

First Occurrence of Blackspot Wrasse, *Decodon melasma* Gomon 1974 (Pisces: Labridae) in California

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ABSTRACT

Wrasses (family Labridae) are epibenthic, demersal, and water-column fishes found in coastal warm-temperature and tropical waters, usually near rocky and coral reefs of the Atlantic, Indian, and Pacific Oceans. Although this is the second largest family of marine fishes (Nelson 1994), only three species have been reported from California: rock wrasse, *Halichoeres semicinctus*; senorita, *Oxyjulis californica*; and California sheephead, *Semicossyphus pulcher* (Hubbs *et al.* 1979; Eschmeyer *et al.* 1983). This paper reports the first occurrences of a fourth species of wrasse in California.

Following the 1997-1998 El Nino, three specimens of a small labrid were collected in the Southern California Bight (SCB) by 7.6-m wide (headrope) wemiballoon otter trawls with 1.2-cm cod-end mesh. The first specimen, 51 mm standard length (SL), was collected on 2 June 1998 off Dana Point, California (latitude 33°27.80' and longitude 117°44.85' W) at a depth of 60 m. The second specimen (also 51 mm SL) was collected on 25 June, 1998 at a depth of 60 m off Laguna Beach, California (latitude 33°30.07' N and longitude 117°49.40' W). These fish were collected during a cooperative trawl survey between the Ocean Institute (Orange County Marine Institute at the time) and the Southern California Coastal Water Research Project (SCCWRP). Both specimens were identified at that time by M.N. Allen as the blackspot wrasse, *Decodon melasma* Gomon 1974. A third specimen (57 mm SL) was collected on 26, April, 1999 off San Diego, California (latitude 32°37.54' N and longitude 117°19.37' W) at a depth of 100 m. It was captured at one of the City of San Diego, Metropolitan Wastewater Department, Environmental Monitoring and Technical Services' long-term, fixed location trawl monitoring stations. City of San Diego marine biologists brought this specimen to the attention of R. H. Rosenblatt (Scripps Institution of Oceanography; SIO), who identified it as *Decodon melasma*. All three specimens have been catalogued in the SIO Marine Vertebrates Collection: SIO 99-100 (San Diego); SIO 00-77 (Dana Point); and SIO 00-78 (Laguna Beach).

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