



The IGFTO Observer

A newsletter for International Game Fish Tournament Observers

Volume 5

Edition 1



IGFTO Experiences Tremendous Growth

IGFTO Membership Applications are Available Online at www.igfto.org

Observing Today ... Conserving for Tomorrow



IGFA World Record Coordinator Jack Vitek instructs an Observer Training Course class in IGFA angling rules and billfish species identification. He tells each class: "If you want to observe, you need to join IGFTO."

IGFTO Observer Spotlight

By Angie Sherlock

I've grown up on the water and fished since I was old enough to bait a hook; having fished in the Great Lakes, North Carolina streams, as well as the Atlantic Ocean. I've taken advantage of every opportunity that has come my way to fish for pleasure as well as in local tournaments.

One day last year a friend who shares a mutual passion for fishing and billfish conservation told me she was an IGFTO Observer. I had never even heard of tournament observers, but her exuberance about the experience in the Dominican Republic was obvious and the concept of becoming an IGFTO Observer sounded right up my alley.

Luck was on my side and I was sitting at an IGFA Observer Training Course within a week! Our instructor, IGFA's Jack Vitek, was great; not only covering IGFA angling rules, but also billfish identification and 'observer etiquette.' I was psyched and ready to go to a tournament from the moment I left there. I didn't have to wait too long.

My first tournament was the El Salvador International Billfish Tournament and Presidential Challenge of El Salvador. Everyone - from my fellow Observers to the team members I had the pleasure to observe to the personnel at the resort were fantastic! I met so many interesting people and left with fantastic memories, new friendships and more excitement for my next tournament - not to mention witnessed sailfish and marlin releases like never before. At least that's what I thought ... *(continued on next page)...*

What a year!

International Game Fish Tournament Observers membership increased by 80% in 2015 due to the outstanding response to the five Observer Training Courses hosted by the International Game Fish Association last year. Ten more observers joined IGFTO after taking the course in January 2016.

Due to the surge in membership of experienced professional and amateur sport fishermen, IGFTO was able to provide 195 observers to witness billfish releases at 15 international tournaments in the Caribbean, Central America, US Virgin Islands, Aruba and Florida during 2015. Observers called releases of 7,127 billfish during those tournaments.

During IGFTO's six-year history, observers have witnessed nearly 24,000 billfish releases.

In January 2016, 20 IGFTO observers worked Leg I of the Los Suenos Signature Triple Crown Tournament in Costa Rica, where 1,961 billfish were safely released. That same weekend, another 16 IGFTO observers witnessed releases of 81 billfish during the 53rd Annual Buccaneer Cup Sailfish Release Tournament in Palm Beach, FL.



IGFTO Observer Angie Sherlock aboard Carnio at the International Billfish Tournament in El Salvador.

IGFTO THANKS SPONSORS

AFTCO, Costa Del Mar, Penn Reels, SquidNation and BlackStrap who made it possible for IGFTO to become a community sponsor of The Billfish Foundation in 2016.

International Game Fish Tournament Observers Inc. is a 501(c)3 tax-exempt charitable organization dedicated to the preservation and conservation of game fish worldwide. We provide trained and insured observers to authenticate the "catch and release" of billfish and game fish during international big game fish tournaments.



The IGFTO Observer

A newsletter for International Game Fish Tournament Observers - Page 2



IGFTO Observers witnessed 90 sailfish and 2 marlin releases during the 72nd Annual Stuart Light Tackle Tournament at Sailfish Point Marina, Stuart, FL in December 2015.

IGFTO Observer Spotlight

(continued from previous page)

...until I Observed in the Los Suenos Triple Crown Tournament in Costa Rica, the following year!

I had heard about the fishing in Costa Rica, but never in my wildest imagine expected what I witnessed. Almost 2,000 billfish were caught and released over the course of the 3-day Leg. Being a part of this kind of action was above and beyond anything I could have hoped for! The adrenaline rush of a triple and quad sailfish hookup is insane!

I am so thrilled to be a part of such an awesome group of people, who share the same interests as I have! My experiences as an Observer get better and better with each new tournament I attend. I've recommended certification to everyone I know and will continue to do so.

It's a win-win on all levels – supporting a most deserving cause, traveling to some of the most beautiful places in the world, meeting incredible people, making new friends and witness fishing at its best by some of the best anglers in the world!

What more could an 'angling fool' like me ask for! I'm proud to say that I'm an International Game Fish Tournament Observer and look forward to years of involvement with IGFTO!

Angie Sherlock

Angie lives in Hobe Sound, FL. She is Senior Vice President of Compliance / BSA at Harbor Community Bank and is a member of the Stuart Sailfish Club. She has fished the Blue-water Babes Tournament in Jupiter, FL and Saltwater Sisters Tournament in Stuart, FL. She joined IGFTO in June 2015.



Contact Us:

Steve Hargett, Director
steve.hargett@igfto.org
404-386-3388

Greg Moore, Director
greg.moore@igfto.org

John Treat, Director
john.treat@igfto.org

Terry O'Neill, Director
terry.oneill@igfto.org

Bob Stimolo, Director
bob.stimolo@igfto.org

Pat Moore, Webmaster
webmaster@igfto.org

IGFTO
P.O. Box 123
Bristol, RI 02809-0123

53 Observers Joined IGFTO in 2015

Welcome Aboard:

Chris Abendroth - Fort Pierce, FL
Malcolm Adams - Callahan, FL
Jay Aigner - Wachapreague, VA
George Albert - Deerfield Beach, FL
Bill Astras - Stuart, FL
Brenten Baker - Farmington Hills, MI
Kelley Baker - Melbourne, FL
Jack Braden - Stuart, FL
John Daly - Fort Pierce, FL
Steve Doss - Saint Petersburg, FL
Brian Ermeling - Hobe Sound, FL
Guy Flick - New Smyrna Beach, FL
Robert Fox - Boca Raton, FL
Bonnie Fulmer - Apalachicola, FL
Greg Galland - Fort Lauderdale, FL
Bernie Garcia—St. Charles, IL
Tish Gelineau - Stuart, FL
Cathleen Germann - Stuart, FL
Mark Goodrich - Fort Pierce, FL
Steve Grella - Jensen Beach, FL
Alexandra Hagerty - Key Largo, FL
Jeanne Hall - Marathon, FL
Jaime Harrison - Santee, CA
Steve Hatch - Palm City, FL
Rodney Hinton - Greenville, SC
Jay Hudson - Carolina Beach, NC
Guy "Bill" Lalone - Stuart, FL
Andy LeBuhn - Jupiter, FL
Karen LeCompte - Fort Pierce, FL
Paul Lepore - Dana Point, CA
Steve Loudon - San Antonio, TX
Joe Ludlow - Allso Viejo, CA
Denice Martinez - Falmouth, MA
Jim McCord - North Fort Myers, FL
Celeste Moorhouse - W. Palm Beach, FL
Lynn Moorhouse - W. Palm Beach, FL
Dave Naumann - Sarasota, FL
Tara Orr - Stuart, Jacksonville, FL
Tony Pallone - Deerfield Beach, FL
Walter Palmieri - East Syracuse, NY
Jim Penix - Port St. Lucie, FL
Billy Pickering - Islamorada, FL
Joe Pirrotta - Palm City, FL
Mike Polz - Chicago, IL
Russell Prewitt - Stuart, FL
Jim Prior - Pompano Beach, FL
Derwood Roberts - Merritt Island, FL
Lee Robinson - Tavernier, FL
Mike Russell - Fort Pierce, FL
Brett Schaming - Stuart, FL
Alberto "Tito" Serra - San Juan, Puerto Rico
Pamela Sharp - Torrance, CA
Angie Sherlock - Hobe Sound, FL
Susie Shimamoto - Key Largo, FL
Ken Simmons - Lantana, FL
Jim Smith - Yorkville, IL
Ernie Stallings - Orlando, FL
Ken Sykes - Fort Pierce, FL
Ed Tapping - North Port, FL
Alison Trafton - Boca Raton, FL
Don Wilson - Jensen Beach, FL
Jim Wright - Green Cove Springs, FL
Thomas Wye - Lighthouse Point, FL

International Game Fish Tournament Observers Inc. is a 501(c)3 tax-exempt charitable organization dedicated to the preservation and conservation of game fish worldwide. We provide trained and insured observers to authenticate the "catch and release" of billfish and game fish during international big game fish tournaments.



The IGFTO Observer

A newsletter for International Game Fish Tournament Observers Page 3

Qualified Observers - An Absolute Necessity

When an International Game Fish Tournament Observer steps aboard a tournament boat, the captain and crew can focus on finding and catching billfish rather than focusing cameras which do not capture the entire picture.

“Cameras only capture what the photographer wants to show,” International Billfish Tournament Director Rick Alvarez said. “Before the picture or video is taken, there could have been a number of rule infractions that only a trained, experienced observer will not miss.”

All IGFTO observers are certified and trained by the International Game Fish Association (IGFA) in international angling rules and fish identification. They average more than 20 years of experience on the water and bring their expertise to each tournament, where they witness the actions of the crew and call the release of each species of billfish caught within the rules.

Nearly every captain can tell a story or two about a fish that was disqualified because the video didn’t adequately show the fish species or release.

“When there is money, prestige and bragging rights on the line, the keen eye of an observer is the only reliable way to verify all was properly done within the rules, especially in tournaments at fisheries where there are multiple species and each one scores different points,” said Alvarez, director of the Cap Cana International Billfish Shootout and the Casa de Campo International Billfish Classic in the Dominican Republic.

In the short 6 years since IGFTO was formed, observers have witnessed more than 24,000 billfish releases in 11 countries throughout the Caribbean, US Virgin Islands, Central America and the United States. They observed in 15 tournaments in 2015 and hope to expand their services to more and more venues where billfish are safely released rather than killed to weigh.

“When I board a boat, my role is to ensure all billfish are released according to IGFA and tournament rules,” IGFTO Director Greg Moore said. “I put myself in a position to witness everything happening in the cockpit from the moment a fish appears in the spread to the final release.”

Observers are not there hoping to say “gotcha” or trying to catch an angler or mate violating a rule, but to advise crews on rules and ways to avoid infractions. “Even the most experienced mates and anglers may have questions about the rules,” Moore said.

“Observers are there to answer those questions and make sure everyone has complied with the rules when calling a billfish release.”

As an added benefit to tournament directors and boat owners, IGFTO observers are covered by liability insurance. IGFTO is a 501(c)3 charitable tax-exempt organization dedicated to the preservation and protection of billfish. The organization works with conservation organizations, including the IGFA observer training courses and compiling data for The Billfish Foundation. For information on becoming an observer and joining IGFTO, visit www.igfto.org.



IGFTO Observers - Photo by Richard Gibson
Story & Photos Published in the 2015 International Cap Cana Billfish Shootout Program



International Game Fish Tournament Observers Inc. is a 501(c)3 tax-exempt charitable organization dedicated to the preservation and conservation of game fish worldwide. We provide trained and insured observers to authenticate the “catch and release” of billfish and game fish during international big game fish tournaments.