

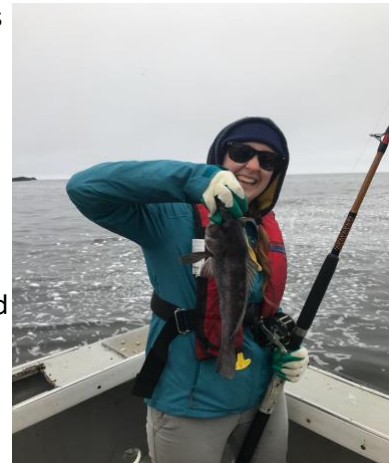


Oregon Marine Reserves - Researcher Bio

VICTORIA QUENNESSEN

Early Life

I was born and raised in New Jersey by French parents. I spent Christmases and a couple of weeks every summer visiting family in France. My favorite place was always my grandparents beach house. It was small, but it was a short walk to the beach, where we spent most of our time. I've always loved to read and I fell in love with math because of my third grade teacher. Because of her influence, I always thought that I would be a teacher when I grew up. In High School, my favorite subjects were math and biology. I played soccer my freshman year, and besides babysitting and tutoring, I started my first official job as a cashier at Michaels in my senior year. I also volunteered for the local hospital in the gift shop and second hand book store. I graduated from high school in 2013.



College

I decided to apply to colleges with marine biology degrees as I had always loved the ocean and biology had become my favorite subject by then. Of all the schools I got accepted to, four were on the west coast and I decided that I didn't want to be that far from home yet. I ended up going to University of Massachusetts Dartmouth as a marine biology major. However, during orientation, an arrogant student bragged about taking calculus 3 his freshman year, and implied that no one else in the audience could do that. So I registered for it. And I kept taking math classes, so I added a math major my second year, with a concentration in computational math.

Besides classwork, I worked as a lab tech in a computational microbiology lab for three years. My first year I mostly cleaned glassware, my second year I got to help out with experiments more, and my third year I got to run a long-term evolution experiment on my own. Also, my junior year, a professor of mine encouraged me to apply for the Marine Resources and Population Dynamics workshop run by NOAA and hosted by the University of Florida. This workshop introduced me to both population dynamics and marine resource management, and made me want to continue my education in that field, so I decided to apply for graduate school. I finished my double major in 2017.

Gap Year

My first round of applications, I didn't get into grad school. So I took a gap year, and served as an environmental educator with a local non-profit, the Westport River Watershed Alliance. I helped to implement existing curricula for grades pre-K through high school, and I helped design updated 4th grade estuaries and 6th grade wetlands curricula. That year, I also volunteered in the education department at the Buttonwood Park Zoo. I assisted with animal ambassador encounters, supervised Nature Play, and ran Science on a Sphere sessions.

Graduate School

I started my masters in Fisheries Science at Oregon State University in the Department of Fisheries and Wildlife in the fall of 2018. My mom and I drove across the country in 4 days so she had some time to help me move in before she flew back home to New Jersey. My thesis tries to predict how fish populations react to the creation of marine reserves (fully protected marine protected areas where no fishing is allowed at all) so that I can explore different ways of managing them. Essentially, if we make a new marine reserve, what's the best way to determine how many fish we can harvest so that the population isn't harmed, but fishermen also don't lose their jobs. How much data do we need to collect, and what do we do with that information, given what we know about the specific fish species? All my work involves computer programming, so I don't have to go out into the field to collect data. However, I volunteer as a Biological Assistant on hook and line surveys with the Oregon Department of Fisheries and Wildlife Marine Reserves program. I've only been on one two-day trip sampling in and around Redfish Rocks so far, but I'm excited to help out more in the future! The picture on the left is the first Black Rockfish I ever caught while sampling with them, it was very exciting. I also (almost) caught a Lingcod that was thiiiiis big!

Fisheries science is a predominantly white male field. Besides my research, I spend a lot of time planning, designing, and carrying out educational outreach. With other grad students in the Department of Fisheries and Wildlife, we participate in day-long events like Discovering the Scientist Within, or run programs for Advocates for Women in Science, Engineering, and Math (AWSEM) Club. Every summer, we run a week-long camp called the Wild About Wildlife camp for 20 middle school students in and around Corvallis. I also served as a group leader for the Environmental Leadership for Youth camp, which exposes underrepresented communities (mostly urban and Latinx students) to expose them to nature in general, and many subjects in the fields of fisheries and wildlife, including potential career paths, specifically.

