1	The divergent effect of capture depth and associated barotrauma on post-recompression
2	survival of canary (Sebastes pinniger) and yelloweye rockfish (S. ruberrimus)
3	
4	Robert W. Hannah*, Polly S. Rankin, Matthew T.O. Blume
5	
6	Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife, Marine Resources Program, 2040 S.E. Marine
7	Science Drive, Newport, Oregon 97365
8	
9	* Corresponding author: bob.w.hannah@state.or.us, Tel.: 541 867-0300 ext. 231, Fax:
10	541 867-0311
11	Polly Rankin: Polly.S.Rankin@state.or.us
12	Matt Blume: <u>Matthew.Blume@state.or.us</u>
13	
14	Key words: discard mortality, barotrauma, Sebastes, caging systems, recompression

# Highlights

Postrecompression survival of two physoclists from deep capture depth was studied. At capture, the external signs of severe barotrauma were similar for both species. Survival (48 h) of the two rockfishes diverged sharply as capture depth increased. Yelloweye rockfish survival remained high while canary rockfish dropped to 25%.

#### 16 Abstract

17 We evaluated the external signs of barotrauma and 48-h post-recompression survival for 18 54 canary and 81 yelloweye rockfish captured at depths of 46-174 m, much deeper than a 19 similar prior experiment, but within the depth range of recreational fishery catch and 20 discard. Survival was measured using specialized sea cages for holding individual fish. 21 The external physical signs associated with extreme expansion and retention of 22 swimbladder gas (pronounced barotrauma), including esophageal eversion, exophthalmia 23 and ocular emphysema, were common for both species at these capture depths and were 24 more frequent than in prior studies conducted at shallower depths. Despite similar 25 frequencies of most external barotrauma signs, 48-h post-recompression survival of the 26 two species diverged markedly as capture depth increased. Survival of yelloweye 27 rockfish was above 80% across all capture depths, while survival of canary rockfish was 28 lower, declining sharply to just 25% at capture depths greater than 135 m. Fish of both 29 species that were alive after 48 h of caging displayed very few of the external signs of 30 pronounced barotrauma and had a high submergence success rate when released at the 31 surface. Logistic regression analysis, using a combined data set from this and an earlier 32 experiment conducted at shallower capture depths, was used to more broadly evaluate 33 factors influencing post-recompression survival. For canary rockfish, depth of capture 34 was negatively related to survival (P<0.0001), but the surface-bottom temperature 35 differential was not (P>0.05). Exophthalmia and ocular emphysema were each 36 negatively associated with survival for canary rockfish (P<0.05). For yelloweye rockfish, 37 no significant associations were found between post-recompression survival and capture 38 depth, the surface-bottom temperature differential or any of the signs of pronounced 39 barotrauma (P>0.05).

### 40 1. Introduction

41 In multi-species hook-and-line fisheries, rules requiring non-retention of particular 42 species are a common approach to limiting fishing mortality on weaker stocks. The 43 effectiveness of non-retention depends on a variety of factors, but particularly upon the 44 survival rate of released fish. Post-release survival can be difficult to estimate due to the 45 many factors that can reduce it, including capture-related injuries, handling time, 46 environmental conditions and predation after release (Davis 2002). Estimation of post-47 release survival is especially complex for species with closed swim bladders 48 (physoclists), such as Pacific rockfish (*Sebastes* spp.), that experience a suite of injuries 49 from barotrauma that are typically exacerbated by greater depth of capture (Hannah et al. 50 2008a, Jarvis and Lowe 2008, Pribyl et al. 2009). At surface pressure, some of these 51 species have extreme buoyancy from retained swim-bladder gas that can also prevent 52 them from submerging and returning to the seafloor under their own power (Hannah et al. 53 2008b, Hochhalter 2012), further complicating the estimation of post-release survival in a 54 fishery.

55

56 The depressed status of several Pacific rockfishes in U.S. coastal waters has led to non-57 retention rules for these species in hook-and-line fisheries (PFMC and NMFS 2012), 58 particularly fisheries encountering yelloweye (Sebastes ruberrimus) and canary rockfish 59 (S. pinniger) and cowcod (S. levis). Yelloweye rockfish and cowcod typically inhabit 60 high-relief rocky areas with boulders and crevices, while canary rockfish are found in these habitats as well as flat bedrock and mixed mud-boulder habitats (Love et al. 2002). 61 62 Concerns about the effects of capture-induced barotrauma on these species have 63 prompted a variety of studies investigating both the typical injuries from barotrauma, as

64 well as the potential for post-release submergence and survival (Hannah and Matteson 65 2007, Hannah et al. 2008b, Hochhalter and Reed 2011, Pribyl et al. 2011, Hochhalter 66 2012). For yelloweye rockfish, both short-term (48 h) and longer-term (17 d) studies of 67 post-release survival have shown high survival when these fish are returned to depth, 68 referred to as "post-recompression survival" (Hochhalter and Reed 2011, Hannah et al. 69 2012). The single short-term post-recompression survival study on canary rockfish has 70 also shown very high survival (Hannah et al. 2012). However, survival studies for these 71 two overfished species were conducted almost exclusively at capture depths less than 64 72 m. Fishery capture and release of these fishes frequently occurs at much deeper capture 73 depths, up to at least 175 m. We report here on a field study evaluating the short-term 74 post-recompression survival of canary and yelloweye rockfish at much greater depths of 75 capture, ranging from 46 m to 175 m.

76

#### 77 **2. Methods**

78 2.1 Post-recompression survival

79 We evaluated post-recompression survival using a variation of the sea-caging method 80 described in detail in Hannah et al. (2012). Sampling was conducted on a chartered 81 commercial passenger fishing vessel equipped with a hydraulic block between September 82 2012 and October 2013, at 2 areas in the vicinity of Stonewall Bank, Oregon (Figure 1). 83 Fish were captured using rod and reel and terminal tackle commonly used in the 84 recreational rockfish fishery. Anglers fished just above the bottom, however, the capture 85 of fish that were suspended above the bottom may have occurred, as is the case for the 86 recreational fishery. Both species were captured in each sampling trip, however, the 87 majority of the yelloweye rockfish were sampled in September-October 2012, while most 88 of the canary rockfish were sampled in September-October 2013. Sampling effort was 89 distributed across a depth range of 46-175 m. For depths of capture between 46 and 84 m 90 (Figure 1, sampling area 1), a sampling goal of 15 canary and 15 yelloweye rockfish from 91 each of four 9-10 m depth zones was chosen. To sample greater depths, we utilized a 92 single depth zone of 135-175 m and a sampling goal of just 10 fish of each species 93 (Figure 1, sampling area 2). The reduced sampling goals in the deeper sampling area 94 were chosen to offset the longer travel time to this area and the increased handling time 95 needed to retrieve both hooked fish and cages from this depth range. Our choice of depth 96 ranges was also constrained by the availability of rocky reef habitat within the study area 97 at various depths.

98

99 After capture, each fish was scored for a standardized set of external signs of barotrauma 100 (Table 1) using a subset of the indicators from Hannah et al. (2008b) and Pribyl et al. 101 (2009). The subset of barotrauma signs we chose are indicative of extreme expansion 102 and retention of swimbladder gas, and will be referred to simply as signs of "pronounced 103 barotrauma". It should be noted however that because rockfish sometimes lose 104 expanding gas through ruptures in the pharyngo-cleithral membrane, the range of the 105 external signs is not always a reliable indicator of the severity of internal trauma 106 (Hannah et al 2008a, Pribyl et al. 2009). After scoring for barotrauma, each fish was then 107 placed in a wet tray for measurement of fork length (cm). The fish was then 108 photographed and placed in a sea cage that was partially filled with seawater and the cage 109 lid was sealed and secured with a large cable-tie. The cage was then deployed as soon as 110 the vessel could navigate to a nearby point of similar depth, over suitable bottom for 111 successful cage retrieval. As in Hannah et al. (2012), the surface interval of fish was

minimized and calculated from the time the fish was brought on board to deployment of the cage overboard. A data logger (Vemco, Minilog-08-TDR,  $0.1^{\circ}$ C resolution,  $\pm 0.2^{\circ}$ C accuracy, 0.4 m depth resolution) was attached to one cage per depth interval to record depth and bottom temperature. Surface water temperature and salinity were also recorded at cage deployment and retrieval for each depth category in which sampling was conducted.

118

The sea cages we used for holding rockfish have been described in detail in Hannah et al. 119 120 (2012) and were designed specifically to minimize adverse cage-effects on fish. The 121 cages incorporated non-abrasive surfaces for all parts that might contact the fish and 122 sufficiently heavy steel bases to be self-righting and to resist current-induced movement. 123 They were also isolated from the forces generated by the mooring line to the surface by a 124 double anchoring system and incorporated screening designed to exclude carnivorous 125 amphipods while maintaining adequate water exchange. We made only two alterations to 126 the cage design described by Hannah et al. (2012) to adapt it to the much deeper depths 127 sampled in this study. We changed the gasket material used to seal the cage lid to a non-128 compressible material to prevent seal failure at these greater depths and we increased the 129 length of the mooring lines used.

130

Our study utilized a nominal caging duration of 48 h, but allowed durations ranging from
44-96 h in consideration of inclement weather or sea conditions and vessel availability.
Following retrieval of each cage, fish were evaluated for survival while still in seawater
in the cage. They were then removed from the cage, the physical signs of barotrauma
were again noted, another photo was taken and the fish was released at the surface. The

137	that could not submerge were assisted back to depth with a sub-surface release device
138	(Theberge and Parker 2005).
139	
140	2.2 Data analysis
141	We estimated post-recompression survival by species and depth zone using LaPlace point
142	estimates to compensate for small sample sizes, as suggested by Lewis and Sauro (2006)
143	and Jarvis and Lowe (2008). We calculated 95% binomial confidence intervals for
144	survival using the adjusted Wald method (Sauro and Lewis 2005).
145	
146	To provide a more complete picture of the effect of capture depth on barotrauma and
147	post-recompression survival for these two species, we combined the data from this study
148	with data from shallower depths of capture collected with very similar methods as
149	reported by Hannah et al. (2012). We used logistic regression (JMP software ver. 6.02)
150	to evaluate the effect of depth of capture and the surface-bottom temperature differential
151	on post-recompression survival for both data sets. The surface-bottom temperature
152	differential has been related to mortality in hook-and-line captured red snapper (Lutjanus
153	campechanus, Diamond and Campbell 2009), and may be important for black rockfish
154	(Sebastes melanops, Hannah et al. 2012). We also included it in this study because at the
155	deeper depths we sampled, the temperature differential was likely to be greater than in
156	previous studies conducted at shallower depths (Hannah et al. 2012). For both data sets,
157	we graphically evaluated the relationship between specific signs of pronounced
158	barotrauma and depth of capture. We also evaluated the association between these

ability of each fish to submerge following release was recorded, and any surviving fish

136

barotrauma signs and post-recompression survival for the combined data sets usingFisher's exact test (Sokal and Rolf 1981).

161

#### 162 **3. Results**

163 We completed 11 deployments of 7-16 sea cages each between September, 2012 and

164 October, 2013. In all, 135 canary and yelloweye rockfish from 5 depth intervals up to

165 174 m were evaluated for signs of pronounced barotrauma (Table 1) and caged to

166 evaluate post-recompression survival (Table 2). This total included 81 yelloweye and 54

167 canary rockfish. The length range of canary and yelloweye rockfish sampled was 26-52

168 cm and 30-59 cm, respectively (Table 2). Time-at-the-surface averaged ( $\pm 1$  standard

169 error) 2.8 ( $\pm$  0.2) min for all 135 fish, with only 2 specimens having a surface interval

170 longer than 5 min, both of which survived. Post-recompression survival of yelloweye

171 rockfish was very high across all depths of capture, with 77 of 81 fish surviving (95.1%,

172 Table 2). Survival of canary rockfish was much lower, with 42 of the 54 canary rockfish

173 sampled surviving (77.8%, Table 2).

174

175 The LaPlace point estimates of survival show a marked divergence between canary and

176 yelloweye rockfish in 48-h survival as a function of depth of capture (Figure 2). At

177 capture depths greater than 135 m, the survival of canary rockfish declined to only about

178 25%, while the survival of yelloweye rockfish remained well above 80% (Figure 2).

179 Inspection of the fish captured at depths greater than 135 m showed that for canary

180 rockfish, a large amount of blood pooling under the pharyngo-cleithral membrane was

181 frequently observed. For both species, dissections of the specimens that died frequently

182 showed evidence of pronounced bleeding within the abdominal cavity and/or within the

pericardial cavity. Two non-surviving yelloweye rockfish also showed visible evidenceof embolisms or ruptures in the heart muscle.

185

186	At all capture depths sampled, esophageal eversion was very frequently observed in both
187	canary and yelloweye rockfish at initial capture, being noted in 70% or more of the
188	specimens (Figure 3, panel A and B). Across all capture depths, exophthalmia was noted
189	in 50% or more of the canary rockfish and 40% or more of the yelloweye rockfish
190	(Figure 3, panel A and B). Ocular emphysema was less frequently encountered in both
191	species (Figure 3, panel A and B). However it increased in frequency as capture depth
192	increased, reaching levels of 70% in canary rockfish and 40% in yelloweye rockfish at
193	capture depths greater than 135 m (Figure 3, panel A and B). A comparison of
194	barotrauma signs from this study with those noted by Hannah et al. (2012, Figure 3, panel
195	C and D) shows that for both species, exophthalmia and ocular emphysema were
196	generally more frequent at the greater depths sampled in this study (Figure 3, panel A and
197	B). Also notable in this comparison is the variability that can be observed in barotrauma
198	signs as a function of depth of capture (Figure 3). For example, at capture depths of 46-
199	54 m, exophthalmia in both species was much more frequent in this study than observed
200	in 2009-10 sampling (Hannah et al. 2012).

201

Most fish that were alive after 48 h of caging were judged to be in good condition. Signs of pronounced barotrauma were mostly absent, especially in yelloweye rockfish and almost all of the fish were able to submerge without assistance when released at the sea surface. Of 42 canary and 77 yelloweye rockfish released, 41 and 76, respectively, were capable of submerging.

208

209

210	relationship between survival in yelloweye rockfish and either variable (P>0.05). For
211	canary rockfish sampled in this study, post-recompression survival was significantly
212	negatively related to capture depth ( $P < 0.05$ ), but not to the surface-bottom temperature
213	differential (P>0.05).
214	
215	Logistic regression analysis of the combined data from this study and data from Hannah
216	et al. (2012) showed that post-recompression survival was not significantly related to the
217	surface-bottom temperature differential in either canary or yelloweye rockfish (P>0.05),
218	even though the differential was much higher, as expected, at the deeper depths of
219	capture (Figure 4). In the combined data set, 48-h post-recompression survival was
220	negatively related to capture depth for canary rockfish, (P<0.0001), but not for
221	yelloweye rockfish (P>0.05, Table 3). A comparison of the two fitted curves for the
222	combined data sets (Figure 5) and the frequency of barotrauma signs (Figure 3) shows
223	that increasing capture depth created pronounced barotrauma in both species, however,
224	the negative effect on survival was much stronger for canary rockfish. This was
225	supported by the results of the Fisher's exact tests. The presence of exophthalmia and
226	ocular emphysema was each negatively associated with survival in canary rockfish
227	(P<0.05), while none of the physical signs of barotrauma were negatively associated with
228	survival in yelloweye rockfish (P>0.05).
229	

Logistic regression of 48-h post-recompression survival on depth of capture and the

surface-bottom temperature differential, for the data collected in this study, showed no

## **4. Discussion**

231 The divergence of 48-h post-recompression survival of canary and yelloweye rockfish as 232 depth of capture increased beyond 135 m shows how difficult it can be to evaluate the 233 survival potential of rockfish with barotrauma based on their appearance at the surface. 234 Most specimens of both species captured at these depths showed some signs of 235 pronounced barotrauma, yet nearly all of the yelloweye rockfish survived following 236 recompression while many of the canary rockfish perished as capture depth increased 237 beyond about 75 m. Studies of post-recompression release behavior also support the 238 notion that surface observations are not indicative of survival, at least for rockfish that 239 tend to retain most of their expanded swimbladder gas (Hannah and Matteson 2007, 240 Hannah et al. 2008a). The retained gas can make it very difficult or impossible for 241 rockfish to submerge (Hannah et al. 2008b, Hochhalter 2012) and also interferes with the 242 evaluation of reflex behaviors, which have been shown to be useful predictors of survival 243 in other captured and discarded fishes (Davis 2007, Davis and Ottmar 2006).

244

245 Our data for canary rockfish suggest that there may be a critical capture depth for some 246 rockfish species at which post-recompression survival decreases rapidly. Between the 247 capture depth intervals of 75-84 m and 135-174 m, post-recompression survival of canary 248 rockfish plummeted from about 80% to just 25% (Figure 2). Our observations of pooled 249 blood under the pharyngo-clethral membrane of captured canary rockfish and in the 250 abdomen of canary rockfish that failed to survive suggests that critical internal physical 251 injuries can be caused by barotrauma at these capture depths. Across these same 2 depth 252 intervals, the typical external signs of pronounced barotrauma in canary rockfish 253 increased just moderately in frequency (Figure 3, panel A and B). The high 48-h post-254 recompression survival of yelloweye rockfish captured at depths greater than 135 m, also

experiencing the effects of pronounced barotrauma, was unexpected and is surprising.
It's possible that a similar critical capture depth exists for yelloweye rockfish, but simply
at a greater depth of capture than sampled in this study.

258

259 It should be noted that our study results represent just an initial estimate of how capture 260 depth and related barotrauma influence post-recompression survival of these two species. 261 With the modest sample sizes in our study, it was not possible to evaluate the many 262 factors that often affect survival, such as fish size or age, time spent above the bottom for 263 schooling species, season or variable environmental conditions, handling, surface 264 interval, predation and longterm health effects from barotrauma (Davis 2002). Some of 265 these factors simply require additional studies, but others are very difficult to study in the 266 field. For example, the ontogenetic migration of Pacific rockfish (Love et al. 2002) 267 makes it difficult to separate the effects of fish size and capture-depth on barotrauma and 268 post-recompression survival, as they are inherently somewhat confounded from a 269 sampling standpoint.

270

271 The absence of most of the physical signs of pronounced barotrauma noted in the 272 rockfish that survived 48 h of sea caging is consistent with prior sea-caging studies with a 273 wide variety of rockfish species (Jarvis and Lowe 2008, Hannah et al. 2012). It is also 274 consistent with the physical model of how barotrauma signs are thought to develop in 275 rockfish (Hannah et al 2008a). Esophageal eversion, exophthalmia and ocular 276 emphysema result from the expansion and "patterned" anterior travel of gas that escapes 277 from the compromised swimbladder of a rockfish during ascent and decompression. The 278 gas that has escaped into a variety of tissues then contracts during recompression and can

be removed quickly via absorption into the blood and normal respiration. Since the
swimbladders of rockfish typically cannot heal and re-inflate appreciably within 48 h
(Parker et al. 2006), the second decompression event does not produce the typical
physical signs associated with swimbladder gas expansion and travel.

283

284 The estimates developed in this study can be very useful for informing the management 285 of hook-and-line fisheries that encounter these two overfished species, especially in 286 combination with data on submergence success as a function of capture depth, like that 287 provided by Hochhalter (2012) for yelloweye rockfish. For example, a primary 288 recommendation from prior studies of post-recompression survival and submergence 289 success for these two species was that hook-and-line fishers should use a variety of 290 "descending" devices to help released fish overcome surface buoyancy (Theberge and 291 Parker 2005, Hochhalter and Reed 2011, Hannah et al. 2012, Hochhalter 2012). The data 292 from this study suggest that descending devices may have a positive effect on survival of 293 yelloweye rockfish across a wide depth range (Figure 6, lower panel). However, for 294 canary rockfish captured at depths greater than 135 m, survival may be so low that it 295 might be better to either allow retention of these fish or to simply not allow a fishery to 296 operate at these deeper depths (Figure 6, upper panel).

297

Although short-term post-recompression survival is now better understood for a variety of Pacific rockfish species (Jarvis and Lowe 2008, Hochhalter and Reed 2011, Hannah et al. 2012), longer term studies of the health of rockfish that have experienced pronounced barotrauma are still badly needed, as well as studies evaluating the cumulative effects of multiple capture events on these long-lived fishes. Critical as well, is understanding the

303	behavioral and sensory compromise that may be evident in fish immediately post-
304	recompression, in the absence of a protective cage. Fish suffering from extensive gas
305	embolisms at the surface may be physically and physiologically compromised for some
306	unknown period of time. It's reasonable to expect that after recompression some time
307	would be needed for recovery, leaving fish vulnerable to predation or unable to quickly
308	seek refuge in a school or within specific habitat. Until such studies can be completed,
309	the effectiveness of population rebuilding strategies for Pacific rockfish that rely heavily
310	on non-retention in hook-and-line fisheries remains uncertain.
311	
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## 379 **Figure captions**

380 Figure 1. Location of the study areas at Stonewall Bank, Oregon.

381

382 Figure 2. LaPlace point estimates of the proportion of canary and yelloweye rockfish

383 surviving after 48 h of sea caging, by depth of capture (m), with 95% confidence

intervals.

385

386 Figure 3. Percentage of canary and yelloweye rockfish displaying 3 different signs of

387 pronounced barotrauma at initial capture, as a function of depth of capture (m),

388 September 2012 through October 2013 (panel A and B) and from the 2009-10 study by

Hannah et al. (2012, panel C and D). Sample size in parentheses.

390

Figure 4. Mean difference in temperature (°C,  $\pm 1$  standard error) between the sea surface

392 and seafloor, by capture-depth interval (m) from all canary and yelloweye rockfish cage

deployments from this study (2012-13) and from Hannah et al. (2012, 2009-2010).

394

Figure 5. Fitted logistic curve of the proportion of yelloweye and canary rockfish

396 surviving 48 h after hook-and-line capture and recompression, as a function of capture

397 depth (m).

398

399 Figure 6. Fitted logistic curves comparing the proportion of canary and yelloweye

400 rockfish submerging following surface release and surviving 48 h after hook-and-line

401 capture and recompression, as a function of capture depth (m). Modeled submergence

- 402 data for canary and yelloweye rockfish are from Hannah et al. (2008b) and Hochhalter
- 403 (2012), respectively.

- 405 Table 1. Indicators used to identify the physical signs of pronounced barotrauma in
- 406 canary and yelloweye rockfish.

Symptom	Indicators
Esophageal eversion	Eversion of esophageal tissue at least 1 cm into the buccal
	cavity.
Exophthalmia (popeye)	Eye protruding outward from orbit
Ocular emphysema	Gas present within the eye or connective tissue surrounding
(gas in the eye)	the eye

Table 2. Summary of canary and yelloweye rockfish captured by hook-and-line in waters off Newport, Oregon and held in individual
cages to estimate 48 h post-recompression survival, by species and capture depth interval (m). Mean fork length (standard error) by
species and depth interval is also shown. The number of mortalities is shown in parentheses.

		Depth of capture						
Common name	Scientific name	Statistic	46-54 m	55-64 m	65-74 m	75-84 m	135-174 m	Total
Canary rockfish	Sebastes pinniger	Number	5(0)	13(0)	11(1)	15(3)	10(8)	54(12)
		Mean length	35.0±1.8	32.4±0.9	35.6±0.7	36.2 ±0.9	48.3 ±1.0	
Yelloweye rockfish	Sebastes ruberrimus	Number	11(0)	20(1)	20(1)	20(1)	10(1)	81(4)
		Mean length	38.5±1.2	39.9±2.1	43.8±1.4	44.8±1.7	55.4±1.7	
Total			16(0)	33(1)	31(2)	35(4)	20(9)	135(16)

413 Table 3. Results of logistic regression analysis of the proportion of rockfish surviving after 48 h versus depth (m) of capture for canary

414 and yelloweye rockfish. Curves were fitted using the canary and yelloweye rockfish data from this study in combination with the data

415	from shallower depths of capture reported in Hannah et al. (20	012).
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Species	Independent variable	Coefficients	Standard	P - value	Whole model	R squared
			error		Chi-square	
Canary rockfish	constant	6.3499	1.1442	< 0.0001	34.9821	0.4854
	depth of capture	-0.0531	0.0116	< 0.0001		
Yelloweye rockfish	constant	4.4034	1.1583	0.0001	1.3616	0.0400
·	depth of capture	0.0150	0.0118	0.2043		

417

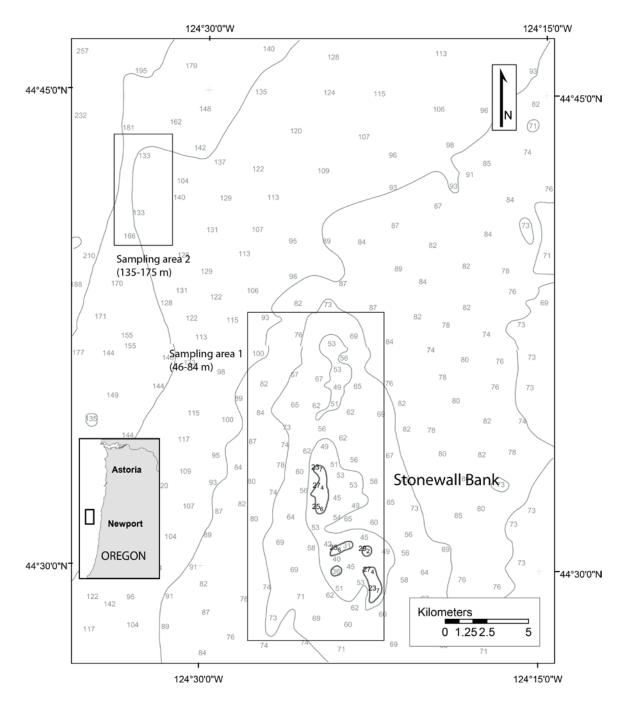


Figure 1

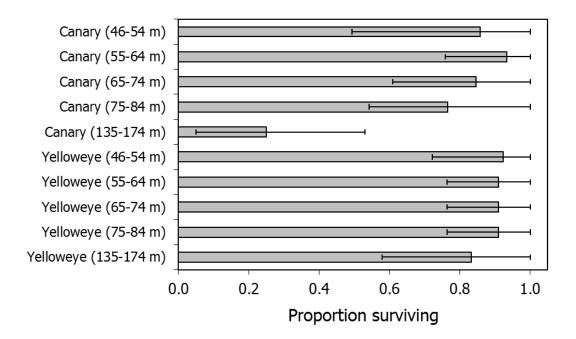


Figure 2

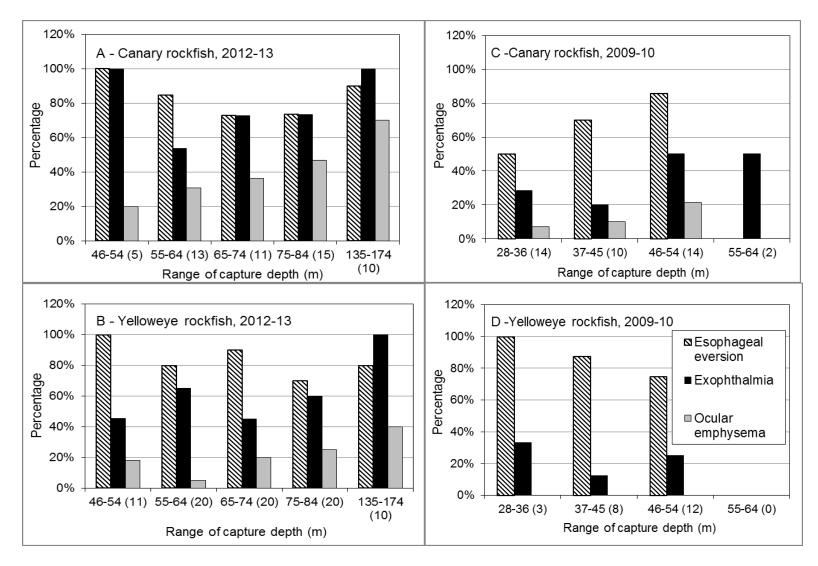


Figure 3

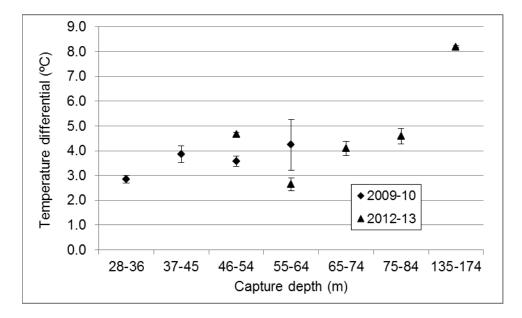


Figure 4.

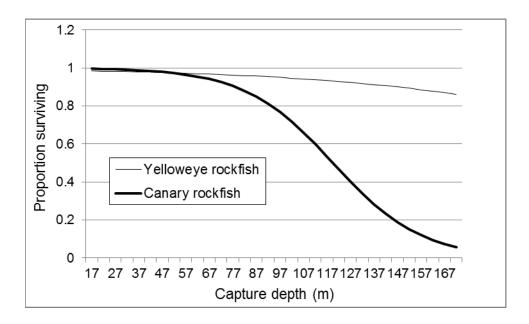
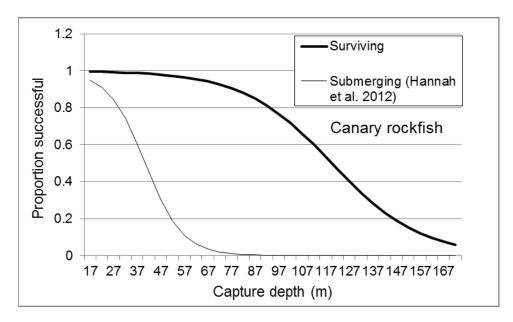


Figure 5



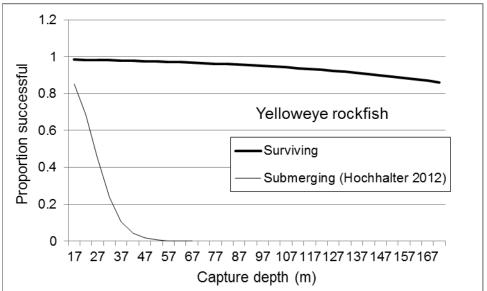


Figure 6