


# IDENTIFICATION OF COMMON GROUND FISH SPECIES

(of Central and Southern California)


Anglers are responsible for knowing current fishing regulations, which can change frequently. Check the state website for up-to-date information.

**Black Rockfish <sup>+</sup>**



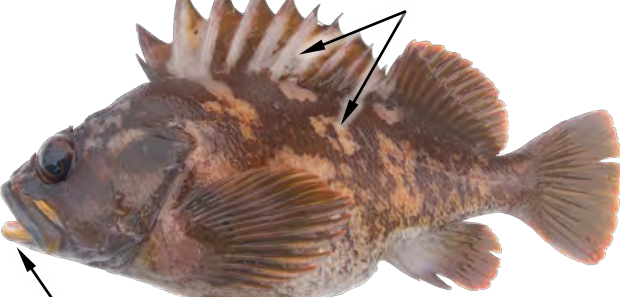
Large mouth. Body mottled with gray. White belly. Black spots on the dorsal membrane.

**Blue Rockfish <sup>+</sup>**




Small mouth. Vague stripes across forehead. Blue-tipped pelvic fins. Large angular blotches on sides of body.

**Gopher Rockfish <sup>++</sup>**




Stout body. Small, terminal mouth. Lower lip is orange. Olive-brown with irregular light-gray or pinkish blotches on back and sides, extending onto dorsal fin.

**Black & Yellow Rockfish <sup>++</sup>**




Mostly black or dark brown with irregular clear yellow blotches on back, sides and between dorsal fin spines. Other than color, is very similar to gopher rockfish.

**Brown Rockfish <sup>±</sup>**



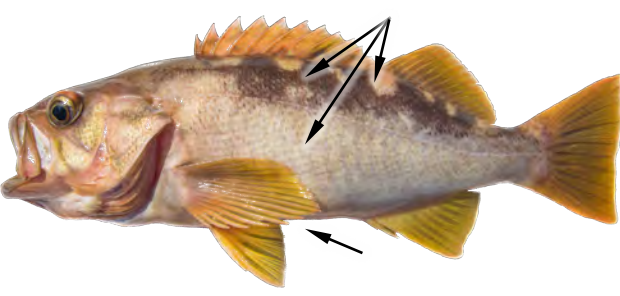
Dark brown patch or spot on gill cover. Underside of throat and lower jaw pinkish. Fins may be pinkish.

**Yellowtail Rockfish <sup>+</sup>**




Fins yellowish, large mouth. May have pale patches or spots on back. May be confused with olive rockfish.

**Olive Rockfish <sup>++</sup>**



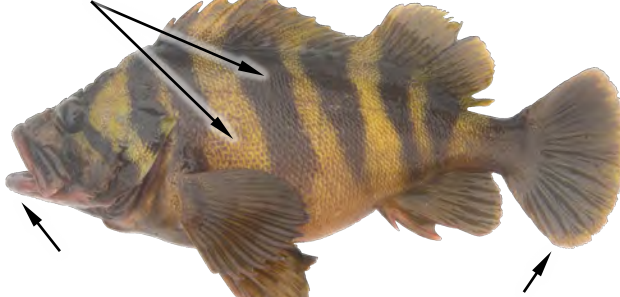
Often mistaken for yellowtail rockfish. Dark olive-brown on back, with clear splotches. Lighter olive-gray on side. White abdomen. Fins are olive to bright yellow.

**Copper Rockfish <sup>+</sup>**




Deep Bodied. Light colored band along the last 2/3 of lateral line.

**Treefish <sup>++</sup>**



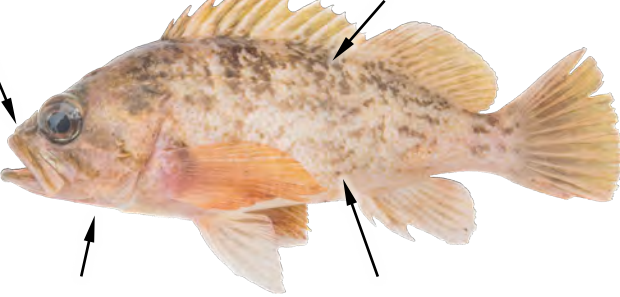
Large, pink fleshy lips. Compact body is yellowish to dark olive with 5 to 6 vertical black bars. Pectoral, anal and tail fins are rounded. Fins on juveniles are white tipped.

**Grass Rockfish <sup>++</sup>**



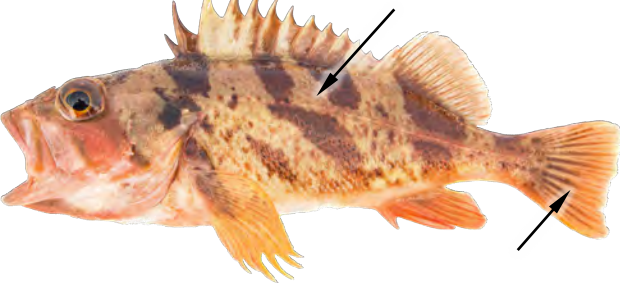
Short gill rakers. Dark green or olive above; mottled green, black or gray on side; whitish below; fins dark. Rare, light-colored variation is yellowish-orange.

**Kelp Rockfish <sup>++</sup>**



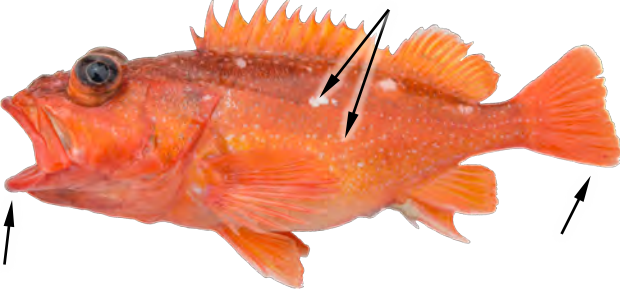
Pointy snout. Long, slender gill rakers on first gill arch. Color can be tan, brown, green, olive-gray or even reddish (with darker mottling). Pinkish white below.

**Calico Rockfish <sup>++</sup>**



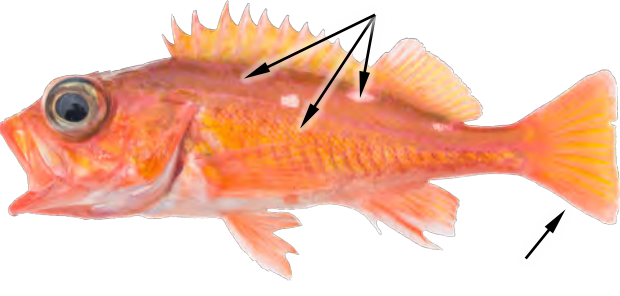
Light greenish-yellow body. Slanted russet markings on sides with pronounced "Y" marking under dorsal fin. Tail membranes are brown or greenish-brown.

**Starry Rockfish <sup>++</sup>**



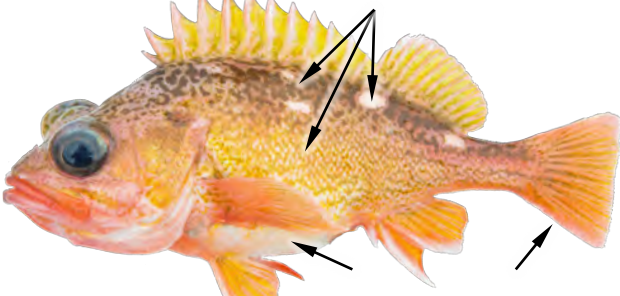
Large mouth. Body is orange-red transitioning to lighter shade below and covered with small white spots. Three to six large white spots present on back. Rounded tail fin.

**Rosy Rockfish <sup>++</sup>**



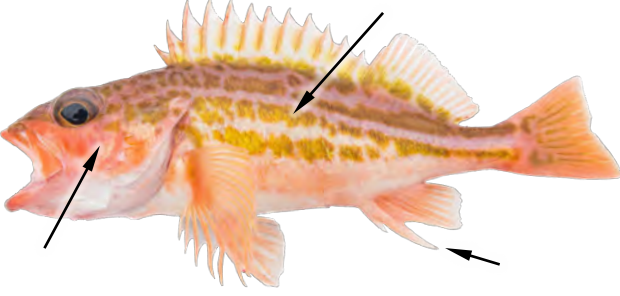
Orange-red to purple body with 4 to 6 whitish blotches above lateral line. Yellow wash on lower sides. Fin membranes are pink and yellow.

**Honeycomb Rockfish <sup>++</sup>**



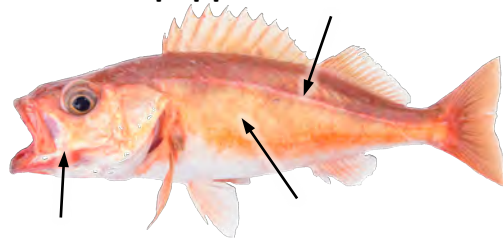
Dusky back with 3 to 5 white patches above lateral line. Dark olive honeycomb border on side scales. Pinkish to white abdomen. Tail fin is straight.

**Greenstriped Rockfish <sup>++</sup>**



Slender body is pinkish yellow with four mottled, horizontal green stripes. Second anal fin spine is long. Green streaks on tail fin membranes.

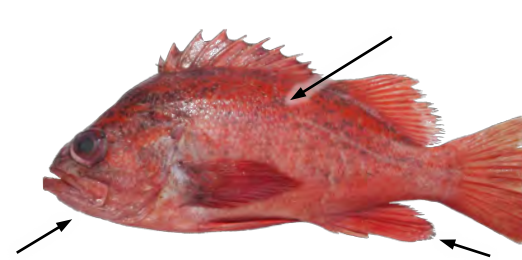


**Chilipepper Rockfish<sup>††</sup>**

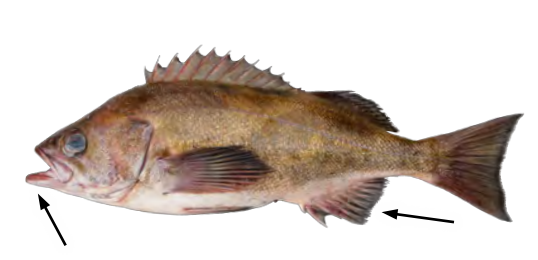
Upper jaw extends only to center of the eye, not past it. Pinkish to copper pink, becoming whitish below. Lateral line, stands out clearly, as a lighter, bright red zone.

**Canary Rockfish<sup>†</sup>**

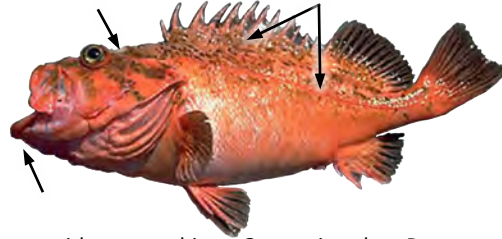
Typically three stripes across side of head and gill plate. Smooth jawline. Body orange mottled with gray. Gray lateral line. Anal fin slanted. Slightly indented tail.

**Vermilion Rockfish<sup>†</sup>**

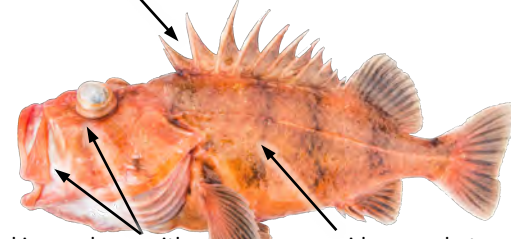
Lower jawline rough to touch. Body reddish and mottled with gray. Anal fin rounded.

**Widow Rockfish<sup>†</sup>**

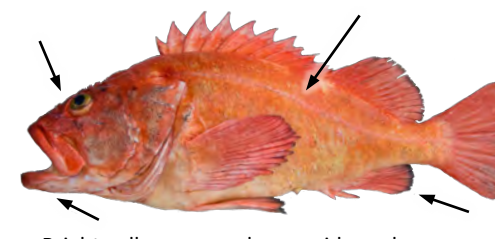
Small mouth. Black fin membranes. Anal fin slanted posteriorly.

**Bronzespotted Rockfish<sup>†</sup>**

Large with upturned jaw. Orange in color. Bronze spots and rays of color on cheeks. Bronze-colored spots on upper sides and back. Strong pink or orange lateral line.

**Cowcod<sup>††</sup>**

Head is very large with very wide space between eye and upper jaw. Deeply notched dorsal fins. Body is pale pink to orange in color, with dusky vertical bars on sides.

**Yelloweye Rockfish<sup>†</sup>**

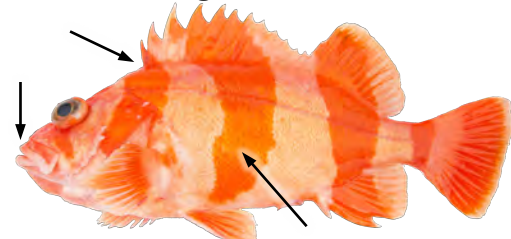
Bright yellow eye and raspy ridges above eye. Smooth jawline. Fins usually have black edges. Juveniles have 1 or 2 white stripes along side of body.

**Bocaccio<sup>††</sup>**

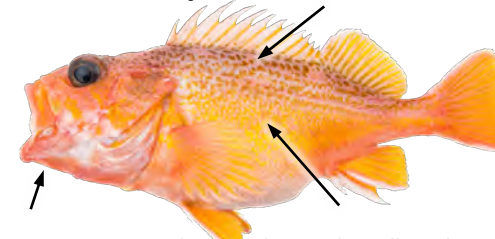
Large mouth extending upwards. Slightly concave between mouth and dorsal fin. Upper jaw extends to the back of the eye. Body orange, olive or brown.

**Redbanded Rockfish<sup>†</sup>**

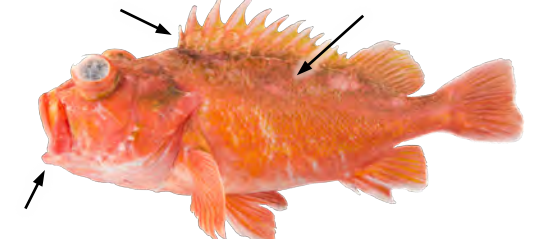
Rounded head. Deep body. Light pink with four dark red vertical bars. First bar does not extend as far into gill cover as it does on flag rockfish. Fins may have dark or black edges.

**Flag Rockfish<sup>††</sup>**

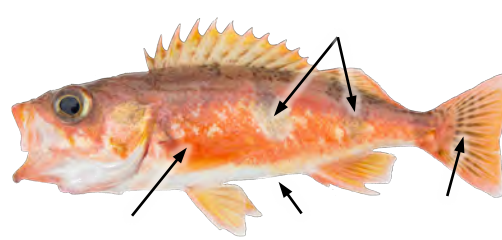
Narrow head. Pointed snout. Light pink coloration with four orange-red bands on body and two on head. Band at the front of dorsal fin extends into gill cover.

**Greenspotted Rockfish<sup>††</sup>**

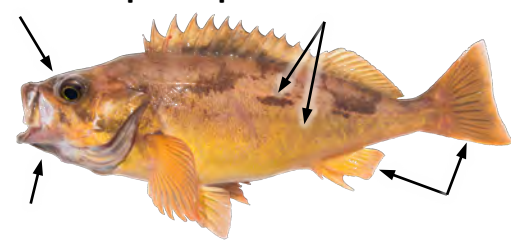
Lower jaw smooth to the touch. Yellowish-pink body and fins. Combination of many small green spots with 3-5 larger pink blotches on back and top of head.

**Greenblotched Rockfish<sup>††</sup>**

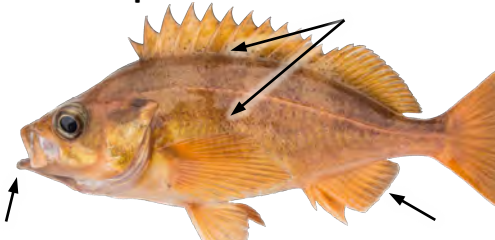
Relatively small mouth. Yellow to red or pale pink in color. Dense, green vermiculation.

**Halfbanded Rockfish<sup>††</sup>**

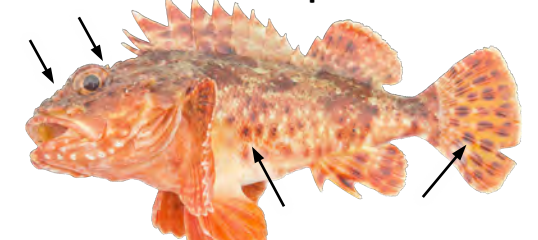
Orange to deep red or brown in color with sharp transition to white abdomen. Two dark-red bars on rear half of body. Brown streaks and dots on tail fin.

**Squarespot Rockfish<sup>††</sup>**

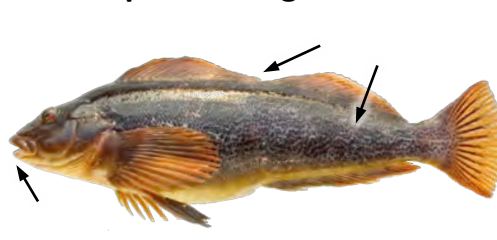
Small eyes and mouth. Dusky-tan, with several dark-brown blotches on or above lateral line. Fins generally dark; with tail being darker than pelvic or anal fins.

**Speckled Rockfish<sup>††</sup>**

Small mouth. Light tan with small dark speckles and vague mottling on back and side. Blackened lower fin membranes. Anal fin has a strong posterior slant.

**California Scorpionfish<sup>††</sup>**

Large head. Deep depression in front of and behind eye. Reddish-brown in color, with brownish-black spotting present over the entire body and fins.

**Kelp Greenling-Female<sup>†</sup>**

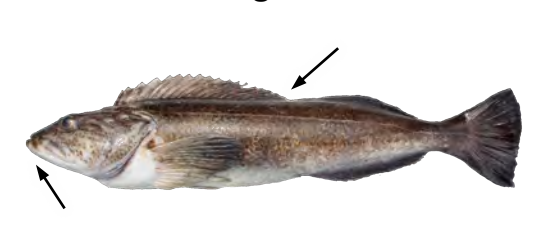
Small mouth, small teeth. Reddish spots. Smooth skin.

**Kelp Greenling-Male<sup>†</sup>**

Small mouth, small teeth. Blue spots may be faint except when breeding, when they become almost neon. Smooth skin.

**Cabezon<sup>†</sup>**

Flap of skin above eye and on snout. Huge mouth, small teeth. Body marbled. Smooth skin lacking scales.

**Lingcod<sup>†</sup>**

Large mouth and large teeth. Deep notch in long dorsal fin. Elongated body. Smooth skin.



[www.wildlife.ca.gov/conservation/marine/groundfish](http://www.wildlife.ca.gov/conservation/marine/groundfish)



[www.psmfc.org](http://www.psmfc.org)

Photos courtesy † Milton Love, †† Ralph Pace Photography  
‡ ODFW & † Vicky Okimura (WDFW) REV. 2017