

# **POACHER CARE**

SOP# - OSTE11

**PURPOSE:** To describe methods of care for poachers.

**POLICY:** To provide optimum care for all animals.

**RESPONSIBILITY:** Collector and user of the animals. If these are not the same person, the user takes over responsibility of the animals as soon as the animals have arrived on station.

**PROCEDURE:** At present there are four poacher species that are found around BMS.

## **Species**

<b>English Name</b>	<b>Scientific Name</b>
Sturgeon poacher	<i>Agonus acipenserinus</i>
Gray starsnout	<i>Bathyagonus alascanus</i>
Spinycheek starsnout	<i>Bathyagonus infraspinatus</i>
Blacktip poacher	<i>Xeneretmus latifrons</i>

## **Identification**

Refer to Lamb and Edgell's book, "Coastal fishes of the Pacific Northwest" for in depth descriptions of individual specimens.

<b>Species</b>	<b>Description</b>
<b><i>Agonus acipenserinus</i></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Have bushy whiskers on their snouts and around their under-slung mouth.</li><li>▪ They are yellowish-brown in color and about 30cm at the longest.</li></ul>
<b><i>Asterotheca melanurus</i></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Anal fin on this fish begins under the space between the dorsal fins.</li><li>▪ Are slender, stiff-bodied and gray in colour.</li><li>▪ Are 13cm at their longest.</li></ul>
<b><i>Bathyagonus infraspinata</i></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Have 8 spines below each eye.</li><li>▪ Anal fin begins below the first dorsal fin.</li><li>▪ Grayish color</li><li>▪ Can be up to 12cm long</li></ul>
<b><i>Xeneretmus latifrons</i></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Characteristic black margin on the first dorsal fin.</li><li>▪ Body is pale gray.</li><li>▪ Can reach lengths of 19cm.</li></ul>

## **Sites**

- Found on shallow rocky and intertidal shores to sandy or muddy substrates at considerable depths.

## **Collection Methods**

Poachers can be caught by fish trawl.

- Mortality is high due to hemorrhaging.

- If the trawl is towed at a shallower depth (10 to 20 meters), for a shorter period of time (10 minute maximum), and the net is pulled in slowly, the survival is drastically increased.

### **Transport**

Please follow transport and handling of fish SOP.

### **Holding**

- Held in continually flowing seawater.
- Lids are necessary.
- Sandy or muddy substrate should be provided.

### **Feeding**

- Feed on bottom-dwelling shrimp and other small crustaceans and worms.
- Very difficult to get poachers feeding on anything but live food
  - Keeping poachers fed requires much time and patience.

### **Tank Cleaning**

*Frequency:* Once a month.

*Procedure:*

1. The poachers should be removed from the tank and placed into a holding bucket.
2. The tanks should be drained and the sides and bottom should be scrubbed and rinsed with warm freshwater.
3. The tanks should then be rinsed with cold seawater and allowed to refill, and the fish replaced.

### **Other information:**

#### ***Anesthetic***

- Anesthetizing these animals is size, species, and density dependent; approximately 0.2mg/L of MS-222.
- Always wear gloves when using MS-222.
- Clove oil is most effective as an anesthetic at concentrations of 40-60 mg/L, and should be dissolved in ethanol (e.g., 1:9) before mixing into the water. Clove oil has a slightly faster induction time and a longer recovery time than similar concentrations of TMS.
  - Clove oil has a wide margin of safety between effective and lethal doses, and fish do not show signs of distress when being anaesthetized.

#### ***Euthanasia***

Euthanasia is size, species, and density dependent; inhalant anesthetic overdose of 0.4 - 2.0 g/L of MS-222.

#### **Animal Return**

- Animals should be returned to the site of their collection.
- Be sure to have well oxygenated water in the bucket that they are being returned in.
- If any anesthetic chemical has been used on the fish during it's holding at BMSC, the animal must not be released before the drug withdrawal time.
  - Withdrawal time should be on the label of an anesthetic in degree-days (degree-days are the accumulated thermal units for a given day. One day at 10C is 10 degree-days). For example, MS-222 has a 5 -day withdrawal time for salmon above 10C.

### **DAILY ACTIVITIES:**

1. Ensure water is flowing into the tank at a reasonable rate.
2. Ensure the standpipe is in place and not blocked.
3. Check for and remove any dead animals.
4. Check for and remove any uneaten prey organisms.
5. Check for and remove any foreign organisms.

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