

XANTHIC, GIGANTIC, CHINA ROCKFISH

On 18 May 1988 approximately two miles southeast of Crescent City, California (lat 41°42' N, long 124°10' W) commercial hook-and-line fisherman Ernie Gentry of the LADY MAE, fishing in 14 fathoms of water with a non-baited barbless hook, caught a 453 mm total length China rockfish, *Sebastes nebulosus*. The fish was shipped to F. Alioto Fish Company in San Francisco and the general manager, Joseph Cincotta, called the author to have the fish identified. This specimen is the largest China rockfish yet captured (Miller and Lea 1972) and the first known to exhibit xanthism.

Xanthism is the property of the skin to be marked by a predominance of yellow pigment. Xanthic fish have been reported on the West Coast for the following species: Dover sole, *Microstomus pacificus* (McCormick and Baldwin 1952); sablefish, *Anoplopoma fimbria* (Phillips 1952); and bocaccio, *Sebastes paucispinis* (Davenport 1966).

Normally China rockfish are a mottled brown or blue-black mixed with yellow and have a yellow stripe running from the anterior spines (between spines III and IV) of the dorsal fin down to the lateral line and thence along the lateral line to the caudal peduncle (Ayres 1854, Miller and Lea 1972). This specimen was a bright golden yellow with a few tiny black spots on the head

and several small patches of black on the dorsal fin membrane between the second and seventh dorsal spines (Figure 1)



FIGURE 1. Xanthic, gigantic, China rockfish caught off Crescent City, California.

All the China rockfish's physical attributes correspond to those described for this species (Ayres 1854, Phillips 1952, Miller and Lea 1972). The total length of 453 mm exceeds the previously reported total length of 432 mm by five percent. This specimen had seven anal fin rays, 10 unbranched and 18 total pectoral fin rays, 13 dorsal fin rays, and 29 gill rakers ($8 + 21 = 29$). The following measurements were taken: standard length (367 mm), head length (148.6 mm), orbit width (32.2 mm), bony interorbital width (19.8 mm), suborbital height (14.1 mm) and pectoral length (109.7 mm).

The age of this fish was determined by four scientists experienced in aging rockfish using the experimental broken and burnt otolith method (Chilton and Beamish 1982). All scientists agreed that the fish was approximately 70 years old (ca. 1918 year class).

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