



Grouper Identification

These fish are currently rare or uncommon in California, USA

GIANT SEA BASS

Stereolepis gigas

MAXIMUM TOTAL LENGTH (TL): 2.7 m (8.9 ft)

Older juveniles and adults dark gray, often with dark spots on sides. Newly settled juveniles black with white caudal fin; somewhat older juveniles bright red or orange, with black spots. **Depth:** 5–46 m (18–150 ft). **Range:** Humboldt Bay CA to Oaxaca, southern Mexico, including Gulf of California. **Common from southern CA to Baja CA and into Gulf of California.**

⊘ **May not be taken off California (T14 CCR §28.10). Pursuant to T14 Section 712.5, giant sea bass legally taken in Mexico may only be brought into California if a Declaration of Importation of Dead Fish and Wildlife Form (DFW 901) has been submitted and is in possession:**

<https://wildlife.ca.gov/Enforcement/Entry-Declaration>



dark spots along body

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TL=End of nose to tip of tail



6-36"
1-14 years



2-6"
1.5-6 months

Juveniles

GULF GROUPE

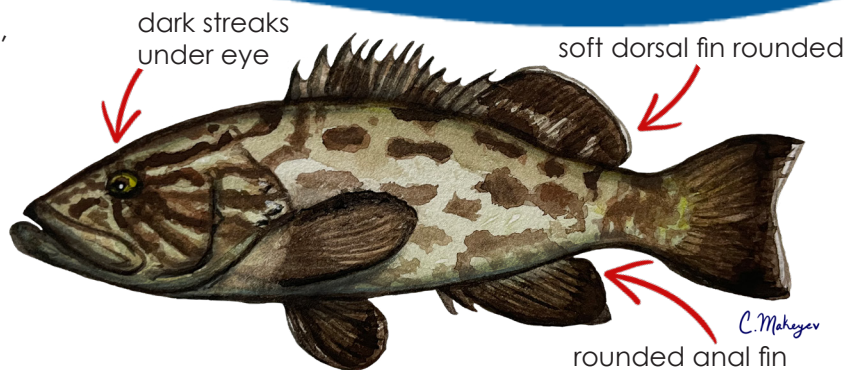
Mycteroperca jordani

Max TL: 198 cm (78 in) Brown or gray-brown, often with dark blotches on body and dark streaks under eye; margin of some fins may be white. **Depth:** 2–50 m (5–164 ft).

Range: La Jolla, CA to Mazatlán, Mexico, including Gulf of California.

Common off southern Baja and into tropics.

⊘ **May not be taken, possessed or imported (T14 CCR §28.12)**



dark streaks under eye

soft dorsal fin rounded

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rounded anal fin

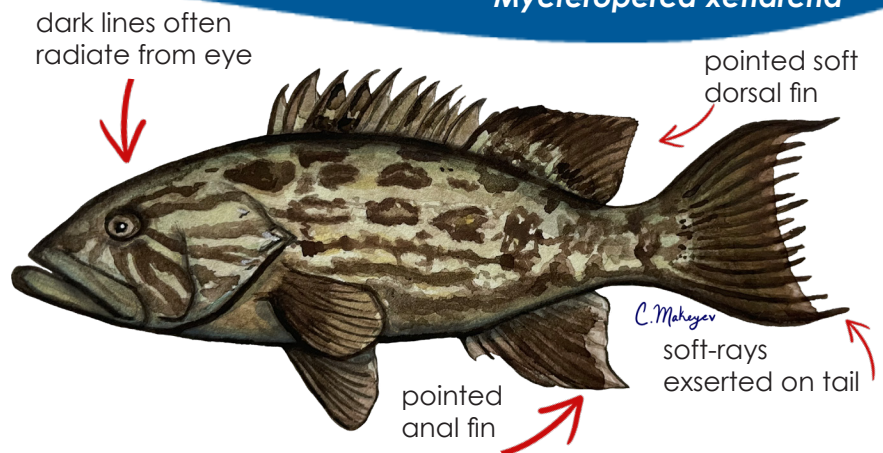
BROOMTAIL GROUPE

Mycteroperca xenarcha

Max TL: 150 cm (59 in). Brown, gray, or greenish, often with dark brown or gray-green vermiculations or blotches; often dark lines radiating from eye.

Juveniles with dark saddle on top of caudal peduncle. **Depth:** intertidal - 70 m (230 ft). **Range:** San Francisco, CA to Callao, Peru, including Gulf of California and Islas Galápagos. **Common off southern Baja and into tropics.**

⊘ **May not be taken, possessed or imported (T14 CCR §28.12)**



dark lines often radiate from eye

pointed soft dorsal fin

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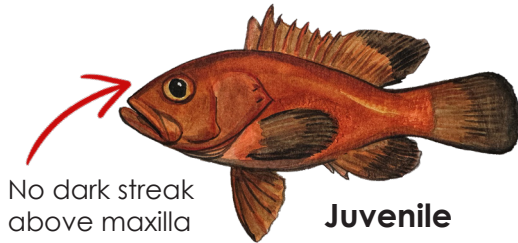
soft-rays exerted on tail

pointed anal fin

GULF CONEY

Hyporthodus acanthistius

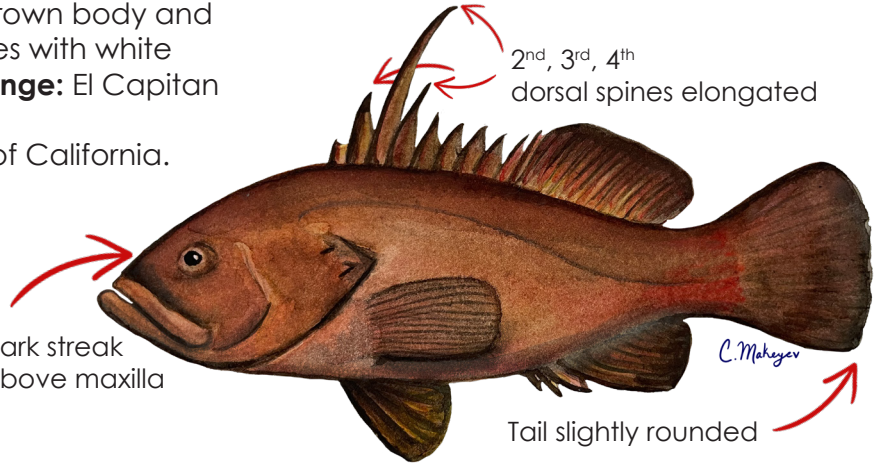
Also known as rooster hind, rose coney
Max TL: 130 cm (51 in) Red, rosy-red or brown body and fins (fins sometimes dark); body sometimes with white blotches. **Depth:** 12–256 m (40–840 ft). **Range:** El Capitan (north of Santa Barbara), southern CA to Isla Lobos de Tierra, Peru, including Gulf of California. Rare in Southern CA. **Common in tropics.**



No dark streak above maxilla

Juvenile

dark streak above maxilla



2nd, 3rd, 4th dorsal spines elongated

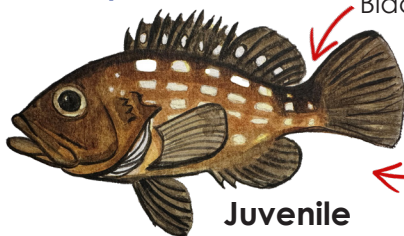
Tail slightly rounded

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STAR-STUDED GROUPE

Hyporthodus niphobles

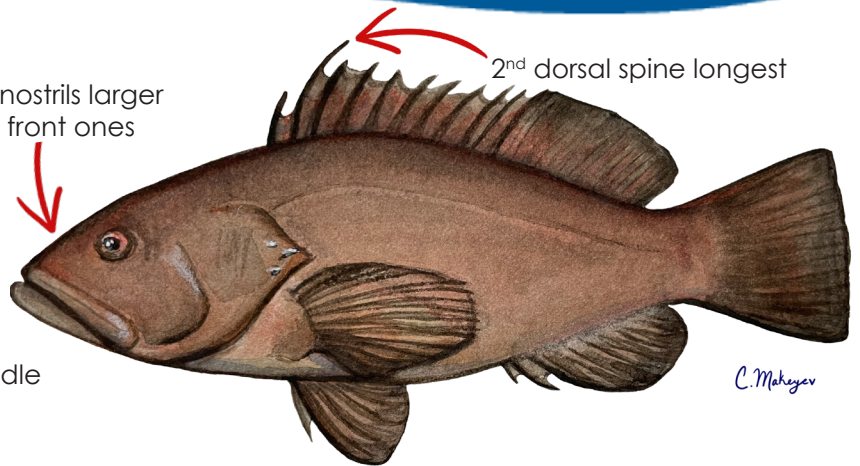
Formerly snowy grouper
Max TL: 121 cm (47.6 in) Reddish-brown sometimes with white spotting that may fade after death. Juveniles with white spots in vertical series and horizontal rows. **Depth:** 1–450 m (3–1,476 ft). **Range:** Central CA to Islas Lobos de Afuera, Peru, including Gulf of California and Islas Galápagos. **Common in tropics.**



Juvenile

Black saddle

rear nostrils larger than front ones



2nd dorsal spine longest

white spots in grid-like pattern of vertical series and horizontal rows on body and dorsal fin.

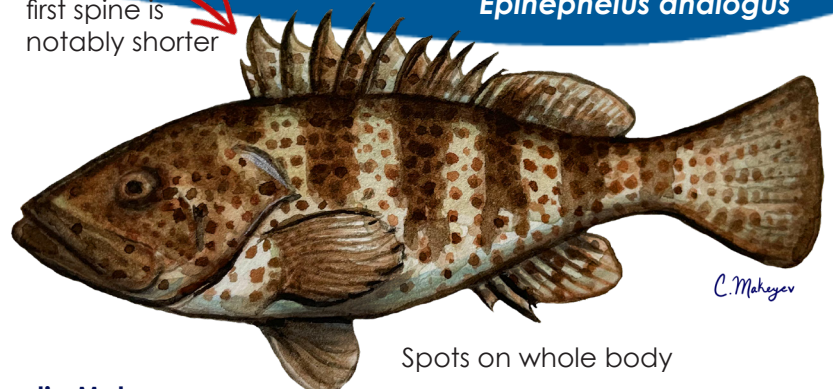
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SPOTTED CABRILLA

Epinephelus analogus

Max TL: 114 cm (44.9 in). Reddish-brown or gray-brown with dark brown spots over body. **Depth:** 1 - 107 m (3-353 ft). **Range:** San Pedro, CA to Pucusana, Peru, including Gulf of California and Islas Galápagos. **Historically common south of southern Baja California.**

first spine is notably shorter



Spots on whole body

C. Makeyev

Illustrations by CDFW Environmental Scientist Claudia Makeyev v2025