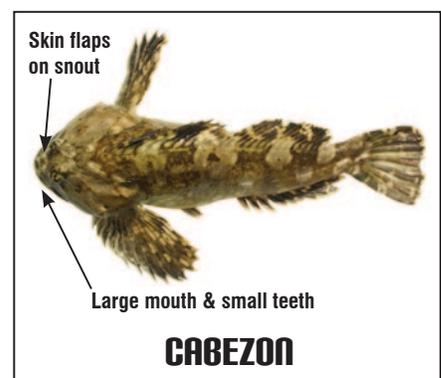
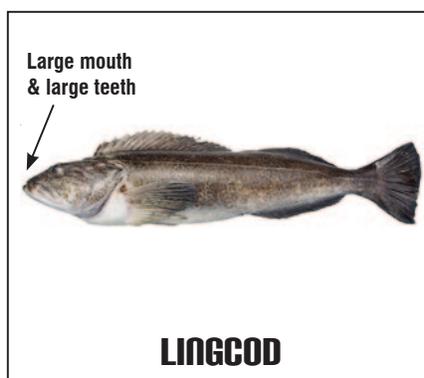
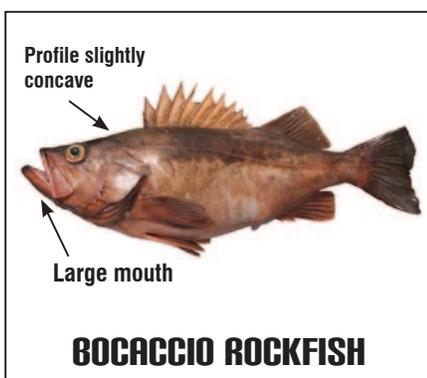
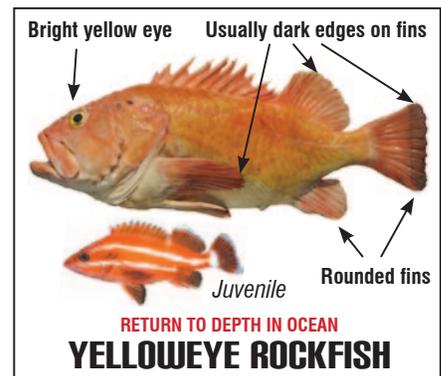
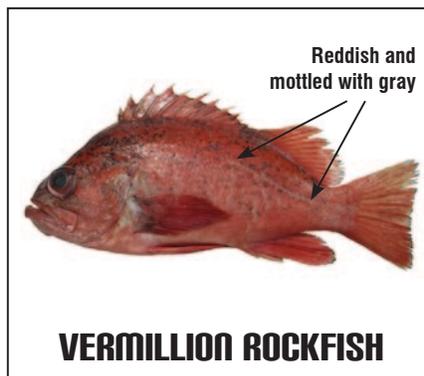
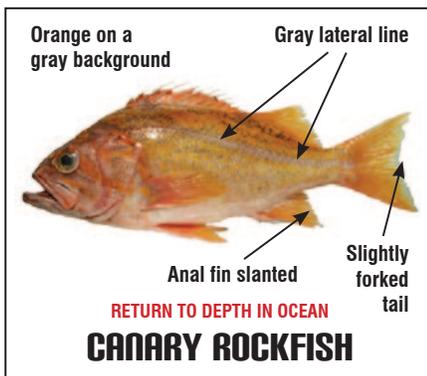
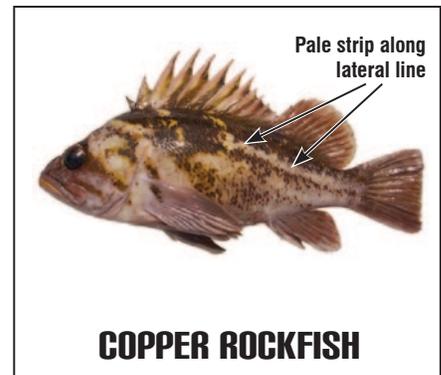
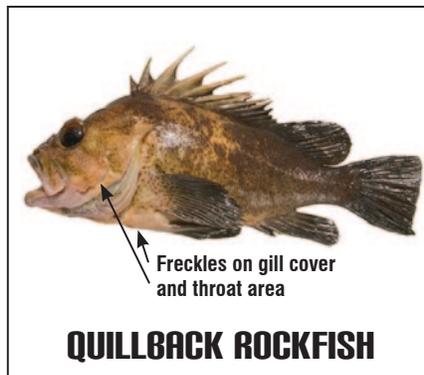
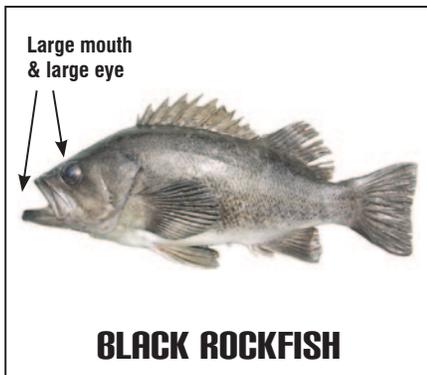


# SAVE OUR FISHERIES

Misidentifying species of Rockfish threatens to close our fisheries. Learn to identify these species.



**All Rockfish in Puget Sound must be returned to depth except Lingcod and Cabezon during open season.**

Photos provided by Steve Axtell,  
Washington Department of Fish & Wildlife



# SAVE OUR ROCKFISH - SAVE OUR FISHERIES

## FISH CAN SURVIVE BAROTRAUMA

Amazingly, rockfish that look dead at the surface can “pop” back to life if quickly returned to a native depth range. Because of this, rockfish that you must, or want to, toss back should be quickly recompressed.



*Even fish with bulging eyes and protruding stomach can survive if returned to depth quickly. Note: the organ protruding from the fish's mouth is the stomach, not the swim bladder.*

## TOP FIVE REASONS TO SEND'EM DOWN

Why should you care about helping a released fish return to depth?

1. Floating fish are a waste of the resource.
2. Some populations of prohibited species, such as canary and yelloweye rockfish, may take decades to rebuild.
3. High-grading is illegal and selects for smaller fish in the gene pool.
4. Venting fish may cause more harm than good.
5. Re-descending fish can increase their chances of survival.

Catch-and-release practices work best when you can help with fish survival. Helping fish get back down is good for the resource and the sport.

There are many methods to descend a rockfish. Puget Sound Anglers recommends the Shelton Fish Descender or SFD. The SFD is effective and inexpensive. It allows you to continue fishing immediately after releasing a descended rockfish when used inline. For more information visit [www.sheltonproducts.com/SFD.html](http://www.sheltonproducts.com/SFD.html)



**Shelton Fish Descender:** Hook fish through lower lip from inside to outside, to keep hook from puncturing an extruded stomach and to prevent line cuts to eyes. You can also hook a fish through the membrane on its upper lip from outside to inside, which some say makes for easier release. In both cases, the weight must lead the fish into the water and be heavy enough to sink it to the desired depth. Fish is released with a sharp jerk on the line. Once a fish reaches a depth at which it regains muscle coordination, it may wrestle free prematurely.

### Problems:

- Misidentified Yelloweye and Canary rockfish reporting and inaccurate reporting in general can and have shutdown our coastal fishery. Misreporting can also reduce our fishing seasons the following year.
- Not reporting or under reporting will show weak stocks and could affect our seasons as well. Please report accurately when asked by any WDFW representative!

### Solutions:

- Keep this rockfish identification sheet on your boat to accurately identify the rockfish.
- Use the Shelton Fish Descender tied to your mainline to send the rockfish back down to depth **within 2 minutes**. (be careful not to puncture the rockfish stomach if protruding from mouth)
- Descended Rockfish can live and will save our resources while saving our fishing seasons!
- Report Accurately! Misidentifying Yelloweye and Canary Rockfish will shut down our fisheries!



**VENTING:** A sharp needle or steel cannula is used to puncture a fish's inflated swim bladder. The Department of Fish and Game does not encourage venting as it can cause serious injury to fish and angler. You may accidentally puncture the wrong organ and/or introduce infection. Even when done properly, venting damages a fish's swim bladder.