

California Collaborative Fisheries Research Program

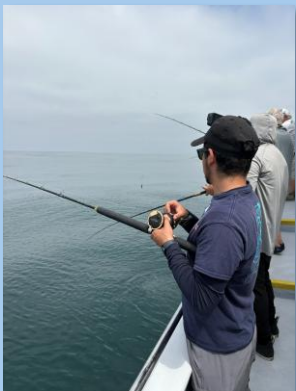
Scripps Institution of Oceanography Volunteer Newsletter

A Summary of the 2025 Sampling Season



CCFRP Volunteers,

With your support, we successfully completed our ninth season of CCFRP sampling in San Diego! We cannot thank you enough for your continued participation and enthusiasm for this program. This season was particularly exciting because we were able to again invite members of the local fishing community on our trips! We were able to complete all 12 sampling trips this year, where we conducted standardized hook-and-line surveys inside MPAs and throughout nearby reference sites off San Diego County. Over the course of the summer, we were joined by 90 volunteer anglers who spend 513 hours catching and releasing fish as part of our surveys. Our anglers caught a total of 1311 fish (698 of these were tagged) representing 36 different species. We'd like to share some highlights from this past season and keep you up to date on all things CCFRP!



Know someone interested in fishing with us in 2026?

Sign up at <https://www.ccfpr.org/volunteer-angler-sign-up> to volunteer!



Meet the Crew!

Jack Elstner

Lead Field Scientist



Jack is a PhD student at the Scripps Institution of Oceanography, and the outgoing lead tech for the San Diego sector of CCFRP. Originally from Maryland's Chesapeake Bay, Jack is interested in the conservation and management of critical fisheries habitats in a changing ocean. Using CCFRP data, he is working to develop novel methods of MPA assessment that allow for improved education and adaptive management of California marine reserves. Through his science, Jack is also committed to fostering relationships and building trust among fisheries scientists, marine resource managers, and local fishing communities.

Zach is a PhD student at the Scripps Institution of Oceanography, and the incoming lead tech for the San Diego sector of CCFRP. Zach joins us from the California State University Long Beach's Shark Lab, where he conducted research on great white shark predator-prey dynamics. He is interested in how elements of the fish community interact with each other and their physical environment. Zach is working with CCFRP data to understand how habitat interacts with MPA status to shape the fish community. Through CCFRP and an upcoming public project with leopard sharks, Zach is committed to community involvement in local science in San Diego.

Zach Merson

Lead Field Scientist



Jack & Zach: double the scientists, double the fun

Meet the Crew!

Jakob Tallman

Field Technician



Jakob is one of the undergraduate research field technicians and is currently a fourth year Marine Biology student. He just finished his second year with CCFRP and enjoyed taking data, tagging fish, and assisting the anglers with their caught fish. Jakob enjoys spending time near the water, whether that is fishing, exploring, or helping with the CCFRP project. His favorite memory this past summer was when an angler landed a shortfin mako shark!



More field crew coming soon!

Biggest Fishes Caught in 2025

Below are the top 9 largest fish caught last season.

Total lengths are listed along with angler, gear type, area, and site (MPA/REF).

Shortfin Mako – 84.5 cm (33.3 in)

James Heiser, South La Jolla REF

Shrimp Fly

California Sheephead – 57.0 cm (22.4 in)

Michael Mikitka, South La Jolla MPA

Dropper Loop

Barred Sand Bass – 56.7 cm (22.3 in)

Alfonso Navarrete, Swami's REF

Swimbait

California Sheephead – 55.1 cm (21.7 in)

David Blackston, South La Jolla MPA

Dropper Loop

California Sheephead – 50.6 cm (19.9 in)

Trevan Nguyen, Swami's MPA

Dropper Loop

White Sea Bass – 49.5 cm (19.5 in)

Ron Wilson, Swami's MPA

Swimbait

Kelp Bass – 49.1 cm (19.3 in)

Victor Lawton, Swami's MPA

Swimbait

Vermillion Rockfish – 48.7 cm (19.2 in)

Max Titcomb, South La Jolla MPA

Shrimp Fly

Kelp Bass – 47.7 cm (18.8 in)

Ron Matsuno, Swami's MPA

Swimbait



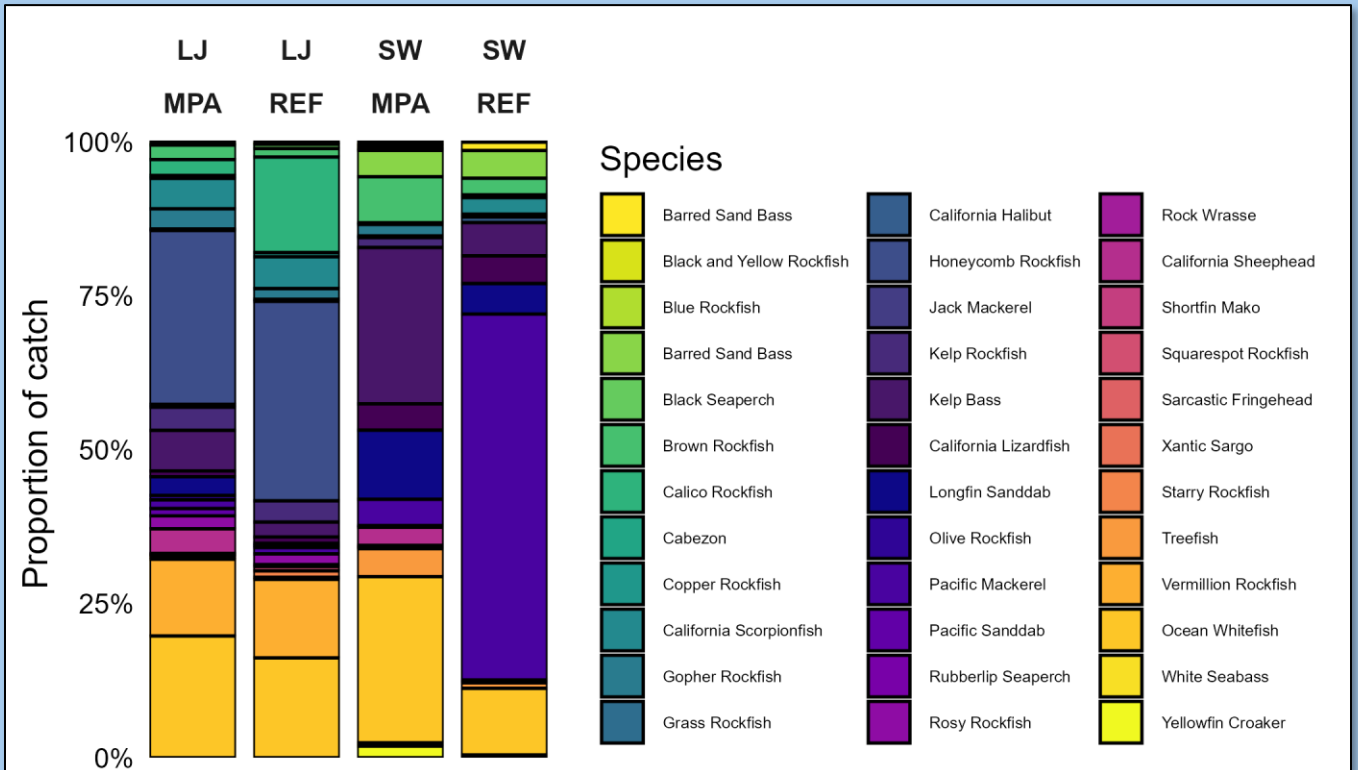
2025 Data Summary

Area	# Species	2025 CPUE	Most Frequently Caught Species
South La Jolla MPA	23	3.38	Honeycomb Rockfish, Ocean Whitefish, Vermillion Rockfish,
South La Jolla REF	22	2.35	Calico Rockfish, California Scorpionfish
Swami's MPA	21	2.83	Pacific Mackerel, Ocean Whitefish, Kelp Bass, Longfin Sanddab,
Swami's REF	15	1.69	Sanddab, Brown Rockfish

CPUE: Catch-per-unit-effort, a method of standardizing catches between varying numbers of anglers and time spent fish. We take the total catch and divide it by the number of anglers times hours fished.



CPUE:



Breakdown of catch by species across sites and MPA/REF status

Species Spotlight: Shortfin Mako

This summer we had a CCFRP first – a shortfin mako shark hooked by angler James Heiser! Here are some facts about this feisty fish:

The shortfin mako shark (*Isurus oxyrinchus*) is the fastest species of shark, reaching up to 46 mph in short bursts. Shortfin makos can reach nearly 15 ft long and weigh over 1300 lbs. The world record for heaviest shortfin mako was set right here in California, with a 1323 lb shark landed off Huntington Beach in 2013. San Diego is known for its number of young makos, which make for a great fly-fishing experience. Mako sharks are listed as endangered but have a fairly high likelihood of survival (~88%) if released alive.

Shortfin makos can be found worldwide, and eat a variety of offshore fish such as herring, mackerel, tuna, and billfishes. Makos also eat other sharks and marine mammals on occasion. Although often considered dangerous, in part due to their starring role in the 1999 film *Deep Blue Sea*, mako bites are quite rare, with only 10 recorded bites on humans from 1980 – 2024. While we don't target mako sharks as part of CCFRP, this catch reminds us there are a lot of fish out there! This shark was handled properly and safely returned to the ocean.



This juvenile male mako washed ashore in Palos Verdes, CA in 2024. Here, scientists collect measurements and samples to better understand the species.



Did you know?

Sharks have no bones! Their skeleton is made up of calcified cartilage, giving them superior flexibility and reducing their weight. Cartilage doesn't fossilize like bones, so most of what we know about ancient sharks comes from just their teeth and dermal denticles (tooth-like scales)!

Tag Returns

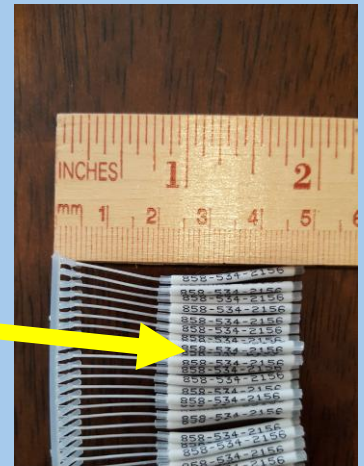
This past summer we had a whopping 20 tag returns. Tag returns are an exciting part of our program that helps us learn about movement and growth rates of the fish we catch and release.

Species	Total	Max Days at Liberty	Max Distance (mi)
Ocean Whitefish	5	880	0.81
Brown Rockfish	4	2536	0.06
Kelp Bass	2	686	0.04
Kelp Rockfish	2	1106	1.84
Barred Sand Bass	1	Found in sea lion stomach!	
California Scorpionfish	1	336	-
Vermillion Rockfish	1	46	0.03
Copper Rockfish	1	146	1.26
Gopher Rockfish	1	688	0.01
Honeycomb Rockfish	1	348	0.02
Treefish	1	687	0.01



Tag after two years, some algal growth

Clean tags with phone number



What to do if you catch a tagged fish:

- Record the **Tag ID number** and **location** (length & depth if possible)
- Call 858-534-2156 and leave us a detailed message
- Let us know if you kept or released the fish (with or without tag)
- We now have CCFRP hats as a **reward** for tag return data!

2026 Angler Appreciation Workshop

Tuesday, May 12th, 2026
6:00pm

Join us at the Martin Johnson house on Scripps campus (8840 Biological Grade, La Jolla, CA 92037) for good food, exciting updates, and the chance to sign up early for this year's trips!



RSVP Here: <https://forms.gle/DJygnNdSVt5yJ6546>

2026 CCFRP Schedule

Wednesday, **June 17th** (Oceanside Sea Center, Oceanside Harbor)

Thursday, **June 18th** (Oceanside Sea Center, Oceanside Harbor)

Thursday, **July 2nd** (Oceanside Sea Center, Oceanside Harbor)

Friday, **July 3rd** (Oceanside Sea Center, Oceanside Harbor)

Wednesday, **July 22nd** (Seaforth Sportfishing, Mission Bay)

Thursday, **July 23rd** (Seaforth Sportfishing, Mission Bay)

Wednesday, **July 29th** (Seaforth Sportfishing, Mission Bay)

Tuesday, **August 4th** (Oceanside Sea Center, Oceanside Harbor)

Wednesday, **August 5th** (Oceanside Sea Center, Oceanside Harbor)

Wednesday, **August 12th** (Seaforth Sportfishing, Mission Bay)

Friday, **August 14th** (Seaforth Sportfishing, Mission Bay)

Wednesday, **August 19th** (Seaforth Sportfishing, Mission Bay)

We extend our gratitude to Captain Joe Cacciola of the Sea Star and Captain Paul Fischer of the Outer Limits for their continued support of CCFRP.

Starting thinking about what trips you would like to sign up for and keep a lookout for emails from catchreporter@gmail.com for sign-ups!

