

# Finfish and Shellfish Identification Book

## *Companion Guide to the California Fishing Passport*

**D**id you know that striped bass were introduced to California in 1879, and that they once supported a commercial fishery? Or that California sheephead begin life as females but then become males later in life? Or that the McCloud River redband trout survived the last Ice Age in free-flowing streams east of Mt. Shasta, isolated from other trout species?

These are just some of the fascinating facts you'll find in the *California Finfish and Shellfish Identification Book*. Toss in a legal limit of fishing tips for some of the toughest species to catch, along with full color illustrations of 150 California finfish and shellfish, and you've got the perfect companion guide to the Department of Fish and Wildlife's (CDFW's) *California Fishing Passport*.

The California Fishing Passport program encourages anglers to try to catch California's most popular finfish and shellfish species, and earn stamps in their passports by successfully catching each species. Not only is the program fun and a great challenge, participating anglers can also work their way toward special recognition and prizes for their accomplishments.

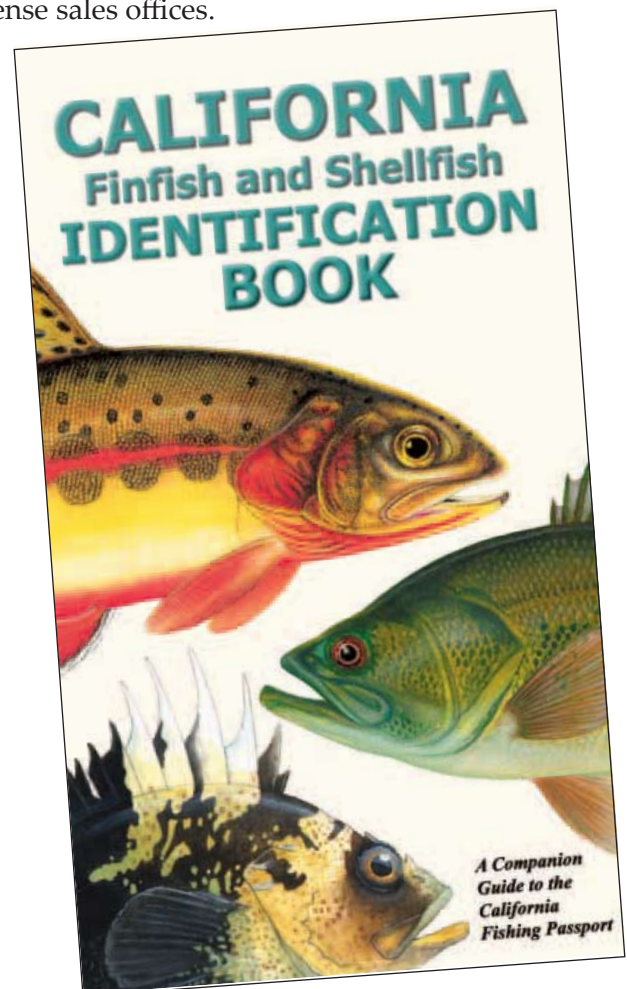
The *California Finfish and Shellfish Identification Book* provides anglers with an inside edge for catching all the freshwater and saltwater species in the passport. Full color illustrations by top artists Joseph Tomelleri, Amadeo Bachar and Jeremy Taylor provide anglers with detailed pictures of the fishes they will encounter as they fish their way around the state. Range and habitat information within California, distinguishing characteristics, maximum length, weight, and lifespan data, and fishing tips are all provided in the book.

The *California Finfish and Shellfish Identification Book* contains a treasure trove of information collected and updated from prior CDFW publications. CDFW staff experts also contributed their knowledge and insights in each entry, providing specific information about the many varied finfish and shellfish anglers can expect to encounter in California. The *California Finfish and Shellfish Identification Book* is geared to

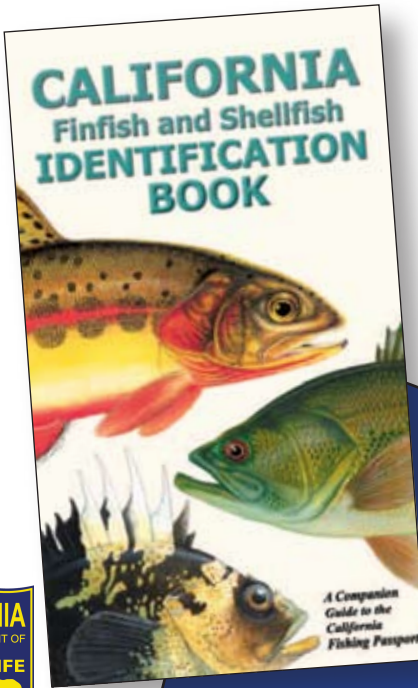
provide an exciting peek into the many opportunities that await anglers of all ages in California.

In 2007, then-Director Ryan Broddrick officially kicked off the California Fishing Passport program, saying "This program serves as a great complement to California's highly prized ocean and freshwater fisheries. It invites all types of anglers to get out and explore the Golden State and meet the challenge of catching a variety of fish species."

The *California Finfish and Shellfish Identification Book* is available from official California Fishing Passport Program supporters, CDFW license sales offices and the CDFW Publications Office ([publications@wildlife.ca.gov](mailto:publications@wildlife.ca.gov)). For the location nearest you, go to [www.wildlife.ca.gov/Fishing/Passport](http://www.wildlife.ca.gov/Fishing/Passport) for a list of official Supporters and CDFW license sales offices.



# What's Inside the California Finfish and Shellfish Identification Book?



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### Quillback Rockfish



**Quillback rockfish** are found from Point Sur northward off California, but they are most common off northern California. This fish may be found in subtidal areas to depths of around 900 ft. Quillback rockfish are bottom dwellers, and prefer rocky areas and/or kelp cover.

**Distinguishing Characteristics**  
Brown with yellowish to orange blotches toward the front of the body. Light-colored "saddle patches" extending over the head and through the spiny dorsal fin. Head spiny; may have orange to brown speckling extending back over body to just past the pectoral fins. Dorsal fin spines very long, acuminate between the spines, deeply incised. Fins dark brown to black, except where dorsal fin is blotched.

**Life History & Other Notes**  
Quillback rockfish are primarily bottom feeders that prey on crustaceans, but they will take small fishes in the water column, occasionally. They are believed to feed mostly during morning and evening hours.

As with all rockfish, fertilization is internal. Development of the embryo takes place within the ovaries until the young are ready to hatch. When the female releases her eggs, exposure to sea water causes the sticky yolk to escape from their egg cases. Young are released off central and northern California from April through July.

Quillback rockfish may be taken from the rocks or in offshore ledges using crabs, shrimp, or squid for bait.

**Quillback Rockfish**  
SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Sebastes maliger*  
OTHER COMMON NAMES: brown bomber  
RANGE & HABITAT: Point Sur northward, mostly off northern California in rocky areas with kelp cover  
LENGTH: To 24 in.  
LIFE SPAN: To 95 years  
DIET & SUGGESTED BAIT: Feeds on crustaceans and small fishes. Try using crabs, shrimp, squid, or live anchovy for bait and artificial lures

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### Smallmouth Bass



**The smallmouth bass** was first brought to California in 1874 from Lake Champlain, Vermont and the St. Joseph River, Michigan, and planted in the Napa River and Alameda Creek. It subsequently spread and was introduced into a number of waters throughout central and northern California. It is now found, among other places, in Trinity Lake, Putah Creek, the Russian River, the Colorado River, Pyramid Lake, Diamond Valley Lake, the lower portions of Sacramento and San Joaquin river tributaries, and many Central Valley impoundments such as Shasta Lake, Shasta County; Oroville Lake, Butte County, and Folsom Lake, Placer and El Dorado counties. Smallmouth bass prefer lower temperatures (about 70° F) and adapt to swifter currents than largemouth bass. They do best in clear, boulder-strewn streams with scant vegetation and rocky shoal areas for spawning.

**Distinguishing Characteristics**  
Dark vertical barring usually present on sides. Upper jaw does not extend to rear margin of eye and dorsal fin is not deeply notched.


**Life History & Other Notes**  
Smallmouth bass are the earliest spawning bass, beginning in the spring when water temperatures reach 55° to 60° F. Smallmouth are an aggressive bass that will go after all types of bass lures, particularly jigs. They are often considered better fighters than the largemouth bass. Most anglers are very satisfied with catching a 2- to 3-lb. smallmouth bass.

**Smallmouth Bass**  
SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Micropterus dolomieu*  
OTHER COMMON NAMES: brownback, smaller, brown bass  
RANGE & HABITAT: Statewide in clear streams, lakes with rocky areas  
LENGTH & WEIGHT: To 25 in. and -9 lb.  
LIFESPAN: To 15 years  
DIET & SUGGESTED LURES: Feeds on fish, amphibians, small mammals, crayfish. Try crayfish colored crankbaits, jigs, spinnerbaits, or plastic worms

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### Coastal Cutthroat Trout



**The Coastal cutthroat trout** is one of 11 California Heritage Trout species. This trout is found in the lower courses of most coastal streams from the Eel River northward. It is not generally abundant and seems to have difficulty competing with rainbow trout. Limited numbers of sea-run cutthroat occur in those streams, but are somewhat difficult to distinguish from sea-run rainbows and so are often overlooked.

**Distinguishing Characteristics**  
Back usually dark olive green. Sides usually lighter, belly silvery white. Usually a pair of red streaks ("cutthroat" marks) present on the membrane between the jawbones. Body and all fins usually covered with large irregular black spots. Spining does not extend to the lower sides and belly of all fish.

**Life History & Other Notes**  
The coastal cutthroat is a northern trout whose range extends only a short distance into California. Unlike sea-run rainbow trout, sea-run cutthroat seldom venture long distances in the ocean, usually staying within a few miles of the coast. The Smith River drainage is a stronghold for coastal cutthroat and many are found in large river estuaries like those of the Smith and Klamath rivers and Redwood Creek. Also, coastal lagoons such as Stone Lagoon and Lake Earl have held some large cutthroat trout.

The coastal cutthroat trout was originally described in 1836 by Sir John Richardson from fish caught in the Cathlamet River in Oregon. It was named for Captain William Clark of the Lewis and Clark Expedition.

**Coastal Cutthroat Trout**  
SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Oncorhynchus clarkii clarkii*  
OTHER COMMON NAMES: coastal cutty, cutthroat  
RANGE & HABITAT: Coastal streams from the Eel River northward  
LENGTH & WEIGHT: To 20 in. and 5 lb.  
LIFESPAN: Small streams: To 2 years  
Large rivers: To 7 years  
DIET & SUGGESTED BAIT/LURES: Eats insects, small fish. Try flies, spinners

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### California Spiny Lobster



**California spiny lobster** may be found from San Sulpicio County southward off central California. They prefer kelp beds rocky areas off the southern coast mainland, and around basalt islands, to depths of 20 ft. Spiny lobsters often hide in and crevice in rugged rock on for protection.

**Distinguishing Characteristics**  
Red to brown. Shell (carapace) massive, forward-pointing. Two heavy, spiny antennae longer than the body, with two antennules in between. Small eyes set on stalks. Long, sharp head spines. Large golden "false eye" spots on the actual eyes. Segmented legs in rounded fins.

**History Notes**  
California lobsters feed on a wide range of plants and animals, and readily consume decaying materials. Spawning occurs from March to August. Females may carry 80,000 coral-rod eggs beneath tails. Upon hatching, the tiny young drift with the for seven or eight months through twelve development stages settling to the as juvenile lobsters.

Many people catch spiny lobsters using hoop nets (usually steel rings and netting) in fisherman's traps, and set or float. Skin and scuba divers capture spiny lobsters by hand.

**California Spiny Lobster**  
SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Panulirus interruptus*  
OTHER COMMON NAMES: spiny lobster  
RANGE & HABITAT: San Luis Obispo County and in nearshore rocky reefs  
LENGTH & WEIGHT: To 2+ ft. and 26+ lb.  
LIFE SPAN: To 50 years  
DIET & SUGGESTED BAIT: Feeds on wide range of plants and animal material. Try crabs for bait

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### Striped Bass



**Striped bass were** introduced to California in 1879, when 132 small fish from the Navasink River in New Jersey were released into San Francisco Bay near Martinez. In 1882, three hundred more fish were released into lower Suisun Bay. By 1892 a flourishing commercial fishery had developed, which was subsequently closed in 1935 in an effort to build a sport fishery.

Since their introduction, striped bass have spread north to Canada and south to Mexico. In California, most striped bass are found in the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta and the larger tributary rivers downstream from dams. Limited fisheries also exist in Tomales Bay and the Russian River, but outside of the aforementioned areas, sea-run striped bass are uncommon.

Landlocked striped bass exist in Black Bluff, Camp Far West, Millerton, Modesto, San Antonio, Santa Margarita, and Success reservoirs, Lake Mendocino, and the Colorado River system. Striped bass are also present in the federal Central Valley Project, State Water Project, and the Contra Costa

County canals and reservoirs using the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta as a source.

**Distinguishing Characteristics**  
Silvery with seven or eight conspicuous horizontal blackish stripes on the back and sides (one in the lateral line). Eyes small. Body is slender and not noticeably compressed (flattened side to side). Pectoral fins relatively short, not reaching past the tips of the ventral fins.

**Striped Bass**  
SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Morone saxatilis*  
OTHER COMMON NAMES: stripes  
RANGE & HABITAT: San Francisco Bay, Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta, larger rivers and some lakes and reservoirs  
LENGTH & WEIGHT: To 4 ft. and 90 lb.  
LIFESPAN: To 20+ years, average to 10 years  
DIET/SUGGESTED BAIT: Feeds on fish and shrimp. Try using softshell, bloodworms, pile worms, or ghost shrimp for bait, or artificial lures

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Anglers will find loads of information about ocean and freshwater fish, shellfish, and more!

