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Introduction

- Many rockfish species are morphologically similar during the juvenile stage.
- The juvenile stage of some rockfish species has never been observed.
- Little is known about the distribution of juvenile rockfish in the Gulf of Alaska.
- Juvenile rockfish were incidentally caught during the Auke Bay Laboratory’s Ocean Carrying Capacity juvenile salmon research surveys.

Approach

- A subset of 55 fish collected across the northern Gulf of Alaska between 1998–2002 were identified to species.
- Morphologic and genetic characters were used to identify species.

Species Identification

- Morphologic:
  - pigmentation
  - body shape
  - head spine patterns
  - meristics of fins & vertebrae
- Genetic:
  - mtDNA restriction enzyme fragments based on patterns of known species

Results

- Both genetic and morphological characters were necessary to ID species.
- Seven \textit{Sebastes} rockfish species were identified (see above).
- The majority of the fish were Pacific ocean perch (\textit{S. alutus}).

Ongoing Research

- Complete species identification of \textasciitilde1000 young-of-the-year rockfish.
- Describe spatial and temporal distribution in the Gulf of Alaska.
- Examine population genetic structure of Pacific ocean perch juveniles.

References

- Li, Z, et al. in press. A key to selected rockfishes (\textit{Sebastes} spp) based on mitochondrial DNA restriction fragment analysis.