



Questions? Feel free to contact me at christy@REEF.org

Sea of Cortez / Gulf of California – Parrotfish and Wrasse

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Cortez Rainbow Wrasse (*Thalassoma lucasanum*)

IP is greenish/brown/yellow with bright yellow mid-body stripe. TP has bright blue/purple head and yellow collar, swims fast among large groups of IPs.

Up to 6"

Distribution: Abundant throughout Gulf, along Pacific coast to Panama and oceanic islands.

Photo by: Paul Humann (TP shown)



Chameleon Wrasse (*Halichoeres dispilus*)

All phases typically have an ear spot. IP body is light greenish brown to pale white, sometimes with pale stripe along mid-body. TP is colorful, reddish head and blue-green body, coloration on tail forms a V. All phases are variable and can quickly change colors. Up to 8"

Distribution: Common throughout Gulf, along Pacific coast to Panama and oceanic islands.

Photo by: Paul Humann (IP shown)



Spinster Wrasse (*Halichoeres nicholsi*)

IP is pale with distinguishing black stripe along mid-body and a vertical black bar behind head. TP are rarely seen, bluish-green body with dark blotch behind pectoral fin and yellow ear spot. Juveniles have black and yellow body pattern with large ocellated spot on side. Up to 15" (juv 2-4")

Distribution: Common throughout Gulf, along Pacific coast to Panama and oceanic islands.

Photo by: Paul Humann (IP shown)






Wounded Wrasse (*Halichoeres chierchiae*)

IP are reddish-brown checkerboard pattern, with small black spot on rear dorsal fin, often have a white chin. TP ha bright red patch (the wound) on the side of its greenish body. Up to 8"

Distribution: Common throughout Gulf, along Pacific coast to Panama and oceanic islands.

Photo by: Paul Humann (TP shown)

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|  | <p>Rock Wrasse (<i>Halichoeres semicinctus</i>) IP is brownish-yellow body with scattered black scales along back (like pebbles). TP is greenish-blue with large black bar behind pectoral fin (like a boulder). Up to 12" Distribution: Mostly restricted to northern Gulf (rare in southern Gulf), extends north along Baja to southern California. Photo by: Janna Nichols (IP shown)</p> |
|  | <p>Golden Wrasse (<i>Halichoeres melanotis</i>) Juvenile is bright gold-yellow with black stripe extending along mid-body. TP and IP are brownish green to red with 5-6 vague dusky bars alongside, dark patch on cheek with pale blue spots. Up to 6" (1-2" juvenile) Distribution: Occasional in the Gulf, along Pacific coast to Panama and oceanic islands. Photo by: Gerry Allen (Juv shown)</p> |
|  | <p>Banded Wrasse (<i>Halichoeres notospilus</i>) Both IP and TP are dark green to brown with 6 body bars, bars are indistinct in IP and become more thin and distinct in TP. IP is covered in small bluish spots. TP has a red tail. Found in surge zone. Up to 10" Distribution: Common in the Gulf, along Pacific coast to Panama and oceanic islands. Photo by: Roger Steene (iP shown)</p> |
|  | <p>Mexican Hogfish (<i>Bodianus diplotaenia</i>) IP is reddish brown with several brick red broken stripes, typically a yellow tail. With age, the stripes fade and a bright yellow bar appears on side of body (young TPs). Old TP individuals get large bump on head and yellow bar is faded (rare). Up to 2' (TP), 5-10" (IP) Distribution: Abundant to common throughout Gulf, along Pacific coast to Panama and oceanic islands. Photo by: Paddy Ryan (Young TP shown)</p> |
|  | <p>Bluechin Parrotfish (<i>Scarus ghobban</i>) IP phase has 5 indistinct blue bars on greenish body and blue borders on tail. TP phase uniformly blueish-green with pink stripes on dorsal and anal fins. Conical head shape (vs. squared-off). Both IP and TP have thin blue line above and below eye and blue markings under chin. Up to 1.5' Distribution: Common throughout Gulf, along Pacific coast to Panama and oceanic islands, also throughout western Pac. AKA Blue-barred Parrotfish in CIP and SOP. Photo by: Paul Humann (IP shown)</p> |
|  | <p>Azure Parrotfish (<i>Scarus compressus</i>) IP phase has 3-5 pale and indistinct bars on side of greenish-brown body, tail does not have borders. TP body is greenish. Both phases have bright green markings radiating from eye. Up to 2' Distribution: Occasional throughout Gulf, along Pacific coast to Panama and oceanic islands. Photo by: John Earle (IP shown)</p> |



Bicolor Parrotfish (*Scarus rubroviolaceus*)

More commonly seen IP phase distinctly bi-colored, dark brownish-red front and paler in back. Large TP individuals are blue and green, often darker on front half. TP and IP have squared-off head. Up to 2'

Distribution: Occasional throughout Gulf, along Pacific coast to Panama and oceanic islands, also found throughout western Pacific. AKA Redlip Parrotfish in CIP and SOP.

Photo by: Paul Humann (IP shown)



Bumhead Parrotfish (*Scarus perrico*)

IP and TP phases look similar. Large, bulbous forehead that gets larger with age. Bluish green body. Up to 2.5'

Distribution: Uncommon throughout Gulf, along Pacific coast to Panama and oceanic islands (not the same species as in the CIP and SOP)

Photo by: Paul Humann (TP shown)



Loosetooth Parrotfish (*Nicholsina denticulata*)

Distinguished from other parrotfish by having small teeth instead of a fused beak. Both IP and TP are shades of greenish/red/tan, variable in color and pattern, often matching background. IP can have broad wide stripe down side. TP has red tail. Smallest parrotfish in Gulf. Up to 12"

Distribution: Occasional throughout Gulf, along Pacific coast to Panama and oceanic islands, and in Hawaii

Photo by: Beth Bruton (TP shown)