

OCCURRENCE OF TOPSMELT, ATHERINOPS AFFINIS, IN THE
COLUMBIA RIVER ESTUARY

by

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Fourteen topsmelt, Atherinops affinis, a common California coastal species (Miller and Lea 1972), were taken in the Columbia River estuary, Oregon, on 6 December 1979. The specimens were collected on a flood tide at Clatsop Spit (RKm 10.2) on the south side of the estuary, using a 50 m variable mesh beach seine. Water temperature and salinity at 2.4 m of depth were 7.3°C and 2.4 o/oo, respectively. The fish had a mean total length of 107 mm (3 S.E.) and a mean weight of 6 g (0.6 S.E.). The specimens are now in the collection of the Northwest and Alaska Fisheries Center's Field Station at Hammond, Oregon.

Although topsmelt are distributed along the coast of western North America from off lower California northward to southern Vancouver Island, British Columbia (Hubbs 1918; Hart 1973), this will be the first known published record of topsmelt appearing in the Columbia River estuary. In the late 1960's Carl Sims (Northwest and Alaska Fisheries Center, Seattle, Wash., pers. commun.) captured topsmelt at Clatsop Spit; however, additional information is unavailable, and the collection was not reported in any scientific literature. It is noteworthy that before a northward range extension in 1962 (Peden and Stewart 1964), topsmelt had been reported only as far north as Coos Bay, Oregon (Hubbs 1918).

REFERENCES

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