



**NOAA Teacher at Sea
Christopher Monsour
Onboard NOAA Ship OSCAR ELTON SETTE
June 12 – July 12, 2007**

NOAA Teacher at Sea: Chris Monsour

NOAA Ship OSCAR ELTON SETTE

Mission: Lobster Survey Northwestern Hawaiian Islands

Day 24: Saturday, July 7th, 2007

Log #10

Today we finally got to get back to what brought us here, the lobster trapping. As mentioned several times before, the lobster population at Necker Island seems to be smaller than Maro Reef. Today this was evident when at one point we had pulled up more Grey Tipped Reef Sharks than lobsters. It was neck and neck with 20 apiece. I think at the end of the day we had more sharks. (As I am writing this the lab is finishing up the data). Some of the area where we were sampling is a sand bottom which is not the best habitat for the lobsters, so we pulled mostly hermit crabs and sharks out of the traps. That is not to say we did not catch any lobster. We caught a few Chinese slipper and a few spiny. The spiny that we did catch were large adults, with no juveniles. There were several times that we would have an entire string of traps without any lobsters.

The number of sharks did surprise me and at first I was hesitant to handle the sharks, but the other cracker, Matt, showed me the proper way to get a shark out of the trap. I had to first grab the shark behind the head, near the gills and then grab near the tail. One has to grab the head first because a shark does not like to be grabbed as one could imagine and if the head is not grabbed first, it



NOAA Teacher at Sea Chris Monsour demonstrates the proper technique for holding and releasing one of the many Grey Tipped Reef Sharks that were brought aboard OSCAR ELTON SETTE during the July 7th lobster trapping.



will bite you. After I fumbled the first two, I had enough courage and the ability to take sharks out of the traps on my own. At one point when I was taking a shark out I was called the "Shark Whisperer". By my estimate, I pulled 12 sharks out of the traps and tossed them overboard. There were a few times when we would have 2 very large sharks in a trap. I have to wonder what would drive such a large animal into such a small space, for so little food. Is the natural drive for food so strong in sharks that they would squeeze themselves into such a small space?

There were also a few eels, Conger eels to be exact and these eels do not have the teeth or the mean disposition of the moray eels. I did not know this at first, so the first time Matt tried to pick up a Conger eel and it slid out of his hands and ended up coming right at me! I was standing on the table in about 2 seconds, I didn't know it wasn't going to bite me. The crew got a good laugh at me standing on the table. Eventually, I had the nerve to pick up the eels and was able to remove the last eel of the day and toss it over the side of the ship safely.

We have only 5 days left, 3 of these will be trapping. I am glad to be back to work. The six days we were down were fun at first, but by Thursday I was getting cabin fever or boat fever. I am looking forward to the 3 days of work. I will be a cracker again tomorrow, runner, and my last day I will be a stacker.

Aloha...

Chris