

Creature of the Month



California Sheephead

Where they live: In Shallow Rocky Environments and Kelp Beds- Near Mexico and Southern California- from shallow water to 180 feet deep

What they eat: Crabs, mussels, snails, squid, sea cucumbers, sea urchins, abalone and sand dollars.

How they eat shelled animals:

Sheephead have dog-like teeth that are used to pry food from rocks. They also have tooth-like plates in the rear of the mouth that are used to crush shells as well as very powerful jaws.

What they look like:

The body of the sheephead is plump and elongated. Females are a pinkish, while the males develop distinct coloration: the head is black, the middle is pinkish and the rear 1/3 of the body is also black. Both male and female have large canine-like teeth and white chins.

Interesting facts:

This species begins life as a "protogynous hermaphrodite", which means that they all start life as a female, but some become a male later in life. Usually, one male will live with several females; however, if something happens to the male one of the females can become male.

An 8 inch fish is about 4 years in age. The transformation to males can begin when they reach 12 inches in length, about 5-7 years in age.

Largest recorded size: 36 inches, 36 lbs.