

Short Communications

THE ARGUS MORAY, *MURAENA ARGUS*, ADDED TO THE CALIFORNIA FAUNA.— A remarkable moray eel (family Muraenidae) was recently photographed by scuba diver Chris Menjou at Catalina Island, Southern California. It is undoubtedly *Muraena argus* (Steindachner) and represents the first record of it north of Magdalena Bay, Baja California Sur, Mexico (24°32.5'N, 112°04.8'W). The eel was encountered on 11 October 2003 at 1400 hrs along the western boundary of the marine park at Casino Point, north of Avalon Harbor (33°20.7'N, 118°19.0'W). It was living among large, algae-covered rocks at 12 m. Maximum reported size of *M. argus* is 120 cm; Menjou described its head as slightly less than “fist-sized,” indicating that it was probably an adult. *Muraena argus* is unique among eastern Pacific morays in having elongate, tubular posterior nostrils, a white freckling on a black background, and bright yellow eyes; the only other California moray, *Gymnothorax mordax* (Ayres), is brown and lacks tubular posterior nostrils. *Muraena argus* is also known from Alijos Rocks (off Baja California Sur), the Gulf of California; Cocos Island; Malpelo Island; the Galápagos and Isla La Plata, Ecuador; and Lobos de Afuera, Peru (as *M. albigutta* Hildebrand), from shallow water to 60 m (McCosker and Rosenblatt 1975; Robertson and Allen 2002). Its appearance in California may be related to the extreme 1982–1984 or 1997–1998 El Niño events which brought numerous larvae, juveniles, and adults of eastern tropical Pacific fishes to California (Lea and Rosenblatt 2000).

We sincerely thank Chris Menjou for sharing his photographs and advice with us.



FIGURE 1. Argus moray, *Muraena argus*, photographed at Catalina Island by Chris Menjou.

LITERATURE CITED

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- **John E. McCosker¹ and David G. Smith²**. ¹ *California Academy of Sciences, San Francisco, California 94118*; ² *National Museum of Natural History, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C. 20560*.