

Digital Fishers: New Sablefish Campaign

Submitted by Dwight Owens Wed, 2014-05-21 14:32

Calling all citizen scientists! Ocean researchers need your help in analyzing huge volumes of video that support their discoveries and lead to a better understanding of our ocean planet.



Digital Fishers is a science-oriented crowdsourcing game-with-a-purpose that recruits people on the Web to gather data selected from thousands of hours of video, archived every year from undersea cameras. But, how do we make this massive flood of data scientifically useful. This is where you come in. Your eyes and observations will not only support ocean research projects but also help computer scientists at the University of Victoria's Computer Vision Research Lab develop algorithms that will be able to automate the long process of watching many hours of undersea footage.

With a big boost of support from the David Suzuki Foundation's Ocean Keepers, the latest Digital Fisher mission is a fishing derby, of sorts. The goal is to count sablefish, or black cod, that appear in a series of one-minute clips—almost 1,500 clips in total. Alongside the growing community of Digital Fishers from around the world, the David Suzuki Foundation is encouraging its community to tackle the mission. The game has five levels, with reward cards earned as your experience grows. Who can 'catch' the most?

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-- Sarika Cullis-Suzuki

For marine scientist Sarika Cullis-Suzuki, science and public acumen can be a powerful combination for furthering knowledge about the oceans. “Each citizen observation will expand our current understanding of marine ecosystems and species behaviors in the natural world. The David Suzuki Foundation is eager to see what we find!”

The assistance from citizens in automated analysis of big data is also important to scientists working with Ocean Networks Canada. It operates two large undersea observatories off the west coast of British Columbia that collect, deliver and archive complex and diverse data from hundreds of sensors and instruments, in real-time over the Internet. Along with a smaller observatory in the Arctic Ocean, that data adds up to 50 terabytes per year. Recorded video from seafloor cameras alone equals over 5.5 terabytes—enough to fill over 12 thousand DVDs.

From Peru to Australia and South Africa to Switzerland, over 2200 Digital Fishers players from around the world have made over 100,000 observations, or annotations since its launch in 2012. The record holder hails from the U.S., with over 18,900 annotations, but players range in age and background.

“It’s a perfect outlet for wannabe scientists, from retirees to parents with children,” says Jodie Walsh, Digital Fishers program coordinator. “They’re all learning about the ocean, and doing something meaningful at the same time.”

The Sablefish Countdown campaign will run for several months. Its data will help scientists monitor the fish population, and also support a University of Victoria graduate research paper comparing the effectiveness of expert scientists, graduate students and automatic detection, with the valuable contribution from Digital Fishers’ citizen scientists.

Digital Fishers was developed by the University of Victoria’s Ocean Networks Canada with the [Centre for Global Studies](#), and funded by Canada’s Advanced Research and Innovation Network ([CANARIE](#)).

Links

- [Learn more about Digital Fishers](#)
- [Play Digital Fishers \(login\)](#)
- [20-second "how-to" video](#)
- [Read the blog](#)
- [Facebook page](#)

Contacts

[Maia Hoeberechts](#), Ocean Networks Canada Associate Director, User Services

Jodie Walsh, Centre for Global Studies, research coordinator and citizen science enthusiast

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