



YELLOWTAIL ROCKFISH (*Sebastes flavidus*)



Yellowtail Rockfish are a midwater species with a streamlined body. They are greenish-brown in color on their back with white and dark blotches. Their bodies are lighter colored with a yellowish tinge below the lateral line. Their yellow fins are a distinctive feature. Yellowtail Rockfish are known to be able to make extensive movements up and down in the water, changing depth with ease unlike many other rockfish species. They are typically found over high relief rocky reefs, gravel, or cobble bottom types. Yellowtail Rockfish are caught by both recreational and commercial fishermen off the west coast.

OVERVIEW

- **Oregon Conservation Strategy Species**
- **Size:** Up to 26 inches long
- **Weight:** Up to 9.3 pounds
- **Lifespan:** At least to 64 years
- **Key Strategy Habitats:** Nearshore, Estuaries
- **Similar Species:** Olive Rockfish, Black Rockfish, Widow Rockfish

FISHING TIPS

- Target rocky reef, or areas of gravel or cobble bottom habitat from 300-600 ft. deep. Look for suspended schools of rockfish, drop your hook to the depth of the schools and jig through the water column.
- Long leader gear set ups and a variety of lures and flies work well for this species.
- Remember to check the fishing regulations for the area before you go and be sure you have your fishing license and descending device.

RANGE AND DISTRIBUTION

In Oregon: Yellowtail Rockfish can be found throughout the state's marine waters.

Everywhere Else: Yellowtail Rockfish range from the eastern Aleutian Islands, Alaska to northern Baja. They are more common and abundant from British Columbia to southern Oregon. The depth

FUN FACTS

Favorite Food: Midwater prey such as krill, amphipods, and other zooplankton. They also eat fish.

- The Latin name "*flavidus*" for this species means yellow.
- Young of the year Yellowtail Rockfish tend to move from shallower inshore waters where they settle in spring to deeper waters in the fall.
- Adult Yellowtail Rockfish can change depth rapidly.
- Yellowtail Rockfish can quickly release gas from their swimbladder when brought to the surface from depth unlike most rockfish.
- Yellowtail Rockfish can quickly release gas from their swim bladder.
- Yellowtail Rockfish observed from a manned submersible at Hecata Bank off the Oregon coast were inactive near the bottom at night.



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range for Yellowtail Rockfish is from surface waters for young of the year to about 1,800 feet for adults, but they are more typically found in water depths shallower than 600 feet.

LIFE HISTORY AND ECOLOGY

In all rockfish species, fully formed larvae are released from the mother's body and live for several months in the water column. In surveys off central California in May and June, pelagic juvenile Yellowtail Rockfish are most frequently caught at depths of about 210 feet. Small juveniles, 1-3 inches long, settle to the bottom in estuaries and nearshore waters from April to August.

Rockfish don't spawn; spawning refers to the release of sperm and unfertilized eggs into the environment. Rather, all rockfish species mate and have internal fertilization, but the process of courtship and mating has been observed for relatively few of the many species. Females Yellowtail Rockfish can produce 56,000-1,992,700 eggs a year. The eggs that are fertilized develop and are nourished in the womb. There is no placenta or other structure for transfer of nutrition and research suggests that the nourishment comes from dead embryos and undeveloped eggs that are reabsorbed into the amniotic fluid. Live young are released by Yellowtail Rockfish sometime between January and May. Reproductive success is related to favorable ocean conditions during the larval life stage, with good upwelling and productive ocean conditions producing strong year classes. The long lifespan and annual reproductive cycle help to ensure that good year classes of recruits are produced when the right combination of environmental conditions occurs in the highly variable California Current system.

Genetic evidence suggests that Cape Mendocino is a dividing point between two different stocks of Yellowtail Rockfish along the west coast.

Known predators of Yellowtail Rockfish include Chinook Salmon, Pelagic Cormorants, Pigeon Guillemots, and Rhinoceros Auklets which feed mainly on larvae and pelagic juveniles. Lingcod will eat older individuals.

DIET AND FORAGING

Yellowtail Rockfish eat a variety of fish species as well as squid and plankton such as krill and amphipods. Although they mostly eat food found in the water column, they will also eat things on or near the bottom.

HABITAT CHARACTERISTICS

Yellowtail Rockfish live in coastal waters usually less than about 600 feet deep often over areas of high relief rocky bottoms, but also over gravel and cobble bottoms.



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CONSERVATION AND MANAGEMENT

Threats: Yellowtail Rockfish that reside in the California Current Ecosystem benefit from the annual seasonal cycle that includes upwelling of cold nutrient rich waters during the spring and summer months, which are critical for ocean productivity. Changes in ocean productivity, whether they are human induced or natural, can affect reproductive success and stock size. Yellowtail Rockfish are also vulnerable to overfishing based on productivity and susceptibility analysis.

Conservation and management: Yellowtail Rockfish are included in the federal Pacific Coast Groundfish Fishery Management Plan administered by the Pacific Fishery Management Council (PFMC). The Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife works in concert PFMC and manages fisheries for Yellowtail Rockfish within state waters. The Pacific Fishery Management Council conducts stock assessments for this species periodically in an effort to ensure that fisheries for this species are sustainably managed. There is much still unknown about this species and there is an extensive set of research and data needs to improve conservation and management. Some of these needs include a fishery-independent survey for this mid-water species to get better information on abundance throughout its range.

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