

In Memoriam: Nina Jo Kogut (1969-2021)

May 13, 2022



Fisheries scientists lost one of their strongest supporters on 17 July 2021 with the passing of Nina Jo Kogut. For over 20 years, Nina devoted her strong scientific skills to the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW), and served in a variety of capacities associated with fisheries monitoring and management.

Nina grew up in the Santa Cruz Mountains, graduating from Los Gatos High School, before serving in the United States Navy. She worked during, and funded her own advanced education, earning her B.S. in Biological Sciences at San Jose State University and her M.S. in Conservation Ecology at California State University, Sacramento.

During her early natural resources career, Nina worked as a Natural History Interpreter and seasonal employee with state and federal parks, and with several non-profit organizations before working at a local water utility district. From 1995 to 1999, she conducted a variety of field surveys for freshwater fishes (resident and diadromous species) as well as mammals, birds, reptiles, amphibians, and plants in floodplain and riparian habitats. Nina was an Environmental Scientist with CDFW from 1999 to late 2020. She began this portion of her career at the Bay Delta Office in Stockton, where she worked with Dave Kohlhorst performing research on Green and White Sturgeon, Striped Bass, and resident fish populations in the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta. While working with her beloved survey crew aboard the Striper II, Nina brightened everybody's day with her smile, laughter, and unwavering positivity. She was the perfect blend of grit and kindness.

Nina's strong scientific curiosity, energy, and initiative displayed their importance, while she worked on CDFW's sturgeon tagging project. She observed that no matter how clean she kept the holding water, there would inevitably be clams at the tank bottom. Her proposed study to explain the phenomenon did not gain traction internally, so she confidently pursued it on her own time. Working with captured sturgeon at a local university she revealed that introduced clams, which comprised a substantial proportion of the White Sturgeon diet, provided little nutrition and were generally passed undigested and alive. The resulting paper published in 2008 as "Overbite clams, *Corbula amurensis*, defecated alive by white sturgeon, *Acipenser transmontanus*," embodied important implications for future sturgeon management and conservation.

In 2010, Nina transitioned to the Monterey Regional Office to work with Konstantin Karpov on the use of remote operated vehicles (ROVs) for ground fish surveys and on the Marine Protected Areas program, during which she and her collaborators authored numerous outreach and education resources. In addition, she was an author of 5 peer-reviewed research papers that appeared in professional journals. While working on these projects, Nina accepted an appointment as Associate Editor for the Department's journal, *California Fish and Game*, and served in that capacity for 10 years, through publication of volume 105 in 2019. During her first year as Associate Editor, Nina revised and published the Instructions for Contributors to *California Fish and Game*; three consecutive Editors-in-Chief depended on those guidelines for nearly a decade. She also was the Copy Editor for each of the papers included in the Special Marine Issue of *California Fish and Game*, which included 11 papers assembled specifically to

celebrate the centennial anniversary of California's longest-running, continuously published scientific journal and, specifically, its contributions to the science of marine biology.

After fighting a long and courageous battle with cancer, Nina retired from the Department in 2020. She was a ray of sunshine, a wonderful supporter of her co-workers, and a great friend of many. She will be sorely missed.

—Friends and Colleagues of Nina Kogut