

PRESS RELEASE

***Copious* LK985 nets albino monkfish**

The *Copious* LK985 landed a rare monkfish on Wednesday 28th March. It had been caught on grounds approximately 45 miles east of Lerwick. The monkfish was unusually light in colour and completely lacked the dark background pigment that is normally present on the skin, the eyes also lacked pigment. The lack of pigment gave the skin and eyes a pinkish appearance.



The fish was handed to Dr Chevonne Laurenson of the NAFC Marine Centre and it has been added to their reference collection. The fish was 59 cm in length (23 inches) and had a gutted weight of 2.4 kg (over 5lb). It was found to be a female and to have been 5 years old.

Dr Laurenson explains *“Albinism is defined as the inability to form melanin (dark pigment) in the skin or in the eyes (and hair in animals). It is caused by the albino not being able to produce an enzyme (type of protein) that is needed before it can produce the pigment. Albino monkfish have been recorded before but, as with albinos in other species, they are rare. This specimen was similar to previously recorded incidences in that there were some pigmented cells along the lateral line and on the fins.”*

Dr Laurenson has been at the forefront of research on monkfish for the last decade, taking part in a number of collaborative monkfish research programmes with the FRS Marine Laboratory in Aberdeen and other European research institutes.



PHOTO © NAFC: *The 59cm albino monkfish next to a “normally” pigmented monkfish for comparison.*

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NOTE TO EDITORS:

In view of the increasing range and scope of the work being undertaken by NAFC, the decision was taken in September 2005 to change the institute's name from the North Atlantic Fisheries College to the NAFC Marine Centre.

Please note our correct title is now 'NAFC Marine Centre'. The 'NAFC' in our title identifies us with, and provides continuity from, our previous name – North Atlantic Fisheries College. In conversation 'NAFC' should be spelt out as 'N-A-F-C'. Similarly, we are no longer just a 'college', but a marine centre - providing education, research and commercial services to the marine sector.