

## Vermilion (Red Snapper) Deep Water & Night fishing.

There is a general feeling among ocean sport fisherman that most fish are inactive or sleep at night, that's probably true of many species however based upon observations, fishing and simple logic I believe that our fat tasty red fish friends around the Banda Bank feed during the evening hours. Dr. Love (#1 rockfish guy) is not sure one way or the other thus this presents an interesting area to investigate, maybe add a bit to the data bank and potentially (if you're a night person) some very good fishing.

Rockfish forage close to the bottom over rocks, along drop-offs and over reefs; they feed mostly upon small creatures such as anchovies, lanternfishes, small rockfishes, octopi, squid's and krill. We know that they forage around and between local reefs and other known feeding grounds within a radius of maybe 5 miles. Typically they range from near surface waters to about 1450 feet however good fishing for the large vermilion we are seeking are commonly found in the 200 to 500 foot range.

The known fact that red snapper feed upon lanternfish is a clue suggesting that they may feed at night. Lanternfishes are small luminous deep ocean creatures, during daylight hours they range between 1000 and 3600 feet. During evening hours they, and several other glowing species such as the luminous little h.squid migrate upward ranging between 300 feet and the surface to forage in nutritionally rich ocean upwelling's. This suggests that during daylight hours lanternfish would not be a common food source however during the late night hours lanternfishes may populate the vermillions common upper foraging range, possibly becoming a principal and nutritious food source available during that time period.

Red Snappers are very good eating with lots of meat per inch of length. Experience with Banda Bank red fish clearly indicates that vermilion will have almost a third more good edible meat and far fewer parasites per size than salmon groupers caught in the same water column often on the same ganion. Common logic suggests that to gain that quality and quantity of prime edible flesh would require a lot of protein intake, maybe more than is available in the competitive daylight hours foraging among the rocks. Foraging some distance between feeding zones also suggests that no one location can provide sufficient fare for 24/7 occupancy.

Given all that one would have to assume that if Mother Nature and evolution are doing their thing as advertised vermilion would have adapted/evolved to make use of the abundant source of protein available to them and at the time of peak abundance, the late night hours. And not to forget that their predators are less active at night. Dr. Love says "Rockfishes are Cool", they are not called "rock" fish for nothing, I do not see how a cool "rock" fish can just ignore or sleep thru a free midnight psychedelic light show and an all you can eat buffet.

What follows is a pretty good article on tackle and rock fishing, unfortunately source is unknown:

**"Tackle:** I tie all my own ganions. In the past, I've used an 8-foot long, 7-hook ganion. Under the new regulations I've opted for a 6 1/2-foot ganion with a 125 pound main line, barrel swivels placed between beads and crimp sleeves spaced 18 inches apart with a 10/0 circle hook tied exactly 6 inches from the opposite end of the swivels on the main line using 100 pound mono. To finish things off, I attach a barrel swivel at each end of the main line with a crimp sleeve.

Your ganions are the business end of things and it's important that they be tied correctly. If the connection from the hook to the main line is too long or if you use a lighter mono, you'll spend the day untangling your rig after each drop. If you use a cheap store bought ganion without swivels on the mainline, you'll spin off a lot of fish on the way up and/or twist your rig till it's no longer useable.

Over the years, my friends and I have experimented with a lot of different set-ups and that includes sinkers. We've painted them orange thinking they might look like another rockfish and attract the real thing, but color doesn't seem to matter. We've even made sinkers out of scrap rebar that we've picked up at construction sites. A 16-inch piece of 1 ½ inch diameter rebar weighs about 5 pounds, and while color doesn't make much of a difference, the paint cuts down on rust stains. The rebar does however, make a sharper sound banging against the rocks than a lead sinker and will get you more fish.

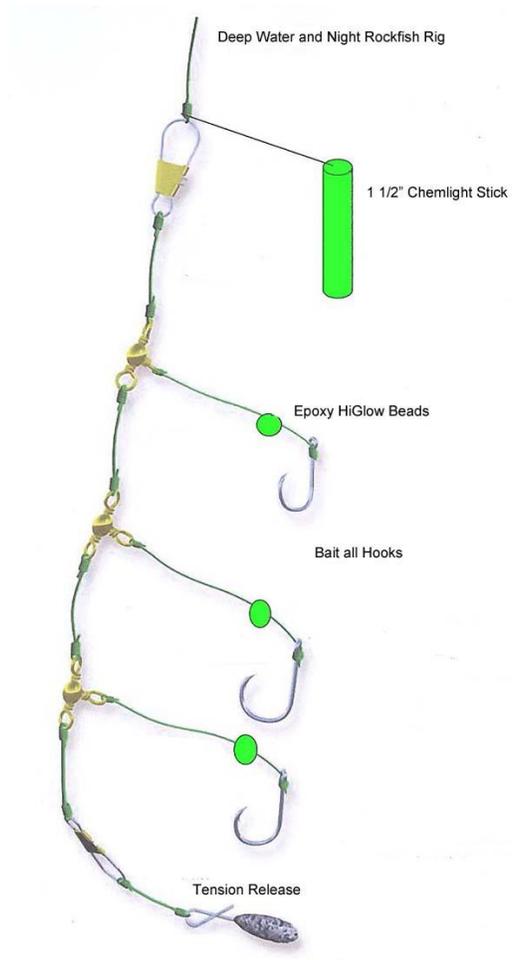
Whatever type of sinker you decide on, use a weight that gets you to the bottom with a minimum amount of scope in your line. No angles, no tangles! Tie it a foot below the bottom swivel using 40 or 50 pound mono and a not-so-good knot. In the event you get hung-up in the rocks, your line will break between the bottom swivel and sinker saving your ganion and any fish you've hooked!

**Bait:** As is the case with many of the fish off our coast, live squid is the bait of choice for rockfish. However, live squid are hard to come by and when you can find them, there's a price to pay. In lieu of live squid, frozen is your next best bet. Every year, when the squid are thick and market prices are low, I head to the State Fish Company at the commercial docks in San Pedro and pick up a couple of hundred pounds of frozen squid. You'll pay anywhere from \$.35 - \$.50 per pound for a 5 pound box which is a heck of a lot better than the \$2.00+ per pound the tackle shops and landings get. Belly strips are another good bet...particularly for lingcod!

**Dropping Down:** When you're on a tuna trip and there's a jig strike, the first guy in the water with live bait usually gets bit. It's no different here. When the skipper says drop 'em, the first guy down almost always gets the most fish! When you hit bottom, reel-up a foot or so, this will cut down on hang-ups. You walk a fine line here, in that you need to stay close to the bottom, but don't want to get stuck. I've also found that the fish like active baits, so jig your baits or tug on the line between the reel and first guide if you keep your rod in a rod holder.

**Spots:** The real skill in rockfishing is in the hunt and your boat handling. These fish won't come to you, so you need to drop right on 'em. This is easier said than done, particularly when you're fishing in 900 feet of water. You'll need a quality fish finder or sounder...and you need to know your instruments! When you come across a likely spot of fish, toss a paper plate over the port and starboard side. Make sure your anglers are ready to drop, and continue up current a couple of boat lengths depending upon depth. Judge the wind, current and swell, then position your boat so it drifts back between the plates. If there are fish, and they're on a chew, you'll get bit!" End of quote.

The following illustration is a generic multi-hook deep water day/night ganion dressed up with a mini green chemical light stick on top and a few super bright green glow beads. It should be baited (half of a market squid is best) but any chunk bait will work. When drifting over rocks the sinker will often snag, hopefully it will pull loose and you will not lose the entire rig and caught fish. The theory here is when the sinker hits a rock bottom the sound will alert fish in the area and they will notice the Chemlight stick, will swim over to investigate and quickly sense the hooked bait and bite. The first fish to bite will immediately panic and try get off the hook alerting all fish in the general area thinking a big meal is present, and soon all hooks are taken. This rig is a proven performer, if you do not catch anything within 5 or 10 minutes you are in the wrong area.





**Lingcod:** Lingcod are ancient bottom fish native to the Pacific West Coast. In Northern Baja/Southern California they are typically found around rocky bottoms and formations along ridges and ledges sharing the area with Red Snappers and other rock fish, depending upon the bottom structure they are usually found in waters ranging from 30 to 300 feet. Fish in these waters are usually 15 pounds or less with 8 to 10 pounders most common in contrast to Alaskan Lingcod that grow to 70 pounds.

A voracious feeder the diet of Lingcod varies but basically anything it can get into its mouth is OK. Small Lingcod have a diet that is mostly crabs, shrimp and mollusks as they grow it changes mostly to other fishes, squid and octopus. In Ensenada we fished a two square mile area close inshore area for many years, depth varied from about 40 to 100 feet, always came home with plenty of fish usually caught on simple Root Beer or Pearl White plastic gummy jigs. Drift fishing in a light to moderate wind about a mile back and forth over the rocky bottom and ridges is the only way to go but be prepared to lose a lot of lead sinkers caught up on the bottom. If your lazy and just anchor you will only catch the one or two fish that may be just below your boat.

When hooked the fish feels like a dead weight, often times when bringing a smaller ling or rock cod up you will feel extra weight, if this should happen retrieve slowly as you have likely picked up what is called a "hitchhiker", lingcod being aggressive and not having a swim bladder will attack a smaller hooked fish and hold on all the way to the surface where often you can net or gaff them. Note photo of Captain Ron with a big mouth 15 pound blue-green Ling that was netted hanging onto a smaller Ling all the way to the surface.

We maintained a fishing boat and residence in Ensenada for many years going down almost every weekend, we were there primarily for the albacore tuna but when we struck out on albacore (or between tuna seasons) we always went for the Ling's so as not to come home empty.

Medium tackle works well but I usually used my heavy tuna trolling rod with #40 line and two speed reel, made it very easy to reel them up (especially helpful when using a multi-hook ganion with two or three big red snappers on the hooks). When filleting lingcod do not be surprised by the color of the meat which can vary in color from white to green to blue, when cooked it will turn white.

This is a really ugly prehistoric fish, very big mouth with many sharp teeth, the fish is easy to fillet and the white meat is hard to beat, fresh or frozen it is excellent poached, pan fried or B-B-Q'd. We had more friends and family waiting our return with Ling's often preferred over albacore.



Admiral Manny – Captain Ron – Disablebody Seaman Timmy - 2002