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Size-selectivity and capture efficiency of sablefish (*Anoplopoma fimbria*) in Southeast Alaska using pot gear with escape rings

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An experiment was conducted in Chatham Strait in Southeast Alaska to estimate size-selectivity and capture efficiency of sablefish (*Anoplopoma fimbria*) using pot gear with escape rings. Four escape rings scenarios were considered: control pots with no escape rings, and three treatment pots with internal diameters of 8.9, 9.5, and 10.2 cm. Theoretical size-selectivity curves developed using the sablefish girth-length relationship were compared to selectivity curves estimated using a Bayesian SELECT (Share Each LEngth's Catch Total) model. Relatively small increases in escape ring size caused large shifts in selectivity. Results suggest that 9.5 cm escape rings provide the best compromise between reducing catch rates of small, immature sablefish, while maximizing selectivity and capture efficiency of large, mature sablefish. Further experimentation is needed to determine if discrepancies between theoretical and SELECT selectivity curves can be explained by the current study's relatively short soak time.

KEY WORDS

size-selectivity, escape ring, *Anoplopoma fimbria*, sablefish, CPUE, SELECT model, pot fishing

22 1 | INTRODUCTION

23 Fishing gear selectivity is a critical fisheries stock assessment quantity for scaling an observed population to total
24 population abundance (Quinn and Deriso, 1999; Beverton and Holt, 1957). Selectivity can be estimated in numerous
25 forms, though it is most often incorporated into assessments as the probability of capture by length or age. Misspec-
26 ified selectivity estimates can produce unreliable estimates of maximum sustainable yield-based biological reference
27 points (Butterworth et al., 2014; Crone and Valero, 2014) or lead to biased projections of fish abundance (e.g. Stewart
28 and Martell, 2014; Walters and Maguire, 1996).

29 Numerous intrinsic and extrinsic factors influence gear selectivity. For example, changes in fishing gear, regula-
30 tions, or fisher behavior can shift selectivity (Graham et al., 2007; Valdemarsen and Suuronen, 2003). These changes
31 can be motivated by shifting markets or processor preference, for example, if the development of a live market fishery
32 increases the desirability of smaller or medium-sized fish (Reddy et al., 2013; Kindsvater et al., 2017). Modification
33 of fishing gear or regulations can also be motivated by conservation efforts to protect a segment of a fish population,
34 reduce bycatch, or avoid interaction with habitat or protected species (Kennelly and Broadhurst, 2002). Environmen-
35 tal factors (e.g. water temperature) can influence selectivity on a seasonal basis due to spawning period and body
36 condition (e.g. Özbilgin et al., 2007) or swim speed (e.g. Yanase et al., 2007). Additionally, fish behavior or availability
37 can change selectivity if, for example, fish occupy deeper waters as thermal refuge during periods of warm sea surface
38 temperatures (e.g. Barbeaux et al., 2019; Li et al., 2019).

39 Several recent changes in sablefish (*Anoplopoma fimbria*) fishery dynamics and regulations in Alaska have created
40 the potential for changing fishery selectivity. A federal fishery prosecuted in the United State's exclusive economic
41 zone (EEZ, 3-200 nm; Figure 1) has been regulated under an Individual Fishing Quota (IFQ) program since 1995
42 (Hanselman et al., 2019). This fishery is predominately a longline fishery; however, sablefish catch by pot gear in the
43 Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands has increased dramatically since 2000 from 0.5-0.7% in 1991-1999 to 45% in 2017-
44 2018 (Hanselman et al., 2020) due to killer whale (*Orcinus orca*) depredation on longline gear (Peterson et al., 2013,
45 2014). Similar regulatory changes were implemented in the Gulf of Alaska (GOA) in 2017 to allow pot fishing in federal
46 waters to mitigate increasing sperm whale (*Physeter macrocephalus*) depredation on longline gear (Hanselman et al.,
47 2020). Subsequent landings from pot gear in the GOA have increased to 13% of the total catch in 2019 (Hanselman
48 et al., 2020). Sablefish length composition data suggest that pot gear selects for smaller-sized individuals than longline
49 gear, and resultant changes in selectivity will be addressed if catch in pot gear continues to increase (Hanselman et al.,
50 2020).

51 Commercial harvest of sablefish in Alaskan state waters up to 3 nm is regulated by the Alaska Department of Fish
52 and Game (ADFG) in the Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands, Cook Inlet, Prince William Sound, and Southeast Alaska
53 management areas (Figure 1; Russ et al., 2013; Rumble et al., 2017; Olson et al., 2017; Beder and Shaishnikoff, 2018).
54 The majority of sablefish harvest in state waters occurs in Southeast Alaska in Chatham Strait and Clarence Strait
55 (Figure 1), which have been regulated under an Equal Quota Share (EQS) program since 1994 and 1996, respectively
56 (Olson et al., 2017). Many vessels participate in both federal IFQ and state sablefish fisheries (Hanselman et al., 2019).
57 However, a fundamental difference between the IFQ and EQS fisheries is that full retention of all sablefish caught
58 is mandated in the IFQ fishery, while the release of healthy sablefish is allowed in EQS fisheries (Olson and Sullivan,
59 2019; Sullivan et al., 2019). The seasons for the fisheries also differ slightly; the IFQ sablefish fishery is eight months
60 long (March-November) to align with the Pacific halibut (*Hippoglossus stenolepis*) IFQ fishery, while seasons in Clarence
61 Strait and Chatham Strait occur in June-November and August-November, respectively (Hanselman et al., 2019; Olson
62 et al., 2017). Directed sablefish pot fishing has been permitted under regulation since 1970 in Clarence Strait but is
63 not currently permitted in Chatham Strait (Olson et al., 2017).

Record year classes of sablefish were observed in 2014 and 2016 in the North Pacific Ocean, leading to an influx of small fish into commercial sablefish fisheries (Hanselman et al., 2020). This rapid population increase has resulted in poor model fits to population abundance indices and increased uncertainty in fishery and survey selectivity estimates (Hanselman et al., 2020). Conservation concerns over suppressed spawning stock biomass and lack of diversity in the population's age structure, coupled with high uncertainty in large recruitment events, have prompted cautionary harvest policies for sablefish in IFQ and EQS fisheries (Hanselman et al., 2019, 2020; Sullivan et al., 2019). Despite these measures, fishery performance in the IFQ fishery is at a historic low, in part due to high catch rates of small fish (Hanselman et al., 2020). There is a considerable economic incentive to target large sablefish; they can be worth more than seven times the price per kg compared to the smallest-sized sablefish caught in the fishery (Sullivan et al., 2019). Consequently, the IFQ fleet has pushed to change federal regulations to allow discarding of small sablefish in the IFQ fishery (Armstrong and Cunningham, 2018).

In 2018 a live market pot fishery for sablefish was proposed for Clarence Strait (Figure 1). A primary concern for this type of fishery among management biologists is growth overfishing (Diekert, 2012), and the harvest of immature sablefish comprise the "plate size" target generally seen in live fish markets (McGilvray and Chan, 2003). A pot fishery for sablefish exists in British Columbia (BC), Canada, where a minimum size limit of 55 cm and the use of 8.9 cm escape rings for sablefish was implemented based on the length-at-50% maturity (L_{50}) for sablefish in BC (Haist et al., 2000; Haist and Hilborn, 2000). Studies have shown large variability in growth and maturity among sablefish in Alaska, BC, and the west coast of the United States (e.g. Head et al., 2014; Kapur et al., 2020). Additionally, because sablefish spawn in the winter months, classification of maturity status during summer annual surveys can be difficult (Rodgveller, 2018). A comparison of macroscopic and histological maturity samples collected across the Gulf of Alaska produced an L_{50} between 58-64 cm (Rodgveller, 2018). These findings are consistent with macroscopic maturity data collected in annual surveys conducted by ADFG in Southeast Alaska ($L_{50}=63$ cm for females; Dressel, 2009). To account for the relatively high L_{50} while reducing catch rates of immature sablefish, 10.2 cm (4 in) escape rings were required in the Clarence Sound sablefish pot fishery beginning in 2018 (Olson and Sullivan, 2019).

An escape ring experiment was conducted in May 2019 to analyze the impact of escape rings on capture efficiency and size-selectivity of sablefish. An optimal escape ring size provides the best compromise between low catches of immature sablefish while maintaining high CPUE of mature sablefish. Three alternative escape ring sizes, 8.9 cm (3.5 in), 9.5 cm (3.75 in), and 10.2 cm (4 in), were evaluated during the ADFG sablefish marking survey in May and June 2019 in Chatham Strait (Green et al., 2016). A combination of techniques were employed to evaluate the impact of escape rings on pot size-selectivity. Given that girth, or the circumference of a fish at its widest point, determines whether a sablefish can pass through an escape ring, a girth-length relationship was used to develop theoretical selectivity curves. Additionally, selectivity was estimated directly using the SELECT (Share Each Length's Catch Total) method (Millar, 1992), which has been applied to a variety of trawl and pot gear experiments (e.g. Xu and Millar, 1993; Millar and Walsh, 1992).

2 | METHODS

A longline of 40 conical pots with 5.08 x 5.08 cm mesh spaced 50 m apart was set for approximately 24-hr soaks at 17 stations in Chatham Strait in May 14–Jun 3 during the 2019 ADFG sablefish marking survey on the R/V *Medeia* (Figure 1; Green et al., 2016). Each set was comprised of four treatments with ten pots per treatment in a fixed alternating design. The study included four different escape ring scenarios: a control with no escape rings, and three treatments with internal ring diameters of 8.9, 9.5, and 10.2 cm. Each treatment pot included two escape rings

104 installed on opposing vertical or sloping walls of the pot (Figure 2). An L_{50} of 63 cm was selected as a reference
 105 length for evaluating capture efficiency and size-selectivity among escape rings treatments.

106 2.1 | Capture efficiency

107 Differences in catch rates of sablefish between control and treatments pots (CPUE) were evaluated using the non-
 108 parametric Kruskal-Wallis test to evaluate the null hypothesis that mean CPUE between escape ring scenarios is the
 109 same (Neter et al., 1974). Statistical comparisons of CPUE between escape ring scenarios were conducted for all
 110 sablefish combined, sablefish greater than or equal to 63 cm, and sablefish less than 63 cm. Post hoc multiple com-
 111 parisons Dunn tests were conducted using a Bonferroni adjustment (Zar, 1999). Statistical analyses were conducted
 112 using the statistical software R (R Core Team 2019) and the R library FSA (Ogle et al., 2019).

113 2.2 | Theoretical size-selectivity curves

114 Sablefish fork length and girth data were collected to develop theoretical size-selectivity curves for the escape ring
 115 scenarios following an approach developed for Southern rock lobsters (*Jasus edwardsii*) in Australia (Treble et al., 1998).
 116 Sablefish girths (\hat{G}) were estimated using a linear regression model with log-transformed data to determine the allo-
 117 metric relationship with length (L):

$$\hat{G} = aL^b. \quad (1)$$

118 Seasonal changes in the girth-length relationship were evaluated by comparing a single slope and intercept re-
 119 gression with regressions that provided for separate intercepts or separate intercepts and slopes between the survey
 120 and fishery. Candidate models were compared using the Akaike Information Criterion (AIC; Burnham and Anderson,
 121 1992). Sablefish girths were simulated across a range of lengths for the survey and fishery time periods assuming a
 122 lognormal distribution and a standard deviation equal to the residual standard deviation from the best-fitting regres-
 123 sion model. All sablefish with an approximate diameter (\hat{G}/π) greater than the escape ring diameter were assumed
 124 to be retained in the pot and those less than or equal to the escape ring diameter were assumed to escape. The
 125 proportions of sablefish by length with a \hat{G} greater than the escape ring were plotted as probabilities of retention or
 126 theoretical size-selectivity curves. Theoretical selectivity curves for the control pots were developed in the same way
 127 using an assumed mesh diameter of 70 mm. Resultant theoretical selectivity curves were used to develop priors for
 128 the SELECT analyses.

129 2.3 | SELECT modelling of experimental escape ring data

130 A Bayesian SELECT model was developed using the R library Template Model Builder (TMB; Kristensen et al., 2016).
 131 The SELECT method estimates selectivity parameters of experimental gear fished in tandem with control gear as-
 132 sumed to retain all length classes of fish encountered by the gear (Millar, 1992). Control pots were assumed fully
 133 selected at 50 cm based on results from the theoretical selectivity curves, and length frequencies were binned into 1
 134 cm increments. Length frequencies obtained with each escape ring treatment were compared with those observed in
 135 the control pots. Given that a fish in length bin i was caught and retained in a pot in set j , the probability that it was
 136 captured in escape ring treatment k (ϕ_{ijk}) was modelled as

$$\phi_{ijk} = \frac{P_{ijk}}{P_{ijk} + \delta r_j} \quad (2)$$

137 where P_{ijk} is the probability that a fish was retained in an escape ring treatment (i.e. selectivity), δ is the relative
 138 probability of entering a control pot (i.e. the probability of entering a control pot / the probability of entering an
 139 escape ring pot), and r_j is the ratio of control pots sampled to escape ring pots sampled in set j . The inclusion of r_j
 140 permitted unequal sampling of pots across sets (Haist et al., 2000).

141 Relative gear selectivity (P_{ijk}) was modelled as a logistic function. A random effect was included at the set level
 142 (η_j) to account for variability in length frequencies that may be explained within a set. The probability of retaining a
 143 fish of length i in set j and treatment k was defined as

$$P_{ijk} = \frac{1}{1 + \exp(-\kappa_k(i - s_{50,k}) + \eta_j)}, \quad (3)$$

144 where s_{50} is the length at which 50% of sablefish are selected to the gear, and κ is the slope of the logistic curve
 145 at s_{50} . The SELECT log-likelihood is

$$\log(L) = \sum_{k=1}^K \sum_{j=1}^J \sum_{i=1}^I T_{ijk} \cdot \log(\phi_{ijk}) + C_{ij} \cdot \log(1 - \phi_{ijk}), \quad (4)$$

146 where T_{ijk} and C_{ij} are numbers observed in each length bin and set for each treatment and control pots, respec-
 147 tively.

148 Normal priors on length at 0 and 100% retention probabilities were developed using results from the theoretical
 149 size-selectivity curves for each escape ring. Mean length at 0% retention in the theoretical curves was 51, 55, and 58
 150 cm for 8.9, 9.5, and 10.2 cm escape rings, respectively. A weakly informative prior variance ($\sigma=0.35$) was assumed for
 151 the length at 0% retention to account for factors that could influence the lower arm of the logistic selectivity curve
 152 (e.g. fish availability and soak time). Mean length at 100% retention was 68, 72, and 77 cm for 8.9, 9.5, and 10.2 cm
 153 escape rings, respectively. An informed prior variance ($\sigma=0.05$) was applied to the length at 100% retention to loosely
 154 constrain the upper arm of the logistic curve to asymptote according to the girth-length relationship. Broad uniform
 155 priors were used for all other parameters (Table 3).

156 Markov chain Monte Carlo (MCMC) sampling was implemented in the *tmbstan* R library using the no-U-turn
 157 sampler (NUTS), a self-tuning MCMC algorithm (Monnahan and Kristensen, 2018; Carpenter et al., 2017; Hoffman and
 158 Gelman, 2014; Stan Development, 2018). Seven chains were run with 2,000 iterations each, including 1,000 samples
 159 for burn-in. Convergence diagnostics included a visual examination of trace plots and pairwise correlation plots for
 160 fixed effects. The sampling efficiency in the bulk (95%) and tails (outer 5% and 95%) of the posterior distributions was
 161 evaluated using the effective sample size (ESS) for each chain and parameter calculated by the *tmbstan* library. The
 162 ESS statistics corrects for autocorrelation within chains, and both the bulk and tail ESS should be greater than 100 per
 163 chain (Stan Development, 2018). The agreement or mixing between chains was evaluated using an \hat{R} convergence
 164 diagnostic produced by *tmbstan*; an \hat{R} less than or equal to 1.05 was considered fully mixed or converged (Vehtari
 165 et al., 2019).

166 The relationship between estimated selectivity parameters for each treatment was used to develop a generalized

167 function to define the size-selectivity of a pot with any escape ring size (Arana and Ziller, 1994; Arana et al., 2011):

$$P = \frac{1}{1 + \exp(-(a_1 + b_1 \cdot E) \cdot (i - (a_2 + b_2 \cdot E)))}, \quad (5)$$

168 where E is the escape ring size and a_1 , a_2 , b_1 , and b_2 are coefficients from the following linear relationships:

169 $\kappa = a_1 + b_1 E_k$ and $S_{50} = a_2 + b_2 E_k$.

170 3 | RESULTS

171 3.1 | Capture efficiency

172 A total of 14,234 sablefish were caught in 17 longline sets over a 17 day period in May and June of 2019. Fork lengths
 173 were recorded for 11,107 sablefish (Figure 3, Table 1). All data, code, and output files for this study can be found at
 174 https://github.com/commfish/great_escape.

175 CPUE of sablefish (all sizes combined) declined significantly with increasing escape ring size (Figure 4, Table 2; χ^2
 = 77.2, $p < 0.001$). However, when sablefish were grouped by L_{50} (< 63 cm and ≥ 63 cm), the difference between
 176 treatments was no longer significant for the larger-sized group (Figure 4, Table 2; < 63 cm: $\chi^2 = 46.9$, $p < 0.001$; ≥ 63
 177 cm: $\chi^2 = 5.3$, $p = 0.151$). For all sizes combined, post hoc multiple comparison Dunn tests showed that all treatments
 178 were significantly different ($\alpha = 0.05$) from each other except the 10.2 cm - 9.5 cm ring combination (Table 2). The
 179 CPUE of sablefish less than 63 cm was significantly different between escape ring scenarios except for the 8.9 cm -
 180 control ($p_{adj} = 0.139$) and 10.2 cm - 9.5 cm ($p_{adj} = 1.00$) combinations (Table 2). In contrast, no CPUE comparisons
 181 of sablefish greater than or equal to 63 cm were significantly different. In summary, CPUE declined with increasing
 182 escape ring diameter due to decreases in CPUE of small sablefish. CPUE of large sablefish remained relatively constant
 183 between control and treatment pots, although the distribution of CPUE in control pots was most closely matched by
 184 the 8.9 cm escape ring treatment (Figure 4).

186 3.2 | Theoretical selectivity curves

187 Girth and length measurements were collected from 153 sablefish captured in control pots during the survey, and
 188 an additional 411 samples were collected during the fishery in Sep and Oct 2019. The girth-length relationship for
 189 sablefish was best characterized by a linear model with a single intercept and separate slopes for data collected in
 190 May and Sep/Oct (Figure 5A). Theoretical selectivity curves showed that as girth-at-length increases throughout the
 191 growing season, the proportion retained at length increases for a given escape ring size (Figure 5B). In other words,
 192 as fish get fatter over the growing season, they have a harder time escaping from a pot and are retained at a higher
 193 rate for a given length.

194 Results showed large changes in selectivity with relatively small increases in escape ring size (Figure 5B). For the
 195 8.9 cm escape ring, sablefish were fully selected by 64 cm in the fishery, meaning that by the time 50% of sablefish
 196 are mature at 63 cm, they are 99% selected to the gear. In contrast, results from the 9.5 cm and 10.2 cm escape rings
 197 showed that 89% and 50% of 63 cm fish are selected during Sep/Oct, respectively. Theoretical selectivity curves for
 198 Sep/Oct showed that sablefish are not fully selected to the gear until 69 cm and 73 cm for 9.5 and 10.2 cm rings,
 199 respectively. If the management goal is to protect immature sablefish while maximizing proportion retained above
 200 L_{50} , theoretical size-selectivity curves suggest that an escape ring as small as 8.9 cm may be appropriate.

201 3.3 | SELECT modelling

202 The Bayesian SELECT model was applied to length frequency data from the escape ring experiment, resulting in
 203 selectivity estimates for the three escape ring treatments (Table 3). Residual plots suggested the model fit the data
 204 well, with the exception of residual patterns in the larger length bins for the 8.9 cm escape ring and in the smaller
 205 length bins for the 10.2 cm escape ring (Figure 6). The relative probability of entering a control pot (δ) was estimated
 206 to be 0.95, indicating there is a slightly higher probability of entering a pot with escape rings than not. This may be
 207 a spurious result as the 95% credible interval contained $\delta = 1$ (Table 3). Alternative hypotheses include attraction to
 208 the metal escape rings or habituation to the control pots, which are used annually on the survey.

209 Posterior distributions and correlation plots for the model's fixed effects showed that parameters are well-estimated
 210 (Figure 7). As expected, a positive linear correlation was observed between the s_{50} parameters and escape ring size
 211 (Figure 7). Trace plots for the seven chains indicated the model was well mixed (figure omitted for brevity). This in-
 212 terpretation was corroborated by an \hat{R} statistic of 1.00, below the maximum convergence threshold of 1.05, and a
 213 minimum bulk and tail ESS well above the recommended minimum of 100.

214 A comparison of theoretical and SELECT curves showed that theoretical curves are far steeper than the SELECT
 215 curves, resulting in a much narrower selection range (Figure 8). At $L_{50}=63$ cm, sablefish were 89% (95% credible
 216 interval: 85-93%), 75% (70-80%), and 65% (59-70%) selected for the 8.9, 9.5, and 10.2 cm escape rings, respectively.
 217 These retention probabilities were lower at L_{50} than they were for the theoretical curves, resulting in different man-
 218 agement implications. However, based on seasonal changes in the theoretical selectivity curves, one may expect the
 219 SELECT curves to be shifted to the left later in the year when the fishery occurs, resulting in an increased retention
 220 probability at L_{50} for all escape rings. The SELECT curves retained a much higher proportion of smaller-sized sablefish
 221 than would be suggested by the theoretical size-selectivity curves. The SELECT curves indicated that sablefish are
 222 not fully selected until they are at least 80 cm for the 8.9 cm escape ring and even greater for the 9.5 cm and 10.2 cm
 223 escape rings.

224 Linear regressions of SELECT model parameter estimates κ and s_{50} yielded the following results: $\kappa = 0.53 - 0.037 \cdot E$
 225 ($R^2 = 0.94$) and $s_{50} = 6.28 + 5.22 \cdot E$ ($R^2 = 0.97$), where E was the internal escape ring diameter. These regression
 226 coefficients were used to develop a generalized equation that can be used to calculate the size-selectivity for any
 227 escape ring size:

$$P = \frac{1}{1 + \exp(-(0.53 - 0.037 \cdot E) * (i - (6.28 + 5.22 \cdot E)))}. \quad (6)$$

228 4 | DISCUSSION

229 There is a long history of modifying fishing gear to alter selectivity and reduce incidental catch of non-target species or
 230 size classes (Kennelly and Broadhurst, 2002; Broadhurst et al., 2007). Our experiment demonstrates that escape rings
 231 significantly reduce catch of small, immature sablefish ($L_{50}=63$ cm), while maintaining average catch rates of larger,
 232 mature individuals (Table 2, Figure 4). Theoretical and SELECT-estimated size-selectivity curves suggest that the 8.9
 233 cm escape ring will maximize catch of sablefish greater than or equal to 63 cm, with the trade off that it will also
 234 result in the highest catches of sablefish less than 63 cm. This trade off was realized in the capture efficiency analysis;
 235 the 8.9 cm escape ring had intermediate CPUE for small fish, but its distribution of CPUE of large sablefish was most
 236 similar to the control pot CPUE (Figure 4). There was no additional decrease in CPUE of small sablefish between the
 237 9.5 and 10.2 cm escape rings. If the management goal is to provide the best compromise between minimizing catches

238 of small fish to reduce discard mortality, while maximizing catches of large fish, these results indicate that an escape
239 ring size greater than 9.5 cm may not be preferred.

240 Several factors contribute to the apparent differences in the theoretical and SELECT estimated selectivity curves
241 (Figure 6). One hypothesis is that the current study's relatively short soak time (24 hr) was insufficient to observe the
242 full effects of the escape rings on size-selectivity. Theoretical curves assume all fish smaller than the escape ring will
243 escape, which may be unrealistic given search time and crowding in the pots. Further experimentation is needed to
244 assess the effects of soak time on escape ring size-selectivity and capture efficiency. Another factor to consider is
245 the availability of small sablefish in the population during the time of the study. Large recruitment events of sablefish
246 from 2014 and 2016 were observed as peaks in the length frequencies around 48 cm and 53 cm (Figure 3). The high
247 abundance of small fish may have caused crowding in the pots, making it difficult for fish to escape, and thus biasing
248 selectivity estimates. Finally, residual patterns in the model fits to the data (Figure 6) could potentially be remedied
249 with alternative selectivity curves. Other studies have suggested that pot gear for sablefish may follow a dome-shaped
250 selectivity curve (Assonitis, 2008), and others have used an asymmetric logistic curve (Haist and Hilborn, 2000; Haist
251 et al., 2000). Residual patterns were not consistent across escape ring treatments, however. Further research would
252 be needed to develop methods to generalize these alternative selectivity parameterizations as a function of escape
253 ring size as has been done in this study (Equation 6). Finally, the SELECT model relies on the assumption that all
254 size classes included in the analysis are fully selected to the control gear (Millar, 1992). If this assumption is violated,
255 selectivity estimates from this method may be unreliable.

256 Results differed from previous escape ring studies conducted in British Columbia for sablefish. Haist et al. (2000)
257 found that the length at which 50% of sablefish are retained (s_{50}) was 60–64 cm for a 9.8 cm escape ring, while s_{50} was
258 52–59 cm in the present study for the escape ring sizes examined. This difference may be attributed to the parameter-
259 izations of the logistic curve, which varied between the two studies. However, it is likely due to the differences in the
260 data collected in the two studies. For example, the proportion in treatment pots (ϕ) showed significantly more con-
261 trast in Haist et al. (2000), with observations of ϕ ranging between 0 and 1, while the ϕ in this study ranged between
262 0.2 and 0.6. These differences are likely explained by variation in fish availability between areas and years.

263 A fundamental tension exists in modern fisheries management between the traditional guidance to reduce inci-
264 dental catch of small, immature fish and an alternative strategy of "balanced harvesting" or spreading fishing mortality
265 more evenly across size or age classes (Zhou et al., 2010). While most harvest strategies rely on a reference point
266 based on a fishing mortality rate (F) averaged across all ages (e.g. F_{35} ; Clark, 1991), the realized resultant age-specific
267 F s may be much higher if mortality is concentrated on large fish in a population (Garcia et al., 2012; Breen et al., 2016).
268 The debate between selective and balanced harvesting remains highly relevant among fisheries managers and biol-
269 ogists regulating fisheries with limited resources and shrinking budgets. This study demonstrates that larger escape
270 rings select for larger individuals, while smaller escape rings may offer a compromise that results in a more balanced
271 harvest across size classes.

272 Management recommendations from this study vary between federal IFQ and state EQS sablefish fisheries. In
273 particular, because releasing small fish is legal in EQS state fisheries, there is a large incentive to discard small fish
274 because large sablefish can be worth more than seven times per kg than smaller fish (Sullivan et al., 2019). In particular,
275 managers in state waters may prefer the medium-sized escape ring (9.5 cm) because it effectively minimizes CPUE
276 of small sablefish, thus reducing discarding mortality (Figure 4). In contrast, the smaller escape ring (8.9 cm) may
277 be preferable for the IFQ fishery where full retention is mandatory to promote balanced harvest of sablefish across
278 a wider spectrum of size and age classes. Escape rings may also offer a solution to fishermen trying to avoid small
279 sablefish in the IFQ sablefish fishery in Alaska (Hanselman et al., 2020). Interestingly, the development of a live market
280 sablefish fishery in Clarence Strait stalled due to a steep increase in tariffs of U.S. seafood products going to China

281 from 10% to over 40% (J. Scoblic, personal communication, January 10, 2020). The use of 9.5 cm escape rings will
282 sufficiently protect immature sablefish from discard mortality, while allowing for the development of a live market
283 sablefish fishery in the future.

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288 Conflict of interest

289 The authors have no conflict of interest to disclose.

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409 *National Academy of Sciences*, **107**, 9485–9489.

410 5 | TABLES**TABLE 1** Number of sablefish caught, fork lengths sampled, and mean fork length with standard error (SE) by escape ring treatment during the 2019 pot survey in May and June. Control = no escape ring.

Treatment	Total catch	Fork lengths	Mean fork length (SE)
Control	5,216	4,059	56.7 (0.13)
8.9 cm	3,604	2,827	58.0 (0.15)
9.5 cm	2,918	2,244	58.2 (0.18)
10.2 cm	2,495	1,977	58.2 (0.21)
Total	14,233	11,107	57.6 (0.08)

TABLE 2 Results for non-parametric Kruskal-Wallis and post hoc multiple comparison Dunn tests for CPUE of all sizes of sablefish combined, sablefish < 63 cm, and sablefish \geq 63 cm. Statistically significant results ($\alpha = 0.05$) for Dunn tests are highlighted in bold and p-values have been adjusted using the Bonferroni correction.

Comparison	Z-statistic	p _{adj}
<u>All sizes combined:</u> χ^2 -statistic = 77.2, $p < 0.001$		
10.2 cm - Control	-8.20	< 0.001
9.5 cm - Control	-6.63	< 0.001
10.2 cm - 8.9 cm	-4.23	< 0.001
8.9 cm - Control	-3.98	< 0.001
8.9 cm - 9.5 cm	2.66	0.047
10.2 cm - 9.5 cm	-1.57	0.702
<u>Sablefish < 63 cm:</u> χ^2 -statistic = 46.9, $p < 0.001$		
10.2 cm - Control	-6.17	< 0.001
9.5 cm - Control	-5.12	< 0.001
10.2 cm - 8.9 cm	-3.85	0.001
8.9 cm - 9.5 cm	2.80	0.030
8.9 cm - Control	-2.27	0.139
10.2 cm - 9.5 cm	-1.06	1.000
<u>Sablefish \geq 63 cm:</u> χ^2 -statistic = 5.3, $p = 0.151$		
9.5 cm - Control	-2.15	0.187
10.2 cm - Control	-1.74	0.490
10.2 cm - 8.9 cm	-0.51	1.000
10.2 cm - 9.5 cm	0.36	1.000
8.9 cm - 9.5 cm	0.89	1.000
8.9 cm - Control	-1.25	1.000

TABLE 3 SELECT model parameters estimates (medians and 95% credible intervals, CI) with priors used for Bayesian analysis. For brevity, only median values are reported for random effects. Parameters are indexed by escape ring treatment, such that 1 = 8.9 cm, 2 = 9.5 cm, and 3 = 10.2 cm. The relative probability of entering a control pot δ was estimated using a log-link and is reported on the natural scale for clarity.

Parameter	Symbol	Median	95% CI	Prior
Length at 50% selectivity, 8.9 cm	$s_{50,1}$	52.5	(50.9, 53.9)	$U \sim (0, 100)$
Length at 50% selectivity, 9.5 cm	$s_{50,2}$	56.5	(54.8, 58.0)	$U \sim (0, 100)$
Length at 50% selectivity, 10.2 cm	$s_{50,3}$	59.1	(57.4, 60.6)	$U \sim (0, 100)$
Slope at 50% selectivity, 8.9 cm	κ_1	0.20	(0.17, 0.25)	$U \sim (0, 0.9)$
Slope at 50% selectivity, 9.5 cm	κ_2	0.17	(0.15, 0.20)	$U \sim (0, 0.9)$
Slope at 50% selectivity, 10.2 cm	κ_3	0.15	(0.14, 0.17)	$U \sim (0, 0.9)$
Relative probability of entering a control pot	δ	0.95	(0.90, 1.01)	$U \sim (0.1, 2)$

411 6 | FIGURES

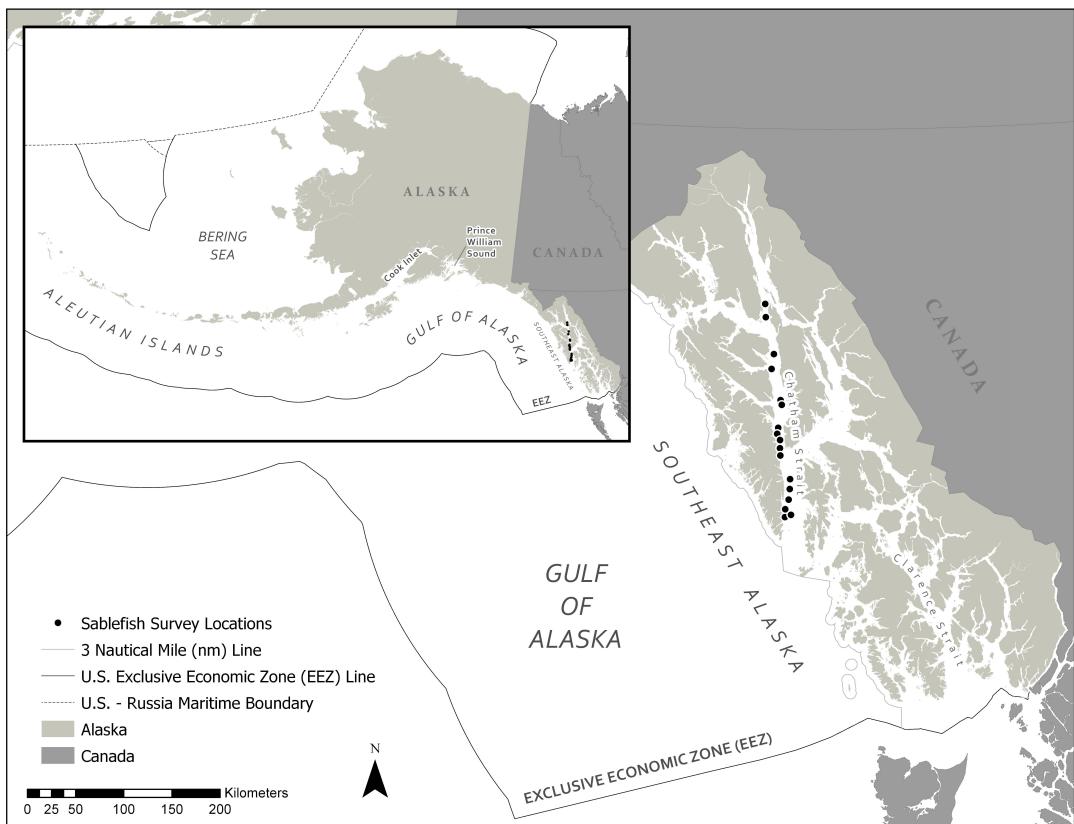


FIGURE 1 Map of study area and survey locations in Southeast Alaska.

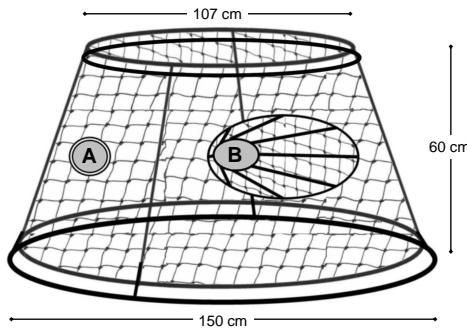


FIGURE 2 Diagram of the conical pot used during the survey, including the placement of the escape ring (A), the soft-sided entrance tunnel (B), the top diameter (107 cm), bottom diameter (150 cm), and height (60 cm). Both the entrance tunnel and escape ring are mirrored on the opposite quadrants of the pot (not shown in this diagram).

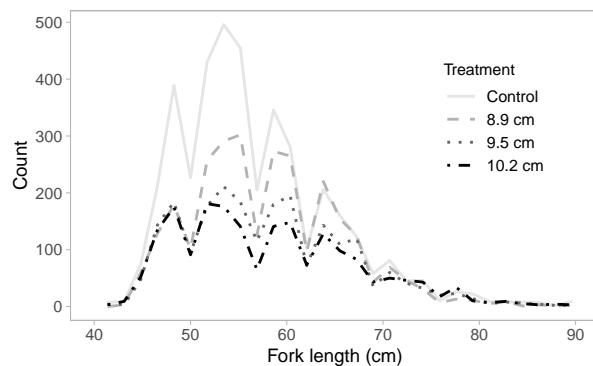


FIGURE 3 Length frequency distributions obtained using different sizes of escape rings (Control = no escape ring).

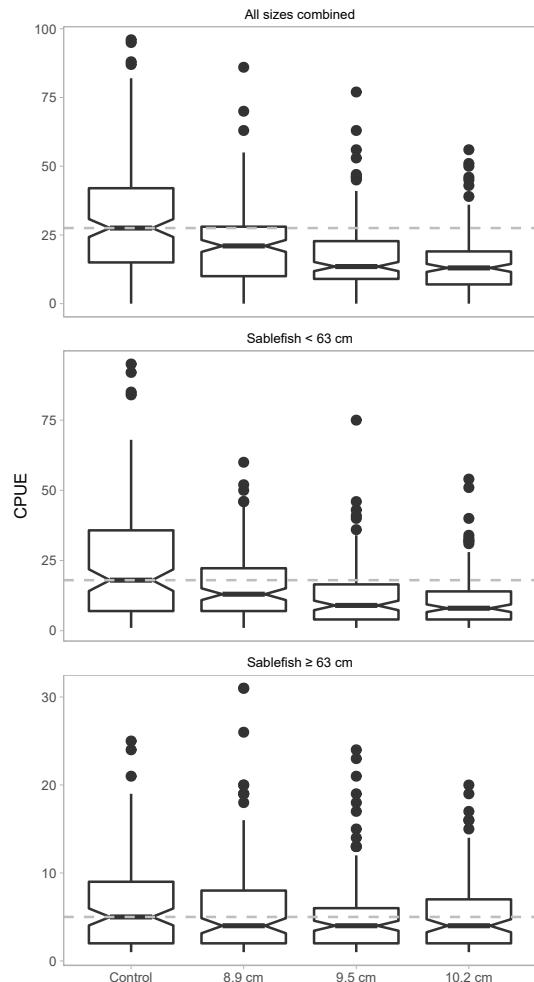


FIGURE 4 Number of sablefish caught per pot (CPUE) by escape ring treatment shown as notched box plots for all sized fish combined, sablefish < 63 cm and sablefish ≥ 63 cm. Each box shows the median (line), interquartile range (IQR, the box), 1.5 times the IQR (the whiskers), and the notches show roughly 95% confidence intervals around the median. The median CPUE for control pots is shown as reference in each panel as a grey dashed horizontal line.

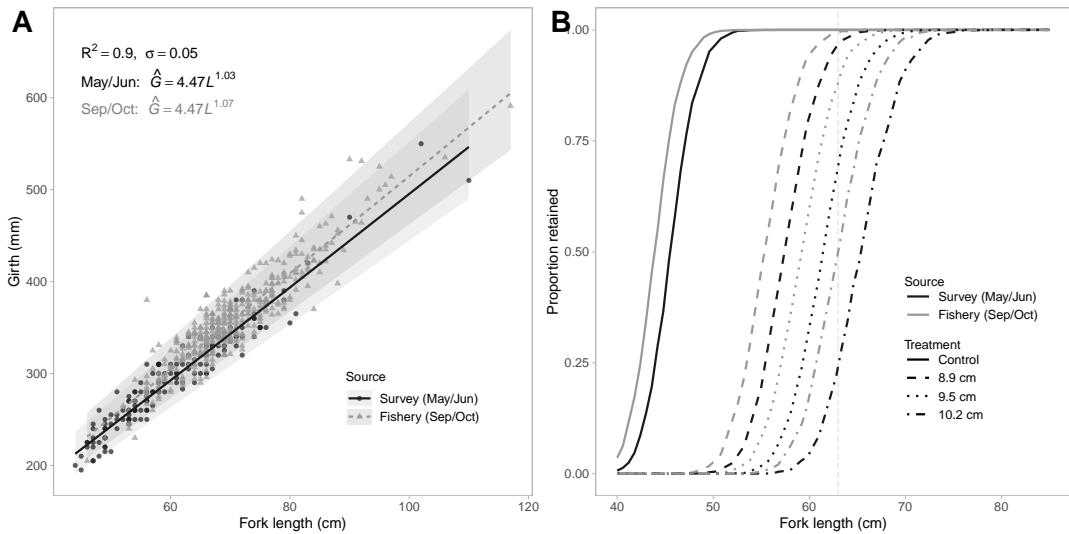


FIGURE 5 A) Fitted values and prediction intervals for the regression of girth on length for data collected during the survey in May and June (black circles, solid line) and fishery in September and October (grey triangles, dashed line). The coefficient of variation (R^2), residual standard deviation (σ), and model equations are shown in the upper left. B) Theoretical curves developed using the girth-length regression and σ for each treatment and season. The length-at-50% maturity (L_{50}) for sablefish is shown as a grey dashed vertical line for reference.

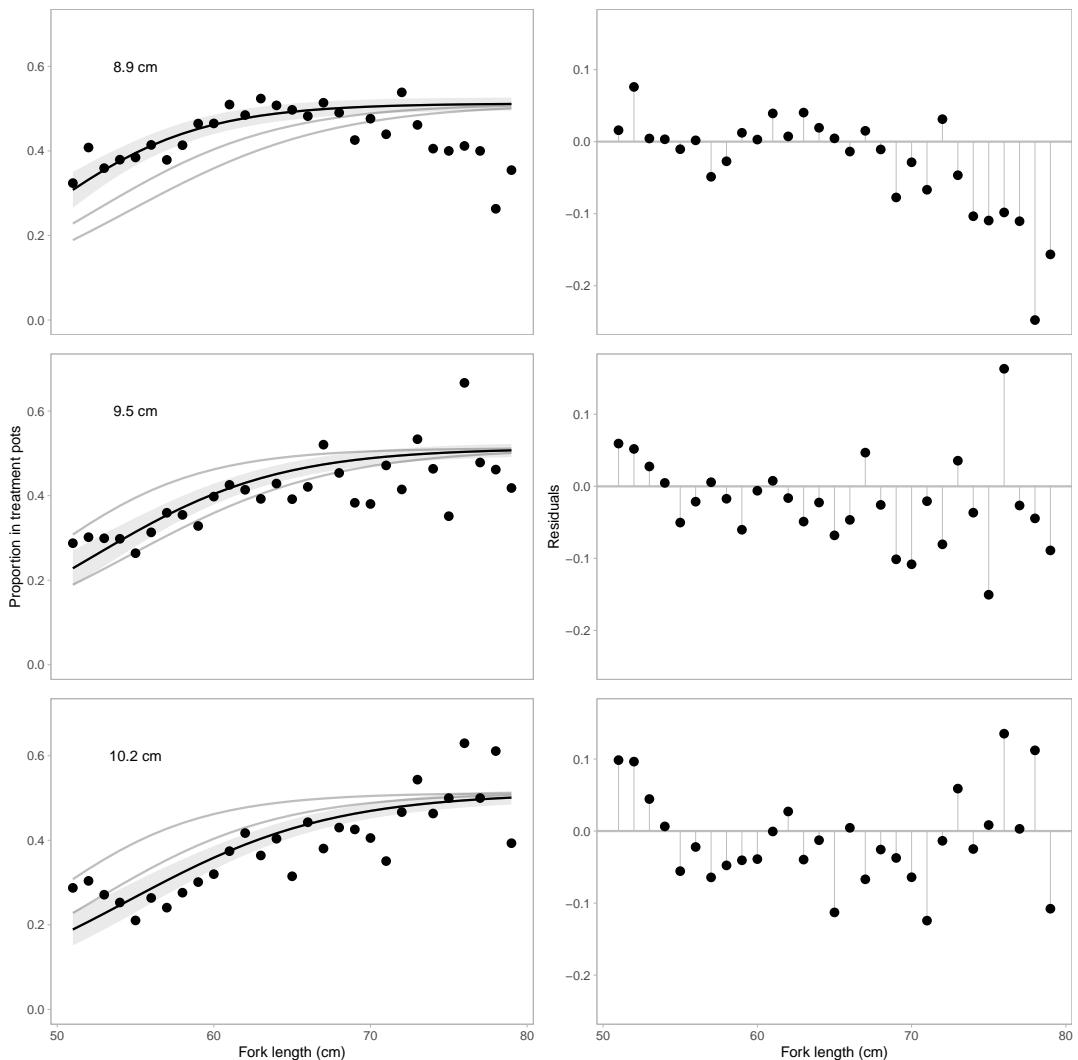


FIGURE 6 Model fits to proportion of fish in each treatment with 95% credible intervals (left) with associated residuals by length bin (right). Fits for the other treatments are shown in grey for comparison.

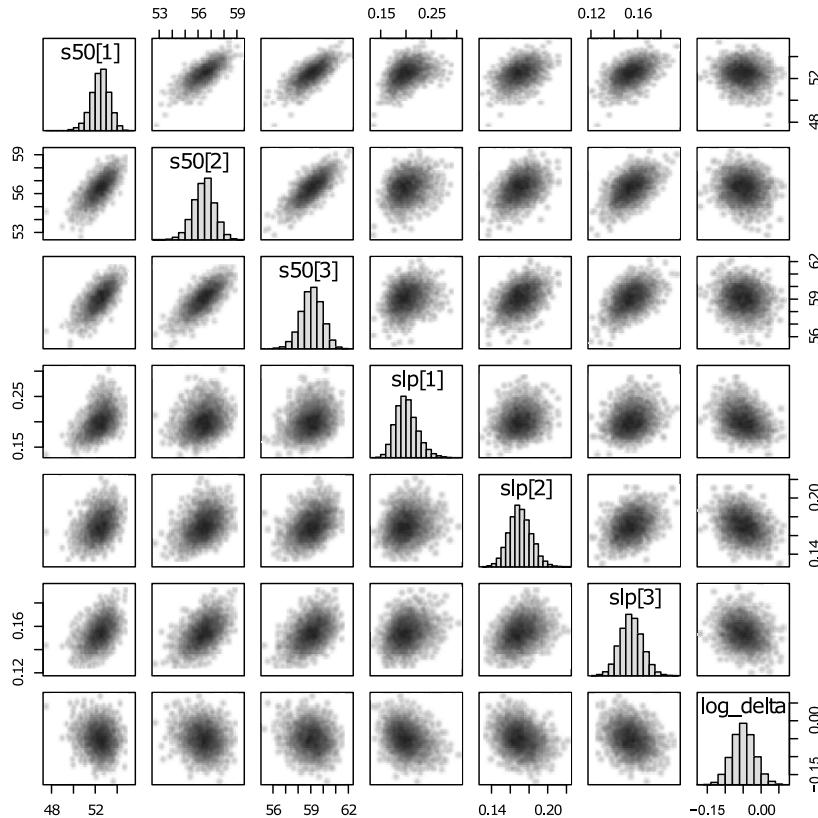


FIGURE 7 Marginal posterior distributions for SELECT model fixed effects (diagonal) with pairwise correlation plots. Parameters include the s_{50} (s_{50}) and k (slp) for each treatment, which were indexed as 1 = 8.9 cm, 2 = 9.5 cm, and 3 = 10.2 cm. The relative probability of entering a control pot δ (log_delta) was estimated using a log-link.

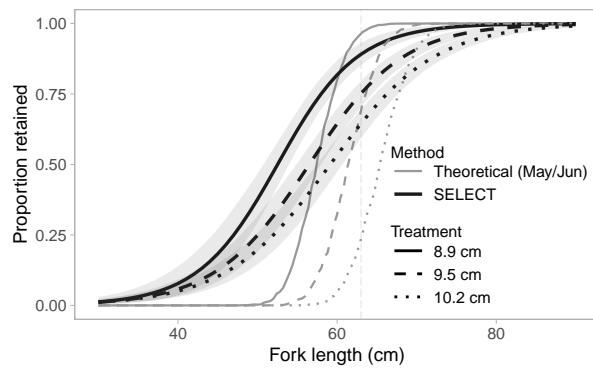


FIGURE 8 Theoretical selectivity curves calculated using girth data collected during the survey in May and June (grey) are compared with SELECT model estimated curves with 95% credible intervals for each treatment. The length-at-50% maturity (L_{50}) for sablefish is shown as a grey vertical line for reference.