



Observing Today...Conserving for Tomorrow

The IGFTO Observer

A newsletter for International Game Fish Tournament Observers

Volume 9 Edition 1



Renaissance Man John Treat

Story by Art McDonald

As the membership of the IGFTO grows, perhaps it's time to look back at just how the organization was founded, and one need look no further than John Treat. It was John,

IGFTO's Second Observer Training Course in Costa Rica a Success

IGFTO is pleased to report its second successful Observer Training Course held in Quepos, Costa Rica. The course held on February 18th, 2020, helped to provide observers for the prestigious Pescadora Billfish Championship at Marina Pez Vela. Eleven new IGFTO members participated in the course that covered IGFA angling rules, release techniques, boat etiquette and safety. In addition, five current IGFTO members took the opportunity to refresh

along with Bob Malerba and Terry O'Neill, who were the brain trust behind what is now the foremost Big Game Fishing Observer group in the world – the International Game Fish Tournament Observers. Let's meet John Treat:

John was born in Grand Rapids, Michigan, and lived in Illinois the first 18 years as he says, "listening to the corn grow." His early memories of fishing were on the Grand Haven, Michigan pier with a cane-pole and little silversides for bait. He attended college in the East, where he met the love of his life, Patti, and moved to Rhode Island to further his career in banking.

Chasing Bass and Blues Down the Beach

It didn't take him long to fall in love with saltwater and fishing for Striped Bass and Bluefish. He began chasing them down the beach on shore before work (when he would then change into a 3-piece suit). Later he purchased his first boat – a 17' Boston Whaler- in which he plied his new-found skills into a new-found love.... saltwater fishing. Soon after that, he moved up to a 23' Mako, and then a 26' Grady White – loaded to the gills with all the bells and whistles.

During the '70s and '80s, he began to fish beyond his local Narragansett Bay to the island of Cuttyhunk in the Elizabeth Islands, where he pursued large Striped Bass. Every fall he would trailer his boats to Chatham, Nauset Beach and Monomoy Point to fish the annual fall run of Striped Bass along the shore. It was there, in 1984, that he landed his first of four Striped Bass over 50 lbs. The largest weighed 57.5 pounds and was a huge thrill for him.

John joined a very active and competitive fishing Club named the East Bay Anglers. There were between 7 and 8 tournaments each year, and the club would win nearly all of them due to those members that were hard-core anglers – including John. Later, he became president of the club during a period when the Striped Bass were under pressure. John's recognized that conservation efforts were

their knowledge and skills. The course was conducted by IGFTO president Steve Hargett. Steve opened the course by stating "The IGFTO is committed to encouraging and supporting billfish release tournaments in Costa Rica. We also recognize the value of being able to provide tournament directors with trained and qualified observers who are native to Costa Rica."

Welcome New Members

Congratulations and welcome to these new IGFTO members:

John Wargo	Boca Raton FL
Jason Ludwig	Hanover PA
Dawn Williams	West Palm Beach FL
Dave Gutch	North Palm Beach FL
Bamboo McCue	Wellington FL
Toby Tobias	Rockport TX
Evan O'Shea	Jacksonville FL
Robert Lee	Port Perry ON CA
Mark Mukon	Ocean Breeze FL
Rebecca Lane	Savannah GA
Eric Weinbaum	Boca Raton FL
Amanda Gilbert	Largo FL
Tina Mauzy	Ft. Lauderdale FL
Joe Stein III	Marriottsville MD
Edward Hails	Montgomery AL
Pratik Patel	Goshen, IN
Randy Ratliff	Aberdeen, WA
Kelie Limehouse	Playa Hermosa, CA
Maria Jimenez Bakit	San Jose, CR
Stu Webber	Fremont, CA
Mark Tuma	Elgin, IL

needed and used his leadership to encourage the switch from J-Hooks to Circle Hooks to lower the incidence of killing the fish.

[An Early Advocate for Tag and Release](#)

He became an active tag and release advocate for the American Littoral Society and has tagged countless Striped Bass over the years. As he expanded into larger center consoles, he began targeting Bluefin and Yellowfin tuna further offshore – and eventually, he began exploring other areas ranging from Maine south along the coast to the Carolinas. When he retired in the 1990s, he started taking his boat to Florida chasing Sailfish, Tarpon, and Mahi-Mahi south along the east coast and the Florida Keys.

The second part of John’s fishing career began when he read an article in Marlin Magazine describing the Certified Observer Course being offered by the IGFA back in 2002. He immediately signed up for the course being held in Ocean City, Maryland – which is where he met Bob Malerba (they were the only “Yankees” among all the “Southern Boys.”) Both John and Bob became Certified Observers and began observing in numerous Florida Tournaments, followed by International venues of Venezuela, Costa Rica, Aruba, El Salvador, and the Dominican Republic.

[A Founder of the IGFTO](#)

It didn’t take long for John and Bob, along with a dozen or so other Certified Observers, to recognize they were more “professional” and experienced than many of the other Observers at the tournaments. In those days, many of the “Observers” were boyfriends, girlfriends or acquaintances pulled out of bars to observe with no experience. Over the first five or so years of observing, John and Bob began formulating a plan to create what is now known as the IGFTO. The goal was to set membership apart and distinguish members as THE elite Observer Group. There were about 1,100 IGFA Observers who became “Certified”

Chris Funk	Fayetteville, NC
Anthony Cadarin	Chandler, AZ
Simon Lemke	Milwaukee, WI
Debbie Pierog	Hermosa, CR

New Observer Training Course Announced

***Saturday, April 25,
Delray Beach, Florida***

A new course is scheduled for Delray Beach, Florida, on Saturday, April 25, 2020. The course runs from 9 am to 1 pm at the Bel Aire community clubhouse, located at 5121 Casa Real Drive.

IGFTO members are asked to help spread the word about this new OTC. This will be the last OTC in Florida for the 2020 winter season. The course content has changed significantly since the days when the IGFA presented the content. In addition to IGFA rules and billfish species identification, the course includes practical advice about how to be a first-class observer, what to expect in a tournament, and a thorough presentation of slides and video on how to identify various species of billfish.

during that period, and the IGFTO goal was to reach 10% of them based on their experience and expertise. Simply stated, the overall goal was to have 100-110 members. That number now exceeds 200!

Approximately 15 Charter Members donated \$175 each to help fund the fledgling organization. After hours of work compiling documents (Articles of Incorporation, By-Laws, Mission Statement, Corporate filings, and a granted tax-exempt status under Section 501 (c)(3)), the International Game Fish Tournament Observers (“IGFTO”) was formed. It didn’t take the fishing community long to recognize the experience and expertise associated with an Observer wearing the IGFTO blue shirt!

[Paying it Forward](#)

These days, John spends a considerable amount of time fishing with his Grandson, Jack (age 12), helping him to develop into a world-class angler and future observer. Jack’s become a darn-good angler, having bested several jumbo Striped Bass and Sailfish, fishing the waters of Rhode Island and Quepos, Costa Rica.

Over more than 50 years fishing and 75 tournaments as an observer, John has acquired a treasure trove of wonderful experiences and great friendships made with his fellow observers, tournament directors, anglers, and crewmembers across the globe. An original member of the IGFTO Board of Directors, John has recently stepped down and has the distinction of being the first and only “Director Emeritus.” He’s still active in the organization and attends the monthly IGFTO Board meetings. The Board of Directors relies on John’s experience, wisdom, and judgment – which is freely given and graciously accepted.

Those IGFTO members that attended the OTC presented by the IGFA should take this course, not only as a refresher but to benefit from the significant amount of new content. IGFTO members in good standing may attend free of charge.

The program is an exceptional value for those interested in becoming an observer in world-class tournaments:

Each paid attendee will receive:

- Course Admission (\$175 value)
- Membership in IGFTO for 2019 (\$100 value)
- Membership initiation fee waived (\$100 value)
- IGFTO Dress Shirt (\$45 Value)
- IGFTO Work Shirt (\$30 Value)
- FREE Continental Breakfast (\$15 Value)
- IGFTO Face Mask (\$13 Value)
- IGFTO Course Booklet (\$12 Value)
- IGFTO Observer Log Book (\$7 Value)
- IGFTO Lapel Pin (\$4 Value)

Director Evan Hipsley Named to National



Marine Fisheries Advisory Panel

IGFTO Director Evan A Hipsley, Jr. has been selected to serve on the Atlantic Highly Migratory Species (HMS) Advisory Panel (AP) for the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS). The HMS AP was established to advise NMFS on the collection and evaluation of information for developing or amending fishery management plans for Atlantic HMS.

Each HMS AP member is chosen for their expertise in a particular area, as well as their ability to contribute to multi-species management. The members of the Highly Migratory Species Advisory Panel (HMS AP) represent commercial and recreational fishing interests, the scientific community, and the environmental community who are knowledgeable about Atlantic HMS and/or Atlantic HMS fisheries.

Each AP member serves a three-year term, with the current group of new AP members terms expiring on December 31, 2022. NOAA Fisheries consults with and considers the comments of the Highly Migratory Species Advisory Panel (HMS AP) when preparing and implementing fishery management plans or amendments for Atlantic tunas, swordfish, billfish, and sharks.

TOTAL VALUE \$501

SPECIAL PRICE \$250

(Half Price!)

ATTENDEE SAVINGS \$251

**(Must be paid in full by
midnight April 11, 2020)**

Each attendee will learn:

- The purpose and mission of observers
- How to volunteer and be chosen to observe in a tournament
- Observer's duties
- Observer Code of Conduct
- How to call a release
- IGFA Rules and Regulations
- Billfish Identification

IGFTO members are encouraged to help spread the word. To sign up and register go to www.IGFTO.org

Your help in spreading the word is greatly appreciated,

Clearance Sale!

Yeti IGFTO 26 oz Double Wall Vacuum Insulated Bottle Keeps cold cold and hot hot

Was \$40.00 For a limited

IGFTO President Steve Hargett said, “we are thrilled to see an IGFTO board member serve on such a prestigious committee. This appointment allows the IGFTO to play a role in fisheries management and gives us an opportunity to further our organizations’ mission to conserve our precious gamefish resource. We’re very proud of Evan and expect he will make a significant contribution to the advisory panel.”

IGFTO Sponsors GRAY FISHTAG RESEARCH

The IGFTO Board of Directors has approved the sponsorship of Gray Fishtag Research (“GFR”), a 501 (c) (3) non-profit organization. This is an international and fully interactive fish tagging program powered by the world’s largest network of fishing professionals consisting of approximately 10,000 charter boat captains and mates. GFR is an essential tool for promoting the sustainability of marine game fish and increasing public resource awareness. The program is collecting information in real-time, producing valuable scientific data, directly from fishermen in every part of the world. They are connecting professional fishermen and angling enthusiasts with the scientific community who are desperate for relevant data. All fish species in every ocean are being monitored, including billfish, sharks, general offshore, and inshore species are being tracked and recorded. Results provide scientists and biologists with valuable information on migration patterns, fish stocks, growth rates, habitat depths, and much

time now just \$29.95!
Save over \$10.00

Go to IGFTO.org and click on the Ship’s Store

Brand New Women's IGFTO Work Shirts!

Specially created for our better observers these shirts are cut to fit the fairer sex. Shirts are IGFTO blue with our logo and are in stock in Medium, Large, and Extra Large Sizes. Available at the IGFTO Ship’s Store

IGFTO in the NEWS!

Recognition from Marlin Magazine

Do you subscribe to Marlin Magazine? If you do, you’ll find a very nice article about the IGFTO in the March 2020 issue on page 30 written by Editor-in-Chief Sam White. In it, Sam traces the history of the organization’s beginning-recognizing

more. The data collected is being analyzed and used for scientific purposes and shared with any interested parties at NO COST. Considering the mission statements of both Organizations are parallel in conservation efforts, IGFTO is proud of our association, as a corporate sponsor, with GFR.

founders Bob Malerba, John Treat, and Terry O'Neill. He also speaks to the value of having observers over using cameras, the benefits of our Observer Training Program, and the significant number of tournaments we have participated in calling the release of almost 50,000 billfish. Thanks for the encouraging words Sam-great job!

Upcoming tournaments

Every one of these tournaments promises to be an exciting event at a fantastic location. Don't wait until it's too late, sign up today! For more information, log into the members' section of IGFTO.ORG and navigate to the Tournaments and Tournament Information for Observers Sections. Email Steve Hargett:

captsteve57@hotmail.com

- Los Suenos
Signature Series
Billfish
Tournament, Los
Suenos, Costa
Rica. Leg III, March
25-28, 2020
- Casa de Campo,
April 1 - 5, 2020

IGFTO Tournament Report

Los Suenos Triple Crown Leg I

A total of 39 IGFTO Observers attended the seventh annual Signature Triple Crown billfish series held at Los Sueños January 15-18. One hundred and eighty highly competitive anglers jumped aboard 38 boats to release 523 sailfish and 70 marlin in just three days, for a combined total of 593 billfish, translating to a per boat average of 16 billfish.

Pescadora Billfish Championship

Ladies-only tournament in
Quepos, Costa Rica.

Thirty-four IGFTO
members called the
release of 330 sailfish and
9 marlin February 20-
22. The vessel “Big Oh”
won the daily each of two
days and took first prize
overall with 27 total
releases. The tournament
recognizes the skills and
competitive nature that
women contribute to the
sport.

IGFTO is proud to be part
of the only all-female
Billfish Championship
tournament. We look
forward to continued
involvement with this
tournament in 2021. Mark
your calendars for next
year as this tournament
and its format are here to
stay.

We're here for you.
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