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R/V *Gloria Michelle* Hosts Nantucket's Maria Mitchell Association During Island Visit

Staff, students and members of the Maria Mitchell Association on Nantucket learned about fisheries research and oral histories, the work of the NEFSC and NOAA Fisheries, and careers during two days of community outreach and education August 16-17 aboard the R/V *Gloria Michelle*.

"We introduced people to the work of the Northeast Fisheries Science Center, and we showed there are a variety of career opportunities in science supporting the various missions of NOAA," said Doug Pawlishen, the *Gloria Michelle's* Officer in Charge. "The weather was perfect, we had lots of visitors who asked great questions, and all of us who participated had a great time sharing what we do with the island community. The vessel is a good platform for doing community outreach and education events, and I'd like to see it used more in the future in other New England ports if the opportunity arises."

More than 200 visitors, from pre-school students in science camps to retired island residents and summer visitors, had an opportunity to board the vessel, docked at Coast Guard Station Brandt Point on Nantucket harbor. Groups ranging from two or three to dozens arrived throughout the day on both days to tour the vessel and learn about its operation, recent and upcoming cruises, and participate in hands-on activities.

Various fish species, some collected on the vessel's recent Gulf of Maine shrimp cruise and others on *Henry B. Bigelow* cruises in more distant waters, were on display for students and adults to see and touch. Several were dissected, much to the delight of the younger students, who were interested in learning more about fish anatomy.

Science stations aboard ship featured posters on how fish age and size are related, hands-on displays of various fish species, and demonstrations of the Fisheries Scientific Computing System (FSCS) used during fisheries surveys. NOAA Corps Officers Doug Pawlishen and Andy Reynaga provided information about the ship and its operation through tours of the ship's interior and bridge. A slide show of images of life at sea played in the galley. The safety at sea station included demonstrations of survival suits; several students raced to see how fast they could get into one.

Adam Poquette, Catherine Fillo and Jakub Kircun from the Ecosystems Surveys Branch and Heidi Marotta from Data Management Systems took turns manning the science stations on

the deck and answering questions. Joshua Wrigley and Patricia Pinto da Silva from the Social Sciences Branch spoke with smaller groups on the vessel's bow about the Voices from the Fisheries oral history project and the importance of capturing the human side of fishing and fisheries research. Visitors were able to hear recorded interviews from scientists and local fishermen, and did some hands-on learning using the equipment to mock interview each other.

Despite very tight quarters and a large number of visitors aboard at times, the groups moved about the ship in an organized fashion and seemed to enjoy the experience. Many expressed appreciation for the opportunity and thanked the NEFSC staff for their work. Several college students and adults expressed interest in the NOAA Corps and in volunteer opportunities with the surveys.

Among the 201 visitors, which included 85 adults, 81 children and 35 teens and college students, were the Coast Guard, Environmental Police, and members of local marine mammal response teams. Members of the general public, both locals and island visitors, also stopped by, including a mooring tender, Antarctic surveyor, the chair of the Bourne School Committee and the principal of the Peebles Elementary School in Bourne.

The Bourne visitors came to explore future activities and opportunities for their students aboard the *Gloria Michelle* in Woods Hole as it aligns with the Massachusetts curriculum frameworks and STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math). They also expressed interest in professional development for their teachers to broaden how they teach science initiatives.

"Having the boat docked at the Coast Guard Station near downtown put us in the unique position to also do some unscheduled outreach," said Catherine Fillo, who organized the visit with the Maria Mitchell Association and the Coast Guard. "For example, the local mooring tender drove by us and asked if he could come onboard. We, of course, said 'Absolutely!' After he stopped by and we explained who we were, what we do, and showed him around the vessel, we could later hear him driving by with some members of the public, explaining to them exactly what we had told him!"

Most of the ship visitors came from the partnership with the island's Maria (pronounced Ma-rye-ah) Mitchell Association (MMA). Among them were three different age groups from the MMA's Discovery Camp programs (ages 5-12), Teen Naturalist Leadership Program (ages 13-16), and its Aquarium and Natural Science Museum staff along with several program directors. MMA Executive Director David Gagnon came aboard to welcome members and to experience the tour himself, as did Lauren Berlin, executive assistant and marketing and event coordinator.

Maria Mitchell, the first American female astronomer, was born on Nantucket in 1818 and is well-known as an astronomer, naturalist, librarian and educator. Using a telescope, she discovered a comet in 1847 which became known as "Miss Mitchell's Comet" but is today formally called C/1847 T1. She later became the first faculty member at Vassar College and was the first woman elected Fellow of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences in 1848 and

Fellow of the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS) in 1850. She was also one of the first women elected to the American Philosophical Society (1869).

The Maria Mitchell Association is a private non-profit science and education organization founded in 1902 to preserve the legacy and historic birthplace of Maria Mitchell. The MMA operates two observatories, a natural science museum, an aquarium, and conducts a variety of science and history-related programming throughout the year.

This was the vessel's first outreach and education trip to Nantucket. The *Gloria Michelle* visited Martha's Vineyard in June 2013 and 2014, making port calls to Edgartown and Oak Bluffs for community outreach and education. School tours were conducted each year for island students, and the public had an opportunity to tour the vessel and learn about the NEFSC during Oak Bluffs annual Harbor Festival.

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Related Links:

R/V *Gloria Michelle*: http://www.nefsc.noaa.gov/gloria_michelle/

Maria Mitchell Association: <http://www.mariamitchell.org>

Maria Mitchell: <http://www.sheisanastronomer.org/index.php/history/maria-mitchell>