

Index of Common Names

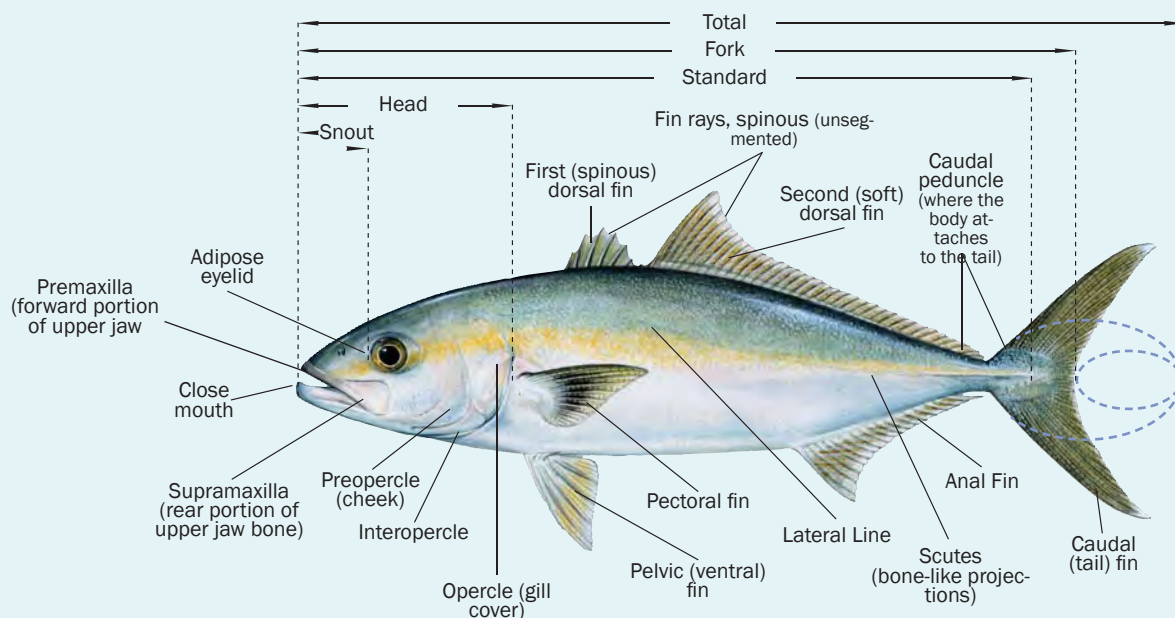
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Learning to identify fish is a fascinating study in itself and is a matter of importance to the angler; misidentification of fish can lead to fisheries violations. Included in the following listing are fish and invertebrates commonly caught by anglers in Florida. They are grouped into Families as listed in the American Fisheries Society publication, "Common and Scientific Names of Fishes."

How to use this section

Fish Illustrations by Diane Rome Peebles; Invertebrate Illustrations courtesy of Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services



Features: The details most readily observed have been given top priority, since the angler has only moments to decide if a fish is a legal catch.

Similar Fish: Many fish have "look-a likes," other fish that resemble them closely. In

such instances, the most readily seen differences are given.

Habitat: Many fish are locked into particular habitats, information that often tells the angler where to drop the hook.

Size: Anglers usually judge the size of the fish by its weight. Scientists use length, since age/length relationships are more reliable than age/weight.

Notes: This includes the fish's life history, behavior, and feeding habits.

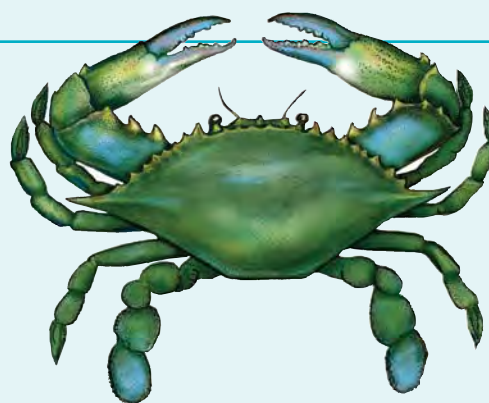
Blue Crab

Callinectes sapidus
Family Portunidae

- Features**
- Brilliant blue color on their front claws (tips are red in females) with an olive or blueish-green carapace.
 - Pair of paddle shaped legs that are excellent for swimming.
 - Nine marginal teeth behind each eye, within the last pair of teeth ending in a sharp spine.

Habitat Seagrass beds and other submerged aquatic vegetation areas are important nursery habitats for juvenile blue crabs. Adults utilize grassy and shallow sandy areas.

Size To 9 inches



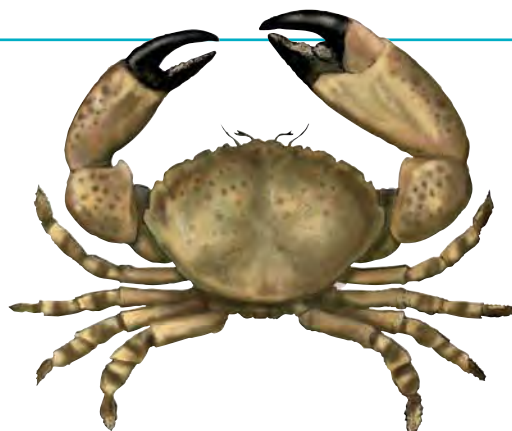
Stone Crab

Menippe spp
Family Xanthidae

- Features**
- Carapace is smooth, heavy and thick.
 - Claws are enlarged, stout and dark tipped.
 - There are four blunt teeth along the sides.
 - Usually one claw is larger and if legal can be harvested and then the crab is returned to the water.
 - Adults are reddish brown, juveniles are dark blue to purple.

Habitat Reefs and rocky areas, oyster bars in shallow to moderate deep areas. Stone crabs burrow in mud, seagrass or oyster beds.

Size To 2-4 inches.



Clams

Southern Quahog (*Mercenaria campechiensis*)
Northern Quahog (*Mercenaria mercenaria*)

- Features**
- Clams are bivalve, or two-shelled.
 - Clams have two muscles (adductors) used to close the shell.
 - Two siphons used to draw in or expel sea water.
 - Hatchet-shaped foot used to burrow into sand or mud.

Habitat Found in sediments located from high tide line to under 50 feet of water; they are most common on sand or sand-mud bottoms and tolerate a variety of salinities.

Size 1 inch thick across hinge.



Oysters

Crassostrea virginica
Family Ostreidae

- Features**
- When feeding, the oyster can pump and filter over 9 gallons of water in 1 hour.
 - Interior white with a purple mussel scar.
 - Oysters require a hard substrate to grow and often grow on the top of other oyster shells.
 - Oval in shape with a bumpy wrinkled shell.

Habitat Oysters flourish in estuaries where nutrient-rich fresh water meets the salt water.



Bay Scallops

Argopecten irradians
Family Pectinidae

- Features**
- Mottled gray and black.
 - Lower valve white.
 - Have an adductor muscle.
 - Capable of swimming by clapping valves together.
 - All species have rows of blue eyespots along edge of mantle.

Habitat Seagrass meadows in shallow waters.

Size To 3 inches.

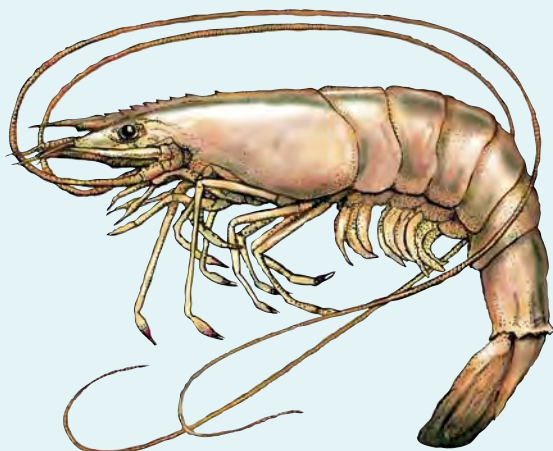


Shrimp

Brown shrimp (*Farfantepenaeus aztecus*), Pink shrimp (*Farfantepenaeus duorarum*), White shrimp (*Litopenaeus setiferus*) and royal red shrimp (*Pleoticus robustus* or *Hymenopenaeus robustus*).

- Features**
- Shrimp are decapod crustaceans characterized by five pairs of legs, often with small pincers on the end.
 - They have large, well-developed eyes, large swimmerets, and long antennae.
 - Pink shrimp found along the Atlantic Coast are usually brown; those found along the northern Gulf Coast are often lemon-yellow; and those found in the Florida Tortugas are pink.
 - White shrimp are grayish-white with a green, red or blue tinge on the tail and legs.
 - Royal red shrimp are usually deep red but are sometimes grayish pink.

Habitat Most shrimp spawn offshore in deep water from early spring through early fall. Young shrimp are carried by currents into coastal estuaries to mature. In Florida, shrimp are harvested with trawls that are cone-shaped nets towed along the bottom in waters near shore.



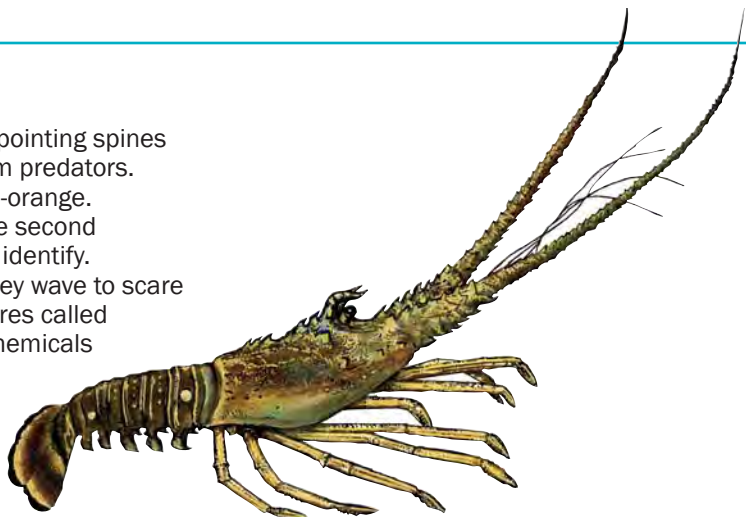
Spiny Lobster

Panulirus argus
Family Palinuridae

- Features**
- Spiny lobsters get their name from the forward-pointing spines that cover their bodies to help protect them from predators.
 - They vary in color from almost white to dark red-orange.
 - Two large, cream-colored spots on the top of the second segment of the tail make spiny lobsters easy to identify.
 - They have long antennae over their eyes that they wave to scare off predators and smaller antennae-like structures called antennules that sense movement and detect chemicals in the water.

Habitat Hardbottom, seagrass, and coral reefs of South Florida and Caribbean.

Size To 15 pounds (10 inches).



Shortfin Mako

Isurus oxyrinchus

Family Lamnidae, Mackerel Sharks

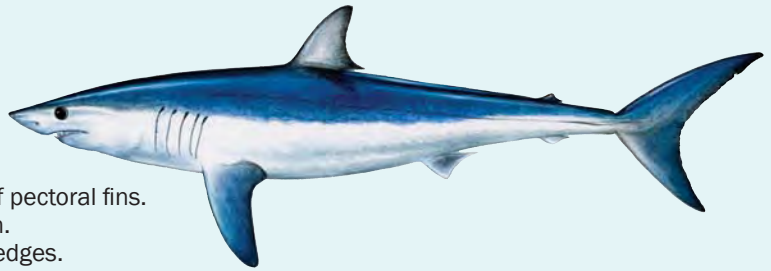
- Features**
- Lunate tail with similarly sized lobes.
 - Lateral keel at the base of the tail.
 - Deep blue back and white underside.
 - Underside of sharply pointed snout white.
 - Origin of first dorsal entirely behind base of pectoral fins.
 - Second dorsal fin slightly in front of anal fin.
 - Long, narrow, recurved teeth with smooth edges.

Similar fish White shark, *Carcharodon carcharias*, whose teeth are serrated and triangular, and the longfin mako, *Isurus paucus*.

Habitat Offshore fish often seen near the surface.

Size To 300 pounds (12 feet).

Notes Active, strong swimming fish known for leaping out of the water when hooked; feeds on mackerel, tuna, sardines, and some much larger fish.



Atlantic Sharpnose Shark

Rhizoprionodon terraenovae

Family Carcharhinidae, Requiem Sharks

- Features**
- Long and flattened snout.
 - White trailing edge of pectoral.
 - Black-edged dorsal and caudal fins, especially when young.
 - May have small whitish spots on sides.
 - Furrows in lips at the corners of the mouth.
 - Outer margin of teeth deeply notched in both jaws.
 - Second dorsal fin originates over middle of anal fin.
 - Slender body, brown to olive-gray in color with white underside.

Similar fish Other Carcharhinids.

Habitat Inshore species, even found in surf; also common in bays and estuaries; adults occur offshore.

Size A small species, 2 to 4 feet.

Notes Mature adults between 2 to 2.75 feet long; 4-7 newborns range from 9 to 14 inches in length; adults feed on small fish and crustaceans.



Sandbar Shark

Carcharhinus plumbeus

Family Carcharhinidae, Requiem Sharks

- Features**
- Snout broadly rounded and short.
 - First dorsal fin triangular and very high
 - poorly developed ridge between dorsal fins.
 - Brown or gray in color with white underside.
 - Upper and lower teeth finely serrated.

Similar fish Dusky shark, *Carcharhinus obscurus*; bull shark, *Carcharhinus leucas*.

Habitat Nearshore fish typically found at depths ranging from 60 to 200 feet.

Size To 10 feet.

Notes Both predator and scavenger, feeding mainly near the bottom on fish and shellfish; migrates long distances; matures at about 6 feet in length.



Blacknose Shark

Carcharhinus acronotus

Family Carcharhinidae, Requiem Sharks

- Features**
- Distinctive dusky smudge at snout tip (more prominent in young).
 - No dark tips on fins.
 - Pale olive-gray above, whitish below.
 - First dorsal fin begins above rear corner of pectoral fin no mid dorsal ridge.
 - Upper teeth very asymmetrical, those toward front coarsely serrated at base.

Size To 5 feet.

Habitat Common in bays and lagoons.



Blacktip Shark

Carcharhinus limbatus

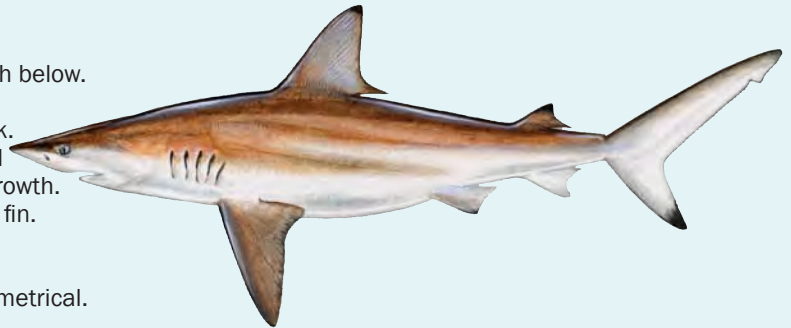
Family Carcharhinidae, Requiem Sharks

- Features**
- Dark bluish gray (young paler) above, whitish below.
 - Distinctive whitish stripe on flank.
 - Inside tip of pectoral fin conspicuously black.
 - Dorsal fin, anal fin, and lower lobe of caudal fin also black-tipped in young, fading with growth.
 - First dorsal fin begins above axil of pectoral fin.
 - Snout long, almost V-shaped from below.
 - No middorsal ridge.
 - Upper and lower teeth serrated, nearly symmetrical.

Similar fish Spinner Sharks, *Carcharhinus brevipinna*, the first dorsal fin begins above a point behind the pectoral fin, and the snout is longer.

Habitat Principally pelagic, but often comes inshore in large schools, particularly in association with Spanish Mackerel; frequently the most common shark (especially young) in clear-water cuts and along beaches in Florida and the Bahamas.

Size To 8.25 feet.



Scalloped Hammerhead

Sphyrna lewini

Family Sphyrnidae, Hammerhead Sharks

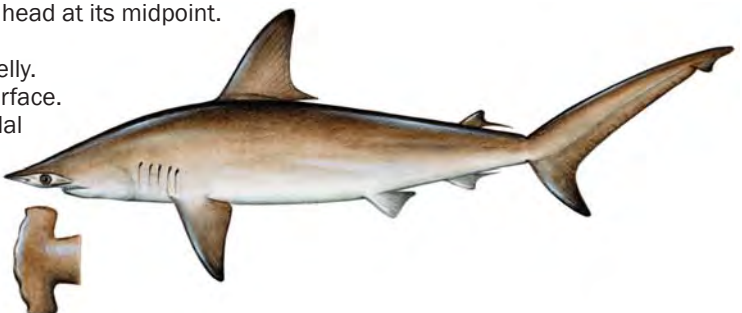
- Features**
- Fifth gill slit shorter than 4 preceding ones, located behind the pectoral fin base.
 - Flattened head extending to hammer-like lobes on each side.
 - Distinct indentation of the front margin of the head at its midpoint.
 - Teeth smooth-edged.
 - Gray-brown to olive in color with white underbelly.
 - Pectoral fins tipped with black on the undersurface.
 - Tips of first and second dorsal lobes and caudal also may have dusky tips.
 - Pelvic fin with nearly straight hind margin.

Similar fish Other hammerhead sharks.

Habitat Both offshore and inshore.

Size Common to 6 feet and can reach 14 feet.

Notes Predatory fish, feeding mainly on fish, squid, and stringrays; male matures at about 6 feet in length.



Bonnethead Shark

Sphyrna tiburo

Family Sphyrnidae, Hammerhead Sharks

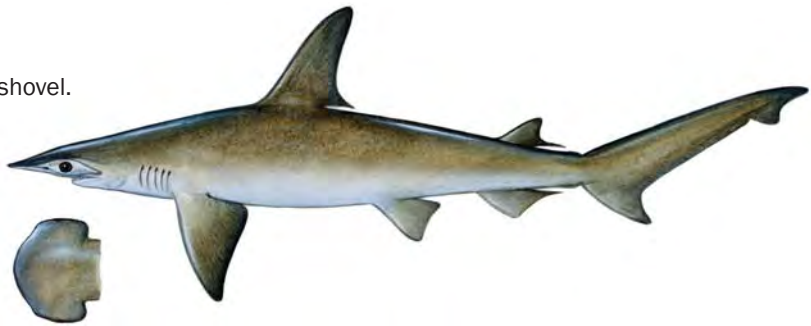
- Features**
- Broadly widened head in the shape of a shovel.
 - Only slight indentation of anal fin.
 - Front of head not notched at midline.
 - Gray or grayish-brown in color.

Similar fish Other hammerhead sharks.

Habitat Inshore species found in bays and estuaries.

Size To 5 feet.

Notes Matures at about 3 feet in length and bears 6 to 12 young at a time; feeds mainly on crabs and other crustaceans.



Southern Stingray

Dasyatis americana

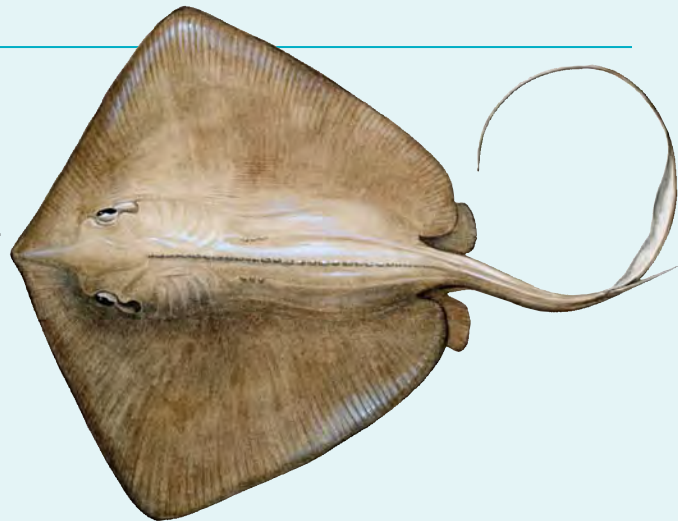
Family Dasyatidae, Stingrays

- Features**
- Disk almost a perfect rhombus, with pointed corners.
 - Ventral finfold on tail long and relatively high, dorsal finfold rows near shoulder.
 - Disk usually uniform dark brown above, grayer in young.
 - Large spine on base of tail.

Habitat Common in bays and estuaries.

Size To 6 feet across disk.

Notes The largest stingray along our Southeastern and Gulf shores.



Ladyfish

Elops saurus

Family Elopidae, Tarpons

- Features**
- Terminal mouth.
 - Slender body.
 - Small scales.
 - Last dorsal ray not elongated.
 - Head small and pointed.

Similar fish Juvenile tarpon, *Megalops atlanticus*.

Habitat Inshore fish, in bays and estuaries; occasionally enters freshwater, occurring in tidal pools and canals; often forms large schools and harasses bait at the surface.

Size 2 to 3 pounds (36 inches).

Notes Known to spawn offshore; ribbon-like larvae very similar to *Albua* and *Megalops*, peaking in fall; adults feed predominantly on fish and crustaceans; leaps when hooked.



Tarpon

Megalops atlanticus

Family Megalopidae, Tarpons

- Features**
- Last ray of dorsal fin extended into long filament.
 - One dorsal fin.
 - Back dark blue to green or greenish black, shading into bright silver on the sides.
 - May be brownish gold in estuarine waters.
 - Huge scales.
 - Mouth large and points upward.

Similar fish (As juveniles) ladyfish, *E. saurus*.

Habitat Primarily inshore fish, although adult fish spawn offshore where the ribbon-like larval stage of the fish can be found.

Size To 300 pounds (96 inches).

Notes Slow grower, matures at 7 to 13 years of age; spawning occurs between May and September; female may lay more than 12 million eggs; can tolerate wide range of salinity; juveniles commonly found in fresh water; gulps air at the surface; feeds mainly on fish and large crustaceans.



Bonefish

Albula vulpes

Family Albulidae, Bonefishes

- Features**
- Silvery color with bluish or greenish back.
 - Slender, round body.
 - Snout long, conical, aiming downward and overhanging the lower jaw.
 - Dark streaks between scales on upper half of body and faint crossbands extending down to lateral line.
 - Extremities of dorsal and caudal fins shaded with black.

Similar fish Ladyfish, *E. saurus*.

Habitat Primarily inshore fish inhabiting shallows of the Florida Keys; found in shallows often less than 1 foot deep, usually over lush grass flats, occasionally over white sand.

Size To 18 pounds, rarely more than 10 pounds.

Notes Travels in loose schools; roots out shrimp, shellfish, crabs, and fish from the bottom; spawns offshore, eggs hatching into ribbon-like larvae that metamorphose into fish-like form at about 2 inches and move inshore.



American Shad

Alosa sapidissima

Family Clupeidae, Herrings

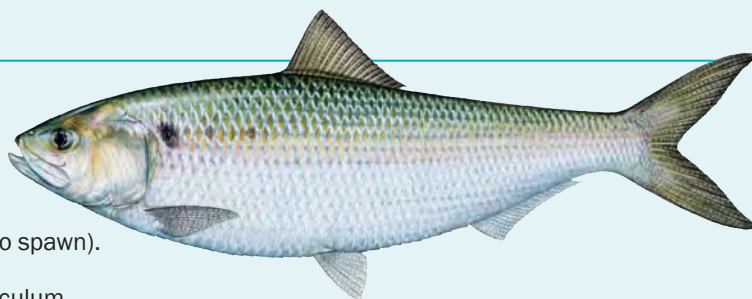
- Features**
- Color of back green or greenish blue with metallic lustre.
 - Silvery sides, white underneath (colors darken when fish enters fresh water to spawn).
 - Belly with scutes forming distinct keel.
 - One or more dark spots in a row behind operculum.
 - Lower jaw with pointed tip that fits into v-shaped notch in upper jaw.

Similar fish Outer species of *Alosa* (shad and herring) and *Brevoortia* (menhaden); menhaden, which are often referred to as "shad," have a rounder lower jaw tip; American shad is an East Coast species replaced on the Panhandle coast by Alabama shad.

Habitat Offshore except during late winter, spawning run into East Coast rivers, notably the St. Johns River.

Size To 12 pounds (20 inches).

Notes Anadromous species, coming into fresh water to spawn; young remain in fresh water to length of 2 to 4 inches, then move out to sea; plankton feeder, but strikes small, bright spoons or flies; their roe (as many as 30,000 in a single female) is prized, the flesh full of fork bones. Important fish food but with depleted stock numbers.



Atlantic Thread Herring

Opisthonema oglinum

Family Clupeidae, Herrings

- Features**
- Back dark blue/gray, sides silvery, belly white.
 - Small head.
 - Last dorsal ray is elongated.

Habitat In salt water from Cape Cod to Brazil, including Gulf of Mexico.

Size To 12 inches.

Notes Has scales on ridge of back before dorsal fin.



Scaled Sardine

Harengula jaguana

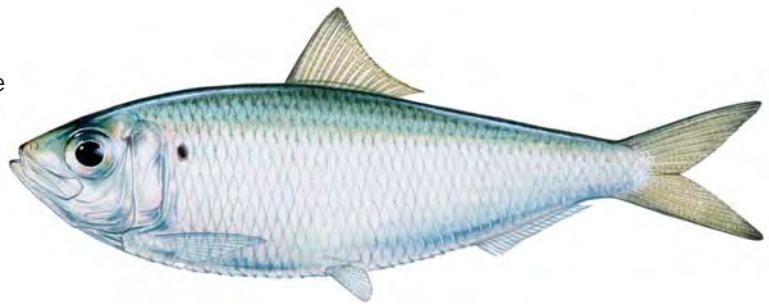
Family Clupeidae, Herrings

- Features**
- Solid back with dark streaks, usually single small dark spot at upper edge of opercle and sometimes one at shoulder.

Habitat N. Gulf of Mexico to Brazil.

Size To 7 inches.

Notes Commonly caught with strings or wire loops.



Spanish Sardine

Sardinella aurita

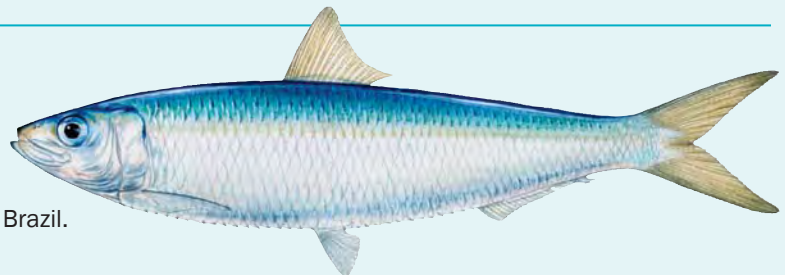
Family Clupeidae, Herrings

- Features**
- Back bluish gray, sometimes greenish.
 - Sides silvery to brassy.
 - Slender body.

Habitat In schools ranging from N. Gulf of Mexico to Brazil.

Size To 10 inches.

Notes An abundant fish, representing a resource so far only utilized locally.



Gulf Menhaden

Brevoortia patronus

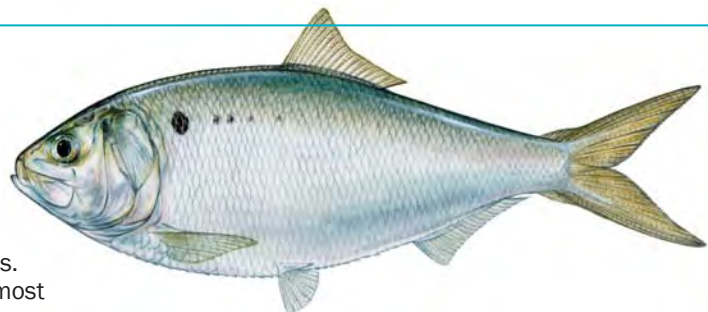
Family Clupeidae, Herrings

- Features**
- Oval, deep, and compressed.
 - Blue or green, sometimes bluish-brown above.
 - Sides and belly silvery, fins yellowish.
 - Distinct spot at the top of the gill plate that is often followed by several rows of smaller spots.
 - Head very large, exposed margin of scales almost vertical, fringed.

Habitat Near surface; schools primarily in estuaries and near shore waters of the northern Gulf from early spring through fall.

Size Rarely over 10 inches.

Notes Sexual maturity begins at late age 1 with major spawning areas offshore across the northern Gulf.



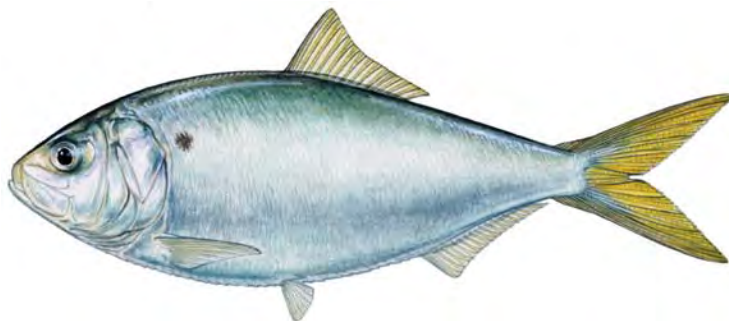
Yellowfin Menhaden

Brevoortia smithi

Family Clupeidae, Herrings

- Features**
- Silvery, with a greenish or bluish back.
 - Fins golden yellow.
 - A single dark shoulder spot.
 - Scales on back noticeably smaller than those on sides and difficult to count – about 60-70 rows across middle of side.
 - 27-30 (usually 28-29) ventral scutes.

Size To 13 inches.



Ballyhoo

Hemiramphus brasiliensis

Family Hemiramphidae, Halfbeaks

- Features**
- Pectoral fin short.
 - Tip of pelvic fin extends past beginning of dorsal fin.
 - Tip of lower jaw and upper lobe of caudal fin orange-red.
 - Dorsal and anal fins unscaled.

Habitat Young are pelagic; adults abundant in bays and nearshore waters, near reefs.

Size To 16 inches.



Fat Snook

Centropomus parallelus

Family Centropomidae, Snooks

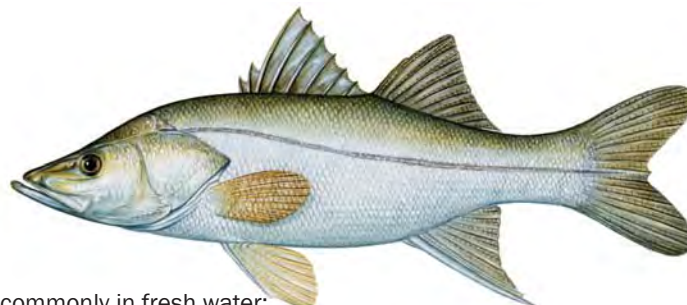
- Features**
- Deeper body than other snooks.
 - Black lateral line extends onto tail.
 - Mouth reaches to or beyond center of eyes.
 - Yellow-brown to green-brown above silvery on sides.
 - Usually no dusky outer edge of all snook.

Similar fish Other *Centropomus*.

Habitat Inshore species found in mangrove habitat; found commonly in fresh water; occurs more in interior waters (as opposed to estuarine water) than other snook.

Size To 24 inches.

Notes Usually found in fresh water; mangrove shorelines serve as nursery grounds for young.



Common Snook

Centropomus undecimalis

Family Centropomidae, Snooks

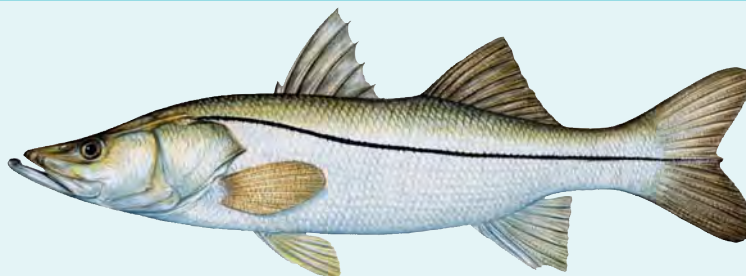
- Features**
- Distinct black lateral line.
 - High, divided dorsal fin.
 - Sloping forehead.
 - Large mouth, protruding lower jaw.
 - Grows much larger than other snooks.
 - Pelvic fin yellow.

Similar fish Other *Centropomus*.

Habitat From central Florida south, usually inshore in coastal and brackish waters, along mangrove shorelines, seawalls, and bridges; also on reefs and pilings.

Size To 50 pounds (48 inches).

Notes Cannot tolerate water temperatures below 60° F; can tolerate wholly fresh or saltwater; schools along shore, inlets and in passes during spawning season; feeds on fish and larger crustaceans.

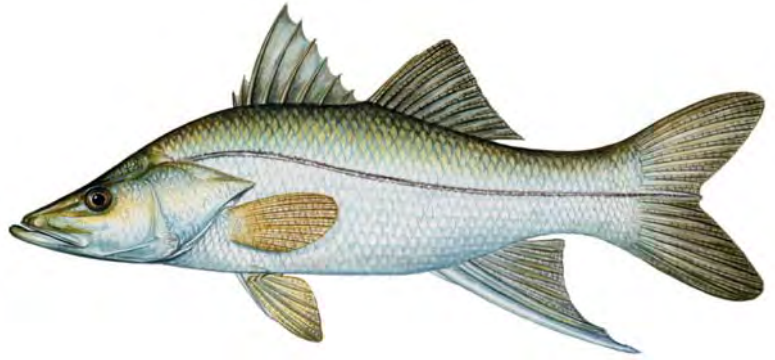


Swordspine Snook

Centropomus ensiferus

Family Centropomidae, Snooks

- Features**
- Smallest of the snooks.
 - Profile slightly concave.
 - Prominent lateral line outlined in black (not solid), extends through caudal fin.
 - Color yellow-green to brown-green above, silvery below.
 - Giant second anal spine that extends past the base of the caudal fin.
 - Largest scales of all snook.



Similar fish Other *Centropomus*.

Habitat Occurs in inshore estuarine habitats from south Florida as far north on East Coast as St. Lucie River.

Size To 1 pound (12 inches).

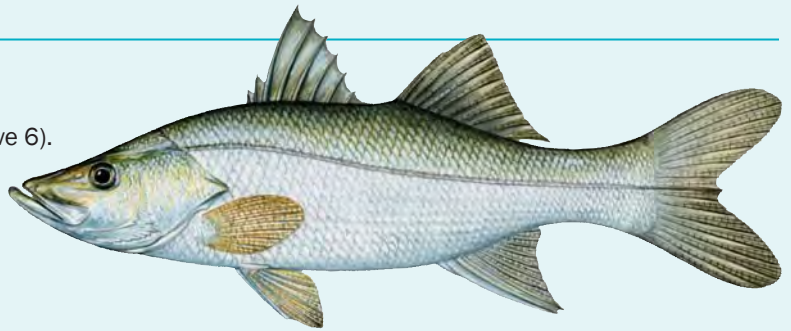
Notes Full-grown adults are less than 12 inches long; mangrove shoreline habitats serve as nursery areas for young; rare on Florida's west coast; prefers only slightly brackish or fresh water.

Tarpon Snook

Centropomus pectinatus

Family Centropomidae, Snooks

- Features**
- Only snook with 7 anal fin rays (others have 6).
 - Lower jaw curves upward.
 - Compressed body.
 - Prominent black lateral line extends through tail.
 - Tips of pelvic fins reach beyond anus.



Similar fish Other *Centropomus*.

Habitat Inshore in south Florida; frequently in fresh water.

Size To 20 inches.

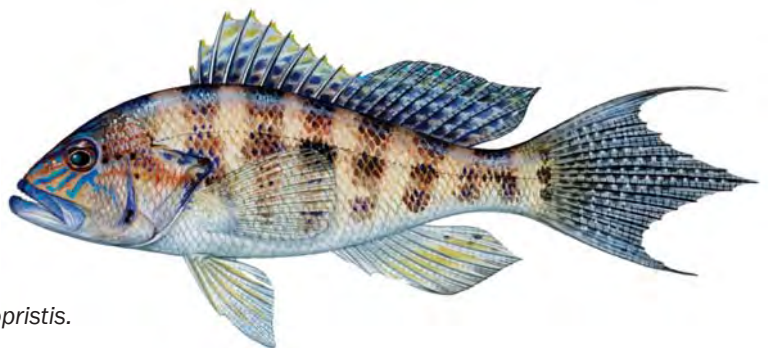
Notes Feeds on small fish and larger crustaceans; young are nurtured along mangrove shorelines; rare on Florida's West Coast.

Bank Sea Bass

Centropristis ocyurus

Family Serranidae, Sea Bases and Groupers

- Features**
- Pale olive or brassy-brown in color with indistinct black blotches that form vertical barrings (the blotch above pectoral fin darker).
 - Wavy blue lines on head.
 - Lips purplish-blue.
 - Caudal fin tri-lobed on adults.
 - Edge of nape unscaled.



Similar fish Rock sea bass, *C. philadelphica*; other *Centropristis*.

Habitat Offshore in deep water with rocks and reefs.

Size To 12 inches.

Notes Protogynous hermaphrodites. After three or four spawning seasons older females become breeding males; feeds on the bottom, taking squid, crustaceans, and small fish.

Black Sea Bass

Centropristis striata

Family Serranidae, Sea Basses and Groupers

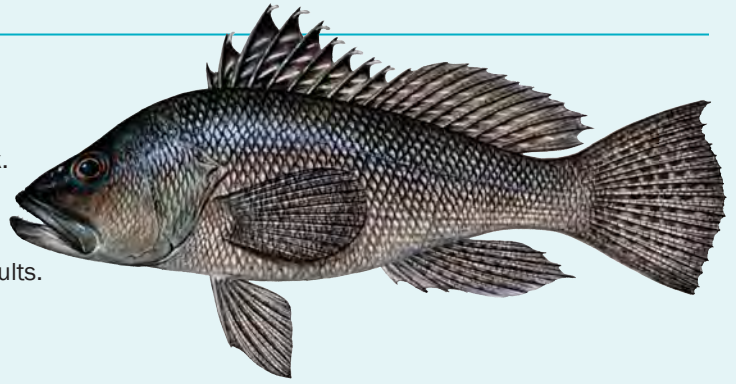
- Features**
- Basic color dark brown or black.
 - Dorsal fin has rows and stripes of white on black.
 - Large males have iridescent blue and ebony markings, and fatty hump in front of dorsal fin.
 - Females may have indistinct vertical barrings.
 - Top most ray of caudal fin much elongated in adults.
 - Caudal may be tri-lobed.
 - Sharp spine near posterior margin of gill cover.
 - 6-7 dark bars from dorsal fin base to flanks.

Similar fish Bank sea bass, *C. ocyurus*; other *Centropristis*.

Habitat Structure-loving fish, associated with reefs and rubble offshore; smaller specimens often found in inshore finger channels.

Size To 8 pounds (24 inches). Common to 1.5 pounds (13 inches).

Notes Spawns January through March; protogynous hermaphrodites - after three or four spawning seasons older females become breeding males; omnivorous bottom feeders, diet including small fish, crustaceans, and shellfish.



Rock Sea Bass

Centropristis philadelphica

Family Serranidae, Sea Basses and Groupers

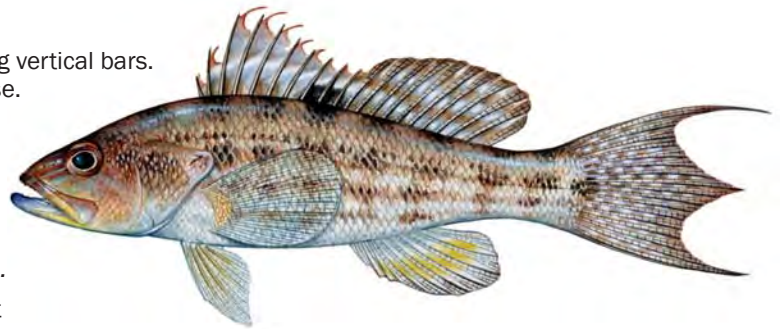
- Features**
- Color olive-bronze, with dark blotches forming vertical bars.
 - Dark black blotch on middle of dorsal fin base.
 - Tip of lower jaw purplish.
 - Bright blue and orange stripes and markings on head and fins.
 - Fully scaled nape.
 - Tail tri-lobed in adults.

Similar fish Bank sea bass, *C. ocyurus*; other *Centropristis*.

Habitat Offshore; differs from other sea basses in that it is often found on sandy or muddy bottoms.

Size Small species, rarely more than 10 inches.

Notes Spawns January through March; young adults are predominantly female, transforming into males as they grow older; maximum size about 10 inches.



Goliath Grouper

Epinephelus itajara

Family Serranidae, Sea Basses and Groupers

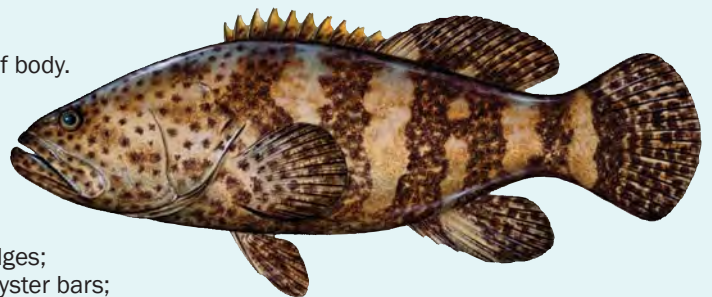
- Features**
- Head and fins covered with small black spots.
 - Irregular dark vertical bars present on the sides of body.
 - Pectoral and caudal fin rounded.
 - First dorsal fin shorter than and not separated from second dorsal.
 - Eyes small.

Similar fish Other grouper.

Habitat Nearshore around docks, in deep holes, and on ledges; young often occur in estuaries, especially around oyster bars; more abundant in southern Florida than in northern waters.

Size Largest of the groupers with adults reaching up to 8 feet and 800 pounds.

Notes Spawns over summer months; lifespan of 30 to 50 years; feeds on crustaceans and fish.

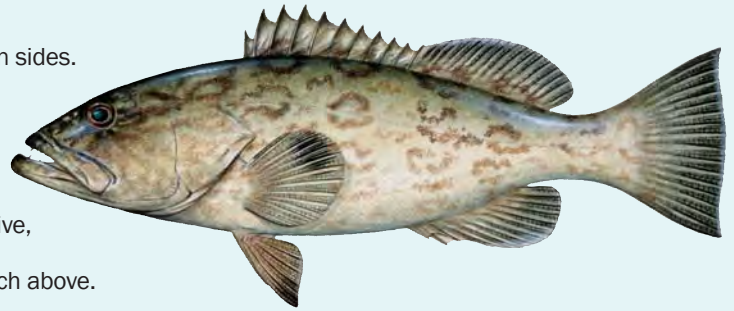


Gag

Mycteroperca microlepis

Family Serranidae, Sea Basses and Groupers

- Features**
- Brownish gray in color with dark worm-like markings on sides.
 - Strong serrated spur at bottom margin of preopercle, less noticeable in large specimens.
 - Fins dark, with anal and caudal having white margin.
 - Tail is slightly concave.
 - White margin on anal and caudal fins.
 - Under 10 pounds, gag's spur on preopercle is distinctive, where black is gently rounded.
 - Preopercle has a distinct bony knob at angle, with notch above.



Similar fish Often confused with black grouper, *M. bonaci*.

Habitat Adults offshore over rocks and reefs; juveniles occur in seagrass beds inshore.

Size To 50 pounds (36 inches). Common to 25 pounds.

Notes Forms spawning aggregations in water no shallower than 120 feet in Middle Grounds area, January through March; current research to identify similar aggregations off the Atlantic Coast is ongoing. Young gags are predominantly female, transforming into males as they grow larger; feeds on fish and squid.

Black Grouper

Mycteroperca bonaci

Family Serranidae, Sea Basses and Groupers

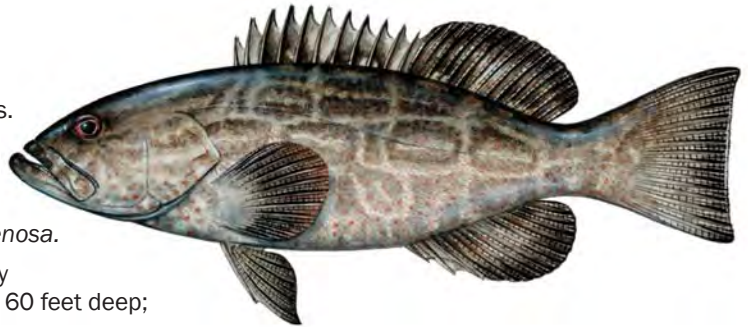
- Features**
- Olive or gray body coloration with rectangular, black blotches and brassy spots.
 - Gently rounded preopercle.
 - Square tail.
 - Bluish edge on anal and caudal fins.

Similar fish Gag, *M. microlepis*, yellowfin grouper, *M. venenosa*.

Habitat Offshore species; adults associated with rocky bottoms, reef, and dropoff walls in water over 60 feet deep; young may occur inshore in shallow water.

Size To 180 pounds (48 inches). Common to 40 pounds.

Notes Spawns between May and August; protogynous hermaphrodites, young predominately female, transforming into males as they grow larger; larger individuals generally in greater depths; feeds on fish and squid.



Nassau Grouper

Epinephelus striatus

Family Serranidae, Sea Basses and Groupers

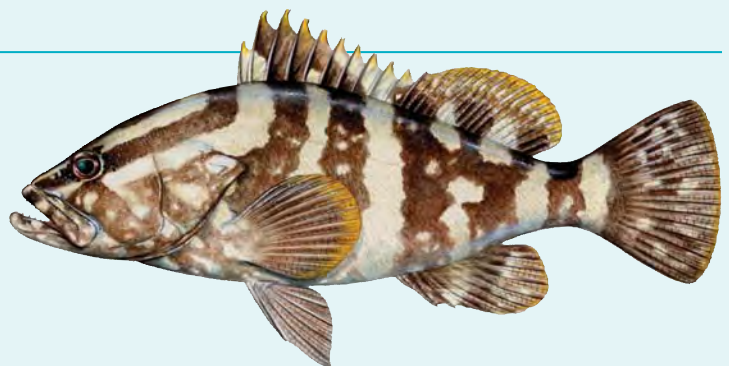
- Features**
- Stripe in shape of tuning fork on forehead.
 - Third spine of dorsal longer than second.
 - Pelvic fins shorter than pectorals.
 - Color light background with brown or red-brown bars on sides.
 - Lack dots around the eyes.
 - Large black saddle on caudal peduncle.

Similar fish Red grouper, *E. morio*.

Habitat Range limited to south Florida; somewhat site specific; smaller individuals nearshore, adults offshore on rocky reefs.

Size To 55 pounds (36 inches). Common under 10 pounds.

Notes Forms large spawning aggregations, making this species highly vulnerable to over-harvest.



Red Grouper

Epinephelus morio

Family Serranidae, Sea Basses and Groupers

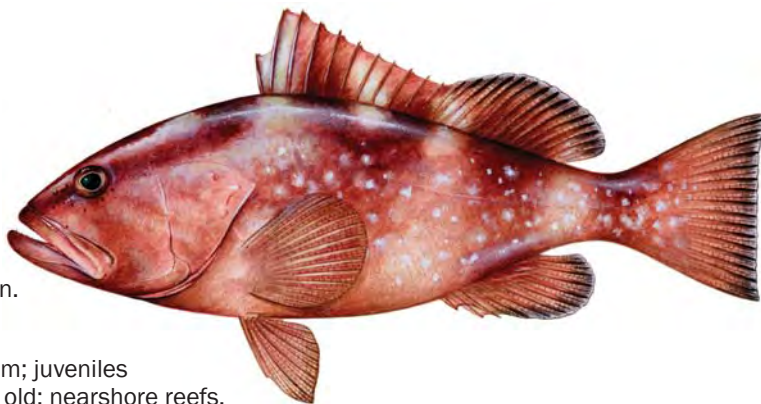
- Features**
- Color brownish red.
 - Lining of mouth scarlet-orange.
 - Blotches on sides in unorganized pattern.
 - Second spine of dorsal fin longer than others.
 - Pectoral fins longer than pelvic fins.
 - Squared-off tail.
 - Black dots around the eyes.
 - Margin of soft dorsal black with white at midfin.

Similar fish Nassau grouper, *E. striatus*.

Habitat Bottom dwelling fish associated with hard bottom; juveniles offshore along with adults greater than 6 years old; nearshore reefs.

Size To 50 pounds (42 inches). Common to 15 pounds.

Notes Spawns in April and May; prefer water temperatures between 66 and 77 °F; undergoes sex change, young individuals female, becoming male as they age; lifespan of at least 25 years; feeds on squid, crustaceans, and fish.



Scamp

Mycteroperca phenax

Family Serranidae, Sea Basses and Groupers

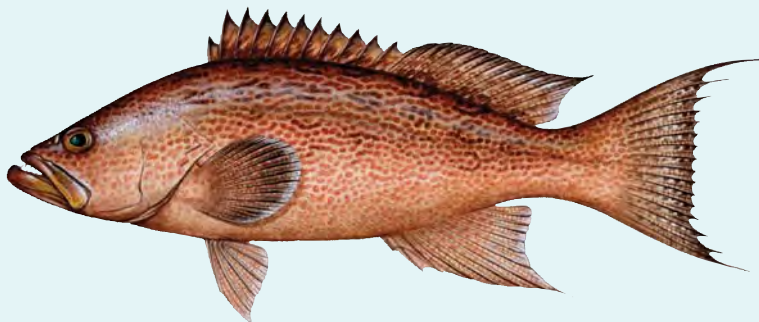
- Features**
- Color light gray or brown.
 - Large adults with elongated caudal-fin rays.
 - Reddish-brown spots on sides that tend to be grouped into lines.
 - Some yellow around corners of mouth.

Similar fish Yellowmouth grouper, *M. interstitialis*.

Habitat Nearshore reefs off the northeastern coast, and on offshore reefs in the Gulf.

Size To 12 inches.

Notes Spawns in late spring; feeds on small fish, squid, and crustaceans; undergoes sex transformation from female to male as it becomes older.



Yellowfin Grouper

Mycteroperca venenosa

Family Serranidae, Sea Basses and Groupers

- Features**
- Color highly greenish olive or bright red with longitudinal rows of darker black blotches over entire fish.
 - Outer one-third of pectoral fins bright yellow.
 - Lower parts of larger fish with small bright red spots.

Similar fish Black grouper, *M. bonaci*, other grouper.

Habitat Offshore on reefs off southern portions of Florida.

Size Common to 20 pounds.

Notes Undergoes sex reversal from female to male in latter part of life; specific name translates to "venomous," alluding to the fact that this fish, perhaps more frequently than other groupers, is associated with ciguatera poisoning; feeds on fish and squid.



Yellowmouth Grouper

Mycteroperca interstitialis

Family Serranidae, Sea Basses and Groupers

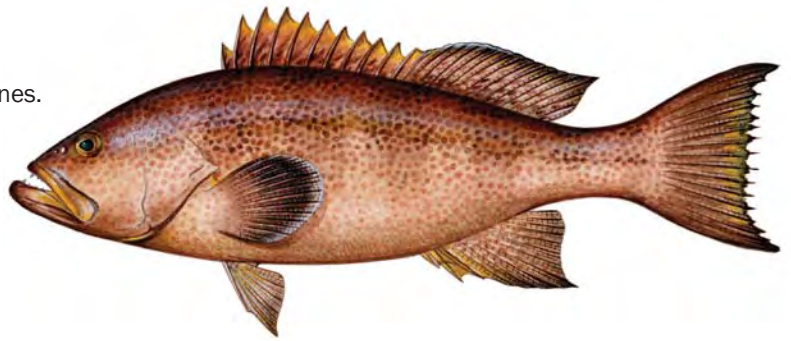
- Features**
- Color tan or brown with darker spots.
 - Spots, or a network of spots, fused into lines.
 - Distinct yellow wash behind the jaws.
 - Yellow around the eyes.
 - Outer edges of fins yellowish.
 - Mouth yellow inside and at corners.

Similar fish Scamp, *M. phenax*.

Habitat Offshore over reefs and rocks; not as common as scamp in the Gulf; range limited to southern Florida.

Size To 8 pounds.

Notes Undergoes sex change, young females become male; young fish are bicolored, dark above, white below; feeds on small fish and crustaceans.



Warsaw Grouper

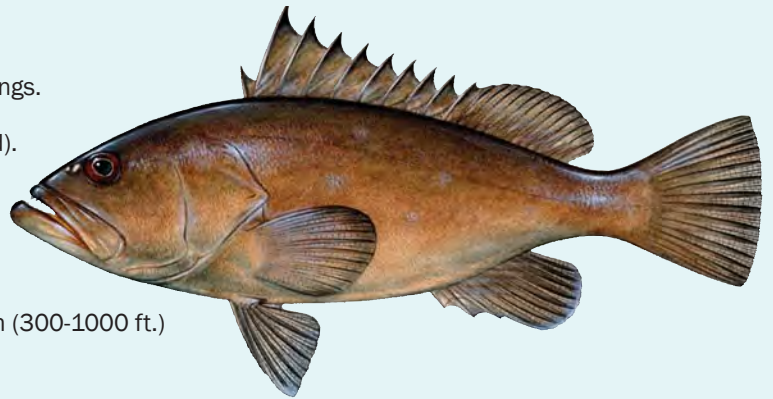
Epinephelus nigritus

Family Serranidae, Sea Basses and Groupers

- Features**
- Uniformly dark brown, with no distinctive markings.
 - Dorsal fin with 10 spines.
 - Second spine very long (much longer than third).
 - Caudal fin squared-off.
 - Rear nostril larger than front nostril.
 - Young: caudal fin yellow dark saddle on caudal peduncle.
 - Some whitish spots on body.

Habitat Deep rocky ledges and sea mounts, in 90-300 m (300-1000 ft.) Young are sometimes caught in inshore waters.

Size To 580 pounds (72 inches).



Sand Perch

Diplectrum formosum

Family Serranidae, Sea Basses and Groupers

- Features**
- Body and dorsal fins with many dark brown bars and alternating orange and blue horizontal lines.
 - Head with many blue lines.
 - Preopercular spines very well developed grouped in 2 radiating clusters with a deep notch between them.
 - Upper lobe of caudal fin prolonged in adults.

Habitat Bays, coastal grassy areas, and shallow banks.

Size To 12 inches.

Notes Popular as a pan fish despite its small size.



Bluefish

Pomatomus saltatrix

Family Pomatomidae, Bluefishes

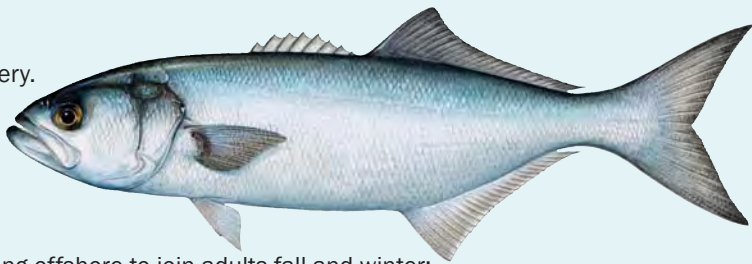
- Features**
- Color blue or greenish blue on back, sides silvery.
 - Mouth large.
 - Teeth prominent, sharp, and compressed.
 - Dorsal and anal fins nearly the same size.
 - Scales small; lateral line almost straight.

Similar fish Blue runner, *Caranx crysos*.

Habitat Young usually inshore spring and summer, moving offshore to join adults fall and winter; strong migration of northeast Atlantic stock to Florida East Coast in winter.

Size Most West Coast catches under 3 pounds, much larger on East Coast (to 27 pounds).

Notes Travels in large schools, following schools of baitfish; cannibalistic; all members of a given school about the same size; spawning occurs offshore in spring and summer.



Rachycentron canadum

Family Rachycentridae, Cobia

- Features**
- Long, slim fish with broad depressed head.
 - Lower jaw projects past upper jaw.
 - Dark lateral stripe extends through eye to tail.
 - First dorsal fin comprised of 7 to 9 free spines.
 - Young have conspicuous alternating black and white horizontal stripes.

Similar fish Remora, *Eceneis naucrates*.

Habitat Both inshore and nearshore inhabiting inlets, bays, and among mangroves; frequently seen around buoys, pilings, and wrecks.

Size To 150 pounds (72 inches). Common at 10-50 pounds.

Notes Spawns in spring and early summer; feeds on crabs, squid, and small fish.



Almaco Jack

Seriola rivoliana

Family Carangidae, Jacks and Pompanos

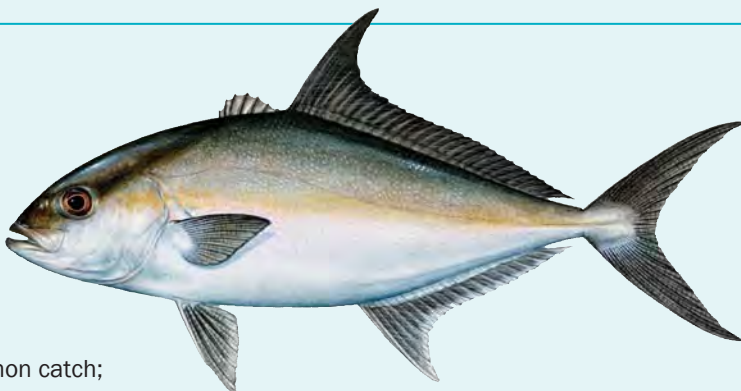
- Features**
- Deep-bodied.
 - Sometimes darker in coloration.
 - Front of soft dorsal and of anal fins high and elongated.
 - Body more flattened than banded rudderfish or greater amberjack.
 - No scutes.

Similar fish Greater Amberjack, *S. dumerili*.

Habitat Wide-ranging in offshore waters, not a common catch; young are associated with Sargassum.

Size To 13 pounds (30 inches).

Notes Spawns offshore, apparently during spring, summer, and fall.



Banded Rudderfish

Seriola zonata

Family Carangidae, Jacks and Pompanos

- Features**
- Dark band from eye to first dorsal fin and six prominent bars on body.
 - Larger fish are bluish, greenish, or brown.
 - Soft dorsal base about twice the length of the anal fin.
 - Tail-lobe white tipped.

Similar fish Other *Seriola*.

Habitat Nearshore and offshore over hard bottom, generally in shallower water than other amberjacks; young associated with weed lines or floating debris and may follow sharks and other large fish.

Size Usually less than 10 pounds (24 inches).

Notes Adults feed on fish and shrimp; spawns offshore most of year.



Greater Amberjack

Seriola dumerili

Family Carangidae, Jacks and Pompanos

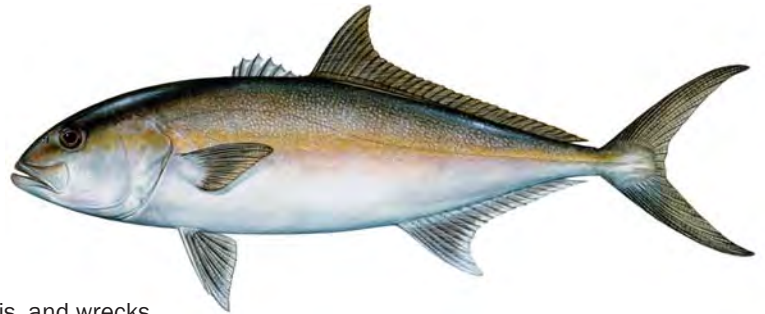
- Features**
- Dark stripe (variably present) extends from nose to in front of dorsal fin and "lights up" when fish is in feeding mode.
 - No scutes.
 - Soft dorsal base less than twice the length of the anal fin base.

Similar fish Other *Seriola*.

Habitat Offshore species associated with rocky reefs, debris, and wrecks, typically in 60-240 feet of water; sometimes caught nearshore in south Florida; juveniles associate with floating objects and may occur in water less than 30 feet deep.

Size To 176 pounds (60 inches). Common to 40 pounds.

Notes Largest of the jacks; thought to spawn offshore throughout much of the year; feeds on squid, fish, and crustaceans; an important game fish, but may cause ciguatera poisoning.



Lesser Amberjack

Seriola fasciata

Family Carangidae, Jacks and Pompanos

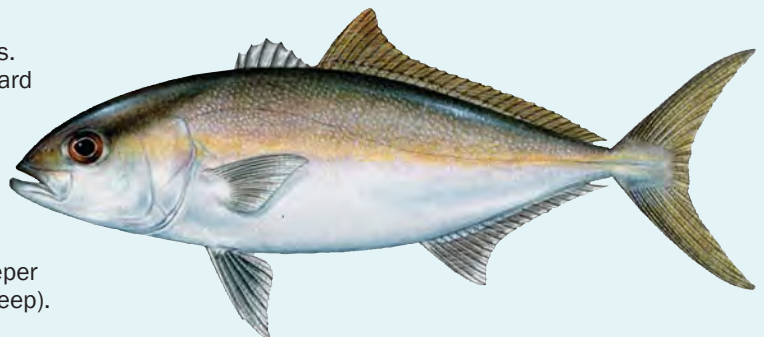
- Features**
- Olive green or brownish back and silver sides.
 - Dark band (variably present) extends backward and upward from eye.
 - Juveniles have split or wavy bars on sides.
 - Proportionately larger eye and deeper body than greater amberjack.

Similar fish Other *Seriola*.

Habitat Nearshore and offshore, apparently living deeper than other *Seriola* (commonly 180-410 feet deep).

Size Usually less than 10 pounds.

Notes Believed to spawn offshore; adults eat fish and squid.



Blue Runner

Caranx crysos

Family Carangidae, Jacks and Pompanos

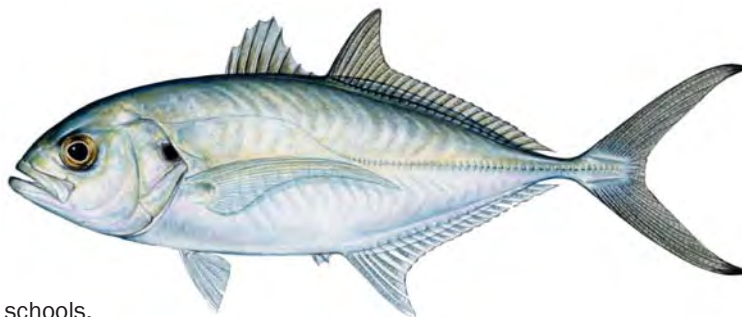
- Features**
- Color light olive to bluish green above, silvery gray to golden below.
 - Frequently black spot on operculum.
 - Readily distinguished from crevalle jack by lack of a dark blotch on the pectoral fin.
 - Tail tips blackish.

Similar fish Bluefish, *P. saltatrix*, other *Caranx*.

Habitat Juveniles found offshore; adults nearshore in schools, but something ranging inshore as well.

Size To 4 pounds. (20 inches). Common under 1 pound.

Notes Matures by 9 to 10 inches; spawns offshore from January through August; young form schools associated with floating objects, and have been observed living inside the belly of jellyfish; adults feed on fish, shrimp, and squid.



Crevalle Jack

Caranx hippos

Family Carangidae, Jacks and Pompanos

- Features**
- Color bluish-green to greenish-gold back and silvery or yellowish belly.
 - Soft dorsal and anal fins almost identical in size.
 - Prominent black spot on operculum (gill cover).
 - Black spot at the base of each pectoral fin.
 - No scales on throat.
 - Body deep, front of head steep.

Similar fish Other *Caranx*.

Habitat Common to both inshore waters and the open sea.

Size To 20 pounds. Common 3-5 pounds.

Notes Tolerates a wide range of salinities; schools corner a pod of baitfish at the surface and feed with commotion that can be seen for great distances; feeds mainly on small fish; peak spawning occurs offshore from March through September.



Palometa

Trachinotus goodei

Family Carangidae, Jacks and Pompanos

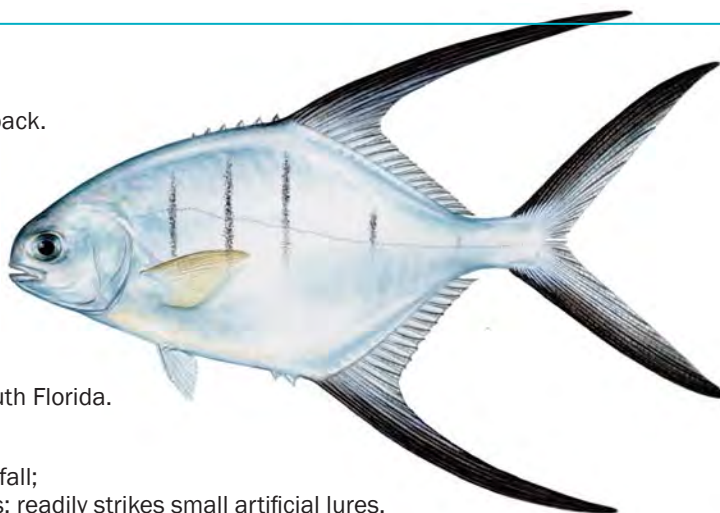
- Features**
- Gray to blue-green on top of head and along the back.
 - Bright silvery sides, yellow on breast.
 - Elongated dorsal and anal fins, dusky or black with bluish edges.
 - Deep body, with four narrow bars high on the sides, and traces of a fifth nearer the tail.
 - No scutes.

Similar fish Pompano, *T. carolinus*, permit, *T. falcatus*.

Habitat In clear water along sandy beaches and bays, occasionally found over reefs; most common in south Florida.

Size Usually less than 1 pound (20 inches).

Notes Thought to spawn offshore in spring, summer, and fall; has shown rapid growth in mariculture experiments; readily strikes small artificial lures.



Permit

Trachinotus falcatus

Family Carangidae, Jacks and Pompanos

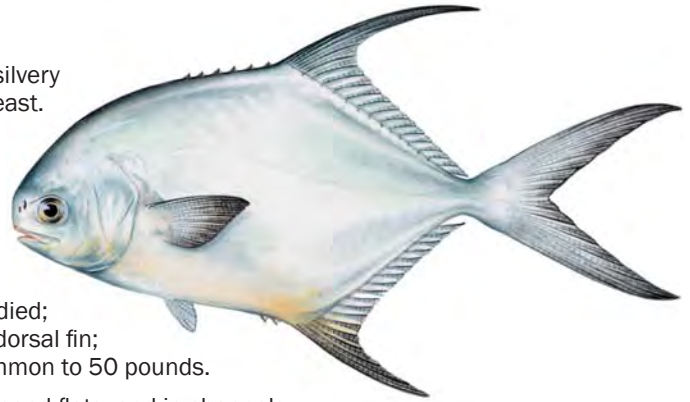
- Features**
- Color gray, dark or iridescent blue above, shading to silvery sides, in dark waters showing golden tints around breast.
 - Small permit have teeth on tongue (none on pompano).
 - No scutes.
 - Dorsal fin insertion directly above that of the anal fin.
 - 17 to 21 soft dorsal rays, 16 to 19 soft anal rays.

Similar fish Florida pompano, *T. carolinus*; the permit is deeper bodied; dorsal body profile forms angle at insertion of second dorsal fin; pompano rarely grow larger than 6 pounds, permit common to 50 pounds.

Habitat Offshore on wrecks and debris, inshore on grass flats, sand flats, and in channels; most abundant in south Florida, with smaller specimens from every coastal county.

Size Common to 50 pounds.

Notes Feeds mainly on bottom-dwelling crabs, shrimp, small clams, and small fish.



Florida Pompano

Trachinotus carolinus

Family Carangidae, Jacks and Pompanos

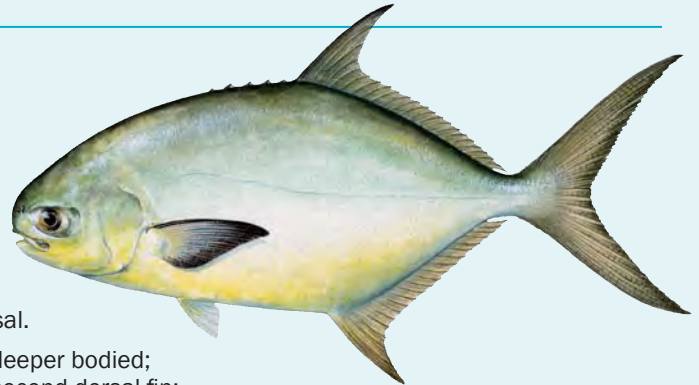
- Features**
- Greenish gray on back, shading to silvery sides.
 - Fish in dark waters showing yellow on throat, pelvic, and anal fins.
 - Deep flattened body with small mouth.
 - No scutes.
 - 22 to 27 soft dorsal rays.
 - 20 to 23 soft anal rays.
 - Origin of anal fin slightly behind origin of second dorsal.

Similar fish Permit, *T. falcatus*; *palometa*, *T. goodei*; the permit is deeper bodied; dorsal body profile not strongly angled at insertion of second dorsal fin; pompano rarely grow larger than 6 pounds, permit common to 50 pounds.

Habitat Inshore and nearshore waters, especially along sandy beaches, along oyster bars, and over grassbeds, often in turbid water; may be found in water as deep as 130 feet.

Size To 8 pounds (24 inches).

Notes Spawns offshore between March and September; feeds on mollusks and crustaceans, especially sand fleas; local movements are influenced by the tide, and seasonal movements are influenced by temperature.



Round Scad

Decapterus punctatus

Family Carangidae, Jacks and Pompanos

- Features**
- Long, fusiform body.
 - Greenish-blue fading to silver on sides, belly white.
 - Narrow, yellowish stripe from head to caudal peduncle.

Habitat Midwater or bottom from shallow water to about 50 fathoms, juveniles sometimes at surface.

Size To 9 inches.

Notes Two small papillae on shoulder distinguish scads from other carangids.



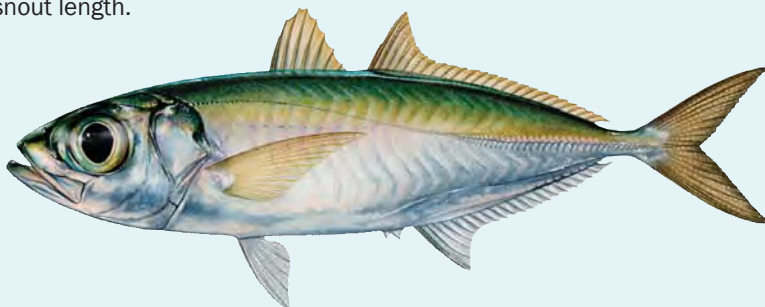
Bigeye Scad

Selar crumenophthalmus

Family Carangidae, Jacks and Pompanos

- Features**
- Eye very large – diameter greater than snout length.
 - No detached dorsal and anal finlets.
 - Two widely separated fleshy tabs on inside of rear edge of gill chamber.
 - Scutes present only on rear part of lateral line.

Size To 24 inches.



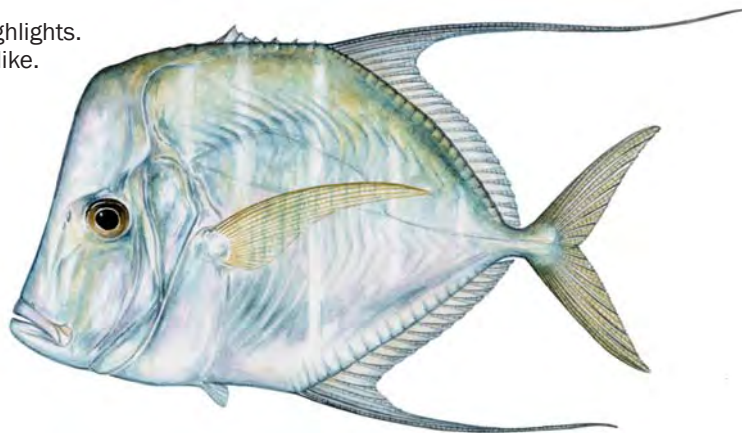
Lookdown

Selene vomer

Family Carangidae, Jacks and Pompanos

- Features**
- Silvery, iridescent, sometimes with brassy highlights.
 - Body extremely compressed and deep, platelike.
 - Front of head very steep; lobes at front of soft dorsal and anal fins very long.
 - Pelvic fins small.
 - Lateral line arched toward front.
 - Young: spines at front of dorsal fin and rays in pelvic fin streamer like.

Size To 12 inches.



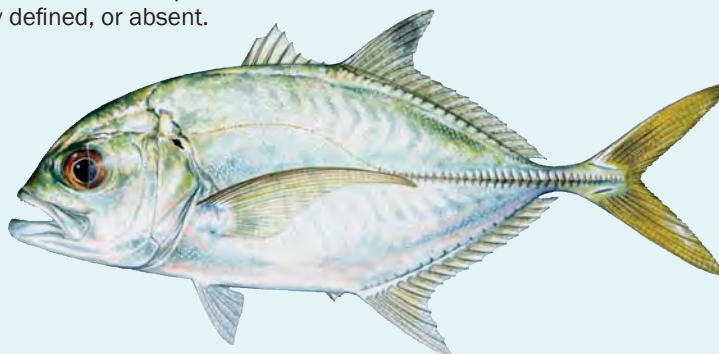
Horse-eye Jack

Caranx latus

Family Carangidae, Jacks and Pompanos

- Features**
- Similar in shape to the Crevalle jack, but front of head less steep.
 - Blackish blotch at edge of opercle small, poorly defined, or absent.
 - No dark blotch on pectoral fin.
 - Entire chest scaly except in individuals less than 3 inches long.
 - Scutes usually blackish.
 - Caudal fin yellowish.
 - 20 to 22 soft rays in dorsal fin.
 - 14 to 18 gill rakers on lower limb of first arch.

Size To 8.5 pounds (30 inches).



Leatherjacket

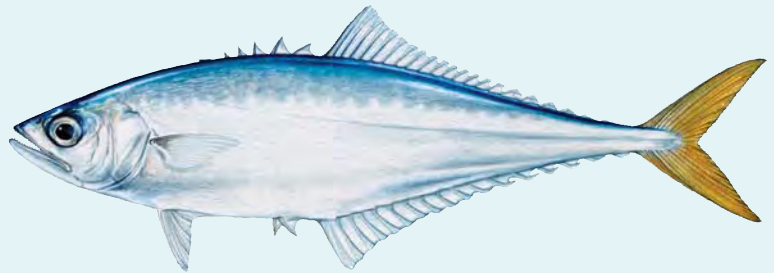
Oligoplites saurus

Family Carangidae, Jacks and Pompanos

- Features**
- Body silvery, bluish above.
 - Fins yellow.
 - Rear parts of dorsal and anal fins consist of a series of finlets.
 - Spinous dorsal fin has 5 well-developed, unconnected spines.
 - Lateral line nearly straight.
 - Scales tiny, embedded.
 - Skin appears smooth.

Habitat Enters bays and estuaries, often in turbid water.

Size To 12 inches.



Atlantic Bumper

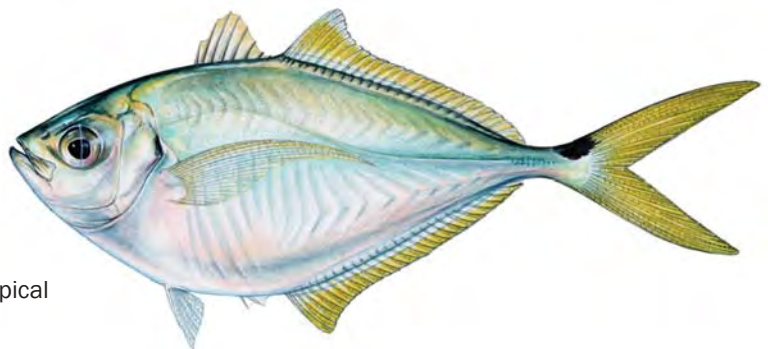
Chloroscombrus chrysurus

Family Carangidae, Jacks and Pompanos

- Features**
- Silvery to golden below.
 - Anal and caudal fins yellowish.
 - Conspicuous black saddle on caudal peduncle and small black area at edge of opercle.
 - Lower profile more arched than upper profile.
 - Lateral line strongly arched toward front.

Habitat One of the most abundant inshore fishes in tropical America; commonly enters bays and estuaries.

Size To 12 inches.



African Pompano

Alectis ciliaris

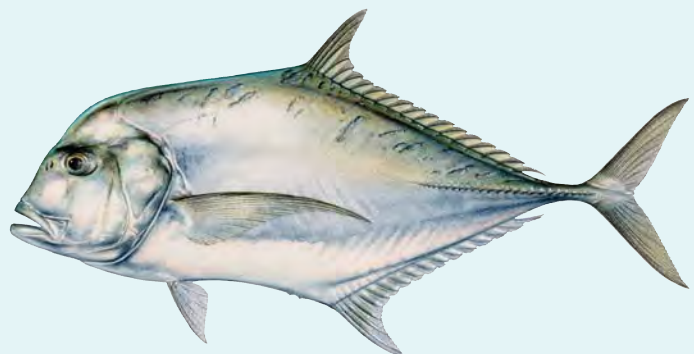
Family Carangidae, Jacks and Pompanos

- Features**
- Body is deep and compressed.
 - Coloration is metallic-blue above, silvery below.
 - Snout is blunt.
 - Dorsal and anal fins with no more than one finlet apiece.
 - Second dorsal and anal fins are falcate (sickle shaped).
 - Body becomes relatively longer with age.

Habitat Young are found in the open ocean. Adults are found to depths of 180 feet often associated with reefs, wrecks and rock ledges.

Size To 40 pounds (42 inches).

Notes Great fighter and good to eat; often found in schools over structure.



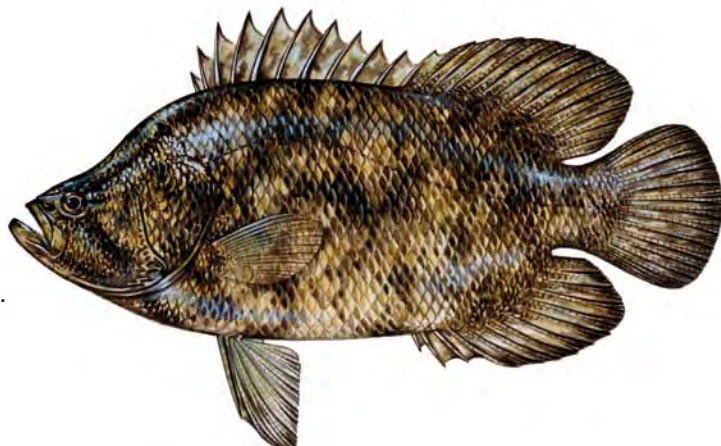
Tripletail

Lobotes surinamensis

Family Lobotidae, Tripletails

- Features**
- Head and body variously mottled, tan to dark brown.
 - Fins (except spinous dorsal and pectoral fins) almost black.
 - Pale olive band across base of caudal fin.
 - Broad, dark brown bar from eye across cheek below corner of preopercle, and another from upper corner of eye to beginning of dorsal fin.
 - Two dark streaks on top of head, behind nostrils.
 - Upper profile concave at nape.
 - Edge of preopercle strongly serrated.

Size To 42 inches.



Blackfin Snapper

Lutjanus buccanella

Family Lutjanidae, Snappers

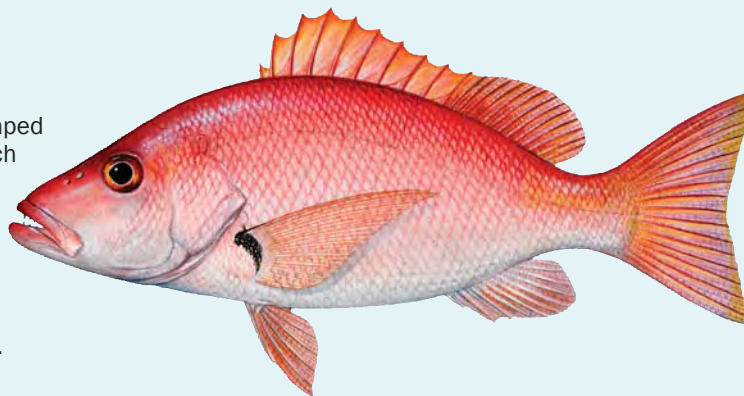
- Features**
- Color generally red, with yellowish caudal, anal, and pelvic fins.
 - Distinctive and prominent dark comma-shaped blotch at the base of the pectoral fins, which gives the fish its common name.
 - Anal fin rounded; no black spot on side underneath dorsal fin.
 - Iris orange or bronze.

Similar fish Other snappers.

Habitat Adults offshore near continental shelf break.

Size To 30 pounds (30 inches).

Notes Sometimes marketed as red snapper; feeds on smaller fishes.



Cubera Snapper

Lutjanus cyanopterus

Family Lutjanidae, Snappers

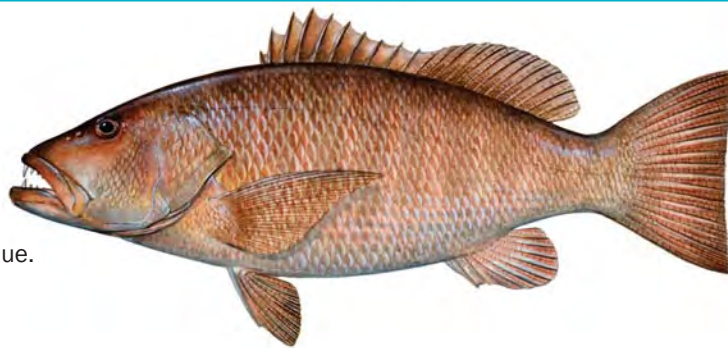
- Features**
- Color dark brown or gray, may have a reddish tinge.
 - Broad-based anchor shaped tooth patch on roof of mouth without a posterior extension.
 - Despite its specific name, which translates to "blue-fin," the fins have only a slight tinge of blue.
 - Canine teeth in both jaws very strong.
 - One pair of canines enlarged and visible even when mouth is closed.

Similar fish Gray snapper, *L. griseus* (gray snapper has anchor shaped tooth patch on roof of mouth), other snappers.

Habitat Juveniles inshore in grass beds; adults offshore or nearshore over wrecks, reefs, and ledges.

Size To 125 pounds. Common to 40 pounds.

Notes The largest of the snappers, ranging to 125 pounds; not common anywhere in its range; feeds on fishes and larger crustaceans; in the Keys, spawns during later summer.



Dog Snapper

Lutjanus jocu

Family Lutjanidae, Snappers

- Features**
- Color brown with a bronze tinge, lighter on sides.
 - Canine teeth very sharp, one pair notably enlarged, visible even when mouth is closed.
 - Blue stripe below eye usually broken into a series of dots.
 - In adults, pale triangle and a light blue, interrupted line below the eye.
 - No dark spot on body underneath dorsal fin.

Similar fish Schoolmaster, *L. apodus* (no white triangle under eye, and fins are more yellow), other snappers.

Habitat Large adults offshore over coral and rocky reefs; juveniles associated with estuaries.

Size To 30 pounds (36 inches).

Notes Spawns from spring through fall; known as a night feeder, taking fishes, mollusks, and crustaceans.



Gray Snapper (mangrove snapper)

Lutjanus griseus

Family Lutjanidae, Snappers

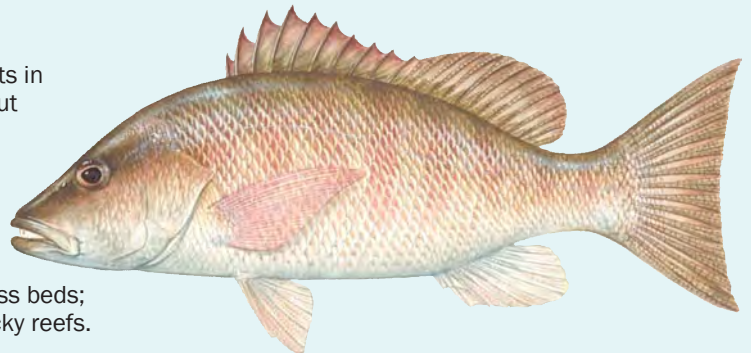
- Features**
- Color dark brown or gray with reddish or orange spots in rows along the sides dark horizontal band from snout through eye (young only).
 - Two conspicuous canine teeth at front of upper jaw.
 - Dorsal fins have dark or reddish borders.
 - No spot on side underneath dorsal fin.

Similar fish Cubera snapper, *L. cyanopterus*.

Habitat Juveniles inshore in tidal creeks, mangroves, and grass beds; adults generally nearshore or offshore on coral or rocky reefs.

Size Common to 10 pounds (24 inches).

Notes Spawns June through August; feeds on crustaceans and small fish.



Lane Snapper

Lutjanus synagris

Family Lutjanidae, Snappers

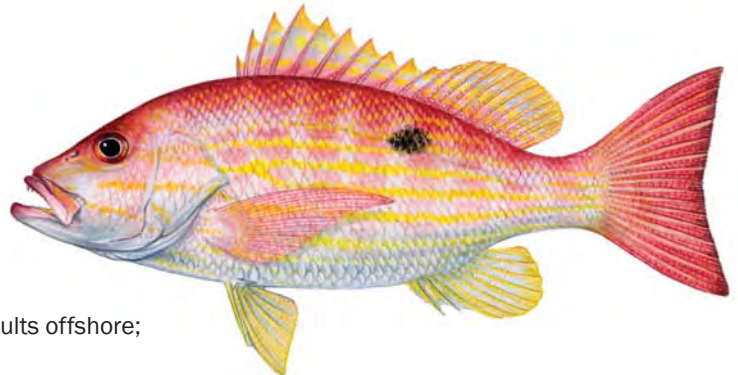
- Features**
- Color silvery-pink to reddish with short, irregular pink and yellow lines on its sides.
 - Diffuse black spot on side, about as large as the eye.
 - The dorsal fin centered above the lateral line.
 - Outer margin of caudal fin blackish.
 - Anal fin rounded.

Similar fish Mutton snapper, *L. analis*.

Habitat Juveniles inshore over grass beds or shallow reefs; adults offshore; most common in south Florida.

Size Usually less than 1 pound (14 inches).

Notes Spawns March to September, sexually mature at 6 inches; feeds on the bottom, taking crustaceans, mollusks, and fish.



Mahogany Snapper

Lutjanus mahogoni

Family Lutjanidae, Snappers

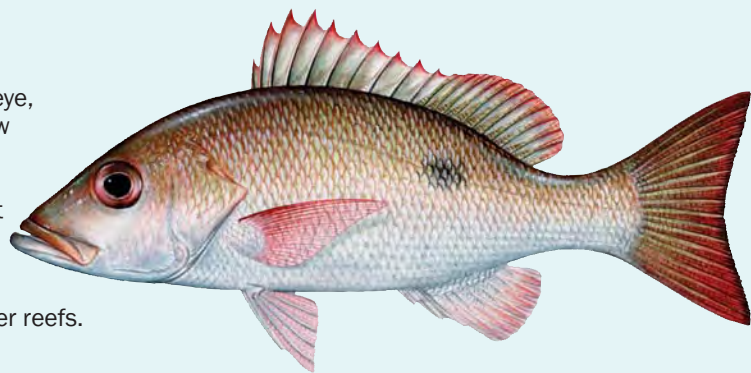
- Features**
- Color grayish-olive with a reddish tinge.
 - Conspicuous dark spot, about the size of the eye, below the soft dorsal fin, 1/4 to 1/2 of it below the lateral line.
 - The large eye and caudal fin are bright red.
 - Lower margin of the preopercle has prominent spur with strong and sharp serrations.

Similar fish Lane snapper, *L. synagris*.

Habitat Nearshore or offshore in clear water, usually over reefs.

Size To 3 pounds (15 inches).

Notes The Spanish name, ojanco, refers to its large eyes; a night feeder, with diet of smaller fishes.



Mutton Snapper

Lutjanus analis

Family Lutjanidae, Snappers

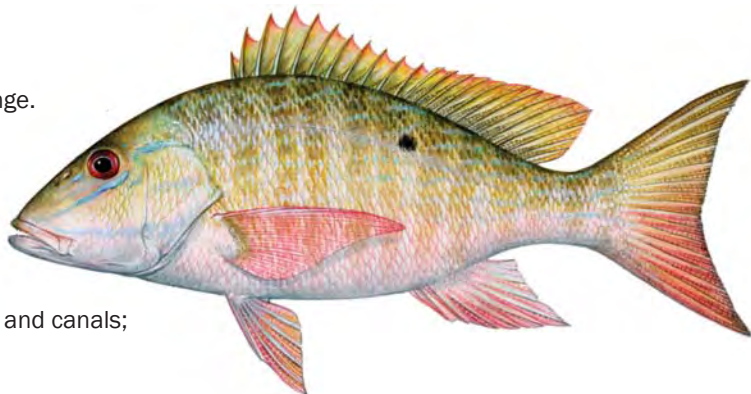
- Features**
- Color olive green on back and upper sides.
 - All fins below the lateral line having reddish tinge.
 - Bright blue line below eye, following contour of operculum.
 - Anal fin pointed.
 - Small black spot below dorsal fin.
 - V-shaped tooth patch on roof of mouth.

Similar fish Lane snapper, *L. synagris*.

Habitat Inshore associated with grassbeds, mangroves, and canals; larger adults found on offshore reefs.

Size To 25 pounds (30 inches).

Notes Spawns in July and August; feeds on fish, crustaceans, and snails.



Queen Snapper

Etelis oculatus

Family Lutjanidae, Snappers

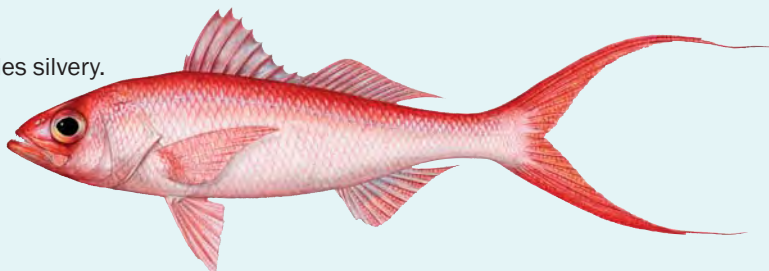
- Features**
- Color of back and upper sides red, lower sides silvery.
 - Body long and slender.
 - Dorsal fin distinctly notched.
 - Large eyes.
 - Caudal fin deeply forked.
 - No dark lateral spot.

Similar fish Other snappers.

Habitat Offshore over rocky reefs of the continental shelf to 450 feet; young suspend at mid-depths.

Size To 36 inches.

Notes Little is known, but it is reported that adults live at depths greater than 400 feet.



Red Snapper

Lutjanus campechanus

Family Lutjanidae, Snappers

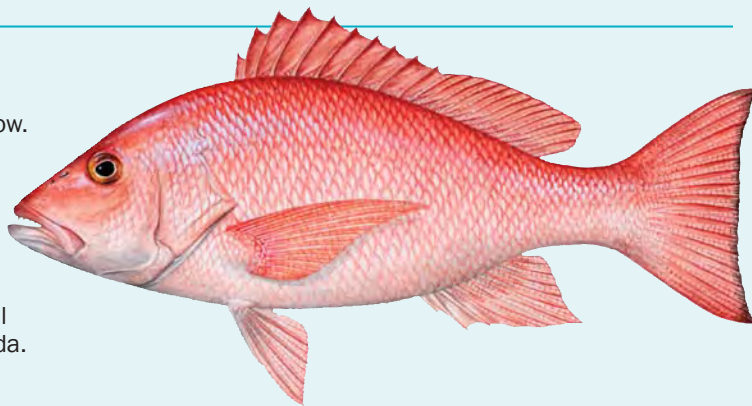
- Features**
- Color pinkish red over entire body, whitish below.
 - Long triangular snout.
 - Anal fin sharply pointed.
 - No dark lateral spot.
 - Red eye.

Similar fish Silk snapper, *L. vivanus*.

Habitat Offshore on the continental shelf, more plentiful off the Panhandle than in south or middle Florida.

Size To 35 pounds (36 inches).

Notes Juveniles occur over sandy or mud bottoms and are often taken in shrimp trawls; adults may live more than 20 years, and attain 35 pounds or more; sexual maturity attained at age 2; spawns June to October; feeds on crustaceans and fish.



Schoolmaster

Lutjanus apodus

Family Lutjanidae, Snappers

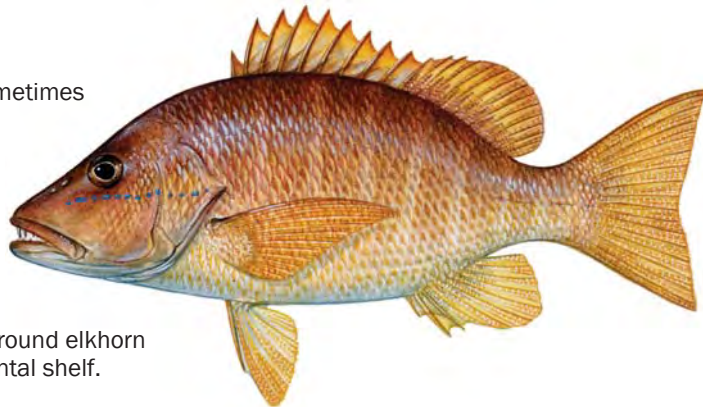
- Features**
- Color olive gray on upper sides with yellow tinge, sometimes with reddish tinge around head.
 - Long triangular snout.
 - Eight pale vertical bars on the side of the body.
 - Yellow fins.
 - Blue stripe below eye, interrupted in adults.
 - No dark lateral spot.

Similar fish Dog snapper, *L. jocu*, other snappers.

Habitat Juveniles in grass flats; adults nearshore especially around elkhorn coral reefs; large adults sometimes found on continental shelf.

Size To 8 pounds (24 inches). Common under 1 pound.

Notes Spawns July and August; attain sizes of 8 pounds and 24 inches; slow grower; feeds on crustaceans, small fishes, and gastropods.



Silk Snapper

Lutjanus vivanus

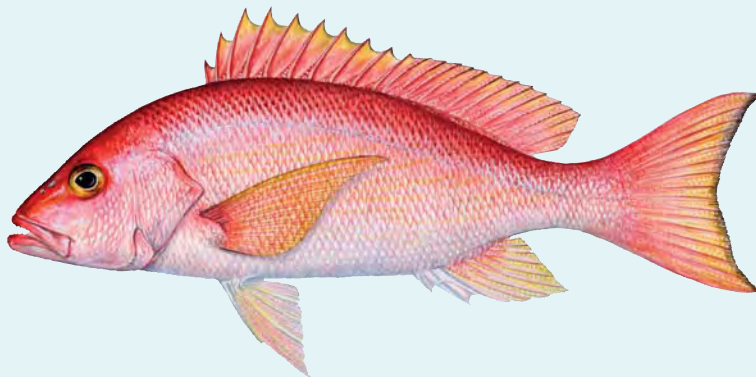
Family Lutjanidae, Snappers

- Features**
- Back and upper sides pinkish red, shading to silvery sides with undulating yellow lines.
 - Pectoral fins pale yellow.
 - Back edge of caudal fin blackish.
 - Anal fin pointed.
 - No dark lateral spot.
 - Yellow eye.

Similar fish Red snapper, *L. campechanus*.

Habitat Offshore over rocky ledges in very deep water; most common in south Florida.

Size Usually less than 5 pounds (30 inches).



Vermilion Snapper

Rhomboplites aurorubens

Family Lutjanidae, Snappers

- Features**
- Color of entire body reddish, with a series of short, irregular lines on its sides, diagonal blue lines formed by spots on the scales above the lateral line.
 - Sometimes with yellow streaks below the lateral line.
 - Large canine teeth absent.
 - Orientation of mouth and eye give it the appearance of looking upward.
 - No dark lateral spot.

Habitat Suspends at mid-depths over rocky reefs offshore.

Size Usually less than 2 pounds.

Notes Spawns April to September, females maturing at 3 to 4 years of age; grows slowly; attains a weight of 6 pounds and length of 24 inches; feeds on small, swimming crustaceans and mollusks.



Yellowtail Snapper

Ocyurus chrysurus

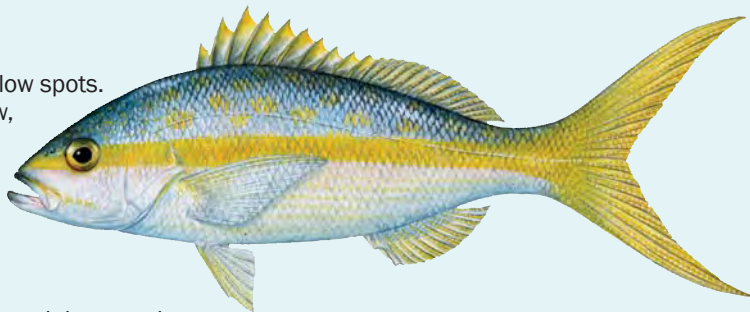
Family Lutjanidae, Snappers

- Features**
- Back and upper sides olive to bluish with yellow spots.
 - Lower sides and belly with alternating narrow, longitudinal pink and yellow stripes.
 - Prominent mid lateral yellow stripe begins at mouth and runs to tail, broadening as it passes the dorsal fins.
 - Caudal fin yellow and deeply forked.
 - No dark lateral spots.

Habitat Juveniles inshore on grassbeds and back reefs; adults nearshore or offshore over sandy areas near reefs.

Size To 5 pounds (30 inches).

Notes Found mainly in tropical waters; spawns in mid summer; rarely exceeds 30 inches and 5 pounds in size; feeds on small fish and invertebrates.



Hogfish

Lachnolaimus maximus

Family Labridae, Wrasses

- Features**
- Body deep, strongly compressed.
 - Color varies, but never bicolored, usually reddish, sometimes bright brick red.
 - Soft dorsal fin with a large dark spot at base.
 - Entire top of head nape purplish brown in large males, this patch of color continuous with blackish area that extends along entire base of dorsal fin.
 - Large blackish crescent through base of caudal fin.
 - Pelvic fin with dusky tip.
 - Mouth very protrusible.
 - 14 spines in dorsal fin - first 3 elongate, bladelike rays at front of soft dorsal and anal fins and lower lobes of caudal fin elongate.

Young Greenish or brownish, mottled with dark.

Size To 36 inches.

Notes Esteemed as a food fish in some areas, but has been implicated in ciguatera; usually marketed as Hog Snapper.



Gray Triggerfish

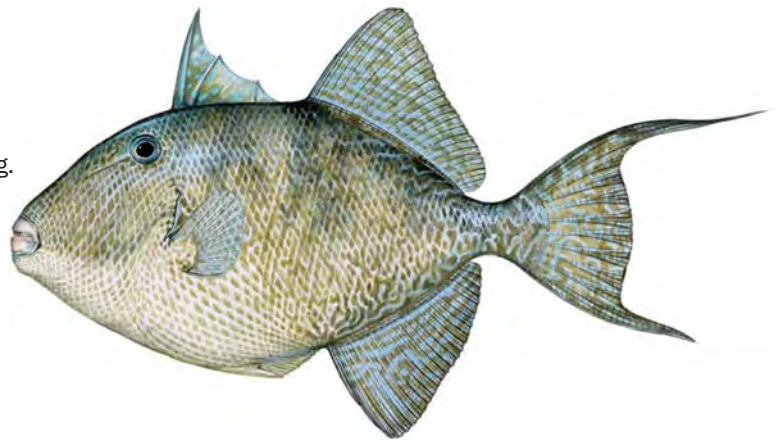
Balistes capriscus

Family Balistidae, Triggerfishes

- Features**
- Entirely olive-gray.
 - Dorsal and anal fins marbled.
 - Caudal fin lobes elongate in large adults.
 - One or more enlarged scales behind gill opening.
 - 26 to 29 dorsal fin rays.
 - 23 to 26 anal fin rays.
 - Young: large darker saddles on back (these saddles sometimes persist in adults).
 - Blue spots and short blue lines in dorsal fin and on upper half of body, becoming white below and in anal fin.
 - Upper rim of eye blue.

Habitat Hardbottom, reefs, ledges.

Size To 17 inches.



Sheepshead

Archosargus probatocephalus

Family Sparidae, Porgies

- Features**
- Basic silvery color, with 5 or 6 distinct vertical black bars on sides, not always the same on both sides.
 - Prominent teeth, including incisors, molars, and rounded grinders.
 - No barbels on lower jaw.
 - Strong and sharp spines on dorsal and anal fins.

Similar fish Black drum, *Pogonias cromis*, Atlantic spadefish, *Chaetodipterus faber*.

Habitat Inshore around oyster bars, seawalls and in tidal creeks; moves nearshore in late winter and early spring for spawning, gathering over rocks, artificial reefs, and around navigation markers.

Size Inshore – 1 to 2 pounds; offshore – common to 8 pounds.

Notes Feeds on mollusks and crustaceans such as fiddler crabs and barnacles; famed nibblers, prompting the saying that “anglers must strike just before they bite.”



Red Porgy

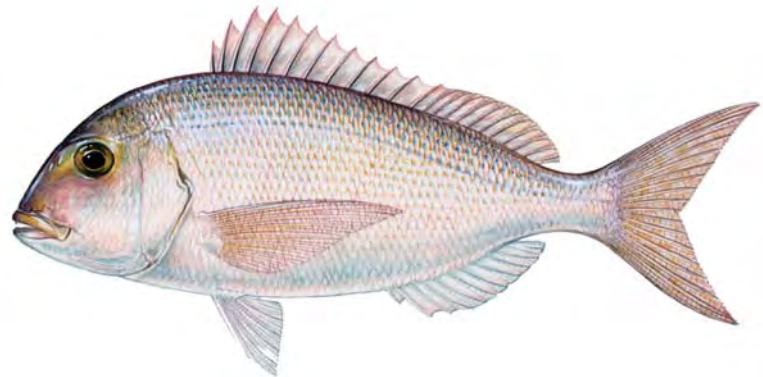
Pagrus pagrus

Family Sparidae, Porgies

- Features**
- The only American porgy with a rear nostril that is round (not slit-like).
 - Head and body silvery red, with many tiny blue spots.

Habitat Deeper part of continental shelf, but young occur in water as shallow as 18 m (60 ft.).

Size To 36 inches.



Jolthead Porgy

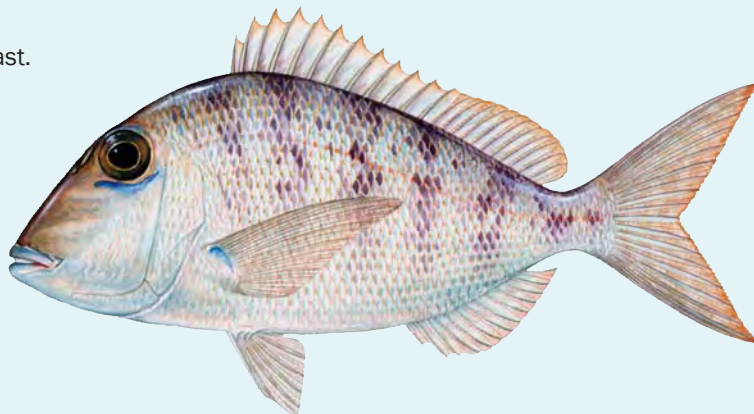
Calamus bajonado

Family Sparidae, Porgies

- Features**
- Generally silvery to brassy, with a bluish cast.
 - Front of head brown, with blue line along lower rim of eye.
 - A whitish stripe below eye, and another between eye and mouth.
 - Corner of mouth orange.

Habitat Coastal waters to 45 m (150 ft.).

Size To 8 pounds (24 inches).



Knobbed Porgy

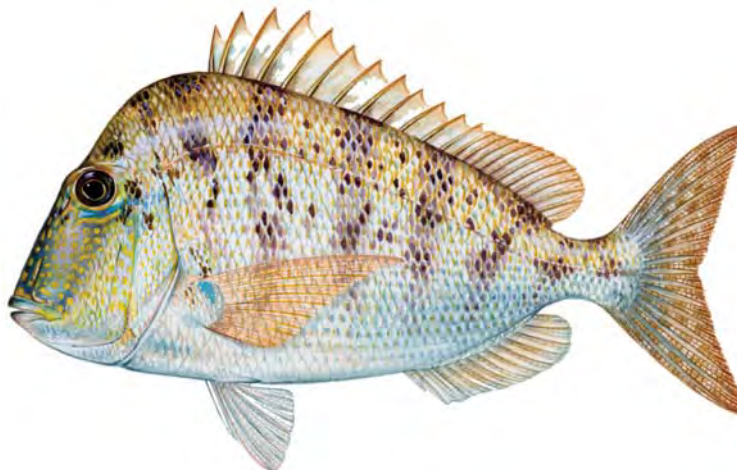
Calamus nodosus

Family Sparidae, Porgies

- Features**
- Body deep.
 - Front profile very steep.
 - Nape projects strongly in large adults.
 - Body generally silvery, with a rosy cast.
 - Cheek and snout dark purplish gray, with many bronze spots.
 - Large blue spot at axil of pectoral fin.

Habitat Hardbottom, reefs, ledges.

Size To 18 inches.



Grass Porgy

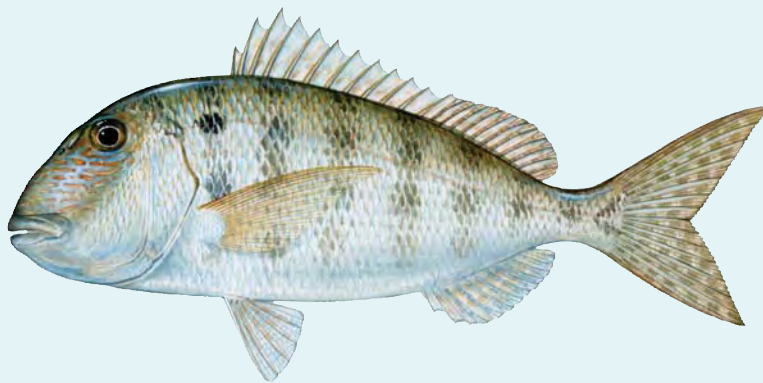
Calamus arctifrons

Family Sparidae, Porgies

- Features**
- Pale tan to silvery.
 - Dark olive above.
 - Dark bar across nape extends through eye to corner of mouth.
 - Dark blotches on body, in about 5 vertical and 4 horizontal series, suggesting interrupted bars and stripes.
 - Blotch near front of lateral line most prominent.
 - Dark V at base of caudal fin.
 - Lobes of caudal fin with dark bars.

Habitat Inshore seagrass beds.

Size To 10 inches.



Littlehead Porgy

Calamus proridens

Family Sparidae, Porgies

- Features**
- Snout and cheek bluish gray, with many wavy, dark blue lines.
 - Areas between lines sometimes brassy.
 - Each scale on upper body has a dark bluish line through the center.
 - These lines unite to form a narrow line along each scale row.

Similar fish Knobbed Porgy, *C. nodosus*.

Size To 18 inches.



Pinfish

Lagodon rhomboides

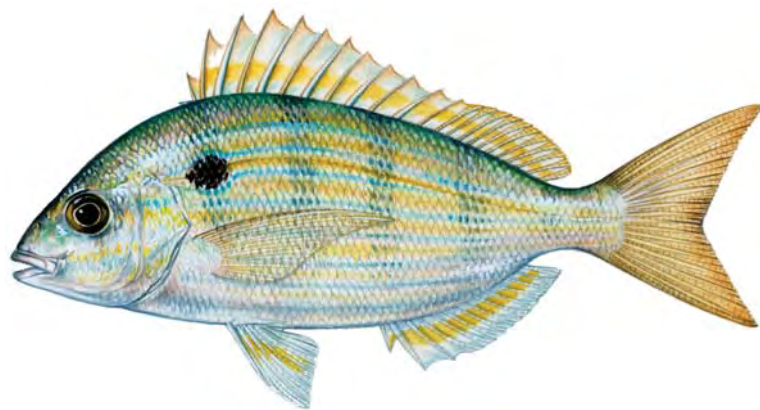
Family Sparidae, Porgies

- Features**
- Small mouth with incisor-like teeth.
 - Distinctive black spot behind the gill cover.
 - Body bluish-silver with blue and orange-yellow horizontal stripes, yellow fins.

Habitat Seagrass beds, bridges, piers, marker pilings, and around natural and artificial reefs; spawn offshore.

Size Usually less than 8 inches.

Notes Popular live bait, notorious bait stealers.



Spottail Pinfish

Diplodus holbrooki

Family Sparidae, Porgies

- Features**
- Dark saddle on caudal peduncle sometimes forms a complete ring around peduncle in adults.
 - Eight faint bars on body, alternately long and short.
 - More prominent in young.
 - Edge of opercular membrane blackish.
 - Pelvic and anal fins dusky brown, dorsal fin less dark.

Habitat Inshore seagrass beds, offshore rocks and reefs.

Size To 18 inches.



White Grunt

Haemulon plumieri

Family Haemulidae, Grunts

- Features**
- Body color light bluish-gray, head with horizontal blue stripes, white underbelly black blotch on preopercle.
 - Margin of each scale bronze.
 - Large bright orange mouth.
 - Scales above lateral line larger than scales below lateral line.

Similar fish Other grunts.

Habitat From shore to the outer reef edge or on offshore hard bottom to 115 feet; most abundant in water less than 80 feet deep; juveniles inshore.

Size To 18 inches.

Notes Audible grunting is produced by grinding of the pharyngeal teeth, with air bladder acting as amplifier; spawning occurs on offshore hard bottoms or reefs from May through June; feeds on crustaceans, mollusks, and small fishes.



Pigfish

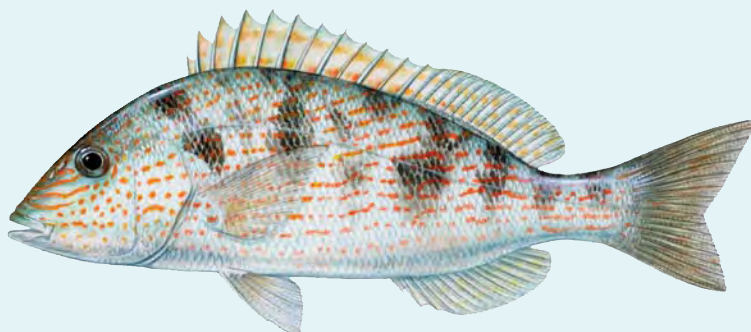
Orthopristis chrysoptera

Family Haemulidae, Grunts

- Features**
- Gray, often with a bluish cast.
 - Many bronze to yellowish spots, dashes, and other small markings.
 - Mouth small, ending below front nostril.

Habitat Bay and banks; not on reefs in water less than 60 ft.

Size To 15 inches.



Tomtate

Haemulon aurolineatum

Family Haemulidae, Grunts

- Features**
- Bright orange mouth lining.
 - Light colored.
 - Gray to tan on back.
 - Yellow to brown stripe from head to base of tail fin.
 - Black blotch at base of tail fin fades away in larger specimens.

Habitat Bottom fish found around reefs and hard bottom areas.

Size To 1 pound (10-11 inches).

Notes Not usually eaten due to small size.



Atlantic Croaker

Micropogonias undulatus
Family Sciaenidae, Drums

- Features**
- Inferior mouth, located below the snout tip.
 - Silver-gray or bronze body with dark oblique wavy bars or lines.
 - 3 to 5 pairs of small barbels on chin.
 - Iridescent especially on head.
 - Preopercle strongly serrated.

Similar fish Spot, *Leiostomus xanthurus*.

Habitat Generally found north of Tampa Bay on the West Coast, and north of Cape Canaveral on the East Coast; young fish found in estuaries; older fish (2 to 3 years) inhabit deep offshore waters during winter and move into bays and estuaries during the spring, summer, and fall.

Size To 4 pounds (20 inches).

Notes During spawning becomes bronze or yellow in color; spawning apparently occurs offshore in fall; longevity 2 to 4 years.



Black Drum

Pogonias cromis
Family Sciaenidae, Drums

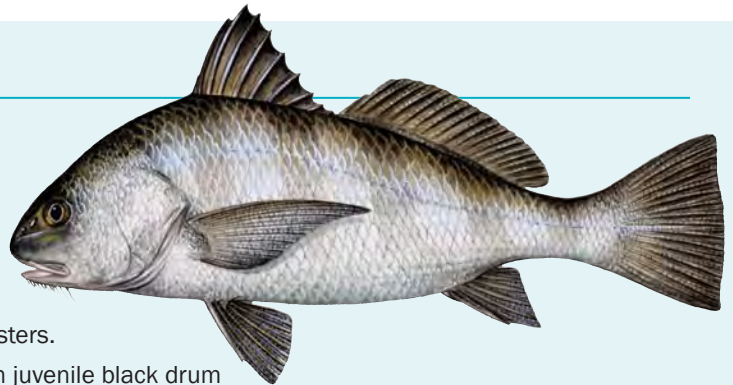
- Features**
- High arched back.
 - 10 to 14 pairs of chin barbels.
 - Gray or black colored body in adults.
 - Young have 4 to 6 vertical bars.
 - Scales large.
 - Has cobblestone-like teeth capable of crushing oysters.

Similar fish Red drum, *Sciaenops ocellatus*. The vertical bars on juvenile black drum are somewhat similar to those on sheepshead, *A. probatocephalus*; and spadefish, *Chaetodipterus faber*.

Habitat Inshore fish common to bays and lagoons; bottom dweller often found around oyster beds; also offshore.

Size Common to 30 pounds.

Notes Largest member of the drum family; spawns nearshore in winter and early spring; feeds on oysters, mussels, crabs, shrimp, and occasionally fish; longevity to 35 or more years.



Red Drum

Sciaenops ocellatus
Family Sciaenidae, Drums

Other names Redfish.

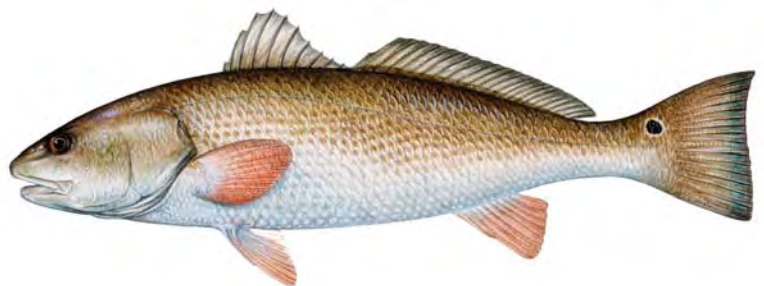
- Features**
- Chin without barbels.
 - Copper-bronze body, lighter shade in clear waters.
 - One to many spots at base of tail (rarely no spots).
 - Mouth horizontal and opening downward.
 - Scales large.

Similar fish Black drum, *P. cromis*.

Habitat Juveniles are an inshore fish, migrating out of the estuaries at about 30 inches (4 years) and joining the spawning population offshore.

Size To 92 pounds (58 inches). Common to 20 pounds.

Notes Red drum are an inshore species until they attain roughly 30 inches (4 years), then migrate to join the nearshore population; spawning occurs from August to November in nearshore waters; feeds on crustaceans, fish, and mollusks; longevity to 20 years or more.



Sand Seatrout

Cynoscion arenarius
Family Sciaenidae, Drums

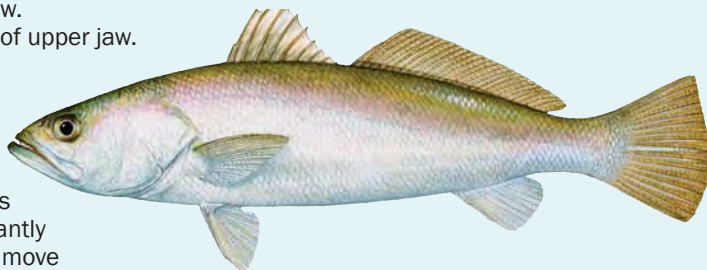
- Features**
- Pale body color, yellow above, silver to white below.
 - One or two prominent canine teeth usually at tip of upper jaw.
 - Inside of mouth yellow.
 - No well-defined black spots on back.
 - 10 to 12 soft rays in anal fin; no chin barbels.

Similar fish Silver seatrout, *Cynoscion nothus*.

Habitat A Gulf species that may occur in the Atlantic waters of extreme southeastern Florida; adults predominantly found inshore residing in bays and inlets, but may move offshore during winter months; young occur inshore in shallow bays.

Size Usually less than 1 pound (15 inches).

Notes Matures during first or second year; prolonged inshore spawning season extends through spring and summer; feeds mainly on small fish and shrimp.



Silver Seatrout

Cynoscion nothus
Family Sciaenidae, Drums

- Features**
- Pale straw-colored above, silvery sides and white below.
 - No distinctive pigmentation, although faint diagonal lines may be present on upper body.
 - 8 to 9 rays in the anal fin.
 - Large eyes.
 - Short snout.
 - One to two prominent canine teeth usually present at tip of upper jaw.
 - Lower half of tail longer than upper half.

Similar fish Other seatrout.

Habitat Most common over sand or sandy mud bottoms offshore along both the Gulf and the Atlantic Coasts of Florida.

Size Usually less than 1 pound (12 inches).

Notes Smallest seatrout; spawns offshore in deep water during spring, summer, and fall; feeds on small fish and shrimp.



Spotted Seatrout

Cynoscion nebulosus
Family Sciaenidae, Drums

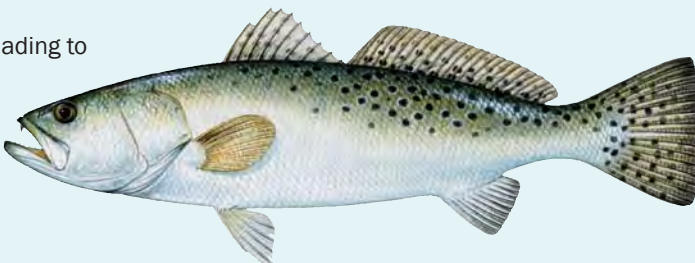
- Features**
- Dark gray or green above, with sky-blue tinges shading to silvery and white below.
 - Numerous distinct round black spots on back, extending to the dorsal fins and tail.
 - No barbels and no scales on the soft dorsal fin.
 - One or two prominent canine teeth usually present at tip of upper jaw.

Similar fish Other seatrout.

Habitat Inshore and/or nearshore over grass, sand, and sandy mud bottoms; move into slow-moving or still, deep waters in cold weather.

Size To 15.5 pounds (36 inches). Common to 4 pounds.

Notes Matures during first or second year and spawns inshore from March through November, often in association with seagrass beds; lives mainly in estuaries and moves only short distances; adults feed mainly on shrimp and small fish; prefers water temperatures between 58 and 81°F, may be killed if trapped in shallow water during cold weather; longevity 8 to 10 years.



Silver Perch

Bairdiella chrysoura

Family Sciaenidae, Drums

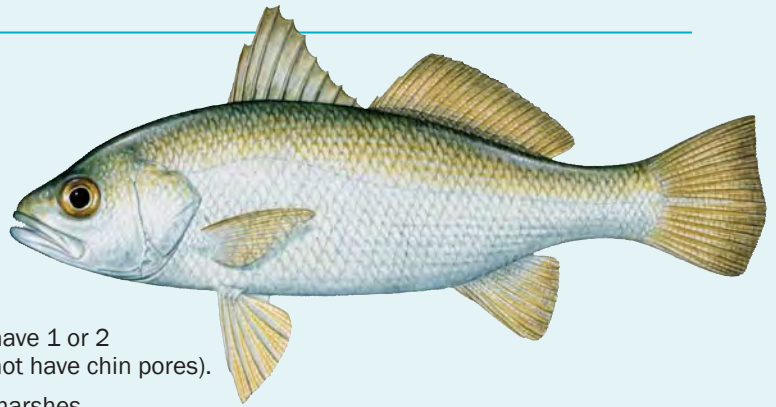
- Features**
- Color silvery with yellowish fins.
 - No spots.
 - No chin barbels.
 - No prominent canine teeth at tip of upper jaw.
 - Preopercle finely serrated.
 - 5 to 6 chin pores.
 - Mouth terminal.

Similar fish Sand seatrout, *C. arenarius* (the seatrouts usually have 1 or 2 prominent canine teeth at tip of upper jaw and do not have chin pores).

Habitat Inshore in seagrass beds, tidal creeks, rivers, and marshes.

Size To 9 inches.

Notes Spawning takes place in shallow, saline portions of bays and other inshore areas, peaking between May and September; matures by second or third year (about 6 inches); adults eat crustaceans and small fishes; may live to 6 years.



Weakfish

Cynoscion regalis

Family Sciaenidae, Drums

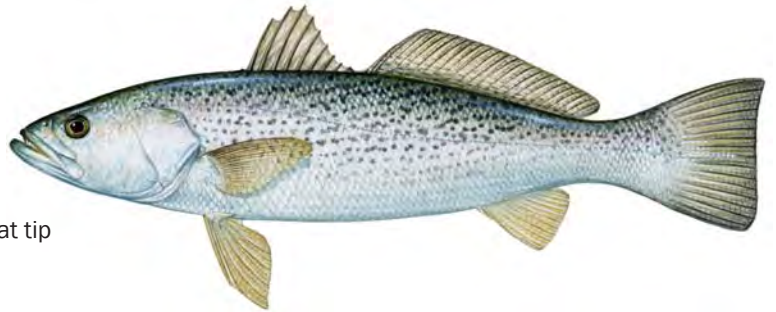
- Features**
- Dark olive or blue-green back.
 - Sides covered in tones of blue, purple, lavender, gold, and copper.
 - Irregular diagonal rows of vaguely defined dark spots appear above the lateral line.
 - 1 to 2 prominent canine teeth usually present at tip of upper jaw.
 - Black margin on tip of the tongue.
 - Pelvic and anal fins yellow.
 - Pectoral fins olive on outside, yellow underneath.

Similar fish Other seatrout.

Habitat An Atlantic Coast fish, possibly found in the extreme southeastern Gulf; adults move inshore and north during warm months inhabiting the surf, inlets, bays, channels, and estuaries; adults move offshore and south during cold months; juveniles inhabit estuaries which serve as nurseries.

Size To 6 pounds (28 inches).

Notes May mature as early as age 1; spawns in nearshore or estuarine areas between April and October; schooling fish; feeds primarily on shrimp and fish.



Gulf Kingfish

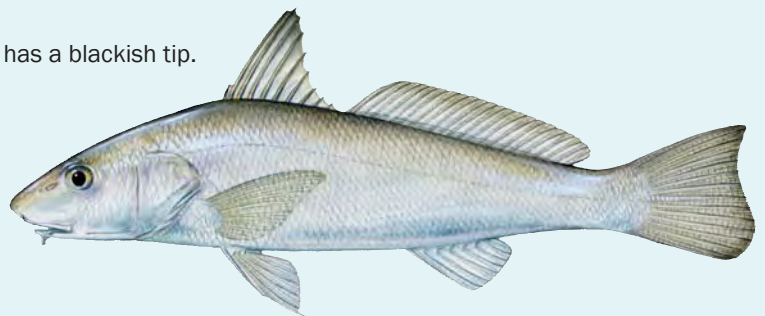
Menticirrhus littoralis

Family Sciaenidae, Drums

- Features**
- Similar to the Southern Kingfish but caudal fin has a blackish tip.
 - Side silvery, without dark marks.
 - Tip of spinous dorsal fin often dusky.
 - Lining of gill cavity silvery.
 - Scales on chest noticeably smaller than those on side.

Habitat At water's edge, in surf.

Size To 18 inches.



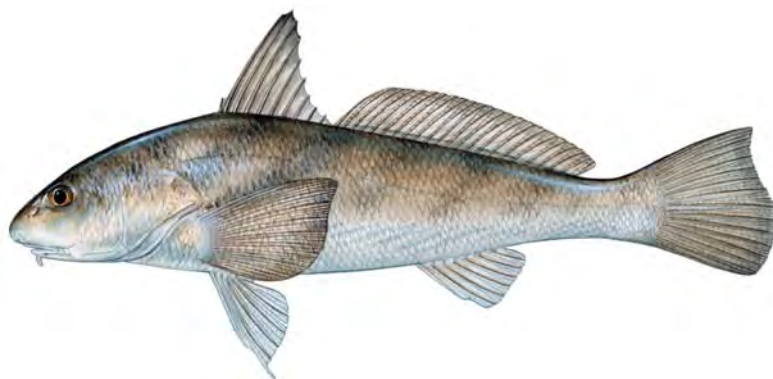
Southern Kingfish

Menticirrhus americanus
Family Sciaenidae, Drums

- Features**
- Grayish brown above, with silvery sides.
 - 7 to 8 diagonal dusky bars or blotches on each side, but these marks are obscure.
 - Form V-shaped marks on side.
 - Scales on chest about same size as those on body.

Habitat Shallow coastal waters; common along beaches.

Size To 2 pounds (15 inches).



Spot

Leiostomus xanthurus
Family Sciaenidae, Drums

- Features**
- The only drum in our region with a distinctly forked caudal fin.
 - Bluish to brownish above.
 - Brassy on side.
 - Silvery to white below.
 - Distinct brownish spot on shoulder.
 - 12 to 15 narrow, diagonal dark lines on upper body.

Size To 14 inches.

Notes A popular pan fish.



Gulf Flounder

Paralichthys albigutta
Family Paralichthyidae, Large-tooth flounders

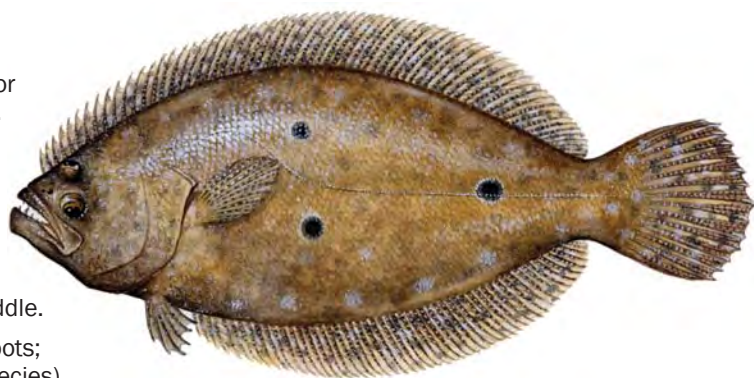
- Features**
- Body color brown, its shade depending on color of bottom, with numerous spots and blotches.
 - 3 prominent eye-like spots forming a triangle.
 - One spot on lateral line, one above, one below.
 - Numerous white spots scattered over body and fins.
 - Strong canine-like teeth.
 - Caudal fin in shape of wedge, its tip in the middle.

Similar fish Southern flounder, *P. lethostigma* (no eyelike spots; color pattern is key to distinguishing the two species).

Habitat Inshore on sandy or mud bottoms, often ranging into tidal creeks; occasionally caught on nearshore rocky reefs.

Size Common to 2 pounds (15 inches).

Notes Hatches into usual fish form, but right eye migrates over to left side early in life; a bottom dweller; thought to spawn offshore; feeds on crustaceans and small fishes.



Hardhead Catfish

Arius felis

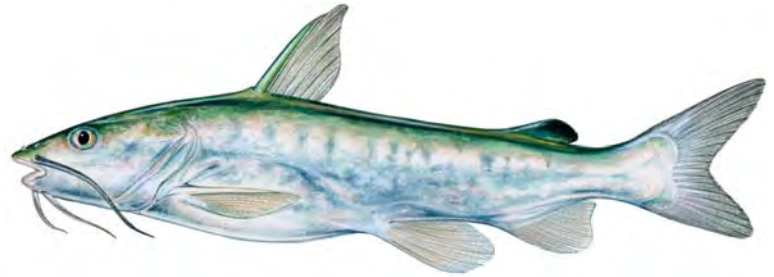
Family Ariidae, Sea Catfishes

- Features**
- Brownish to gray-green.
 - White to yellowish below.
 - Fin spines with no fleshy filaments.
 - Barbel at corner of mouth not very flattened and shorter than head.
 - Four barbels on chin.

Habitat Continental waters and enters brackish waters.

Size To 12 pounds (24 inches).

Notes Commonly caught from catwalks, bridges, and piers, particularly in passes and inland waterways; edible, but generally not eaten.



Gafftopsail Catfish

Bagre marinus

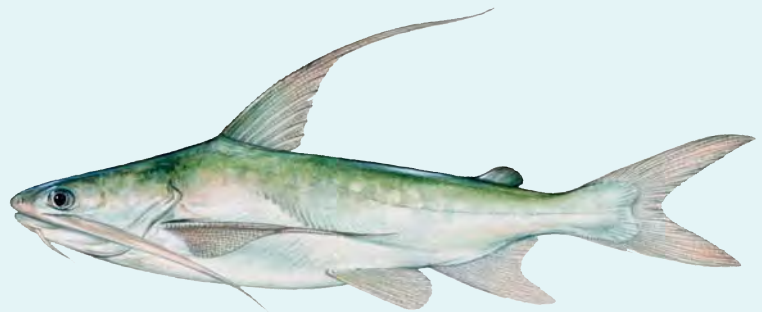
Family Ariidae, Sea Catfishes

- Features**
- Bluish above, silvery below.
 - Dorsal and pectoral fins with long, fleshy filaments on spines.
 - Barbel at corner of mouth flattened, bandlike, and very elongated, sometimes reaching anal fin.
 - Only 2 barbels on chin.

Habitat Continental waters; enters brackish waters; usually less common than the hardhead catfish.

Size To 6 pounds (24 inches).

Notes Commonly caught by anglers along bridges, piers, and catwalks; a good food fish.



Atlantic Spadefish

Chaetodipterus faber

Family Ephippidae, Spadefishes

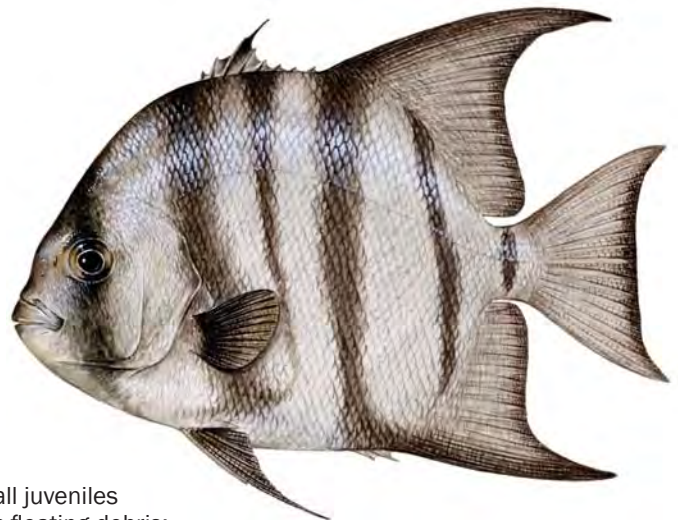
- Features**
- Silvery with 4 to 6 black vertical bands on each side which sometimes become obscure in larger fish.
 - Deep, flattened body.
 - Separated first and second dorsal fins.
 - Concave caudal fin.
 - Anterior rays of second dorsal fin and anal fin elongated.
 - Young are entirely dark brown or blackish.

Similar fish No close resemblance, but frequently and mistakenly called angelfish.

Habitat Inshore and nearshore, around natural and artificial reefs, and especially near navigation markers in 15 to 20 feet of water.

Size To 20 pounds (36 inches). Common to 2 pounds.

Notes Spawns in spring and summer; travels in large schools; small juveniles almost totally black, known to drift on their sides and mimic floating debris; feeds on crustaceans, small encrusting invertebrates, and may nibble on tentacles of jellyfish.



Fantail Mullet

Mugil gyrans

Family Mugilidae, Mulletts

- Features**
- Color olive green with blue tints on back, shading to silvery sides, white below.
 - Anal and pelvic fins yellowish.
 - Dark blotch at base of pectoral fin.
 - Inverted V-shaped mouth.
 - Insertion of second dorsal over that of the anal fin.
 - Fewer soft rays in anal fin than white mullet.

Similar fish Striped mullet, *M. cephalus*, white mullet, *M. curmea* (note difference in shape of fins and opercular margins).

Habitat Inshore, occurring along beaches in the fall.

Size Usually less than 1 pound.

Notes Spawns in nearshore or possibly inshore waters during spring and summer; juveniles occur inshore; feeds on algae, small crustaceans, and detritus.



Striped (Black) Mullet

Mugil cephalus

Family Mugilidae, Mulletts

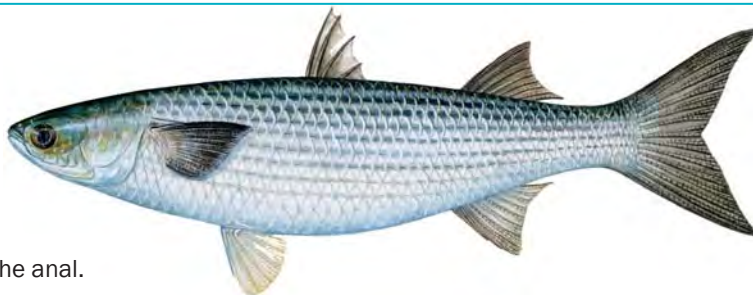
- Features**
- Color bluish-gray or green above.
 - Shading to silver on sides, with indistinct horizontal black barrings.
 - White below fins lightly scaled at base, unscaled above.
 - Blunt nose and small mouth.
 - Second dorsal fin originates behind that of the anal.

Similar fish White mullet, *M. curema*, fantail mullet, *M. gyrans* (both white and fantail mullet have black blotch at base of pectoral fin, which is lacking in the black mullet).

Habitat Inshore.

Size Roe mullet common to 3 pounds, but in aquariums known to reach 12 pounds or more.

Notes Adults migrate offshore in large schools to spawn; juveniles migrate inshore at about 1 inch in size, moving far up tidal creeks; frequent leapers; feeds on algae, detritus, and other tiny marine forms.



Striped Mojarra

Diapterus plumieri

Family Gerreidae, Mojarra

- Features**
- Body dark olive above.
 - Tan to silvery on side, often with a metallic sheen.
 - Conspicuous blackish stripe along center of each scale row, except toward belly.
 - All fins except pectoral fins dusky in large adults.
 - Anal fins sometimes dark orange.
 - Pelvic spine and first 2 anal spines pale.
 - Dorsal and anal spines long and stout.
 - 3 anal spines.

Habitat Brackish and coastal fresh waters (in limestone regions), grassy areas.

Size To 12 inches.



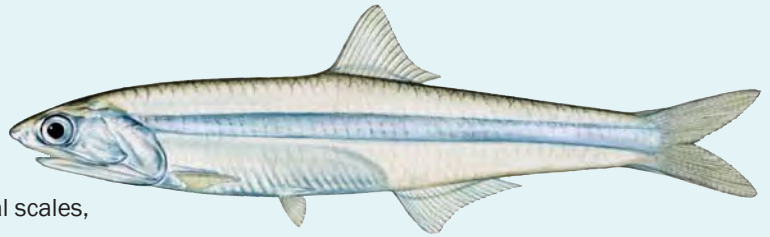
Striped Anchovy

Anchoa hepsetus

Family Engraulidae, Anchovies

- Features**
- Snout length somewhat less than eye diameter.
 - Silver stripe on body narrow – width less than eye diameter or snout length throughout.
 - Back greenish.
 - Some yellowish about the head.
 - Melanophores (pigmented cells) outline all dorsal scales, especially those behind the dorsal fin.
 - Dorsal fin begins above a point well in front of anal fin, and ends above front rays of anal fin.
 - 14 to 17 dorsal fin rays (usually 16), 15 to 18 pectoral fin rays (usually 16 to 17), and 20 to 24 anal fin rays (usually 21 to 23).

Size To 6 inches.



Bay Anchovy

Anchoa mitchilli

Family Engraulidae, Anchovies

- Features**
- Body relatively deep; head short.
 - Snout very short, only slightly overhanging mouth.
 - Silvery stripe narrow, often faint or absent toward front.
 - Stripe fades after death.
 - Body grayish, with few melanophores above.
 - Dorsal fin far back – the only U.S. species in which that fin begins above or only very slightly in front of anal fin.
 - 11 to 14 (usually 12 to 13) pectoral fin rays.
 - 23 to 31 (usually 24 to 29) anal fin rays.

Habitat In shallow bays and estuaries; common in brackish waters, but occurs to 120 ft.

Size To 4 inches.



Great Barracuda

Sphyræna barracuda

Family Sphyrænidae, Barracudas

- Features**
- Gray, with a greenish cast above, whitish below.
 - Many irregular, small black blotches on lower side.
 - 18 to 22 diagonal dark bars on upper side (not always evident).
 - Caudal fin dark with white tips.
 - 75 to 87 lateral line scales; no fleshy tip on jaw.

Young (Not shown) dark stripe on side
stripe breaks into dark squarish blotches as fish grows.

Habitat Young live in inshore seagrass beds; adults range from inshore channels to open ocean.

Size To 106 pounds.

Notes Most attacks on people have occurred when they were wading or swimming in turbid water while wearing bright objects, attempting to spear a barracuda, or carrying speared fish; flesh of smaller fish apparently not poisonous, but larger fish sometimes very toxic due to ciguatera; no safe, reliable way of recognizing toxic fish.



King Mackerel

Scomberomorus cavalla

Family Scombridae, Mackerels and Tunas

- Features**
- Color of back iridescent bluish green, sides silvery.
 - Streamlined body with tapered head.
 - No black pigment on front of the first dorsal fin.
 - Lateral line starts high and drops sharply below the second dorsal fin.
 - Young fish often have yellowish spots like those of Spanish mackerel.



Similar fish Cero, *S. regalis*; Spanish mackerel, *S. maculatus*.

Habitat Nearshore and offshore; occasionally taken from piers running into deep water.

Size To 100 pounds. Common to 20 pounds.

Notes Schooling fish that migrates from south Florida waters in winter to more northerly waters in spring; Gulf population thought to be separate from Atlantic population, with considerable mixing in winter from Cape Canaveral past Key West; spawns in mid summer offshore; feeds on small fish and squid.

Cero (cero mackerel)

Scomberomorus regalis

Family Scombridae, Mackerels and Tunas

- Features**
- Color of back iridescent bluish green.
 - Sides silvery yellow spots forming lines above and below a bronze stripe from pectoral fin to base of the tail.
 - Front of first dorsal is bluish black.
 - Lateral line curves gradually to base of caudal fin.



Similar fish Spanish mackerel, *S. maculatus*; king mackerel, *S. cavalla*.

Habitat Nearshore and offshore fish occurring mainly in south Florida, especially over coral reefs and wrecks.

Size To 11 pounds (34 inches). Common to 5 pounds.

Notes Unlike other mackerels, does not stray far from south Florida waters; spawns offshore in mid summer; feeds on small fish and squid.

Spanish Mackerel

Scomberomorus maculatus

Family Scombridae, Mackerels and Tunas

- Features**
- Color of back green, shading to silver on sides.
 - Golden yellow irregular spots above and below lateral line.
 - Front of dorsal fin black.
 - Lateral line curves gently to base of tail.

Similar fish Cero, *S. regalis*, king mackerel, *S. cavalla*.

Habitat Inshore, nearshore, and offshore, especially over deep grass beds and reefs; absent from north Florida waters in winter.

Size To 11 pounds (31 inches). Common to 2 pounds.

Notes Schooling fish that migrates northward in spring, returning to southerly waters when water temperatures drop below about 70°F; spawns offshore, spring through summer; feeds on small fish and squid.



Wahoo

Acanthocybium solanderi

Family Scombridae, Mackerels and Tunas

- Features**
- Body slender; elongated jaws form a pointed beak.
 - Dark bluish above, with about 30 dark wavy bars.
 - No gill rakers, whitish below 1st dorsal fin long and low, with 21 to 27 spines.

Habitat Offshore Gulfstream; bluewater.

Size To 183 pounds (83 inches).

Notes An important game fish, renowned for its tremendous runs and shifts of direction; usually not in schools; caught by trolling bait and artificial lures on flatlines.



Little Tunny

Euthynnus alletteratus

Family Scombridae, Mackerels and Tunas

- Features**
- Diagonal, sometimes wavy, dark bars on bare areas on each side of back.
 - 4 to 5 dark spots below pectoral fin.
 - No dark stripes on belly.
 - Dorsal fins connected at base.
 - Pectoral fin short.

Habitat Common offshore, but also occurs regularly in bays and over reefs.

Size To 26 pounds (38 inches).

Notes Probably the most common tuna in the West Atlantic; popular sport fish, it is also used as bait for marlin; occurs in large schools.



Yellowfin Tuna

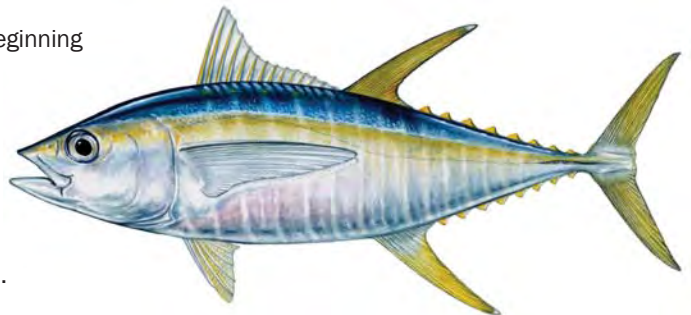
Thunnus albacares

Family Scombridae, Mackerels and Tunas

- Features**
- Pectoral fin moderately long, reaching point below beginning of second dorsal fin.
 - Second dorsal fin and all finlets yellow.
 - No white rear edge on caudal fin.
 - Golden stripe on side.
 - Eye small, 26 to 35 gill rakers.
 - Second dorsal and anal fins become much longer with age (to about 1/5 of total length).

Habitat Offshore mostly bluewater; in or near the Gulfstream.

Size To 367 pounds (82 inches).



Blackfin Tuna

Thunnus atlanticus

Family Scombridae, Mackerels and Tunas

- Features**
- Pectoral fin moderately long, reaching point below beginning of second dorsal fin.
 - Eye large, second dorsal fin dusky.
 - All finlets dusky, with white edges.
 - Dorsal finlets sometimes turn yellowish at base after death.
 - A broad, brownish stripe along upper part of side.
 - 19 to 25 gill rakers (usually 21 to 23) on first arch.

Habitat Nearshore and offshore.

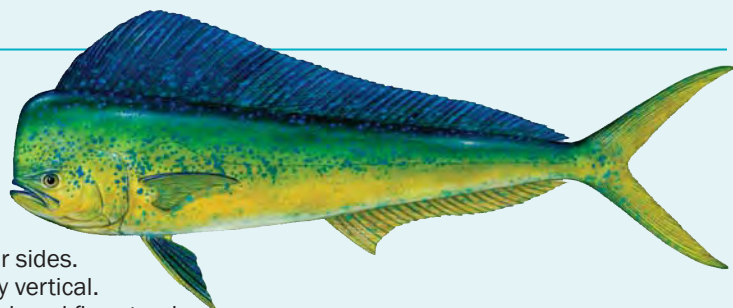
Size To 42 pounds (38 inches).



Dolphinfish

Coryphaena hippurus

Family Coryphaenidae, Dolphinfishes



- Features**
- Bright greenish blue above, yellow on sides, with capability of flashing purple, chartreuse, and a wide range of other colors.
 - Body tapers sharply from head to tail.
 - Irregular blue or golden blotches scattered over sides.
 - Anterior profile of head on adult males is nearly vertical.
 - Head of females more sloping; the single dark dorsal fin extends from just behind the head to the tail.
 - Anal fin margin concave and extending to tail.

Similar fish Pompano dolphin, *C. equisetis*; the pompano dolphin has squarish tooth patch on tongue (oval tooth patch on dolphin) and fewer dorsal rays (48 to 55 vs. 55 to 65 on dolphin).

Habitat Offshore in warm waters.

Size To 88 pounds (63 inches). Common to 30 pounds.

Notes One of the fastest-growing fish, thought to live no more than 5 years; swimming speed estimated at 50 knots; spawns in warm oceanic currents throughout much of the year; young found in sargassum weed; feeds on flying fish and squid.

Swordfish

Xiphias gladius

Family Xiphiidae, Swordfishes



- Features**
- Color of back variable, black, grayish blue, brown, metallic purple, or bronze.
 - Sides dusky, underbelly dirty white.
 - Large eyes, long flat, sword-like upper jaw.
 - Lacks scales, teeth, and pelvic fins.
 - Single keel on each side of body in front of tail.
 - First dorsal fin high, rigid and short.

Habitat Offshore species worldwide in temperate and tropic waters known to frequent depths of 400 to 500 fathoms; also has been seen basking at the surface.

Size To 1300 pounds (15 feet).

Notes Large swordfish are all females, males seldom exceed 200 pounds; except when spawning, females believed to prefer water cooler than that favored by males; feeds on squid, octopus, and pelagic fishes of all kinds.

Longbill Spearfish

Tetrapturus pfluegeri

Family Istiophoridae, Billfishes



- Features**
- Color of body dark blue, shading to silvery, white underneath.
 - Dorsal fin bluish, others brown-black.
 - Two dorsal fins, the first lengthy, its front forming a peak.
 - Two anal fins, the anus well in front of the first.
 - Upper jaw prolonged into spear, its cross section round.

Similar fish White marlin, *Tetrapterus albidus*.

Habitat Offshore in deep water.

Size To 90 pounds (7 feet).

Notes Uncommon; available data indicate that the spearfish matures at 2 years of age, and rarely lives past 4 to 5 years; they are pelagic, and feed at or near the surface, mainly on fishes and squid; named for Al Pflueger, Sr., founder of Pflueger Taxidermy.

Blue Marlin

Makaira nigricans

Family Istiophoridae, Billfishes

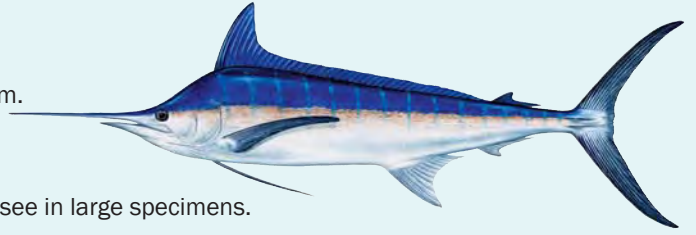
- Features**
- Color cobalt blue on top shading to silvery white on bottom.
 - Upper jaw elongated in form of a spear.
 - Dorsal fin pointed at front end.
 - Pectoral fin and anal fin pointed.
 - Lateral line reticulated (interwoven like a net), difficult to see in large specimens.
 - No dark spots on dorsal fin.
 - Body covered with imbedded scales ending in one or two sharp points.
 - Conspicuous groove on each side of the isthmus.

Similar fish White marlin, *Tetrapterus albidus* (white has rounded dorsal at front end, rounded tip of pectoral and anal fins, and spots on the dorsal fin).

Habitat Offshore, a bluewater fish.

Size Largest of the Atlantic marlins; commonly over 600 pounds (14 feet).

Notes All of trophy size are females; males do not exceed 300 pounds; make trans-Atlantic migrations; spawning procedures unknown; feeds on squid and pelagic fishes, including blackfin tuna and frigate mackerel.



White Marlin

Tetrapterus albidus

Family Istiophoridae, Billfishes

- Features**
- Color of body dark blue to chocolate brown, shading to silvery white underbelly.
 - Noticeable spots on dorsal fin.
 - Upper jaw elongated in shape of a spear.
 - Body covered with imbedded scales with a single sharp point.
 - Tips of first dorsal, pectoral, and first anal fins rounded.
 - Lateral line curved above pectoral fin then going in straight line to base of tail.
 - Conspicuous hump form area between eyes to beginning of 1st dorsal fin.

Similar fish Blue marlin, *M. nigricans*.

Habitat Offshore, a bluewater fish.

Size To 182 pounds (9 feet). Common to 8 feet.

Notes Uses its bill to stun fast-moving fishes, then turns to consume them; spawning procedures unknown; ranges throughout the Atlantic and Caribbean; feeds on squid and pelagic fishes.



Sailfish

Istiophorus platypterus

Family Istiophoridae, Billfishes

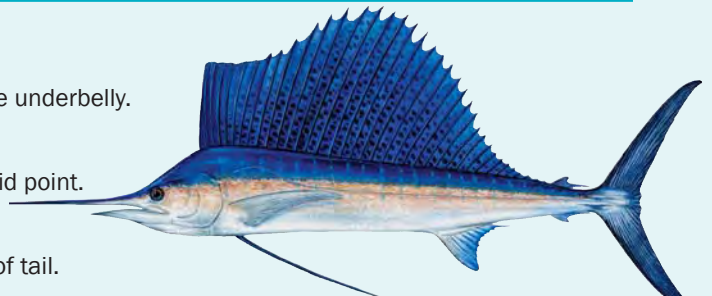
- Features**
- Color dark blue on top, brown-blue laterally, silvery white underbelly.
 - Upper jaw elongated in form of spear.
 - First dorsal greatly enlarged in the form of a sail, with many black spots, its front squared off, highest at its mid point.
 - Pelvic fins very narrow, reaching almost to the anus.
 - Body covered with imbedded scales, blunt at end.
 - Lateral line curved over pectoral, then straight to base of tail.

Similar fish White marlin, *T. albidus*, young blue marlin, *M. nigricans* (spectacular sail-like dorsal of sailfish is most notable difference).

Habitat Offshore species, in south Florida associated with waters near the Gulfstream; off the Panhandle near the 100 fathom line.

Size To 128 pounds (8 feet).

Notes Rapid growing species, reaching 4 to 5 feet in a single year; swims at speeds up to 50 knots; feeds on the surface or at mid depths on smaller pelagic fishes and squid.



Who to call for what

Marine Regulatory & Management Agencies

Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission
Division of Marine Fisheries Management
www.MyFWC.com/ [Click on Fishing](#)
2590 Executive Center Circle, E.
Tallahassee, FL 32301
(850) 487-0554

Regulates marine fishes in Florida's state waters. Provides communication between governing agencies and the public. Improves fisheries habitat and performs marine research. Enforces fisheries regulations.

South Atlantic Fisheries Management Council
www.safmc.net
4055 Faber Place Dr., Suite 210
North Charleston, SC 29405
(843) 571-4366

Responsible for the conservation and management of fisheries 3 to 200 miles offshore of North and South Carolina, Georgia and along Florida's east coast.

Gulf of Mexico
Fisheries Management Council
www.gulfcouncil.org
2203 N. Lois Avenue, Suite 1100
Tampa, FL 33607
(813) 348-1630

Develops and monitors fisheries management plans 9 to 200 miles offshore in the Gulf of Mexico.

NOAA National Marine Fisheries Service
www.nmfs.noaa.gov
263 13th Avenue South
St. Petersburg, FL 33701
(727) 824-5370

Federal agency in charge of managing marine fisheries outside state waters (3 to 200 miles offshore on the Atlantic and 9 to 200 miles on Gulf coast). NMFS is engaged in marine research and enforcement.

Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission Contacts

Our goal is to learn as much as we can about Florida's threatened and endangered species so we can better manage their populations. You can help the FWC protect these species by providing information, such as sightings of tagged manatees or injured sea turtles.

Angler Tag Return Hotline

If you catch a tagged fish in Florida waters call
1-800-367-4461 or email TagReturn@MyFWC.com

Fish Kill Hotline

1-800-636-0511 or submit a report online
<http://research.myfwc.com/fishkill/submit.asp>

Horseshoe Crab Nesting Activity

Biologists at the Fish and Wildlife Research Institute (FWRI) have initiated a statewide survey to identify nesting beaches where horseshoe crabs mate and lay eggs. With the help of the public, FWRI's goal is to identify these beaches around the state 1-866-252-9326 or submit a survey online http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/horseshoe_crab.

Smalltooth Sawfish

This statewide survey provides a means for anglers, boaters, and beach-goers to help biologists learn more about the areas in which sawfish are sighted. If you catch a sawfish while fishing for other species or happen to see one while you are near the water, please contact us.

Sawfish@MyFwc.com 941-255-7403

Whooping Crane

The FWC would like to hear about your Whooping Crane sightings. You can contact project biologists by e-mail: WhoopingCrane@MyFWC.com

Nuisance Alligator

1-866-FWC-GATOR (1-866-392-4286)

Oil, Fuel, or Hazardous Material Spills in Florida Waters

1-800-320-0519

Red Tide Status Line

Toll-Free inside Florida Only -1-866-300-9399

Outside Florida - 727-552-2448

Wildlife Alert

If you suspect a wildlife violation, report it to FWC Wildlife Alert Reward Program for violations that are in progress or need immediate attention. Examples of violations include: illegal hunting, killing or capturing of protected species, fishing by illegal methods, boating under the influence. Telephones are answered 24 hours a day, seven days a week. 1-888-404-FWCC (1-888-404-3922)

Cellular phone customers - *FWC or #FWC

Use the FWC toll-free number to report wildlife violations.

Also use the number to report:

Manatees: Sick, dead, injured, or tagged

Marine Turtles: Dead, sick or injured

Right Whale Sightings:

Georgia Residents use 1-800-2-SAVE-ME