

# Fish & Fishings Deep-sea dweller surfaces

## Fish caught bare-handed along shore

By JOHN ROBINSON 4-28-93  
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LIVE OAK — A rarely seen and monstrous-looking deep-sea fish was pulled bare-handed from the surf off 18th Avenue by a Santa Cruz man Tuesday afternoon.

Hank Scott, a contractor, was walking on the beach when he saw the four-foot creature thrashing in the shallow water and grabbed it, not quite sure what he was getting hold of.

"It looked prehistoric," Scott said. "I didn't know what it was. At first I thought it was a small dolphin, or a halibut. It was just tearing the water up."

As Scott grabbed the fish's tail it whipped back and forth, trying to sink its mouthful of nearly inch-long, dagger-like teeth into him.

"It was just flipping out," Scott said. "Everybody on the beach came running."

A quick knock from a pipe killed the fish as a crowd gathered. None had seen such an odd creature, with its fearsome teeth, iridescent scaleless body, sailfish-like fin and turquoise green eyes that seemed to glow in the sunlight.

Scott took the fish to Shamrock Charters and Fisherman's Supply at the Santa Cruz Small Craft Harbor, where no one there had seen such a fish before — until Bill Reson, a longtime fisherman, arrived and said it was a long-nosed lancetfish.

"I'd seen one before," Reson said. "A shrimp dragger brought one in one time a few years ago.



Hank Scott displays the longnosed lancetfish he caught Tuesday in the surf off 18th Avenue.

Dan Coyro/Sentinel

It's a deep water fish, from way out, way, way down."

The fish was also identified by biologists at the UC Santa Cruz Long Marine Laboratory as a lancetfish, described in scientific books as the "wolf of the sea" for its voracious appetite. The fish grow to 6 feet long and are normally found in tropical and sub-

tropical seas at depths to nearly 6,000 feet.

Their stomach contents are often a treasure for scientists who have discovered previously unknown species of deep water creatures when they have dissected the fish.

Scott said the fish's stomach contained squid and octopus. Ac-

cording to biologists, the fish eat until their stomachs swell like balloons. They have been known to surface when they eat too much or have severe parasites.

What brought this fish to the shallows is unknown.

"I didn't know what to do with it," Scott said. "It's like finding Bigfoot. You don't know whether

to shoot it so people can see it or let it go. But then I catch a lot of seabass. I thought, it's only a fish, and hit it."

Scott said he'll give the fish to the marine lab, if they want it. He won't eat it.

"I don't know if it's good eating, but I won't be the first to try," he said.