



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
NATIONAL MARINE FISHERIES SERVICE
Northeast Fisheries Science Center
166 Water Street
Woods Hole, MA 02543-1026

February 15, 2008

MEMORANDUM FOR: Northeast Fisheries Observer Program Observers

FROM: David Potter
Branch Chief, FSB

SUBJECT: Species Identification Verification Program

It is extremely important for data quality assurance to ensure observers are positively identifying fish. The Northeast Fisheries Observer Program (NEFOP) requires all observers to comply with this verification process so that we can ensure data accuracy and maintain the integrity of the program.

To complete your obligations, please follow the following steps:

1. Check the species list table below.
2. If the species listed has not been sent in yet for verification, send at the first available time.
3. Store the specimen in a Ziploc bag accompanied with a waterproof tag.
4. Complete and include a Species Description Form if necessary (forms attached). Although Species Description Forms are not required, we would prefer to see them included with training trip fish. This will help to reinforce your identification techniques.
5. Record the species on your Haul Log as fish disposition code 007 (“No market, but retained by observer for science purposes”).
6. Freeze the sample so it lasts better during shipping. Ship samples as a priority in a cooler at the same time as your trip data.

Fish species seen on training trips are a priority. Focus your immediate attention on the target species of the trip. Priority training trips include the first three solo trips before certification, and any trip on a new gear type (Pot/Trap, Midwater, Pair Trawl, Longline, Beach Seine, etc). There is no designated order in which you should send fish in. If you are in a southern port, focus on the southern fish first. Likewise, if you are in a northern port, focus on the northern fish first. Regardless, anytime you see a fish for the first time, grab one and send it in. We may also notify you that you have been selected to contribute fish on certain trips if we haven’t verified your species identification in some time.

Observer Trainer, Mike Ball will be responsible for keeping you up to date on your progress. Confirmation of species sent in will be emailed to you as well as any incorrect ID’s. The program



has now been streamlined in order to get observers faster confirmation and feedback. We appreciate your cooperation with the Species Identification Verification Program. There are many species you will come across, some may be extremely rare and we will make full use of the samples to train observers during certification classes and refresher debriefings. We understand how much work you have to do, however the program considers this an integral part of your job. If you have any questions about the program, please don't hesitate to call Mike Ball at 508-495-2126, or email Michael.Ball@noaa.gov.

Please send in the following species:

<p style="text-align: center;">Drums</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Atlantic Croaker Black Drum Banded Drum Spot Weakfish Cunner Tautog</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Flounders</p> <p style="text-align: center;">American Plaice Fourspot Flounder Sand Dab Flounder Summer Flounder Winter Flounder Witch Flounder Yellowtail Flounder</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Gadids</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Atlantic Cod Haddock Pollock Red Hake Spotted Hake White Hake Silver Hake</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Herrings</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Alewife American Shad Atlantic Herring Atlantic Menhaden Blueback Herring Hickory Shad</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Skates</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Barndoor Skate Clearnose Skate Little Skate Smooth Skate Thorny Skate Winter Skate</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Miscellaneous</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Butterfish Scup Longfin Squid Shortfin Squid Redfish Blackbelly Rosefish</p>

Attachments: Species Description Forms



OBS/ TRIP ID _____

Flatfish Species Description

Species common name: _____

Date: _____

Haul number: _____

Stat Area: _____

Length: _____

Specimen collected? Yes No

Pictures Taken? Yes No

Circle one: Right eyed

Left eyed

Does the fish have fleshy lips? Yes No

Does the fish have prominent teeth? Yes No

What is the color of the blind side? _____

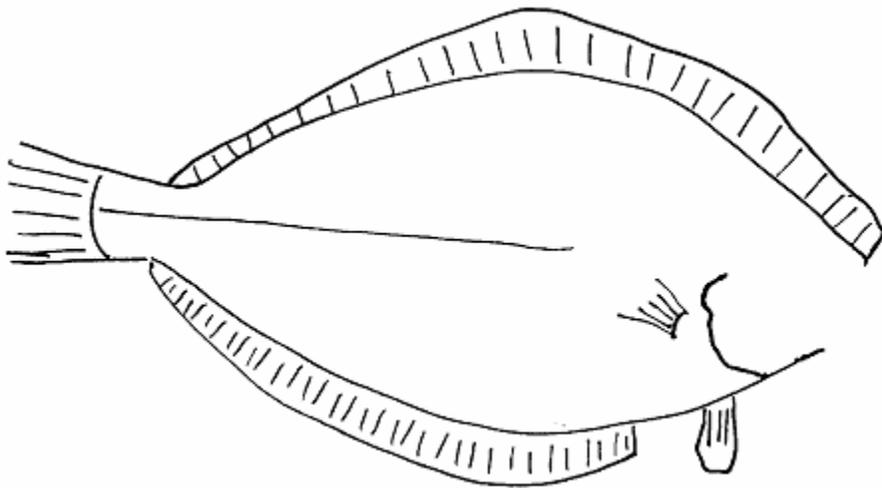
The shape of the lateral line over the pectoral fin is:

___straight ___curved slightly

___arched ___highly arched

In the diagram below, draw in the following characters of your fish:

- 1) the mouth, showing size and shape
- 2) preoperculum and caudal fin shape
- 3) lateral line curve
- 4) eye position
- 5) any additional markings



Other Comments:

OBS/ TRIP ID _____

Skate Species Description

Species common name: _____

Date: _____

Haul number: _____

Stat Area: _____

Total length: _____

Specimen collected? Yes No

Pictures Taken? Yes No

What is the dorsal coloration of the skate?

uniform brown

brown with darker spots

brown with dark bars

brown with dark spots and ocelli

other: _____

What is the ventral coloration of the skate?

uniform light

dusky gray

other: _____

Sex and maturation

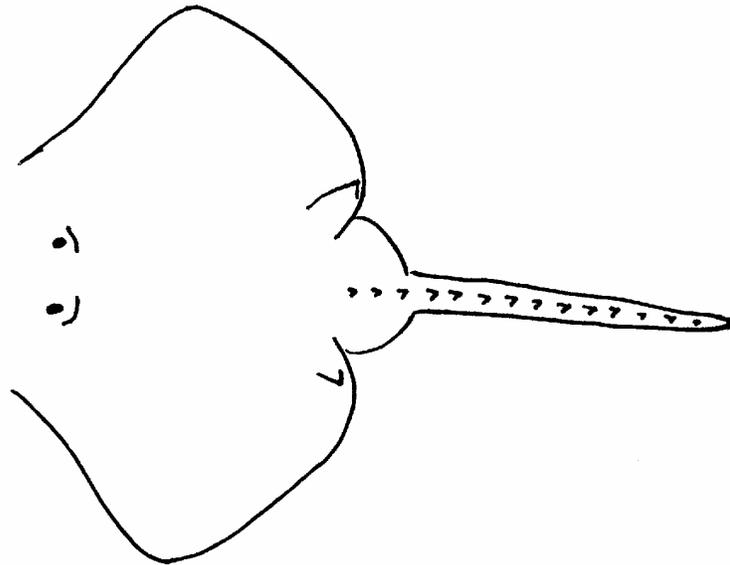
female

male

mature

immature

Draw your skate specimen below. Include disc, wing, and nose shape as well as dorsal spine configuration.



Other Comments:

OBS/TRIP ID _____

Miscellaneous Species Description Form

Species Common Name: _____

Date: _____

Haul number: _____

Stat Area: _____

Specimen Collected? Yes No

Pictures Taken? Yes No

Fish:

Fork Length: _____

How many dorsal fins does the fish have? _____

Are pelvic fins modified into filaments? Yes No

If pelvic filaments present, do they extend beyond the anus? Yes No

Herring Family:

Are scute-like scales along ventral edge (saw-belly) present? Yes No

Peritoneum color (gut cavity lining)? _____

Describe the color and markings of the fish you have keyed here.

Draw your fish on back of this page, clearly depicting the following, as it is displayed on your specimen:

- 1) mouth size and shape
- 2) body shape
- 3) fin locations, shape, and size
- 4) color and markings
- 5) any other specific characters that helped in keying the specimen

Please do not try to copy the drawing from the id guides! The purpose of this to make sure your identification is correct. If the specimen is incorrectly identified, your drawing could help NMFS determine the correct identification.
