



Bottomfish

‘Bottomfish’ are fishes normally caught on or near the ocean floor: halibut, rockfish, and lingcod.

HALIBUT—the most popular bottomfish in area salt waters because of its size and flavor. Pacific halibut is a toothy flatfish resembling a flounder, but it grows much larger—adult halibut over 300 pounds have been caught locally. Halibut live more than 20 years and are usually

harvested in area sport fisheries at 15 to 100 pounds (40 pounds average). Their preferred habitat is along fairly flat sand, rock, or mud bottoms near abrupt dropoffs or rocky points of land.

Peak fishing is in July and August. Though normally caught on or near the ocean floor at depths below 80 feet, halibut are sometimes caught at shallower depths by anglers trolling or mooching for salmon.

Check regulation book for halibut seasons!

Halibut will strike a number of offerings—whole or chunked herring, salmon heads or tails, octopus, squid, and chrome or lead-head jigs with various (optional) rubber tails or skirts.

Heavy, conventional tackle is recommended. Use caution when landing and handling halibut—some anglers prefer to dispatch a large halibut with a hand-gun before boating it. Others prefer a gaff, shark hook or harpoon, attached to a strong rope and float.

ROCKFISH—light-fleshed fish with a distinctive, appealing flavor. Rockfish weigh between 1 and 6 pounds (2 pounds average). Several species are harvested in area marine waters. Yelloweye (red snapper), the largest of the rockfishes, reach weights of 30 pounds, but average about 6 pounds. Rockfish are long-lived—30 to 100 years, depending on species.

Rockfish are often caught incidentally by anglers fishing for salmon or halibut. They are available year-round, but the best sport fishing is in the warmer months.

Check regulations closely for differential rockfish bag limits that apply in the Ketchikan management area!

Local rockfish species can be caught with herring or various jigs, spoons, or flies, anywhere from near-surface to bottom.

If you are planning to release the rockfish you catch, reel it up slowly to the surface, to avoid rupturing its swim bladder.