

The IGFTO Observer Newsletter ~ July 1, 2026 - to - September 30, 2026



Observing Today...Conserving for Tomorrow

The IGFTO Observer ***A Newsletter for International Game Fish*** ***Tournament Observers***

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Edition 3~

In this edition:

Observer Profile: Jenn Pastorius

Let 'EM GO.....And Keep Them In the Water

Recognizing The Billfish Foundation Partnership - President Ellen Peel

Observer Training and Refresher Course Information

Around the Tournament Circuit

Member Profile – Jennifer (Jenn) Pastorius - Lady Angler Extraordinaire

Article By: Art McDonald

The Beginning: Jenn's story is rather unique as she got into sportfishing a little later in life. Even though she had been visiting Ocean City, Maryland over the years, she knew nothing about the sport until she met her future husband, Bobby Pastorius, who grew up fishing out of Cape May, NJ. Bobby had a passion for marlin fishing and Jenn was quick to acknowledge there were going to be some lonely days during the summer with Bobby offshore, virtually every day, fishing. She remembers the first time she went offshore to shark fish. Jenn was fascinated by everything going on around her with so many moving parts, so much to learn, and she wanted to understand it all. From that point on, she was "hooked!"

The Idea: Bobby had always dreamed of having his own fishing and hunting television show. Since Jenn was on the “green” side of fishing, and an eager participant with so much to learn, Bobby decided to bring that dream to life. The original concept was Bobby would teach Jenn how to fish and bow hunt, and viewers could follow along as she learned. That was the beginning!

The Next Step: The next thing Jenn knew, with little-to-no-experience, she, somehow, found herself on national television with her own hunting and fishing show! Jenn and Bobby’s offshore and hunting adventures were aired on several different networks over the years, with one of their biggest claims to fame being their show aired on NBC Sports. It emphasized a cool husband and wife project where viewers got to watch Bobby teach Jenn, let her make mistakes, figure things out, and develop into a better angler along the way. The show featured their lives through dating, getting engaged, getting married, and, eventually, taking the next big step of buying a boat. Shortly after their first wedding anniversary, they bought the boat they still fish on today, affectionally named the Jenny Poo – a 36’ Luhrs.

Having a national television show opened a lot of doors, and they were invited to fish all over the world with some of the best captains and crews in the industry. The show really nurtured her curiosity for fishing, and eventually that curiosity turned into a full-blown love affair with the sport.

Tournament season in Ocean City keeps both Jenn and Bobby busy, but when it winds down, the fishing doesn’t stop! They take Jenny Poo south for the winter, spending time fishing in South Florida, and then head to Elbow Cay in the Bahamas in the spring before making their way back to Maryland for another season. Jenn feels incredibly lucky that fishing has taken her so many places, but Ocean City will always be where her journey as an angler began.

Accolades: One of Jenn's proudest moments during the TV show was catching a Grand Slam in the Bahamas. This was back in the pre-omni days, when finding the right fish and putting together a slam felt a tad rarer and more elusive than it does today. The blue marlin that completed her Slam was actually her very first blue marlin. She caught it on a 20-lb class reel, standing up with NO harness or chair – just a belt. It was a long and tough fight, but she says watching that fish jump right at the boat is a feeling she'll never forget.

Today, they fish competitively as much as they can, and tournament fishing has become a huge part of who she is as an angler. Their team has competed in, and won, almost every major tournament out of Ocean City. They have fished the White Marlin Open almost every year since 2010, but the 2026 Tournament was especially memorable. During the tournament, Jenn released her 1,100th billfish (not a misprint), a number she says that she still has a hard time wrapping her head around. They also earned 2nd Place in the Non-Sonar Release category and won the Small Boat Daily Release category. She, personally, finished 7th overall out of ALL registered anglers, and to finish in the top 10 of an event the size of the White Marlin Open, was a proud moment for her and a reminder of how far she has come from that girl who got on a boat trying to figure out what everybody was doing.

IGFTO: Jenn was first introduced to the IGFTO by her dear friend, Lynette Catha. Because IGFTO is such a "tournament-driven" organization, she knew immediately that this was an organization she wanted to be a part of. She believes that tournament fishing is about so much more than just catching a fish. Rules, strategy, teamwork, preparation, and a lot happening behind the scenes are the success of any operation. Being involved with IGFTO has given her another perspective on the sport she loves, and has reinforced how important knowledgeable observers are to the integrity of competitive fishing.

Looking back, she says it's funny to think that, originally, she got into fishing because she didn't want to spend summers sitting at home while her boyfriend went offshore. Somewhere along the way, that decision turned into television, travel, a lifetime of memories, more than 1,100 billfish releases, tournament wins, and a boat with her name on it.

What more could a gal wish for?



Jenn at the awards stage and the Jenny Poo flying multiple billfish release flags.

Let EM GO..... And Keep Them In The Water

Story By: Art McDonald

The Old Days: Living and fishing in South Florida for over 40 years had given me a unique opportunity to watch the sportfishing industry grow from abundant harvesting levels to dangerously close levels of an ecosystem collapse. I cut my fishing teeth during college summers working, first on head boats and, later, sportfishing charter boats where, literally, every fish hit the dock – it was the best way of advertising - the prize on the dock – a sailfish or two..... or three.... or four!



The Old Days

I can't tell you how many billfish were killed in those days but very few of them ever swam away healthy. Many charter captains felt it diminished their chance to attract new business. When potential clients see several billfish hanging on the fish weigh board it drives future charters.

Fortunately, the industry woke up in the mid 1980's with the realization that we were decimating, in particular, the billfish industry, and the release ethic took hold – thanks in large part to the Billfish Foundation's tireless efforts to recognize the stocks were in sad shape and encouraging both billfish tournaments and recreational fishermen to a release format. The IGFA took interest and, at the strong suggestion of tournament directors Rick Alvarez (Venezuela Shootouts) & Jimmy Loveland (Saint Thomas Boy Scout Tournament), a "Certified Observer Program" for tournament release verifications was formed which, eventually morphed into the International Game Fish Tournament Observers, Inc. Organization ("IGFTO"). Educational programs were instituted into the correct way to release a billfish by "swimming" it alongside the boat to re-oxygenate the fish.

The Hero Shot: Soon after the release ethic took hold another problem evolved with overeager crews lifting the billfish from the water into the boat for a series of snapshots. Again, the captains and crews encouraged this as when potential clients see happy people holding big fish, they want to do it too.



No way Jose

It didn't take too long to realize that the survival rate for, in particular, a billfish being out of the water for any period of time was problematic. Many "releases" ended up with billfish slowly sinking away as opposed to swimming away. Scientists tell us that upon removal from the water the billfish loses its buoyancy and serious internal injuries occur. So too, the protective slime on the outside skin gets impacted in a negative manner. The fatality rate increases exponentially the longer the fish is out of the water.

The Law: In 2006 the United States, first implemented by NOAA Fisheries under the Magnuson-Stevens Act, it became a federal requirement to release recreationally caught billfish without removing them from the

water following the implementation of Highly Migratory Species (HMS) permit regulations by NOAA Fisheries. The federal code states that if a billfish is not being legally retained, it must be released in a manner that ensures maximum probability of survival, specifically without removing the fish from the water.

This rule is enforced under the following parameters:

Any billfish—such as sailfish, blue marlin, and white marlin—that is caught and to be released must remain in the water, preferably kept upright with its head submerged and gills moving.



IGFTO Member Mike Cisneros, Jr Releases a Sailfish the RIGHT way.

Interestingly enough, after the United states implemented the laws surrounding keeping the fish in the water, it was enacted by the majority of the countries where billfishing is popular (in Mexico it is not a law, but highly-encouraged).

We all want pictures of our success to fill a scrapbook, but let's take the picture WITH the sailfish in the water – IT'S THE LAW!

Recognizing The Billfish Foundation Partnership - President Ellen Peel

After more than 30 years of dedicated leadership, Ellen Peel is retiring as President of The Billfish Foundation. Throughout her remarkable tenure, Ellen helped advance billfish conservation, built lasting relationships across the recreational fishing and conservation communities, engaged with national and international dignitaries, and championed efforts to ensure that future generations can continue to enjoy the thrill of billfishing. Her passion, vision, and unwavering commitment have left an enduring mark on The Billfish Foundation, with IGFTO, and the sportfishing community. We thank Ellen for her extraordinary service, as well as the introduction of TBF's famous yellow jacket to the world!



The Billfish Foundation President, Ellen Peel, J.D. LL.M. Photo and article Credit: The Billfish Foundation.

Want More Information? Navigate to: [IGFTO](#), upcoming [OTCs](#), and [FAQs](#).

Membership Dues Renewal Season.

Beginning October 1st every calendar year, IGFTO starts the renewal process for the next calendar year. Be on the lookout for your dues renewal notice from IGFTO. You may remit electronically via that invoice, by check to our Post Office Box, or via Venmo.

Have feedback or want to submit an article? Get in touch with our [webmaster](#). Thanks to all our contributors.

IGFTO is proud to ***WELCOME*** the most-recent graduates of both Ocean City, and Kent Island, MD Observer Training Courses. Our next observer training course offering in Fort Lauderdale, FL is open for immediate registration - sign up [here](#). IGFTO Members - please extend an invitation to your qualified family and friends to attend. Members in good standing are invited to attend any OTC, on a space-available basis, as a refresher; ensure you log in and select the location.

Danielle	Berardi	Berlin	MD
Megan	Bisasky	Baltimore	MD
Michael	Bostic, Sr.	Centerville	MD
Jeff	Brown	Lothian	MD
Arden	D'Amico	Silver Spring	MD
Keith	Gilbert	Ocean City	MD
Jeff	Gombos	Easton	MD
Robin	Hagy	Dagsboro	DE
Nancy	Haines	Ocean Pines	MD

Tom	Holste	Chester	MD
Jim	Lillie	Phoenix	MD
Kathleen	Meyer	Hurlock	MD
Bert	Olmstead	Grasonville	MD
Bob	Pino	Centreville	MD
Bridget	Price	Houma	LA
Mike	Robertson	Columbia	MD
Kolton	Sheeler	Harrisburg	PA
Mason	Shelby	Chester	MD
Julia	Smith	Hunt Valley	MD
Bob	Sullivan	Stevensville	MD
Steve	Swenson	Falls Church	VA
Katie	Tyler	Ocean City	MD
Steven	Walker	Milton	DE



IGFTO's newest Observers and Staff at the Ocean City, MD Marlin Club. Picture Credit: Staff.



IGFTO's newest Observers and Staff at American Legion Kent Island, MD. Picture Credit: Staff.


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Are you already an IGFTO Observer?

Members in good standing are encouraged to sign up for a refresher course at no cost.

[Member Refresher Course](#)

Training Course Schedule

Selecting an Observer Training Course date will initiate the new Observer membership application process. If you're already an Observer, sign up for your refresher course by selecting the "Member Refresher Course" button above.

STATUS	DATE	CITY	VENUE	ADDITIONAL DETAILS
● OPEN	October 31, 2026	Hampton Inn & Suites Fort Lauderdale Airport/South Cruise Port	Hampton Inn and Suites 2500 Stirling Road, Hollywood, FL (954) 922-0011	PayPal price includes convenience fee. Register & Apply

Around the Tournament Circuit

IGFTO has been requested, and will again, be on-hand observing in the below tournaments.

Of note, thanks to those that volunteered; both El Salvador and Guatemala are fully observer-staffed. However, the Pescadora is NOT FULL yet. Have questions or want to sign up, reach out to Lynette: lynette.catha@igfto.org

Los Sueños Triple Crown and Ladies: As soon as the Observer Information Guide and Application are updated for 2027, we will send an eBlast to apply.

For more information, log into igfto.org and navigate to the *Tournament Information for IGFTO Observers* page.



Thanks for taking a few minutes to catch up. As always, Tight lines, and all the Best,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Evan'.

Evan A. Hipsley, Jr.
Member Since 2014
IGFTO President | Director | Webmaster



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.

This email was sent to evan.hipsley@igfto.org

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