



Oregon Sea Grant Extension  
Sustainable Tourism &  
Outdoor Recreation Program

# Interpretative Fact Sheet

## Redtail Surfperch (*Amphistichus rhodoterus*)



The following short article is from the [Oregon Coast 101 Species](#) collection used by the Guide and Outfitter Recognized Professional (GORP) training program. These articles are intended to provide interesting facts you can share with your clientele and add value to your services.

An Interpretive Fact Sheet has been written about each species. We are currently uploading these blogs and creating the links.

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# Redtail Surfperch (*Amphistichus rhodoterus*)

[tourism.oregonstate.edu/redtail-surfperch-amphistichus-rhodoterus/](https://tourism.oregonstate.edu/redtail-surfperch-amphistichus-rhodoterus/)

By colliiek2

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***Surf fishing is one of Oregon's most underutilized fisheries. There are plenty of places to fish and lots of fish to catch!***

There are nine different species of surfperch found off the Oregon coast. The most popular surfperch is the Redtail. It is popular because it is very tasty and frequently caught.

Redtails are found from Baja California northward up into Vancouver Island, British Columbia. Redtail surfperch are predominantly surf dwellers off sandy beaches.



Surfperch fishing (courtesy of ODFW)

Typically, they live in large schools in the surf zone about 30 feet from the shoreline (or between the second and fourth breaker row). They are attracted to the deeper holes and areas with high sand erosion.

These fish concentrate just before spawning in the spring and early summer in sheltered waters such as estuaries and protected bay areas. Large numbers of these fish can be taken at this time. Oregon Dept. of Fish and Wildlife regulations are usually very generous and this fish can be released with minimal harm.

Surfperch and Seaperch are sometimes confused. Seaperch live in kelp beds in deeper waters.

## Identification

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The Redtail Surfperch is a slim, oblong-shaped fish that is about twice as long as high and can weigh in at over three pounds and grow to around 16 inches long. The average size is about two pounds.



Redtail surfperch (courtesy ODFW)

This silver to white fish has eight to eleven reddish brown vertical bars on the sides. The red or pink fins have both rays and spines, and the tail is moderately forked. Coloration can vary depending on the time of year (breeding season) and age of the fish.

## **Prey**

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Surfperch prefer small crustaceans and will also dine on small crabs, shrimp, mussels, and marine worms. Sand crabs; sand, kelp, and tube worms; or clam necks and mussels can be used for bait. They will also take a shrimp pattern fly off of a flyrod.

## **Breeding**

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Surfperch breed in the fall and give birth to live young between June to August. A female will typically birth an average of 27 miniature replicas of the adults. Maximum number of young can reach 51.

## **Harvest Techniques**

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Scout out potential fishing locations ahead of time during low tides. Look for steeply sloped beaches where the waves are breaking hard, rocky areas near sandy or jetties, and places where the shore cuts inward. The best time to fish is an hour or two before high tide.

Fishing gear can be rented if desired. If you have your own set up, choose a #4 or #6 hook and secure it 24-30 inches below a 1- to 2-ounce sinker on an 8- to 10-pound line. Sturdy flyrods can also be used.

## Enjoying them

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These are tasty fish and taste similar to their distant cousins (rockfish, snapper, and sea bass). Recipes for the ‘cousins’ will work just fine for surfperch. Typically, the fish is grilled whole, crispy-fried, or steamed Asian style. Filleting anything less than two pounds will waste too much meat.

You can also find these fish in West Coast Asian markets all year long whole or scaled and gutted. They may be referred to by other common names such as rosy surf fish, redbtail seaperch, porgie, or Oregon porgie.

### REFERENCES:

- Oregon Dept. of Fish and Wildlife (<https://myodfw.com/fishing/species/redtail-surfperch> and .../how-fish- surfperch)
- Washington Dept. of Fish and Wildlife (<https://wdfw.wa.gov/species-habitats/species>)
- The Spruce Eats (<https://www.thespruceeats.com/cooking-with-pacific-surperch-1300660>)