

## **Nomination for Ken Gobalet: Martin A. Baumhoff Award**

Ken Gobalet has provided reliable, meticulous fish bone identifications to the California archaeological community for more than 40 years. He is probably the single-most respected and accomplished ichthyofaunal expert in California and he certainly is among the leaders in that small but important subfield in the United States. As a graduate student in Biology at UC Davis in the 1970s, Gobalet completed a dissertation that involved the bone-muscle system of the parrot fish. This provided him with background in vertebrate comparative anatomy (and an understanding of evolution) that ultimately set the stage for his career-long detour into archaeological and paleontological fish bone identification. Archaeologists in the Department of Anthropology at UC Davis somehow found out about Gobalet's fish studies, and assumed he had sufficient background to identify archaeological fish bones. Sometime in the 1970s the late Bob Orlins (who at the time was a student of Baumhoff's) gave Gobalet a bag (or three) of fish bones from a site that had recently been excavated in the San Francisco Bay area. By his own account, Gobalet spent many many hours on that first set of identifications, consulting reference collections at the Cal Academy of Science and UC Davis. This established the standards that Ken would apply to these types of studies for the next 45 years.

Ken Gobalet has identified archaeological fish bones from Iowa, Idaho, Oregon, the Santa Barbara Channel, Monterey Bay area, Colorado River, Big Sur, the San Francisco Bay Area, Humboldt County, and Clear Lake among other areas. He has identified 100s of thousands of archaeological fish bones—there is no point in trying to come up with a total, but it likely is close to a million. He has contributed to innumerable excavation reports—in many cases (especially in the early years)-- with no written recognition whatsoever of his contribution. Indeed, Gobalet's work was unacknowledged in one of his very first of projects (not the Orlins project!), and from that point on he became a staunch critic of some of the common gray literature practices in California archaeology.

Gobalet has published over 60 peer-reviewed journal articles and book chapters including major syntheses of the pre-European fisheries of the San Francisco and the Monterey Bay areas. He has published papers in

*Journal of California and Great Basin Anthropology*

*Journal of Archaeological Science*

*Journal of Island and Coastal Archaeology*

*Pacific Coast Archaeological Society Quarterly*

*American Antiquity*

*Quaternary Science Reviews*

*Journal of Anthropological Archaeology*

*Western North American Naturalist*

*Transactions of the American Fisheries Society*

*Copeia*

Gobalet has also been a strong advocate for improving the standards of archaeological faunal identification—not just of fish remains, but all animal bones-- throughout California, demanding that analysts describe their methods carefully and identify their reference collections. He was one of the first to recognize problems with inter-analyst bias/variation—a problem that still plagues faunal studies in California today. He has also long been a critic of cavalier/sloppy use of archaeological jargon (he cringes every time he hears the term “economic intensification”).

Gobalet has also mentored a small but dedicated cadre of students in the art/science of ichthyofaunal analysis. The importance of this aspect of his career cannot be overstated because it helps insure that Gobalet’s high standards will continue to be applied in California into the future.

Gobalet also would criticize anyone for describing his identifications as “accurate,” since he would be the first to point out that, in truth, none of us actually know whether his identifications of fish bones or those of any other faunal analysts are scientifically correct. Nonetheless, Ken Gobalet has set the standard for aspiring toward scientific accuracy for this tremendously important class of archaeological materials for 45 years. California archaeology owes him a debt of gratitude and I believe he is richly deserving of the Martin A. Baumhoff award.

Submitted by Terry L. Jones, Professor of Anthropology, California Polytechnic State University, San Luis Obispo