

MONTEREY SPORT RAMP CREEL SURVEY  
1981-83, 1984, 1986-87, 1999-2000

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## Abstract

Creel survey information is summarized from sport fishermen landing their catch at the Monterey Coast Guard Ramp, located in Monterey Harbor, Monterey County, during four survey periods from 1981 to 2000. Data include numbers, species composition, mean length of fishes counted and measured, and sampling effort.

A goal of the Central California Marine Sport Fish Project (Refugia Project) is to provide access to data from past project creel surveys. The data may be used to evaluate future trends in central California coastal fisheries, and to serve as a baseline to help assess the effectiveness of existing or proposed marine protected areas (MPAs). These data have been entered into a Microsoft Access database which is available for download on the internet at the Department's website.

## Introduction

From 1981 through 2000, the Central California Marine Sport Fish Project (Refugia Project) collected information intermittently on fishes landed by sport skiff fishermen at the Monterey Coast Guard Ramp. These surveys were used to assess changes in the quality of fishing in the area from central Monterey Bay to the Point Sur area. In addition to commercial fisheries and the recreational Commercial Passenger Fishing Vessel fishery, sport skiff fishers constitute a significant component of nearshore fishing effort. Monterey sport and commercial anglers have expressed concern regarding the decline in the quality of fishing. In the 1990's, sport anglers believed the sizes of fish had decreased, catch rates had declined, and they had to travel farther from Monterey to achieve reasonable catches of quality (i.e. large) fish (Wilson et al. 1996).

The nearshore reefs of central California provide a wide variety of habitats for fishes, ranging from pinnacles and vertical rock walls to nearly horizontal base rock, boulder fields, and sand channels. In the spring and summer, annual upwelling of cool, nutrient-rich water along the central California coast produces rich plankton blooms and supports a rich algal community. This lush plant growth and its associated infauna provide an abundant food supply for animals living in and on these reefs. Despite similarities in bottom topography, oceanographic conditions, flora, and invertebrate species composition, significant differences exist in the number, size, and species of sport fishes that inhabit these reef systems. Many of the species are residential, underscoring the need for site-specific catch data (Lea et al. 1999).

Creel survey information is summarized from sport fishermen landing their catch at the Monterey Coast Guard Ramp during four survey periods from 1981 to 2000. Data include numbers and mean length of species observed and sampling effort. A previous report summarized the 1981-1999 data (VenTresca et al. 2000).

The Refugia Project has collected both fishery-dependent and fishery-independent data on nearshore sport fish species since its inception in 1957. Much of this information is summarized and published in scientific journals, Department in-house reports and online sites (Table Refugia Publications). However, the data are not readily accessible to the scientific community or fishery managers. The goal of this effort is to provide access to data from past Refugia Project creel surveys. The data may be used to evaluate future trends in central California coastal fisheries, and to serve as a baseline in assessing the effectiveness of existing or proposed MPAs. These

data have been entered into a Microsoft Access database which is available for download on the internet at the Department's website.

### Methods

Four creel surveys of the catch of sport skiff fishers were conducted from 1981 to 2000. All four surveys were conducted at the Monterey Coast Guard Ramp located in Monterey Harbor, Monterey County. Interviews were conducted predominantly on Saturdays, Sundays and occasionally on holidays. From one to three Department of Fish and Game personnel would arrive at the ramp at 1000 and leave between 1500 and 1600. A station was set up close to the boat landing ramp and samplers would approach skiffs as they landed, conduct interviews with anglers, and examine their catch using the procedure below. Due to the voluntary nature of this survey, every effort was made to respect the angler's property and state of mind while the interview was conducted. Below is the standard operating procedure used to conduct the interviews.

#### Interview Procedure for Samplers:

- 1) Briefly explain your connection with the Department and the purpose of the survey BEFORE you ask questions.
- 2) Approach a boat only when it is apparent that you will not be interfering at a crucial moment (immediately after tying up is usually best).
- 3) Ask the boat owner for permission to come aboard before boarding a boat - be aware of fishing poles etc. on deck that could be damaged.
- 4) Handle the angler's catch with care.
  - a) Do not place fish on asphalt or a hot/dirty surface.
  - b) Do not allow fish to dirty the interior of a clean boat.
  - c) If a fish is presented to you in a bucket with water, return it to the bucket with water. Same care is taken with fish packed in ice or on a stringer.
  - d) Do not mix fish from different bags (usually from different anglers on the same boat) unless cleared by anglers to do so.
- 5) Make an effort, whenever time permits, to answer questions as completely as possible (Remember: "I don't know" is always an acceptable answer - it is vital that your answer to a questions regarding angler regulations is UNAMBIGUOUS and ACCURATE. Refer all regulation questions to the California Fishing Regulations for further information)
- 6) Try to keep your enthusiasm level the same no matter what the catch (e.g. a giant bag of sand dabs or 40-lb salmon); don't let your personal biases show.
- 7) Remember that women and children fish too; be sure to include them in your interview process. But, be aware that some parents are suspicious if you ask questions of a child without their presence. It is best to wait for the arrival of an adult before proceeding with an interview.
- 8) If you wear a jacket such that your shirt patch is covered, take extra steps to identify yourself as a member of the Department and the purpose of the survey.
- 9) Although many of the items covered here are simply a matter of common sense, often times in a busy interview period such common courtesies can be easily overlooked. However, the anglers being interviewed only sees the image that you project during the time that you are interviewing him/her. For many anglers, their encounter with you will be the first time that they have seen a representative of the Department. Therefore, it is important that the

impression you make be a good one. In our experience, remembering the courtesies listed above will result in a more positive experience for the angler and a more cooperative angler in a second interview.

In addition to date of sample and weather and sea conditions, interview questions include: target species, fishing location, gear used, depth fished, number of anglers in boat, boat type, and hours from launch to landing. All of the fish of anglers that were interview were counted and as many as possible were measured. Metadata for the associated database are included in Meta data.pdf.

### Data Summaries

During four survey periods from 8 November 1981 to 29 January 2000, four sport angler creel surveys were conducted at the Monterey Coast Guard Ramp. The four survey periods were 1981-1983, 1984, 1986-1987 and 1999-2000. During these surveys a total of 42,310 fishes, representing 85 identified species (Table FISH NAMES) were sampled and 21,645 fishes, representing 82 identified species, were measured during 178 days of sampling (Table DAYS). The geographic fishing range of skiffs that launched from Monterey was from the north side of the Monterey Bay Submarine Canyon to south of Pt. Sur (Figure AREA MAP). This report summarizes the numbers of fish sampled for each of three fishing areas (Inside Monterey Peninsula, Outside Monterey Peninsula, and from Yankee Pt. to Pt. Sur); for the four survey periods; and by gear type (Table TOTAL FISH). Additionally the numbers of fish sampled in each area by survey and major gear types (hook-and-line and spearfishing) are also summarized (Figures IMP FISH, OMP FISH, and M\_S FISH). The species composition of major fishes (top 98% or top 16 species of the catch for hook-and-line) sampled by gear type and area are presented in the following figures:

Hook-and-line Inside Monterey Peninsula – Figure IMP\_HL\_SCM  
Hook-and-line Outside Monterey Peninsula – Figure OMP\_HL\_SCM  
Hook-and-line Between Monterey Peninsula and Point Sur – Figure M\_S\_HL\_SCM  
Spearfishing Inside Monterey Peninsula – Figure IMP\_SPEAR\_SCM  
Spearfishing Outside Monterey Peninsula – Figure OMP\_SPEAR\_SCM  
Spearfishing Between Monterey Peninsula and Point Sur – Figure M\_S\_SPEAR\_SCM

Box plots are presented for lengths of the most frequently caught species for the most robust datasets by gear type and areas (see below). Means are represented by a solid line within the boxed area, which is the interquartile range (50% of values), and the upper and lower “whiskers” represent 90<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> percentile points, respectively.

Hook-and-line Inside Monterey Peninsula – Figure IMP\_HL\_TL  
Hook-and-line Outside Monterey Peninsula – Figure OMP\_HL\_TL  
Hook-and-line Between Monterey Peninsula and Point Sur – Figure M\_S\_HL\_TL  
Spearfishing Inside Monterey Peninsula – Figure IMP\_SPEAR\_TL  
Spearfishing Outside Monterey Peninsula – Figure OMP\_SPEAR\_TL

### Summary

This report summarizes creel survey data from sport fishers landing their catch in Monterey. Data presented include species composition, numbers and mean length of species measured, and

sampling effort summaries for four survey periods from 1981 to 2000. A goal of the Refugia Project is to provide access to data from past project creel surveys. It is hoped that the data may be used to evaluate future trends in central California coastal fisheries, and to serve as a baseline in assessing the effectiveness of existing and proposed MPAs.

#### Cited Literature

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