs, part of time was spent at sea on line transect surveys or opportunistic sightings, occasionally observing on commercial fishing boats; Moved up from just reviewing/collecting data to more involved with program management and observer training; Became area lead, more involved with, tracking the current regulations some budget issues; Now operations coordinator

[15:28]

Northeast Fisheries Observer Program based out of Northeast Fisheries Science Center, Woods Hole; In a building off site in Falmouth, Observer Training Center. Program is from Maine through North Carolina, about seventy observers right now, across the states; Cover twelve or more different fisheries, main gear types are otter trawl, scallop dredge, and gill net; Also do some pots and traps, hag fish more recent; Hag fishing method; Hag fish are eel-type things, slimy; Right now dealing with sampling issues because hard straighten out, hold onto, safety issues with slime and lines; Hag fish used for leather products, a lot shipped to Orient

[17:52]

Never had problems personally with being a woman on a boat; Get a lot of women observers, part of my job is to support them, deal with any compliance issues, harassment, problems on boat; Probably more problems with the males than females; Hesitations on behalf of the industry, have to overcome when break into a new fishery or port, from women are bad luck to fishermen's wives might not like it; Observer training includes vessel etiquette, what to expect for amenities/privacy; Have to screen people before hired to be sure can accept conditions; Still some boats hesitant to taking females but required to, NOAA is equal opportunity employer, accepting observers mandatory if have a permit; Try to work with fishermen in assigning, but can't always meet everybody's requests; Most female observers don't care if not accepted, have to be that way to do job; Does exit interviews when observers leave, overall they really enjoy interactions with fishermen, see they work so hard, deal with lots of regulations

[22:57]

Pretty much everybody has a horror story about particular boats; May be completely ignored for entire trip; Observers dedicated to field, not fish cops, but to monitor resource on the whole vs. going after individual violations;

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[Start of file WAV\_0020\_002]

Screen observers, don't want to hire activists, need them to be, collecting non-biased info, hard working, independent, reliable, trustworthy; 3 week training class at training center/what's included; Hard to teach in classroom kinds of interactions going to have on boats; Have 3 training trips, have a mentor, each trip reviewed

thoroughly by a debriefer in office before sent back out; Keep close tabs, they have a lot of support; Have area coordinators they can call 24-7, on boat if in cell phone range, all carry cell phones; Usually when on boat, start doing solo trips, pretty much on own; Don't really use the vessel communication equipment; Some ways to e-mail in an emergency, never had to use that; Don't really have any horror stories in Northeast, but have had occasional harassment or interference/examples of these; For most part don't have problems like that, if do, on very few vessels; Vessels might start it in hopes won't observe on them anymore, but everyone has to take fair share; Complaints they hear about observers only on nice boats, etc.; Helps if observers have some kind of industry familiarity before come to training, working on boats, running boat, recreationally

[05:30]

Three laws now require observer coverage—Marine Mammal Protection Act, Endangered Species Act, Magnuson Stevens Act; What Marine Mammal act requires, similar under Magnuson; Most of the federal fisheries management plans have some kind of observer requirement, more recently SBRM, Standardized Bycatch Reporting Methodology.

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[Start of File WAV\_0020\_003]

A lot of the level of coverage dependent on congressional funds; Scallop fishery has an industry funded program, fishermen pay for a portion; Majority of coverage is federally tax dollars, so always a limit on how much can actually do per year; How much is done in different fisheries usually based on analysis that needs to be done; Confidence interval around the final estimates/ CV coefficient of variation); Different types bycatch require different levels of coverage because of data variability; A little more monitor driven in some special access programs—Regular B-Day Program to use B-days rather than just the A-days for multi-species, hook special access program, and U.S./Canada Management Area—observer data used for monitoring, total allowable catches, bycatch; Probably not most qualified person to answer questions about how well regulations working; Attend a lot of the council meetings, but kind of an outsider to the regulatory process; Regional office more involved with the regulations themselves; Their program more related to doing the stock assessments that go into creating regulations;. Interprets the ones that are going to involve observe coverage; Great class UNH, called Bridging the Gap, involving fishermen, science and managers to teach about data collection, do stock assessments, the regulatory process; Gets people from different backgrounds to talk about their interpretations; The whole council process is very complicated; Program deals with federally managed and state-run fisheries, thirteen different states, lot of different regulations; Don't have too many town regulations, those might for things like clamming; Program covers the one to three mile area from shore, trawling for squid or whiting, gill netting for cod or monkfish, summer flounder; Mid-Atlantic program just starting in menhaden purse seine fishery, governing body is not state or federal

[05:51]

Observer program don't too much of the analyzing, mostly aggregate, summarize, don't extrapolate; More involved with collecting data, training observers, developing sampling protocols, sampling scheme/ vessel selection, number of sea days, coverage Have a big data quality program; Monitor how well the observers are doing assess/review each trip, debrief, review log, enter data to database; Do close to 10,000 sea days a year; Seventy observers, new class of sixteen in October, will take two or three months to become fully certified; Data quality audits/checks; How data used by scientists/end users; Intake reduction team process, fishermen and scientists and gear specialists all get together and look at ways to reduce bycatch, come up with some mitigative measures that wouldn't necessarily involve closures or complete change in gear/types of measures;

[09:43]

Under the Marine Mammal Protection Act, a little different from the fisheries management councils, try to get a variety of regions, gear types represented on intake reduction team; Then have to evaluate whether or not changes work; Festival helpful for the program as another way to interact with fishermen, get their feedback/work with observers if hear they're not doing their job while on boats; Festival good chance for fishermen to understand better the value/use of data collection, understand that females make great observers/work hard/fit on boat;

[End of File WAV\_0020\_003/End of Interview]