

Contribution Of Weather Photos By Voluntary Observing Ships

Dickson Lau

Weather reports from Voluntary Observing Ships (VOS) provide vital information on weather conditions in the oceans. In addition to typical meteorological observations such as temperature, winds, sea state, visibility, state of sky included in the weather reports, ship officers are also invited to record the sighting of interesting natural phenomena. These include, among others, astronomical phenomena, crepuscular rays, halo, rainbow, waterspout and even ocean creatures that can be of particular value to the national meteorological services and other organizations for weather analysis and scientific researches. Such information can be recorded in the e-logbook (Fig. 1) supplemented with photos and descriptions that will be sent to the national meteorological services or collected by the port meteorological officer upon berthing of the vessel at port.

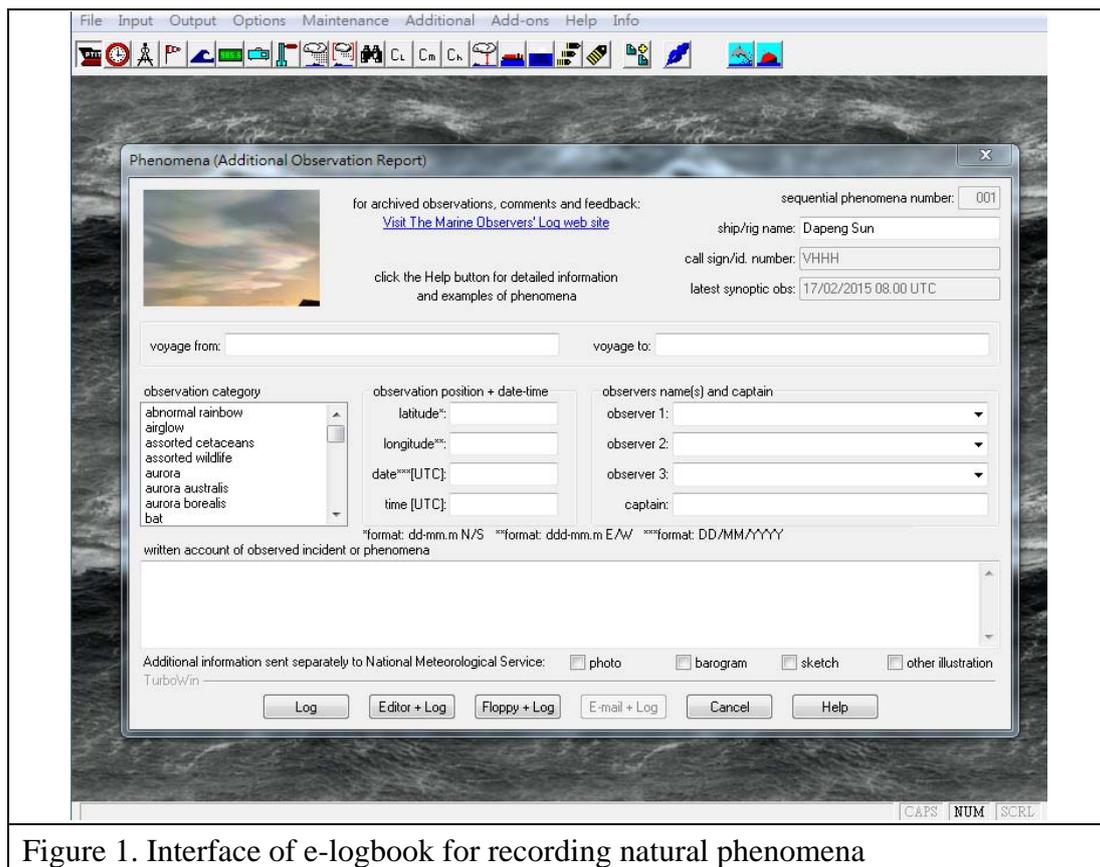


Figure 1. Interface of e-logbook for recording natural phenomena

The Hong Kong Observatory has been conducting a campaign to collect weather photos taken by the ship crews of the Hong Kong VOS since 2016. The main purpose is to collect interesting photos of natural phenomena that are not generally seen on land.

During the past few years, more than 400 photos taken at seas around the globe were received. The photos are classified into five categories, namely, “Cloud”, “Ocean”, “Weather Phenomenon”, “Atmospheric Optics” and “Celestial Objects” (samples in Figs. 2-7), and then uploaded to the “MyOceanWx Gallery”, a Geographical Information System (GIS)-enabled platform on HKO website for display (Fig. 8). The Gallery allows members of the public to appreciate the different weather phenomena and scenery that can be observed at sea and can be accessed via the link of the Observatory’s homepage <https://maps.weather.gov.hk/sea/seawxphoto.htm>.



Figure 2. Cloud photo (cumulonimbus cloud)



Figure 3. Weather phenomenon (lightning)



Figure 4. Astronomical phenomenon (night sky)



Figure 5. Sea creature (dolphin)

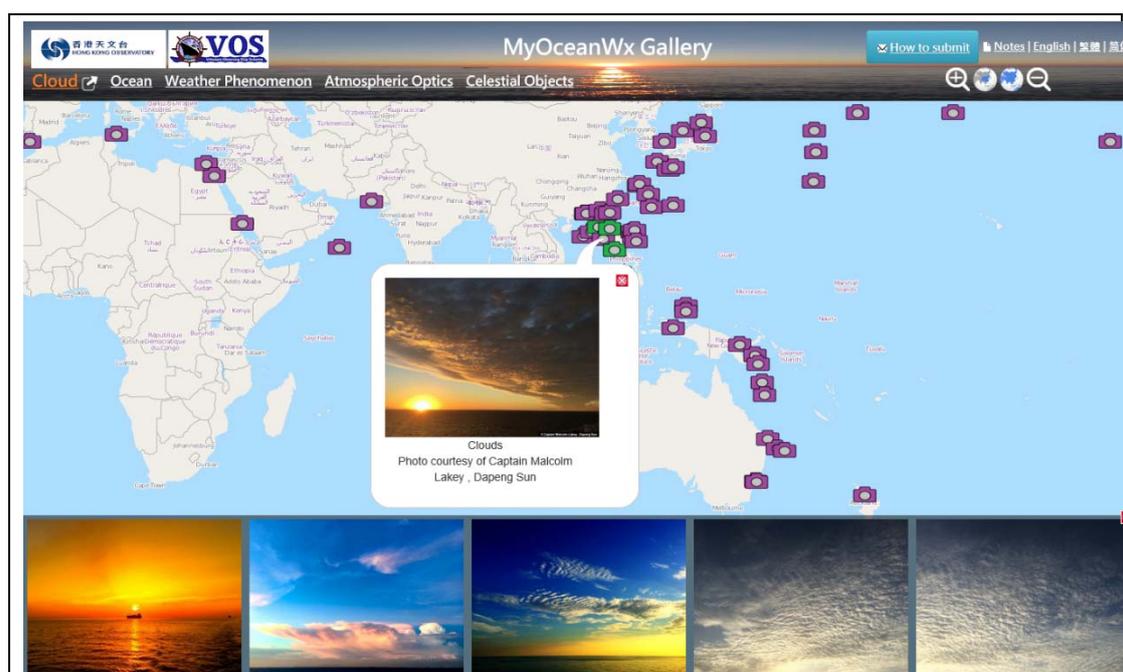
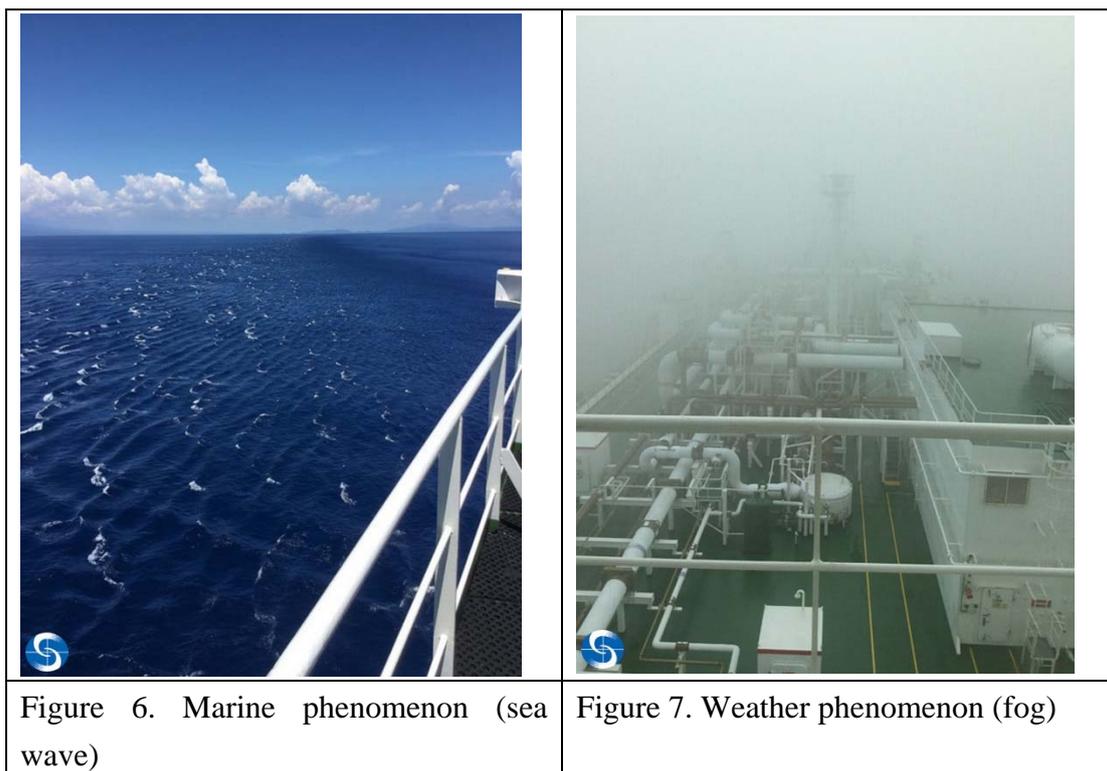


Figure 8. MyOceanWx Gallery

The Observatory expresses its heartfelt gratitude to all contributors of the photos. The continuing support from the shipping community is sought. Travellers during sea voyages are also encouraged to share their beautiful photos through the platform. The instructions on “How to submit to the MyOceanWx Gallery” can be found at https://maps.weather.gov.hk/sea/seawxphoto_submit_note.htm.