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32 ABSTRACT: Understanding changes in the migratory and reproductive phenology of 33 fish stocks in relation to climate change is critical for accurate ecosystem-based fisheries 34 management. Relocation and changes in timing of reproduction can have dramatic 35 effects upon the success of fish populations and throughout the food web. During 36 anomalously warm conditions (1-4° C above normal) in the northeast Pacific Ocean 37 during 2015-2016, we documented shifts in timing and spawning location of several 38 pelagic fish stocks based on larval fish samples. Total larval concentrations in the 39 northern California Current (NCC) during winter (January-March) 2015 and 2016 were 40 the highest observed since annual collections first occurred in 1998, primarily due to 41 increased abundances of *Engraulis mordax* (northern anchovy) and *Sardinops sagax* 42 (Pacific sardine) larvae, which are normally summer spawning species in this region. 43 Sardinops sagax and Merluccius productus (Pacific hake) exhibited an unprecedented 44 early and northward spawning expansion during 2015-16. Additionally, spawning 45 duration was greatly increased for E. mordax, as the presence of larvae was observed 46 throughout the majority of 2015-16, indicating prolonged and nearly continuous spawning of adults throughout the warm period. Larvae from all three of these species 47 48 have never before been collected in the NCC as early in the year. Additionally, other 49 southern species were collected in the NCC during this period. This suggests that the 50 spawning phenology and distribution of several ecologically and commercially important 51 fish species dramatically and rapidly changed in response to the warming conditions 52 occurring in 2014-2016, and could be an indication of future conditions under projected 53 climate change. Changes in spawning timing and poleward migration of fish populations 54 due to warmer ocean conditions or global climate change will negatively impact areas 55 that were historically dependent on these fish, and change the food web structure of the 56 areas that the fish move into with unforeseen consequences. 57

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INTRODUCTION

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61 Global climate change is expected to occur over the next few centuries and lead to 62 unprecedented effects in both terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems (Walther et al., 2002; 63 Parmesan, 2006; Doney et al., 2012), many of which have already been observed 64 (Parmesan & Yohe, 2003; Poloczanska et al., 2013, 2016). Among the many 65 perturbations (e.g., warming, acidification, deoxygenation, sea-level rise) expected to 66 occur in marine systems with climate change, the effects of temperature on the distribution and physiology of marine organisms is expected to be the most pervasive 67 68 (Doney et al., 2012). Although global temperatures are expected to rise by several 69 degrees in the next century, these effects are not uniform throughout the world's oceans 70 (Wang et al., 2010), with the California Current upwelling system off the west coast of 71 North America expected to show highly variable responses (Wang et al., 2010; Sydeman 72 et al., 2014; García-Reyes et al., 2015).

73 Based on projected model outputs under different climate scenarios, the 74 California Current is expected to show changes in fish distributions (Hseih et al., 2009; 75 Cheung et al., 2015) and carrying capacity (Woodworth-Jefcoats et al., 2013, 2016). In 76 addition to shifts in distribution that result in habitat changes, changes to the seasonal 77 timing of events (phenology) such as plankton blooms and fish spawning events are 78 likely to occur. Larval fish appear to be sensitive indicators of climate change, reflecting 79 advancement of spring spawning at approximate rates of 11 days per decade 80 (Poloczanska et al., 2013). The only study to date which examined changes in the 81 phenology of larval fishes from the southern California Current in response to climate 82 change found evidence for both earlier and delayed timing of larval occurrence, which 83 "were more closely associated with a trend toward earlier warming of surface waters 84 rather than decadal climate cycles" (Asch, 2015).

85 Larval-stage fish dynamics are important for understanding various aspects of 86 marine ecosystems. This information can be used as indicators of spawning locations and 87 seasonality, spawning stock biomass (Lasker, 1985; Hunter & Lo, 1993; Ralston et al., 88 2003), future recruitment potential of fish stocks (Houde, 2008; Hsieh et al., 2006), and 89 trophic interactions between zooplankton and piscivore communities (Young & Davis, 90 1990; Auth, 2003; Daly et al., 2013). Because larval-stage dynamics are influenced by 91 local and basin-scale environmental forcing factors both in the northern California 92 Current (NCC; Auth, 2008, 2011; Brodeur et al., 2008; Auth et al., 2011) and elsewhere

in the northeastern Pacific Ocean (Hsieh et al., 2005; Boeing & Duffy-Anderson, 2008;
Doyle et al., 2009), they are particularly suitable as indicators of changes in ocean and
climate conditions in the region (Brodeur et al., 2006, 2008; Guan et al., 2017).

Ichthyoplankton communities have been relatively well-studied in the NCC 96 97 region over the last 30 years (Auth & Brodeur, 2013), during which time episodic 98 anomalies in those communities have been documented resulting from several El Niño 99 events and other environmental fluctuations. For example, Brodeur et al. (2008) 100 examined larvae collected biweekly-monthly in 1997-2006 at two nearshore stations off 101 the central Oregon coast and found the lowest mean concentration of the time-series for 102 total larvae during the 1997-98 El Niño. However, Auth et al. (2015) found anomalously 103 high concentrations and both shoreward and northward displacement of fish larvae during the 2010 El Niño. 104

Anomalously warm (1-4 °C above normal) ocean conditions occurred in the 105 106 northeastern Pacific Ocean from late 2014 through late 2015 (Di Lorenzo & Mantua, 107 2016; Peterson et al., 2016). This warming, commonly referred to as the 'warm blob', 108 was the result of reduced cyclonic storms in the Gulf of Alaska which reduced oceanic 109 mixing, and subsequent cooling, of the upper ocean (Bond et al. 2015). This was 110 followed by the strongest tropical El Niño event ever recorded (Jacox et al., 2016), that 111 lasted into early summer 2016 and resulted in continued elevated water temperatures (Di 112 Lorenzo & Mantua, 2016; McClatchie et al., 2016). These events culminated in 113 prolonged anomalously warm ocean conditions that exceeded the duration and magnitude 114 of other warming events occurring over the past two decades such as the 1997-98 El 115 Niño. This prolonged warming resulted in significant changes to marine communities 116 throughout the pelagic food-web of the California Current (Leising et al., 2015; Cavole et 117 al., 2016; Di Lorenzo & Mantua, 2016; McClatchie et al., 2016; Peterson et al., 2016). 118 The purpose of this study is to examine how the anomalous ocean conditions 119 resulting from the 2015-16 warm-water phenomenon affected the larval assemblage 120 structure, diversity, concentration, distribution, and phenology of commercially and 121 ecologically important fish stocks in the NCC. To compare this recent event to other 122 climatic events, we analyzed larvae collected during winter of 2015-16 in relation to a 123 long time-series of similar winter collections that occurred in 1998-2014. To determine 124 whether larval fish exhibited shifts in phenological timing or cross-shelf distributions, we

125 also examined biweekly-monthly year-round collections from near-shore stations, as well 126 as cross-shelf to oceanic samples from quarterly surveys, conducted in 2015-16 off the 127 central coast of Oregon. We focused our analyses on Engraulis mordax (northern 128 anchovy) and Sardinops sagax (Pacific sardine) larvae, and to a lesser extent larval 129 Merluccius productus (Pacific hake), and related variations in their concentration patterns 130 to local (i.e., temperature and salinity) and basin-scale (i.e., Pacific Decadal Oscillation 131 [PDO] and Oceanic Niño Index [ONI]) environmental variables. By comparing our 132 findings with previous studies, we hope to show how increasingly dynamic and prolonged environmental fluctuations may impact fish stocks in the California Current 133 134 ecosystem in the future.

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MATERIALS AND METHODS

Sampling procedures

141 A total of 188 ichthyoplankton samples were collected during 31 cruises from 142 stations spaced 7-46 km apart along a single transect (Newport Hydrographic [NH] line; 143 44.6° N) extending 2-364 km off the central Oregon coast (Appendix 1, Fig. 1). From 144 this set of samples, we extracted overlapping subsets (i.e., winter, near-shore, and cross-145 shelf) according to a design structured to address specific hypotheses. Winter samples 146 were collected at six stations spaced ~9 km apart located 2-46 km offshore (NH 1-25) 147 during January-March 2015-16 on a ~biweekly basis (only one set of samples was 148 collected in January and February 2016). These samples were compared with data from 149 similar collections made in 1998-2010, as described in Auth et al. (2015) and updated 150 (2011-14) and summarized in the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration 151 (NOAA) Northwest Fisheries Science Center's (NWFSC) winter ichthyoplankton index 152 for the forecasting of adult returns of coho (Oncorhynchus kisutch) and Chinook (O. 153 tshawytscha) salmon in the Pacific Northwestern United States 154 (https://www.nwfsc.noaa.gov/research/divisions/fe/estuarine/oeip/g-forecast.cfm, 2017). 155 In order to understand high-frequency patterns in larval dynamics, near-shore samples 156 were collected at four stations spaced ~9 km apart located 2-28 km offshore (NH 1-15)

157 monthly from January 2015 to December 2016 (no samples were collected in December 158 2015). To investigate cross-shelf patterns across seasons, samples were collected at 10 159 stations spaced 7-37 km apart located 2-155 km offshore (NH 1-85) ~quarterly from 160 March 2015 to December 2016. However, in April 2015 and February 2016, sampling 161 was conducted at 15 and 13 stations, respectively, extending 2-364 km offshore (NH 1-162 200), while in December 2016, sampling was conducted at only six stations extending 2-163 46 km offshore (NH 1-25). Not all samples from each sampling subset were distinct, as 164 samples collected from some cruises were analyzed as part of multiple, overlapping sampling subsets. Sampling was done at different times during both day and night, and 165 166 not all stations were sampled during each cruise due to weather or equipment issues.

167 Samples were collected using a 60-cm diameter bongo with paired 333-µm mesh 168 nets. The bongo was fished as a continuous oblique tow within the upper ~30 m of the water column at stations NH 1-25 and within the upper ~100 m at stations NH 35-200, at 169 a line retrieval rate of ~ 30 m min⁻¹ and a ship speed of 1 to 1.5 m s⁻¹. The length of tow-170 171 wire out and ship and retrieval speeds were continually adjusted during each tow to 172 ensure a wire angle of 45° in order to maintain an effective mouth opening of 0.28 m² 173 throughout the tow. A depth recorder and flowmeter were placed within the net to 174 determine the tow depth and volume of water filtered. Mean water-volume filtered was 45.19 (SE = 0.96) and 138.16 m³ (SE = 5.05) for the 30-m and 100-m tows, respectively. 175

176 Ichthyoplankton samples were preserved in a 10% buffered-formalin seawater 177 solution at sea. Fish larvae from each sample were counted and identified to the lowest 178 taxonomic level possible in the laboratory using a dissecting microscope. The lesser of 179 either all larvae or a random subsample of 30 individuals from each taxon in each sample 180 were measured to the nearest 0.1 mm standard length (SL), or notocord length (NL) for 181 preflexon larvae, using either an ocular micrometer mounted on the sorting microscope or 182 Leica Application Suite 4.5.0 imaging software (Leica Microsystems Ltd. 2014). Most 183 larval osmerids (smelts), Sebastes spp. (rockfishes), Sebastolobus spp. (thornyheads), and 184 *Citharichthys* spp. (sanddabs) collected were not identifiable to species based on 185 meristics and pigmentation patterns, so these taxa were analyzed at the family or generic 186 level. However, the majority of individuals classified as *Citharichthys* spp. are either *C*. 187 sordidus (Pacific sanddab) or C. stigmaeus (speckled sanddab) based on the larger,

188 identifiable individuals collected and dominance of these species in the NCC

189 ichthyoplankton (Matarese et al., 2003).

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Environmental Data

193 Local changes in hydrography were determined at each station from water-194 column profiles of temperature and salinity collected with a SBE25 CTD (Sea-bird 195 electronics). Temperature and salinity from two stations, NH 5 located in 60 m of water and NH 25 located in 300 m of water, were chosen to represent fluctuations on the shelf 196 197 and shelf slope. To show the winter annual deviations throughout the water column, 198 anomalies of temperature and salinity were obtained by subtracting the January-March 199 climatology (1996-2015) from the annual January-March mean. Monthly-averaged seasurface temperature in 1998-2016 (SST, °C; http://www.ndbc.noaa.gov/, 2017) recorded 200 from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's (NOAA) Stonewall Banks 201 202 buoy located 20 nm (37 km) west of Newport, Oregon (44.64°N, 124.50°W) was 203 calculated to show seasonal and annual water temperature differences in 2015-16 relative 204 to the monthly means over the past two decades. Low-frequency, basin-scale fluctuations 205 in the north Pacific Ocean and at the equator were indexed using the PDO 206 (http://research.jisao.washington.edu/pdo/PDO.latest.txt, 2017) and ONI 207 (http://www.cpc.ncep.noaa.gov/products/analysis monitoring/ensostuff/ensoyears.shtml, 208 2017).

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Data analyses

Larval concentrations were expressed as the number of individuals per 1000 m³. Mean concentrations were often $\log_{10}(N + 0.1)$ -transformed to facilitate the display of data over a wide range of values. Weighted mean (based on concentration) lengths (WML) of important larval species were calculated for each sample, and after testing for and finding no significant cross-shelf differences in WMLs for any of the primary larval species examined, monthly means were calculated based on all sampled stations from all sampling subsets. Length distributions were expanded to concentrations per 1000 m³ at size for each sampling date when sufficient larvae were present to facilitate the creationof length-frequency (LF) plots.

221 For all analyses limited to the winter sampling subset, monthly means of the 10 222 most abundant larval taxa in the time-series were calculated then annual mean 223 concentrations were plotted. Additionally, taxonomic evenness, diversity, and 224 distinctness were determined for each tow (n = 267) on all identifiable larval fish taxa (n 225 = 77). Taxonomic evenness was calculated using Pielou's evenness index (J'), which has 226 output values ranging from 0 to 1, with higher values indicating that all fish taxa are 227 characterized in the same relative concentrations (Krebs, 1989). Taxonomic diversity 228 was calculated based on the Shannon-Weiner diversity index (H'), with higher values 229 representing greater diversity (Shannon & Weaver, 1949). Lastly, taxonomic distinctness 230 (Δ^*) was utilized as an index of biodiversity based on taxonomic or phylogenetic 231 relatedness patterns within a community (Clarke & Warwick, 2001). Taxonomic 232 distinctness assesses the average 'distance apart' of any species in a tow based on a 233 Linnaean tree which was developed from the 77 fish taxa of our study (Clarke & 234 Warwick, 2001). Data from the taxonomic evenness, diversity, and distinctness analyses 235 were pooled across tows within a year and were averaged for annual mean estimates of 236 diversity along with standard errors. Tows where no larvae were collected were not 237 included in the analyses because J', H', and Δ^* cannot be calculated. Software utilized to 238 calculate the evenness, diversity, and distinctness indices were performed using PRIMER 239 7 statistical software (Clarke & Gorley, 2015).

240 To determine the similarity in the winter larval fish community over time, 241 hierarchical two-way cluster analysis was used to identify taxa assemblages over the 242 time-series from 1998 to 2016. To eliminate the effect of rare taxa on the analysis, only 243 those taxa that occurred in at least 5% of the samples were used, leaving 25 larval taxa. Larval fish concentrations were averaged monthly and 4th-root transformed prior to 244 245 analysis. The two-way cluster was constructed with the Bray-Curtis distance measure 246 and a flexible beta ($\beta = -0.25$) clustering algorithm. A non-parametric multi-response 247 permutation procedure (MRPP) was used on larval fish concentrations for each tow (n =248 267) to test the hypothesis that there was no difference in the larval community between 249 all pairs of sampling years (1998-2016). Results from the paired tests were used to 250 calculate the percent of the years that were significantly different for each year. Fish taxa

251 primarily responsible for significant differences between years were identified using 252 indicator species analysis (ISA). The ISA measured the fidelity of fish taxa within a 253 particular year in relation to their concentrations in all other years, and a measure of 254 statistical significance is generated as well as an indicator value (IV) index. The IV index 255 is a combination of both taxa specificity (concentration) and fidelity (frequency of 256 occurrence in a year), and its value is not influenced by the concentration of other taxa 257 (Dufrêne & Legendre, 1997). The hierarchical two-way cluster, MRPP, and ISA were 258 performed using PC-ORD 6 statistical software (McCune & Grace, 2002).

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Hydrography

RESULTS

265 The PDO changed from negative to positive in January 2014, followed soon after 266 by a similar change in sign by the ONI (Fig. 2). Both indices remained strongly positive through the early summer of 2016, matching magnitudes that occurred during the strong 267 268 El Niño events of 1982-83 and 1997-98. The local response is reflected in strongly 269 positive winter temperature anomalies throughout the water column at NH 5 and over the 270 upper 80 m at NH 25. These warm anomaly patterns are similar to those observed during 271 the 1997-98 El Niño, except the entire water column warmed at NH25 in 1997-98 (Fig. 272 3a,b). Salinity values at both stations in 2015-16 were approximately average relative to 273 the 1997-2016 time-series. In January 2015-December 2016, monthly-averaged SST at 274 NH 20 was consistently higher (mean monthly difference = ± 1.1 °C) than the 19-y mean, 275 although it was ≤ 1 °C lower in June 2015 and August 2016 (Appendix 2).

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Larval collections, concentrations, and distributions

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279 Mean concentrations of the 10 dominant larval fish taxa (comprising 95% of the

280 total mean larval concentration) collected in winter of both 2015 and 2016 were higher

281 than in any other year in the 19-y time-series (Fig. 4). Larval Engraulis mordax and

282 Sardinops sagax dominated the ichthyoplankton in winter 2015, and both species were in

the top four most dominant taxa in winter 2016. *Engraulis mordax* larvae were found only once before in the 19-y time-series: in relatively low concentrations (mean = 16.3 1000 m^{-3} [SE = 6.3]) in March 1998. *Sardinops sagax* larvae were never before collected during winter. *Engraulis mordax* larvae were collected as early as 4 February in 2015 and 8 January in 2016, while *S. sagax* larvae were collected as early as 18 February in 2015 and 15 February in 2016.

289 Sardinops sagax larvae were collected in the near-shore samples from February to 290 May in 2015 and March to May in 2016, with maximum mean concentrations in March of both years (Fig. 5). *Engraulis mordax* larvae were collected in the near-shore samples 291 292 from February to June and in September-October in 2015, and January to August and 293 November-December in 2016, with maximum mean concentrations in April of both years 294 (Fig. 5). Together, these two species accounted for 76% of the total larval mean 295 concentration from the near-shore samples in January 2015-December 2016, and 83% of 296 the February-May larvae collected in both 2015 and 2016.

297 The cross-shelf sampling subset showed that *E. mordax* and *S. sagax* larvae were 298 not just collected in near-shore samples, but were found across the shelf in March and 299 April 2015 and May 2016 (Appendix 3a,b,c). In March 2015, *E. mordax* larvae were 300 collected at every cross-shelf station except for NH 35 and 85, but were most 301 concentrated at NH 1-25. However, S. sagax larvae were not collected at the 302 intermediate cross-shelf stations (NH 5-25), but were found at the most near-shore station 303 (NH 1) and three of the four offshore stations (NH 35-65). In April 2015, *E. mordax* 304 larvae were collected at every cross-shelf station from NH 1-150, with the highest and 305 most even concentrations at NH 1-65, while S. sagax larvae were highly concentrated at 306 NH 1, but were found at low concentrations at only two other, far-offshore stations: NH 307 65 and 105. The following year, in May 2016, E. mordax larvae were evenly distributed 308 at every cross-shelf station from NH 1-85, while S. sagax were mostly evenly distributed 309 at every offshore station from NH 20-85, with a maximum concentration at the shelf 310 break (NH 35). No *E. mordax* larvae were collected at the offshore (NH > 15) stations in 311 either August 2015 or February 2016, but were collected at relatively low concentrations at two offshore stations in August 2016 (NH 35 and 45; mean = 14.1 1000 m^{-3} [SD = 312 313 4.2]). Sardinops sagax larvae were found at relatively low concentrations at three offshore stations in August 2015 (NH 20, 65, 85; mean = 19.6 1000 m^{-3} [SD = 7.5]), at 314

one offshore station in February 2016 (NH 85; concentration = 7.8 1000 m⁻³), and at the same two offshore stations as *E. mordax* in August 2016: NH 35 (concentration = 11.4 1000 m^{-3}) and 45 (concentration = 134.4 1000 m⁻³). No *E. mordax* or *S. sagax* larvae were collected at any cross-shelf station in November 2015 or October and December

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Larval size distributions

323 In 2015, WMLs for both *E. mordax* and *S. sagax* larvae initially increased, then 324 decreased, before increasing again (Appendix 4). In 2016, WML for *E. mordax* larvae 325 was relatively even from January to March, increased in April, decreased in May, then 326 increased to even levels in June-July, before increasing even further in August (Appendix 327 4). After not being found in the ichthyoplankton in September and October, recently 328 hatched *E. mordax* larvae were again collected in November and December 2016 at 329 WMLs of 3.1 and 3.3 (SE = 0.07) mm, respectively. Sardinops sagax larval lengths 330 increased from February to March 2016, then remained relatively even through May, 331 before increasing again in August (Appendix 4). There were no significant cross-shelf 332 differences in WMLs for any of the three larval species examined.

LF plots showed clear signs of continuous spawning for both *E. mordax* and *S. sagax* during each of the biweekly-monthly cruises in February-May 2015-16, as evident in the large number of recently-spawned (<5 mm) larvae collected during each cruise (Appendix 5a,b). Survival of multiple larval cohorts was also evident by the multimodality and/or presence of larger larvae in the LF plots for *E. mordax* in 2015 and 2016 and for *S. sagax* in 2015, although no evidence was found for multiple cohort survival of larval *S. sagax* in March-May 2016.

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Unusual larval occurrences

We observed several unusual patterns of abundance in the ichthyoplankton collected during winter 2015-16. Osmerids and *Ammodytes personatus* (Pacific sand lance), which normally are two of the dominant taxa found in the winter ichthyoplankton and are morphologically and ecologically similar larvae to *E. mordax* and *S. sagax*, were

found in relatively low concentrations in both 2015 and 2016. Conversely, *Psettichthys melanostictus* (sand sole) and *Isopsetta isolepis* (butter sole) larvae were found in two out of the four highest concentrations of the 19-y winter time-series in 2015 and 2016, with the anomalously warm years of 2002 and 2010 comprising the other two highest years. In addition, *Citharichthys* spp. larvae were collected in the highest concentrations in 2015 and 2016 of the winter time-series, while *Ronquilus jordani* (northern ronquil) larvae were collected in the highest concentrations in 2016.

354 Several larval taxa normally found offshore were found nearshore in winter 2015-16, likely due to the relaxed upwelling associated with the warming phenomena. 355 356 Cololabis saira (Pacific saury) and Lipolagus ochotensis (eared blacksmelt) were both 357 collected for the first time in the 19-y time-series: C. saira in March 2015 at NH 10, and 358 L. ochotensis in March 2015 at NH 20 and in March 2016 at NH 25. Larval Microstomus 359 pacificus (Dover sole) were found as far inshore as NH 5 in March 2016 and at NH 25 in March 2015, while larval Sebastolobus spp., another taxa with an offshore distribution, 360 361 were found pervasively at NH 1-25 in February-March 2015 and 2016 at the highest 362 concentrations ever observed in the 19-y winter time-series.

We also observed two novel species of larval fish during this study. A single 363 364 recently hatched (2.6 mm) Peprilus simillimus (Pacific pompano) larva, a species that 365 normally spawns in the southern California Current in spring-summer, was collected at 366 NH 15 in December 2016, and represents the first confirmed occurrence of a larva for 367 this species off Oregon in at least the last 19 y. We also observed the presence of 368 *Merluccius productus* larvae, a normally southern-spawning species, in high concentrations (mean = 1920.1 [SE = 784.4]; maximum = $3918.3 \ 1000 \ \text{m}^{-3}$) at all far-369 370 offshore stations between NH 35 and 105 in February 2016: the only time that we 371 collected this species in all of the sampling conducted during this study, and the earliest 372 in the year and in the highest concentrations that have ever been observed in the NCC 373 (Auth & Brodeur, 2013). The WML for larval *M. productus* in February 2016 was 4.8 374 mm (SE = 0.1), with a range of 2.8-7.2 mm (SL), which suggested that they were all 375 recently hatched.

Community analysis

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Taxonomic diversity and distinctness was above average in winter 2015-16 relative to the 19-y time-series, while evenness was slightly below average (Fig. 6). Diversity in 2016 was the third highest of the time-series, behind the El Niño years of and 2010, while 2015 was the fifth highest. Taxonomic distinctness was virtually the same in 2015 and 2016, ranking third highest in the time-series behind 2000 and Likewise, evenness values in 2015 and 2016 were almost identical, ranking third lowest behind 2011 and 2000.

386 The dendrogram resulting from the two-way cluster analysis using the 19-y timeseries from the winter data revealed several notable temporal and taxonomic groupings 387 388 (Fig. 7). February and March of 2015 and 2016 clustered close together and separated 389 out from the rest of the sampling periods, although their closest temporal grouping was 390 February and March of 2010: another anomalously warm period in the NCC. Larval E. 391 mordax and S. sagax similarly clustered close together and separated from the rest of the 392 taxonomic groups, and were strongly associated with the February-March 2015-16 393 temporal grouping. However, January of 2015 and 2016 clustered together with other 394 years. The results from the MRPP analysis support those from the cluster analysis, 395 showing that 2015 and 2016 were the only years in the time-series that were significantly 396 different from every other year, while 2010 was significantly different from 94.4% of the 397 other years (Appendix 6). The ISA analysis revealed nine significant indicator taxa in the 398 winter time-series, with four being from 2015-16 (Appendix 7). Most notably, E. mordax 399 and *Sebastolobus* spp. larvae were indicative of 2016, while *S. sagax* and *Citharichthys* 400 spp. were indicative of 2015. These four significant indicator species also exhibited the highest IVs. 401

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DISCUSSION

Dramatic and prolonged changes in the ocean temperature patterns reported here and elsewhere (Bond et al., 2015; Peterson et al., 2016) in the north Pacific Ocean resulted in widespread ecosystem anomalies in the northern California Current (Leising et al., 2015; Di Lorenzo & Mantua, 2016; McClatchie et al., 2016; Peterson et al., In revision). An unusual weather pattern in the north Pacific resulting in extremely elevated surface and water-column temperature anomalies ('warm blob') was followed by a large

El Niño pattern, which was reflected in high PDO and ONI values in the NCC, leading to
a multi-year marine heatwave unprecedented in the historical record (Di Lorenzo &
Mantua, 2016). Although equatorial conditions in early summer 2016 reverted back to El
Niño/Southern Oscillation (ENSO) neutral conditions (NOAA Earth System Research
Laboratory, http://www.esrl.noaa.gov/psd/enso/mei/, 2017), the return of warm ocean
temperature anomalies in the NCC was observed in late summer 2016 but dissipated in
the coastal region by the fall that same year (Gentemann et al., 2017).

The year-round presence of warm water (11-15 °C) off the Oregon coast in 2015-418 419 16 created habitat favorable for winter spawning of several fish species that generally 420 spawn off southern California during this time, or off of Oregon only during the summer 421 when temperatures are at their seasonal maxima, and thus over short temporal periods. 422 Takasuka et al. (2008) showed that the optimal temperature range for spawning of 423 northeastern Pacific Engraulis mordax ranged between 11 and 16 °C. Historically, there 424 were three populations of *E. mordax* in the California Current: two in California and one 425 off central-northern Oregon in the Columbia River plume (Huppert et al., 1980; Richardson, 1981; Parnel et al., 2008); although more recent data suggest that spawning 426 427 has been occurring in southern-central Oregon waters at least since 2013 (Auth & 428 Brodeur, Unpub. Data). While the more southern populations have an early and 429 protracted reproductive season, the Columbia River population typically has a later and 430 relatively narrow window for spawning from late-May to early August (Brodeur et al., 431 2008; Parnel et al., 2008; Auth, 2011). It is beyond the scope of this study to discern if 432 the individuals that spawned in the NCC in 2015-16 were migrants from southern areas, 433 but there is little evidence for this (Davison et al., 2017). For Sardinops sagax, Takasuka 434 et al. (2008) showed that the optimal temperature range for spawning ranged between 435 ~13 and ~25 °C. However, in the present study, the highest concentrations of S. sagax 436 larvae were found during February-May of both 2015 and 2016, when SST was 11-13 °C: below the 13 °C lower threshold previously documented by Takasuka et al. (2008). 437 438 These temperature thresholds generally limit spawning of S. sagax to the area south of 439 Point Conception off southern California during most years, although the spawning 440 population is noted to shift northward during positive ENSO years (Fiedler et al., 1986; 441 Auth, 2008; Sadrozinski, 2008).

442 *Engraulis mordax*, and to a lesser extent *S. sagax*, demonstrated multiple 443 spawnings throughout most of each year in 2015-16 off Oregon, with the presence of 444 newly-hatched larvae occurring over several successive monthly cruises starting in 445 February 2015. Although no *E. mordax* or *S. sagax* larvae were collected in January 446 2015, E. mordax larvae as large as 5.3 mm NL were collected on 4 February 2015 and S. 447 sagax larvae as large as 11.2 mm SL were collected on 18 February 2015, while hatch 448 sizes for these species are 2.5 and 3.5 mm NL, respectively (Matarese et al., 2003), 449 indicating that spawning for both species occurred at least as early as January in 2015. 450 The reason that only a relatively few *E. mordax*, and no *S. sagax*, larvae were collected in 451 June-July and in September-October in 2015-16 may be because we only sampled 452 nearshore (NH 1-15) in those months (except for October 2016 when sampling was 453 conducted at NH 1-200), and these larvae were probably located farther offshore. In a 454 separate study conducted off the Oregon coast in June 2015 and 2016 (McClatchie et al., 455 2016; Auth & Brodeur, Unpub. Data), S. sagax larvae were found in moderate 456 concentrations at NH 20 but absent at NH 15 and 45 in both years, while E. mordax 457 larvae were found at relatively high concentrations at NH 20 and 45 in both years, but at 458 NH 15 were absent in 2015 and at a low concentration in 2016. Unlike E. mordax and S. sagax, Merluccius productus spawn in relatively deep 459 water (50-100 m), where they inhabit cooler waters (10.3 °C) as early-stage larvae, 460 461 eventually rising above the thermocline to warmer surface temperatures (11-11.3 $^{\circ}$ C; 462 Moser et al., 1997). The normal spawning area for this species is considered to be off 463 southern and Baja California, although spawning has been observed to shift northward 464 during warm years (Horne & Smith, 1997; Ressler et al., 2007; Auth, 2008; Sadrozinski, 465 2008). We found *M. productus* larvae only during one sampling cruise (14-17 February 466 2016), but we were not able to sample in offshore waters (>46 km from shore) along the 467 NH line often in the winter months. However, larvae as large as 7.2 mm NL were 468 collected, while hatch size for this species is 2.4 mm NL (Matarese et al., 2003), 469 indicating that spawning occurred at least as early as January 2016. Although we did not 470 find *M. productus* larvae in the NCC in winter 2015 during the local 'warm blob', we did 471 find them in large numbers in winter 2016 during the El Niño, which may be indicative 472 of migration of southern stocks northward resulting from El Niño effects in the south, and 473 not just early spawning in response to local warming conditions in the north like E.

mordax and *S. sagax*. It is also possible that *M. productus* spawned somewhere north of
their usual spawning grounds in 2015, but it may have been somewhat south of our
sampling, and stronger than average northward-flowing currents in winter 2016
compared to winter 2015 transported the larvae to our study region (Peterson et al., In
revision).

479 Previous studies have documented some anomalous distributions in early-life 480 stages of *E. mordax* and *M. productus*. During the 1983 El Niño, Brodeur et al. (1985) 481 observed shoreward displacement and increased abundance of larval taxa that generally 482 occur offshore, especially E. mordax which are normally found in warm, offshore, 483 Columbia River plume waters (Richardson, 1973; Auth, 2009). They also observed a 484 shift in the timing of spawning of E. mordax, collecting larvae continuously in April-485 September 1983, when the normal spawning period for this species is June-July in the 486 NCC (Auth, 2011). Doyle (1995) also found *E. mordax* eggs and larvae as early as April 487 in 1983 over a much broader area, along with unusual occurrences of eggs and larvae of 488 species such as *M. productus* during spring of 1983 and 1984. The only other time *E.* 489 *mordax* larvae were found in winter during the present study's 1998-2016 time-series was 490 in March of 1998: a strong El Niño year. In 2004-05, when anomalously elevated sea-491 surface temperatures and decreased upwelling unrelated to ENSO occurred in the NCC, 492 Brodeur et al. (2006) observed high concentrations of larval and age-0 M. productus in 493 the NCC region from Oregon to British Columbia, which represents a significant 494 northward shift in their spawning distribution since they normally spawn in the southern 495 California Bight. They also observed a shoreward displacement of *E. mordax* larvae. 496 These northward and shoreward shifts in spawning distributions during the present warm 497 event are similar to those observed during the 1983 El Niño (Brodeur et al. 1985). Auth 498 et al. (2015) also found anomalously high concentrations and both shoreward and 499 northward displacement of fish larvae during the 2010 El Niño. However, none of these 500 or any other studies (see Auth & Brodeur, 2013 for references) have documented such a 501 widespread and early spawning of E. mordax, S. sagax, and M. productus in the NCC as 502 we found in the present study.

503Although we do not have direct corroborative evidence of adult spawners shifting504their distributions north during our surveys, findings from other studies indicate the505winter/spring presence of adult *E. mordax* and *S. sagax* well north of their normal

506 distribution in surveys conducted by NOAA's Southwest Fisheries Science Center 507 (SWFSC: Leising et al., 2015; McClatchie et al., 2016). Similarly, a Northwest Fisheries 508 Science Center (NWFSC) 2016 winter spawning survey of M. productus found 509 developing adults as far north as the NH line off Oregon (S. Parker-Stetter, NOAA 510 NWFSC, Pers. Comm.). Although warm periods such as El Niño events have been 511 shown to produce less productive zooplankton communities in the NCC potentially 512 leading to less productive systems as a whole (Fisher et al., 2015), periods of elevated 513 water temperature such as were present in 2015-16 have generally seen increased 514 spawning and larval production in pelagic fish communities in the California Current 515 (Hsieh et al., 2005; Auth, 2008; Daly et al., 2013; Auth et al., 2015). This may be a result 516 of faster gonadal development and growth of adults at higher temperatures (Greve et al., 2005). In any case, adult *E. mordax* and *S. sagax* apparently found adequate prey 517 resources to continue the energetically-expensive serial spawning that they exhibited in 518 519 the NCC throughout most of the year in 2015-16.

520 Shifts in spawning phenologies have been observed in the north Atlantic Ocean 521 (Greve et al., 2005; Genner et al., 2010) and in the north Pacific Ocean off California 522 (Asch, 2015) as well. In an analysis of multi-decadal larval densities for 43 species off 523 southern California, Asch (2015) found earlier phenologies for many species including 524 M. productus, E. mordax, and S. sagax, although the variability in the latter two species 525 was high so that they did not show a significant trend (see online supplementary material 526 http://www.pnas.org/content/suppl/2015/07/09/1421946112.DCSupplemental/pnas. 527 201421946SI.pdf, 2017). These changes were correlated with long-term changes in sea 528 surface temperature, likely mediated through trends in PDO and ENSO conditions, but 529 also may be attributed to other factors such as zooplankton biomass (Asch 2015).

530 Pelagic spawning fishes are known to have limited temperature dependencies for 531 spawning initiation, but other physical (e.g., currents, stratification) and biological (e.g., 532 prey and predator distributions) factors may also affect spawning timing and habitats. In 533 particular, spawning cycles have evolved to coincide with the availability of the proper 534 food resources for larvae (Platt et al., 2003), and disruption of the temporal overlap 535 between larvae and their food may lead to poor survival. In contrast to many demersal 536 spawners, the three species of interest here are iteroparous and capable of multiple 537 spawning events within a season, thus generating a higher probability of a temporal

538 match between food production and at least one of the spawning events. Length-539 frequency plots show multiple E. mordax and S. sagax cohorts surviving at least between 540 biweekly-monthly surveys in February-May 2015-16, and an increase in WML is 541 evidence for larval growth and survival through the summer. In addition, juvenile 542 pelagic fish surveys have collected age-0 individuals of all three species off both Oregon 543 and especially Washington during June of 2015 and 2016, which were absent in previous 544 years (Auth & Brodeur, Unpub. Data), indicating a northward shift in their spawning 545 habitat and providing evidence of successful recruitment of these early-spawned larvae at 546 least to the juvenile stage. Providing that there is not a mismatch between the earlier-547 spawned fish larvae and their prey (Asch, 2015), warmer temperatures in the larval 548 habitat would be expected to increase the growth rate of larvae (Takahashi et al., 2012), 549 decreasing their vulnerability window to size-selective predation.

550 Our results indicate that the spawning and nursery habitats of *E. mordax*, *S.* 551 sagax, and M. productus may have shifted north by 500-1000 km from their usual winter 552 habitats as a result of recent oceanic warming, with important ecological ramifications for the entire food web. Engraulis mordax spawning biomass has been steadily decreasing 553 554 off southern California in recent years (MacCall et al., 2016), and this, along with 555 declines in S. sagax and other pelagic forage species, may have led to precipitous 556 declines in sea lion survival off California (McClatchie et al., 2016). In the NCC, growth 557 and survival of juvenile salmon is dependent on the availability and type of fish prey 558 available to them in spring and summer (Daly et al., 2017). In 2015 and 2016, there were 559 anomalously high amounts of *E. mordax* juveniles in the stomachs of out-migrating 560 Columbia River Chinook salmon (Oncorhynchus tshawytscha) (Daly et al., 2017). In 561 addition, juvenile S. sagax were consumed by juvenile coho (Oncorhynchus kisutch) and 562 Chinook salmon in May and June of 2016 (Daly & Brodeur, Unpub. Data). This is 563 further evidence of early-spawned larval E. mordax and S. sagax recruitment to the juvenile stage in 2015 and 2016, making them available as prey for juvenile salmon 564 565 which could influence their growth and survival to adults.

566 Changes in spawning timing and poleward migration of fish populations due to 567 warmer ocean conditions or global climate change will negatively impact areas that were 568 historically dependent on these fish, as well as change the structure of the areas that the 569 fish move into (Cheung et al., 2015; Asch, 2015). If the unprecedented ocean warming

and/or more frequent and prolonged temperature surges such as has been occurring over
the last two years continues, the northward migration of spawning stocks (Last et al.,
2011), increased larval species richness (Koslow et al., 2017), and disruption to the food
web may become the new normal in the NCC with unforeseen consequences.

574 As is often the case with ecosystem change, some species may benefit from 575 changes in distribution and timing of prey whereas others may not be able to adapt and 576 subsequently decline (Cavole et al., 2016). Similar northward shifts in pelagic fish 577 species due to climate change have occurred in European waters with important 578 implications for ecosystems in those regions (Beare et al., 2004; Alheit et al., 2012; 579 Montero-Serra et al., 2015). Changing ocean conditions can be incorporated within in-580 season forecasting models (Kaplan et al., 2016) to inform fisheries management. We 581 know from past work that the ecosystem recovery time is strongly related to the intensity 582 and duration of warm events (Fisher et al., 2015). However, it is unknown whether the 583 'warm blob' or El Niño will persist for the next year, or whether the system will 584 transition to cooler and/or La Niña conditions with a different fish community as in 2011 585 (Auth et al., 2015), or if the phenological changes documented in this study will persist 586 regardless of future oceanographic fluctuations. Only through continued, regular, cross-587 shelf surveys will we be able to answer these questions, or discern the signals of future 588 anomalies and their relationship to global climate change.

589

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Appendix 1. Dates, stations sampled along the Newport Hydrographic	: (NH) line, and associated sampling regimes for each of the
31 cruises conducted for this study.	

Year	Month	Day	Stations sampled			Sampling regime
2015	1	6	1, 5, 10, 15, 20, 25			Winter, Near-shore
2015	1	21	1, 5, 10, 15, 20, 25			Winter, Near-shore
2015	2	4	1, 5, 10			Winter, Near-shore
2015	2	18	1, 5, 10, 15, 20, 25			Winter, Near-shore
2015	3	4-5	1, 5, 10, 15, 20, 25, 35, 45, 65, 85			Winter, Near-shore, Cross-shelf
2015	3	26	1, 5, 10, 15, 20, 25			Winter, Near-shore
2015	4	7	1, 5, 10, 15			Near-shore
2015	4	27-29	1, 5, 10, 15, 20, 25, 35, 45, 65, 85, 105,	125, 150, 17	5,200	Near-shore, Cross-shelf
2015	5	19	1, 5, 10, 15			Near-shore
2015	6	10	1, 5, 10, 15			Near-shore
2015	7	15	1,5			Near-shore
2015	8	10	1, 5, 15			Near-shore
2015	8	26-27	1, 5, 10, 15, 20, 25, 35, 45, 65, 85			Near-shore, Cross-shelf
2015	9	29	1, 5, 10, 15			Near-shore
2015	10	13	1, 5, 10, 15			Near-shore
2015	11	3-4	1, 5, 10, 15, 20, 25, 35, 45, 65, 85			Near-shore, Cross-shelf
2016	1	8	1, 5			Winter, Near-shore
2016	2	14-17	1, 5, 10, 15, 20, 25, 35, 45, 65, 85,	150,	200	Winter, Near-shore, Cross-shelf
2016	3	11	1, 5, 10, 15			Winter, Near-shore
2016	3	26	1, 5, 10, 15, 20, 25			Winter, Near-shore
2016	4	18	1, 5, 10			Near-shore
2016	5	12	1, 5, 10, 15			Near-shore
2016	5	24-25	1, 5, 10, 15, 20, 25, 35, 45, 65, 85			Near-shore, Cross-shelf
2016	6	12	1, 5, 10, 15			Near-shore
2016	7	7	1, 5, 10, 15			Near-shore
2016	8	1	1, 5, 10, 15			Near-shore
2016	8	21-23	1, 5, 10, 15, 20, 25, 35, 45, 65, 85			Near-shore, Cross-shelf
2016	9	20	1, 5, 10, 15			Near-shore
2016	10	10-12	1, 5, 10, 15, 20, 25, 35, 45, 65, 85, 105,	125, 150, 17	5, 200	Near-shore, Cross-shelf
2016	11	18	5, 10			Near-shore
2016	12	6	1, 5, 10, 15, 20, 25			Near-shore, Cross-shelf



Sea-surface temperature (SST; °C)











(b)



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Appendix 6. Results of the multi-response permutation procedure (MRPP) analysis for the 25 most dominant taxa collected from stations NH 1-25 during winter (January-March) 1998-2016.

Year	Pairs significantly diff	ferent % significantly different
1998	16	88.9
1999	5	27.8
2000	12	66.7
2001	9	50.0
2002	12	66.7
2003	11	61.1
2004	6	33.3
2005	10	55.6
2006	8	44.4
2007	14	77.8
2008	4	22.2
2009	11	61.1
2010	17	94.4
2011	12	66.7
2012	8	44.4
2013	7	38.9
2014	8	44.4
2015	18	100.0
2016	18	100.0

Appendix 7. Results of the indicator species analysis (ISA) with indicator year, value (IV), mean, standard deviation (SD), and p-value (p) for the 25 most dominant taxa collected from stations NH 1-25 during winter (January-March) 1998-2016. * = statistically significant (p < 0.05).

Scientific name	Common name	Year	IV	Mean	SD	р
Engraulis mordax	Northern anchovy	2016	25.6	5.5	2.93	0.0018*
Sebastolobus spp.	Thornyheads	2016	24.9	5.0	2.92	0.0018*
Sardinops sagax	Pacific sardine	2015	25.7	5.1	3.23	0.0022*
Citharichthys spp.	Pacific or speckled sanddab	2015	16.6	6.1	2.18	0.0046*
Microgadus proximus	Pacific tomcod	2002	14.0	5.1	2.76	0.0138*
Isopsetta isolepis	Butter sole	2010	12.4	5.8	2.18	0.0208*
Ammodytes personatus	Pacific sand lance	2000	12.6	6.0	2.31	0.0212*
Lyopsetta exilis	Slender sole	2002	12.9	4.9	2.88	0.0334*
Liparis fucensis	Slipskin snailfish	1999	11.1	4.9	2.87	0.0448*
Ophiodon elongatus	Lingcod	2008	10.8	5.0	2.93	0.0506
Osmeridae	Smelts	2010	9.8	6.1	2.17	0.0618
Hemilepidotus spinosus	Brown Irish lord	1999	9.3	5.2	2.60	0.0644
Ronquilus jordani	Northern ronquil	1999	8.5	5.0	3.16	0.0824
Stenobrachius leucopsarus	Northern lampfish	2010	8.7	6.3	2.04	0.1046
Sebastes spp.	Rockfishes	2010	8.5	6.9	1.39	0.1342
Psettichthys melanostictus	Sand sole	1998	8.2	6.1	2.13	0.1428
Glyptocephalus zachirus	Rex sole	2010	6.4	5.5	2.48	0.2927
Artedius harringtoni	Scalyhead sculpin	2002	5.1	5.3	2.66	0.3903
Hemilepidotus hemilepidotus	Red Irish lord	2011	4.8	4.9	3.11	0.4075
Leptocottus armatus	Pacific staghorn sculpin	2001	4.3	5.0	3.05	0.4923
Hexagrammos decagrammus	Kelp greenling	2014	4.2	4.9	2.74	0.5277
Artedius fenestralis	Padded sculpin	2002	4.1	5.0	2.91	0.5399
Parophrys vetulus	English sole	2011	6.4	6.9	1.53	0.5773
Scorpaenichthys marmoratus	Cabezon	2006	3.6	5.0	2.92	0.7021
Anoplarchus purpurescens	High cockscomb	2000	2.5	4.9	2.96	0.8930











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 $Log_{10}(N + 0.1)$ -transformed mean concentration (no. 1000 m⁻³)

lanus ----



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