

Dory fishing off Pacific City yields unusual species



LUKE OVGARD
CAUGHT OVGARD



Luke Ovgard/Contributed Photo

Luke Ovgard shows a copper rockfish he caught off Pacific City.

PACIFIC CITY— The coffee lost identity in my nostrils amidst the pungent miasma of ocean scents. All kingdoms were represented in the damp air: animal, vegetable and mineral. Gasoline fumes punctuated the otherwise natural scentscape as my friend Dom Porcelli and I met up with our captain, Josh Putman, in the wan light of almost daybreak.

We loaded our gear into a wooden boat painted a cherry red — presumably just for the aesthetic value and high visibility. The vessel was saddled with two large outboards and sat resting its haunches on a trailer in the public parking lot rather than idling at a slip in the harbor like most charter boats on the Oregon Coast. It was the first signal of the unique fishery we'd stepped into.

As gray light began brushing the black sky into a textured gray watercolor, we towed the boat down to the sandy beach. As we descended the small dunes framing Pacific City Beach and the coastline unfolded before us, we saw half a dozen other trucks and SUVs parked on the sand with empty trailers behind them.

Captain Josh backed his trailer into the pounding surf and a man in waders untied the boat and began pulling. He slid it off the struts and turned the bow out to the open ocean.

Once chest-deep in the roiling waves, the captain boarded with impressive spryness, took command of his ship and fired up the engines. We braced and charged into the surf.

Normally, Captain Josh is booked year-round, but a last-minute cancellation enabled Dom to get a trip in, and he generously invited me along, presumably for my razor-sharp wit and local knowledge.

Dom is on track to become the fourth person in history to catch 1,000 species of fish on hook and line, which should happen in the next month or two if all goes as planned.

The two of us had done quite well the days before, fishing area jetties, tide pools, rivers and streams from Corvallis to Barview, but

he was hoping to find two fish on that dory: cabezon and China rockfish. I'd put him on some small cabezon the night before in the sea lettuce beds of my favorite intertidal zone, but the appeal of the world's largest sculpin is lost with hand-sized fish, and we both knew that.

Due to a lack of traditional boat ramp or harbor, relative isolation, small population size, marine protected areas to the north and south and distance from Highway 101, the Pacific City fishery is one of the healthiest bottom fisheries not only in Oregon but in the world.

As a result, you can fish shallower than you would anywhere else from Astoria to Brookings and still catch fish, but if you fish deeper, each angler will catch a party boat's worth of large fish. Another advantage of the deeper, colder water is a reduced parasite load and firmer meat in the fish you'll catch, so they taste better, too.

I quickly traded my medium spinning-jigging setup for the even lighter rods on the boat, and it paid dividends.

We plowed through large black, blue, canary, copper, deacon, quillback and yellow-

tail rockfish fishing 3- to 5-inch swimbaits on remarkably light half- and one-ounce jigheads. It felt like cheating, fishing with such light gear, but you could feel every take, the fight was superior. I managed my largest-ever yellowtail and copper rockfish — both topping 5 pounds. Dom caught some huge black rockfish. We added a few lingcod, Dom got his larger cabezon, and I even caught a new species when we drifted over a deeper reef: a yelloweye rockfish.

Like many deepwater fish, rockfish have what is called a swim bladder. The large fleshy sac inflates or deflates accordingly to help a fish's body deal with varying pressures at depth. When a fish is brought up rapidly, the sac inflates and prevents the fish from swimming down.

Oregon angling regulations require the use of a descending device for fish with barotrauma, which the protected yelloweye had. While Captain Josh dug his out and prepared it, Dom snapped a few quick pictures of me and the vibrant orange fish with those striking namesake yellow eyes.

MORE INFORMATION

This was a typical day for Pacific City's dory fleet, which has operated in much the same way for more than 120 years just south of Cape Kiwanda. The flat-bottomed sturdy wooden boats are known for their safety and stability, according to the Tillamook County Department of Tourism.

Of all ports on the Oregon coast, Pacific City was the only one of any size I'd never visited. It's tucked out of the way and removed from Highway 101 just enough that you have to be intentional about visiting, but you won't regret it. Windswept dunes, salt marshes, pine flats and rugged mountains will keep you busy when you're not fishing.

There are numerous boats operating out of Pacific City. Captain Josh is usually booked solid, but you can try your luck by calling 503-708-1141. Otherwise, just Google "Pacific City dory fishing," and I guarantee you'll find dory.

When we called it a day, we surfed the waves in. Captain Josh planted us squarely on top of a big wave, killed and raised his outboards in a fluid motion, and let the momentum of the surf plant us on the beach. Though I had nothing to do with it, I felt proud by association.

We unloaded our gear and chased other quarry while the captain cleaned our catch. Dom was living in a motel and planned to return to Florida in two days' time, so he graciously added his catch to my own, giving me a solid portion of clean white fillets to take home.

Dom finished his trip to Oregon with more than 15 new species, including those he found on the dory.

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Alex Wittwer/The Observer, File

Eastern Oregon quarterback Kai Quinn drops back to pass during the Mountaineers' 24-7 loss to the College of Idaho on Sept. 25, 2021. EOU is coming off a bye week and after losing three games in a row looks to end that streak Saturday, Oct. 23, when it plays in Montana against winless MSU-Northern.

EOU:

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Offensively the Mountaineers have not scored 20 or more points in a game since a Week 2 victory over Montana Western by a score of 35-28. Eastern managed 17 points in the first half against Rocky Mountain, but six turnovers from quarterback Kai Quinn proved detrimental.

"We did it to ourselves, making mistakes that we need to clean up," Camp said. "It's up to us to make plays."

The Mountaineers will look to take advantage of a MSU-Northern defense that is allowing just under 35 points per contest this year.

The Lights are coming off a 42-14 loss to the College of Idaho, which dropped them to 0-6 in conference play. Even so, Camp and the Mountaineers are not overlooking the team's upcoming opponent simply based on record.

"They have guys that can make plays. I think it will be a great Frontier Conference matchup," he said. "They're hungry for a win and so are we."

Eastern's defense has played admirably as a whole this year, but had difficulty slowing down Rocky Mountain quarterback Nathan Dick in the team's most recent loss. Dick threw for four touchdowns and 224 yards and ran for an additional 123 yards on the way to a 34-17 rout.

While Quinn did what he could to spur the Eastern offense, risks taken in the pocket resulted in turnovers that killed momentum throughout the loss. However, he accumulated 201 yards passing and 82 yards on the ground.

If the redshirt-senior can limit mistakes, his production will be key to turning things around for the Mountaineers' offense.

Eastern has won its last seven head-to-head matchups with the Lights, holding a 7-5 record in road games between the two schools. Having won nine out of the last 10 matchups, the Mountaineers will be hoping for similar results to end the team's losing streak.

Visit our Online Open House!

Help support bicycle and pedestrian projects in eastern Oregon

ODOT developed a list of possible bicycle and pedestrian projects that supports improving safe and equitable access to active and public transportation. Six projects are located in the eastern Oregon communities of Hermiston, Pendleton, Milton-Freewater, La Grande, Ontario and Vale. These projects will compete for new funding dedicated to addressing critical gaps for walking and biking on the state system.

To review project information and give us your feedback please visit our [online open house](https://odotopenhouse.org/pedestrian-and-bicycle-strategic) before October 31 at <https://odotopenhouse.org/pedestrian-and-bicycle-strategic>. Don't forget to take the survey and leave your comments, which will help the state prioritize which projects receive funding. Funds are limited, so please show your support for projects in your area.

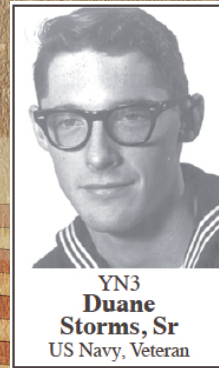
Our goal is to create a multimodal transportation system that is safe and equitable for everyone and your input will help us get there. Visit our [Pedestrian Bicycle Strategic Funding Program website](#) to learn more.

Use your smart phone to access the online open house through this QR code, or go to odotopenhouse.org and search for the pedestrian and bicycle link.



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