

NEARSHORE FINFISH FISHERY #6

The nearshore finfish fishery includes a large group of fish, with 19 primary species. Most of the fish targeted in this fishery are rockfish. Other types of fish include the sheephead, cabezon and scorpionfish. These fish live in rocky reefs and kelp beds, and are fished commercially using traps and hook-and-line fishing.



Rockfish

The nearshore finfish fishery boomed in the 1990s when restaurants and markets had increased demand for live finfish. The fishery exploded before there were many regulations in place to help control the amount of fish taken.

Now there are many regulations that require close attention by fishery participants. The regulations are very complicated and vary from one area to the next.

Fishery participants, managers, scientists and environmentalists are all working together to ensure a sustainable nearshore finfish fishery for years to come.



Sheephead

FUN FACTS:

1. Sheephead can change sex, first being female and then becoming male.

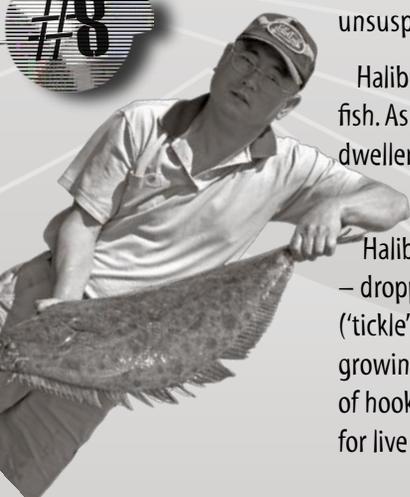
2. What fish has been named for its large head? The cabezon, which means 'bigheaded' in Spanish.

HALIBUT

California halibut, which are abundant in the Santa Barbara Channel region, are a type of flatfish. A flatfish is flat like a Frisbee, and spends much of its time on the bottom of the ocean floor. Like other flatfish, halibut partially bury themselves on the sandy bottom, preparing to ambush unsuspecting prey.

Halibut are born with eyes on either side of their heads and swim in the water, just like regular fish. As they develop, one eye migrates to the other side of the head and they become bottom dwellers. This is an adaptation that enables them to live on the bottom of the sandy ocean floor.

Halibut are fished using gill nets and trawl nets. The trawl net has an interesting feature – dropped-loop chains (also called 'tickler' chains) that hang from the net opening and skim along ('tickle') the bottom of the ocean floor, startling fish into the nets. Halibut are also fished by a growing group of part-time commercial fishery participants using "bounce ball," a method of hook-and-line fishing. These methods have evolved to supply the increasing demand for live halibut. Fishery participants receive a premium price for these live fish.



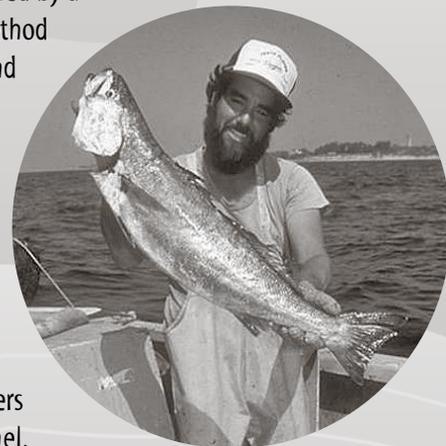
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YELLOWTAIL AND WHITE SEABASS

White seabass are a popular commercial and recreational fish. They live in coastal waters from San Francisco to Mexico, and are often abundant in the Santa Barbara Channel. Yellowtail are more abundant in San Diego and Mexican waters, but when large numbers move into the Santa Barbara Channel (typically when warm water conditions exist, as during El Niños) they become an important part of the local catch. White seabass and yellowtail are commercially fished at least three miles offshore using gill nets. Although controversial and now prohibited in Southern California waters (from shore to three miles offshore), gill nets may be used to catch limited quantities of fish in federal waters (three to 200 miles offshore).

White seabass landed commercially in Santa Barbara Harbor weigh an average of 20 to 30 pounds. There have been reports of some seabass in the area weighing up to 100 pounds! White seabass are fast growers, reaching almost 2 feet in their first two years. How do we know this? Researchers have examined the ear bones ("otoliths") of fish, counting the rings (similar to trees) to determine the age.



White Seabass