

FIELD KEY TO SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA *ASTROPECTEN*

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Three seastars of the genus *Astropecten* are taken at shelf depths within the Southern California Bight. Fisher's *Asteroidea* of the North Pacific and Adjacent Waters Vol. 1 (1911) should be consulted for full descriptions. The three are -

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| | Fisher 1911 | Maluf 1988 |
| <i>Astropecten armatus</i> Gray 1840 | 0-55m | 0-302m |
| <i>Astropecten ornatissimus</i> Fisher 1906 | 87-299m | 9-366m |
| <i>Astropecten verrilli</i> de Loriol 1899 | 18-450m | 2-488m |
| syn. <i>Astropecten californicus</i> Fisher 1906 | | |

The species do not usually occur together, but when they do, one species is nearly always much less abundant than another.

As with *Luidia*, color can be a useful field characteristic, but in *Astropecten* the choices are fewer, only grey or light red. The mosaic patterns of color patches seen in some *Luidia* do not occur in *Astropecten*.

KEY

- 1.a With tubercles or spines on the superomarginal plates, especially in the interradial (less evident in smaller specimens; color grey; enlarged adambulacral spines truncate; lateral spines robust, flattened, those on adjacent arms touching or overlapping at the arm bases and for about 1/5 the arm length.....*Astropecten armatus*
- 1.b Lacking tubercles or spines on the superomarginal plates; color grey or light red; enlarged adambulacral spines hastate if present, if no adambulacral spines enlarged, then all acute; lateral spines small, not touching or overlapping on adjacent arms at the arm bases beyond the first 2-3 superomarginal plates.....2
- 2.a Light red aborally, with lighter middorsal stripe on arms; no adambulacral spines enlarged, lateral spines subacute; paxillae relatively large - 3 rows per two superomarginal plates at arm bases; lateral spines of adjacent arms touching at the arm bases.....*Astropecten ornatissimus*
- 2.b Uniform grey aborally; some adambulacral spines enlarged, hastate; paxillae relatively small - 5 rows per two superomarginal plates at base of arm; lateral spines of adjacent arms not touching at the arm bases.....*Astropecten verrilli*