

Creep into the DEEPEND

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FROM: DEEPEND Science Team
TO: DEEPEND Virtual Team Leaders
Subject: Hello from Dr. Sutton's Lab/Team Fish!

Hello from the Oceanic Ecology lab!

Today, I spent all day working in Dr. Sutton's lab. I started my day sorting through DEEPEND samples. First, we remove the crustaceans and gelatinous zooplankton so we can ship them to the specialists for further identification. Then, comes the fun stuff! We start to identify the deep-sea fish! Each sample is filled with a lot of different fish species. We see hatchetfish, viperfish, fangtooth, bristlemouth, dragonfish, lanternfish, whalefish and many other species!

It's always exciting to see all of the different deep-sea fish and their different adaptations that help them survive in the deep. Some fish have large, fang-like teeth, large tubular eyes, lures, and photophores. Once we identify the species, we weigh and measure each fish.

I spent the afternoon looking at my fish species, tuna! I am identifying the larval and juvenile tuna that we collect in the Gulf. The fish can be less than 4 mm. That's smaller than the width of the nail on your pinky finger.

Since juvenile tuna are so hard to identify, my thesis project will be one of the first studies on this topic. I'm very excited about that! I use pigmentation patterns to identify the little larval tuna. I also count the fin rays of juvenile tuna. Fin rays are the stiff structures that hold the fin up or help it move. Can you count the number of fin rays of this tiny tuna? As you might guess, I spend most of my time at my microscope. I also measure and weigh each larval and juvenile tuna as well.

I will keep you guys updated on my project's progress! Go tuna!

Nina

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Creep into the DEEPEND Mission



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