

FISHING LINES

FISH IDENTIFICATION SECTION

One of the most intriguing aspects of Florida marine fishing is the constant repetition of the question, "What is it?" Rare indeed is the angler who, at some time during a fishing trip, doesn't catch a fish that must be examined closely to determine its species.

Small wonder. Our waters have more than 1,000 species of marine fish, most of them edible and all of them

interesting. Of those, more than 40 are sufficiently important for their harvest to be regulated. Six species have game fish status (redfish, snook, tarpon, bonefish, sailfish, and permit over 20 inches in length), meaning that they may not be sold.

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 114 fish 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."

Illustrations by:
Diane Rome Peebles

Organization of the Fish Identification Section

Description: the details most readily observed have been given top priority, since the angler has only moments to decide whether a fish is or is not a legal catch. Fin-ray counts are supplied when essential.

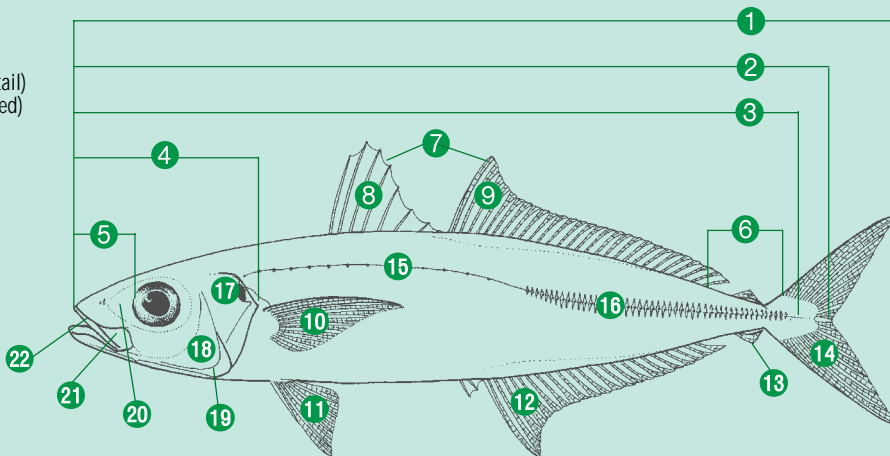
Similar Fish: many fish have "look-alikes," other fish that resemble them closely. In such instances, the most readily seen differences are given.

Where Found: although the ocean has no fences, 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 a fish by its weight, which simplifies recordkeeping. Scientists use length, since age/length relationships are more reliable than age/weight. Both would agree, however, that king mackerel commonly exceed 20 pounds in weight. The Florida records quoted are from the cooperative effort between the Department of Environmental Protection and the International Game Fish Association.

Remarks: this includes the fish's life history (if known), behavior; and feeding habits.

- 1 Total length
- 2 Fork length
- 3 Standard length
- 4 Head length
- 5 Snout length
- 6 Caudal peduncle (where the body attaches to the tail)
- 7 Fin rays, spinous (unsegmented) and soft (segmented)
- 8 First (spinous) dorsal fin
- 9 Second (soft) dorsal fin
- 10 Pectoral fin
- 11 Pelvic (ventral) fin
- 12 Anal fin
- 13 Finlet
- 14 Caudal (tail) fin
- 15 Lateral fin
- 16 Scutes (bone-like projections)
- 17 Opercle (gill cover)
- 18 Preopercle (cheek)
- 19 Interopercle
- 20 Adipose eyelid
- 21 Supramaxilla (rear portion of upper jaw bone)
- 22 Premaxilla (forward portion of upper jaw bone)



Common Name	Page	Common Name	Page	Common Name	Page
African pompano	18	Blue runner	15	Gulf menhaden	6
Almaco jack	13	Bluefish	13	Hardhead catfish	32
American shad	5	Bonefish	5	Hogfish	23
Atlantic bumper	18	Bonnethead shark	4	Horse-eye jack	17
Atlantic croaker	28	Cero	35	Jewfish	9
Atlantic sharpnose shark	2	Cobia	13	Jolthead porgy	25
Atlantic spadefish	32	Common snook	7	King mackerel	35
Atlantic thread herring	6	Crevalle jack	15	Knobbed porgy	25
Ballyhoo	7	Cubera snapper	19	Ladyfish	4
Banded rudderfish	14	Dog snapper	20	Lane snapper	20
Bank sea bass	8	Dolphin	37	Leatherjacket	18
Bay anchovy	34	Fantail mullet	33	Lesser amberjack	14
Bigeye scad	17	Fat snook	7	Little tunny	36
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Blacknose shark	3	Gray triggerfish	24	Nassau grouper	10
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SHORTFIN MAKO - *Isurus oxyrinchus*

Family Lamnidae, MACKEREL SHARKS

Description: 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; slender, recurved teeth with smooth edges.

Similar fish: white shark, *Carcharodon carcharias*; longfin mako, *Isurus paucus*.

Where found: OFFSHORE fish often seen near the surface.

Size: commonly 6 to 8 feet (200 to 300 pounds).

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

Florida record: 911 lbs., 12 ozs.



ATLANTIC SHARPNOSE SHARK - *Rhizoprionodon terraenovae*

Family Carcharhinidae, REQUIEM SHARKS

Description: 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 notched; second dorsal fin originates over middle of anal fin; brown to olive-gray in color with white underside; slender body.

Similar fish: other carcharhinids.

Where found: INSHORE species, even found in surf; also common in bays and estuaries; adults occur OFFSHORE.

Size: a small species, 2 to 4 feet.

Remarks: 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*

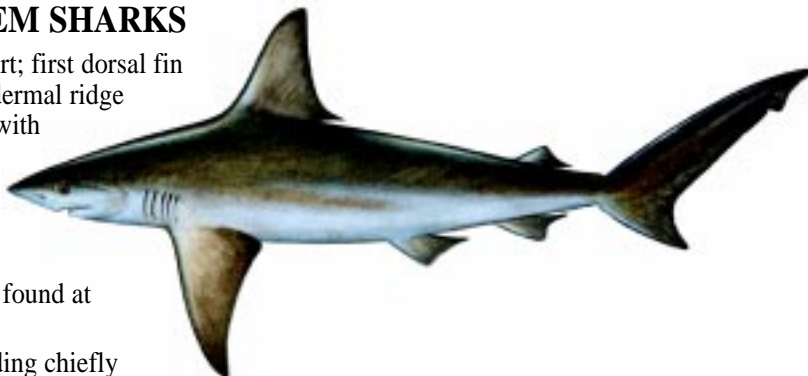
Family Carcharhinidae, REQUIEM SHARKS

Description: snout broadly rounded and short; first dorsal fin triangular and very high; poorly developed dermal 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*.

Where found: NEARSHORE fish typically found at depths ranging from 60 to 200 feet.

Remarks: both predator and scavenger, feeding chiefly 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

Description: distinctive dusky smudge at snout tip (more prominent in young); no dark tips on fins; pale olive-gray above, whitish below; 1st 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 1.5 m (5 ft.).

Where found: common in bays and lagoons.



BLACKTIP SHARK - *Carcharhinus limbatus*

Family Carcharhinidae, REQUIEM SHARKS

Description: 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; 1st dorsal fin begins above axil of pectoral fin; snout long, almost v-shaped from below; no mid dorsal ridge; upper and lower teeth serrated, nearly symmetrical.

Size: to 2.5 m (8.25 ft.).

Where found: 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 Bahamas.

Similar species: in the Spinner Shark the 1st dorsal fin begins above a point behind the pectoral fin, and the snout is longer.



SCALLOPED HAMMERHEAD - *Sphyrna lewini*

Family Sphyrnidae, HAMMERHEAD SHARKS

Description: fifth gill slit shorter than 4 preceding ones and located posterior to 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; second dorsal fin longer than tail; gray-brown to olive in color with white underbelly; teeth smooth-edged; 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.

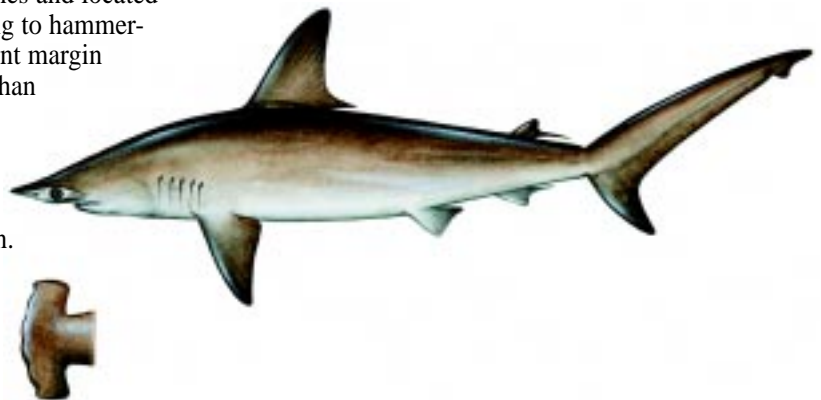
Similar fish: other hammerhead sharks.

Where found: both OFFSHORE and INSHORE.

Size: common to 6 feet and can reach 14 feet.

Remarks: predatory fish, feeding mainly on fish, squid, and stringrays; male matures at about 6 feet in length.

Florida record: 991 lbs.



BONNETHEAD SHARK - *Sphyrna tiburo*

Family Sphyrnidae, HAMMERHEAD SHARKS

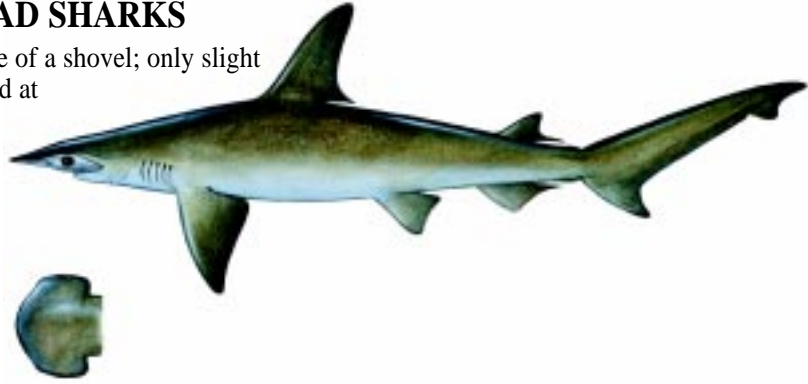
Description: broadly widened head in the shape of a shovel; only slight indentation of anal fin; front of head not notched at midline; gray or grayish-brown in color.

Similar fish: other hammerhead sharks.

Where found: INSHORE species found in bays and estuaries.

Size: commonly 3 to 4 feet.

Remarks: matures at about 3 feet in length and bears 6 to 12 young at a time; feeds chiefly on crabs and other crustaceans.



SOUTHERN STINGRAY - *Dasyatis americana*

Family Dasyatidae, STINGRAYS

Identification: 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.

Size: to 1.8 m (6 ft.) across disk.

Where found: common in bays and estuaries.

Remarks: the largest stingray along our southeastern and Gulf shores.



LADYFISH - *Elops saurus*

Family Elopidae, TARPONS

Description: terminal mouth; slender body; small scales; last dorsal ray not elongated; head small and pointed.

Similar fish: juvenile tarpon, *Megalops atlanticus*.

Where found: 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.

Remarks: 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.

Florida record: 4 lbs., 10 ozs.



TARPON - *Megalops atlanticus*

Family Elopidae, TARPONS

Description: 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 species: (as juveniles) ladyfish, *Elops saurus*.

Where found: primarily INSHORE fish, although adult fish spawn OFFSHORE where the ribbon-like larval stage of the fish can be found.

Size: most angler catches 40 to 150 pounds.

Remarks: 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; can breathe air at the surface; feeds mainly on fish and large crustaceans.

Florida record: 243 lbs.



BONEFISH - *Albula vulpes*

Family Albulidae, BONEFISHES

Description: silvery color with bluish or greenish back; slender, round body; snout long, conical, aiming downward and overhanging 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, *Elops saurus*.

Where found: 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: 3 to 5 pounds.

Remarks: 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.

Florida record: 15 lbs., 6 ozs.



AMERICAN SHAD - *Alosa sapidissima*

Family Clupeidae, HERRINGS

Description: 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.

Where found: OFFSHORE except during late winter spawning run into east coast rivers, notably the St. Johns River.

Remarks: 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.



ATLANTIC THREAD HERRING - *Opisthonema oglinum*

Family Clupeidae, HERRINGS

Other local names: gizzard shad

Description: back dark blue/gray, sides silvery, belly white; small head

Where found: in salt water from Cape Cod to Brazil, including Gulf of Mexico

Size: up to 16"

Remarks: has scales on ridge of back before dorsal fin.



SCALED SARDINE - *Harengula jaguana*

Family Clupeidae, HERRINGS

Description: solid back with dark streaks, usually single small dark spot at upper edge of opercle and sometimes one at shoulder.

Where found: N. Gulf of Mexico to Brazil

Size: up to 18"

Remarks: commonly caught with strings of wire loops.



SPANISH SARDINE - *Sardinella aurita*

Family Clupeidae, HERRINGS

Description: back bluish gray, sometimes greenish; sides silvery to brassy; slender body.

Where found: in schools ranging from N. Gulf of Mexico to Brazil

Size: up to 10"

Remarks: an abundant fish, representing a resource so far only utilized locally.



GULF MENHADEN - *Brevoortia patronus*

Family Clupeidae, HERRINGS

Other local names: shad, pogies

Description: to 18" oval, deep and compressed; blue or green, sometimes bluish-brown above; sides and belly silvery, fins yellowish; distinct humeral spot often followed by several rows of smaller spots; head very large, exposed margin of scales almost vertical, fringed.

Where found: large, near surface schools primarily in estuaries and near shore waters of the northern Gulf from early spring through fall.

Size: three-year-olds are 8 inches long and weigh more than 6 ounces

Remarks: sexual maturity begins at late age (1) with major spawning areas offshore across the northern Gulf.

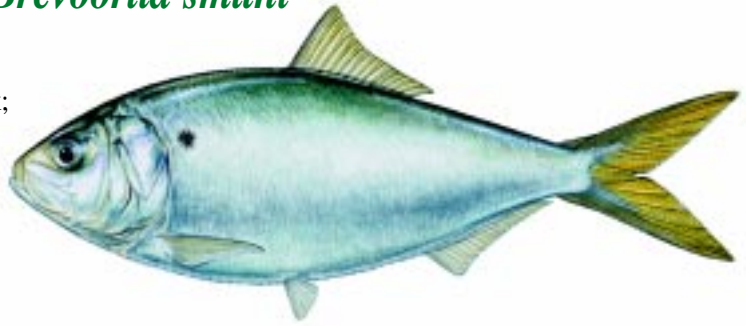


YELLOWFIN MENHADEN - *Brevoortia smithi*

Family Clupeidae, HERRINGS

Description: 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 32 cm (13 in.).



BALLYHOO - *Hemiramphus brasiliensis*

Family Exocoetidae, FLYING FISHES

Description: tip of lower jaw and upper lobe of caudal fin orange-red; pectoral fin short; tip of pelvic fin extends past beginning of dorsal fin; dorsal and anal fins unscaled.

Where found: young are pelagic; adults abundant in bays and nearshore waters, near reefs

Size: up to 16"



FAT SNOOK - *Centropomus parallelus*

Family Centropomidae, SNOOKS

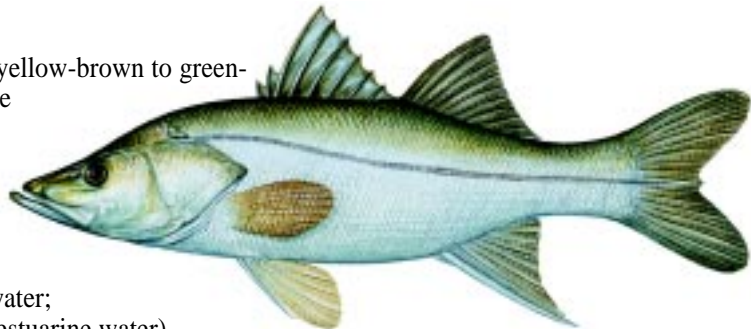
Description: deeper body than other snooks; yellow-brown to green-brown above silvery on sides; black lateral line extends onto tail; mouth reaches to or beyond center of eyes; usually no dusky outer edge of all snook.

Similar fish: other *Centropomus*.

Where found: 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: a small species, rarely more than 20 inches.

Remarks: usually found in fresh water; mangrove shorelines serve as nursery grounds for young.



COMMON SNOOK - *Centropomus undecimalis*

Family Centropomidae, SNOOKS

Description: 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*.

Where found: from central Florida south, usually INSHORE in coastal and brackish waters, along mangrove shorelines, seawalls, and bridges; also on reefs and pilings.

Size: most catches 5 to 8 pounds.

Remarks: spawns primarily in summer; cannot tolerate water temperatures below 60 degrees F; can tolerate wholly fresh or saltwater; schools along shore and in passes during spawning season; feeds on fish and larger crustaceans.

Florida record: 44 lbs., 3 ozs.



SWORDSPINE SNOOK - *Centropomus ensiferus*

Family Centropomidae, SNOOKS

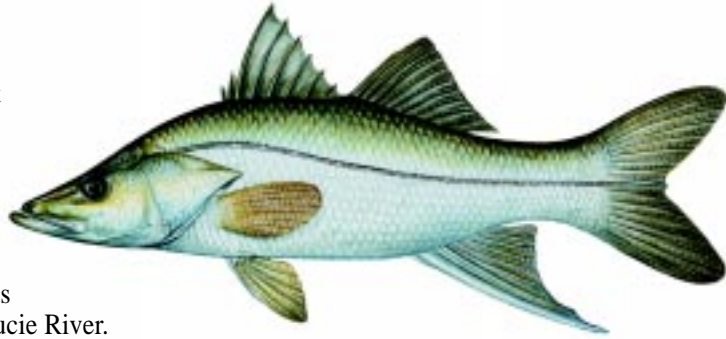
Description: smallest of the snooks; profile slightly concave; prominent lateral line outlined in black (not solid), extends through caudal fin; color yellow-green to brown-green above, silvery below; giant second anal spine, hence the name; largest scales of all snook.

Similar fish: other *Centropomus*.

Where found: occurs in INSHORE estuarine habitats from south Florida as far north on east coast as St. Lucie River.

Size: usually less than 1 pound (12 inches).

Remarks: 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

Description: 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*.

Where found: INSHORE in south Florida; frequently in fresh water.

Size: usually less than 1 pound (12 inches).

Remarks: maximum size 16 to 18 inches; 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 BASSES AND GROUPER

Description: 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*.

Where found: OFFSHORE in deep water with rocks and reefs.

Size: usually 0.3 pounds (8 inches).

Remarks: undergoes sex change, starting life as female, changing to male after three or four spawning seasons; feeds on the bottom, taking squid, crustaceans, and small fish.



BLACK SEA BASS - *Centropristis striata*

Family Serranidae, SEA BASSES AND GROUPE

Description: 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; topmost ray of caudal fin much elongated in adults; caudal may be tri-lobed; sharp spine near posterior margin of gill cover.

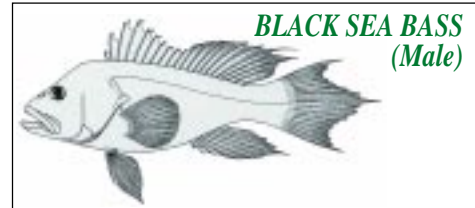
Similar fish: bank sea bass, *C. ocyurus*; other *Centropristis*.

Where found: structure-loving fish, associated with reefs and rubble OFFSHORE; smaller specimens often found in INSHORE finger channels.

Size: common to 1.5 pounds (13 inches).

Remarks: spawns January through March; protogynous hermaphrodites, older females becoming breeding males; omnivorous bottom feeders, diet including small fish, crustaceans, and shellfish.

Florida record: 5 lbs., 1 ozs.



ROCK SEA BASS - *Centropristis philadelphica*

Family Serranidae, SEA BASSES AND GROUPE

Description: 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*.

Where found: 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.

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



JEWFISH - *Epinephelus itajara*

Family Serranidae, SEA BASSES AND GROUPE

Description: 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; adults huge, up to 800 pounds; eyes small.

Similar fish: other grouper.

Where found: 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.

Remarks: spawns over summer months; lifespan of 30 to 50 years; feeds on crustaceans and fish. NOTE: jewfish are totally protected from harvest in Florida waters.

Florida record: 680 lbs.



GAG - *Mycteroperca microlepis*

Family Serranidae, SEA BASSES AND GROUPE

Description: 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; often confused with black grouper; most noticeable differences are brassy spots on black grouper; tail of gag is slightly concave, black grouper's tail is square; gag has white margin on anal and caudal fins, black does not; under 10 pounds, gag's spur on preopercle is distinctive, where black is gently rounded.

Similar fish: black grouper, *M. bonaci*.

Where found: adults OFFSHORE over rocks and reefs; juveniles occur in seagrass beds INSHORE.

Size: common to 25 pounds.

Remarks: 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.

Florida record: 71 lbs., 3 ozs.



BLACK GROUPE - *Mycteroperca bonaci*

Family Serranidae, SEA BASSES AND GROUPE

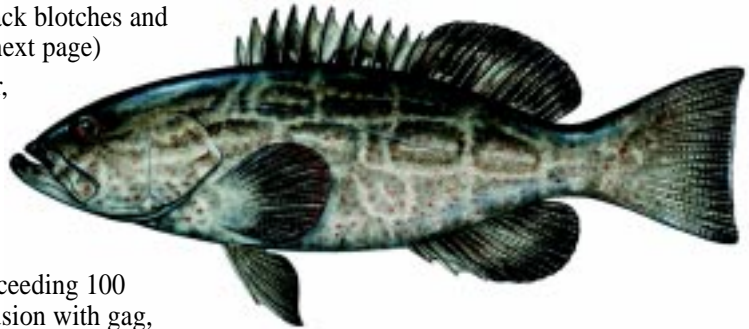
Description: olive or gray body coloration with black blotches and brassy spots; gently rounded preopercle; (see gag, next page)

Similar fish: gag, *M. microlepis*; yellowfin grouper, *M. venenosa*.

Where found: OFFSHORE species; adults associated with rocky bottoms, reefs, and dropoff walls in water over 60 feet deep; young may occur INSHORE in shallow water.

Size: common to 40 pounds, may attain weights exceeding 100 pounds; no Florida record because of identity confusion with gag, which are mistakenly called "black grouper."

Remarks: 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 GROUPE - *Epinephelus striatus*

Family Serranidae, SEA BASSES AND GROUPE

Description: color light background with brown or red-brown bars on sides; stripe in shape of tuning fork on forehead; third spine of dorsal longer than second; pelvic fins shorter than pectorals; lack dots around the eyes; large black saddle on caudal peduncle.

Similar fish: red grouper, *E. morio*.

Where found: range limited to south Florida; somewhat site specific; smaller individuals NEARSHORE, adults OFFSHORE on rocky reefs.

Size: most catches under 10 pounds.

Remarks: forms large spawning aggregations, making this species highly vulnerable to over-harvest.

NOTE: all harvest of this species is prohibited.



RED GROUPER - *Epinephelus morio*

Family Serranidae, SEA BASSES AND GROUPER

Description: 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; margin of soft dorsal black with white at midfin; black dots around the eyes.

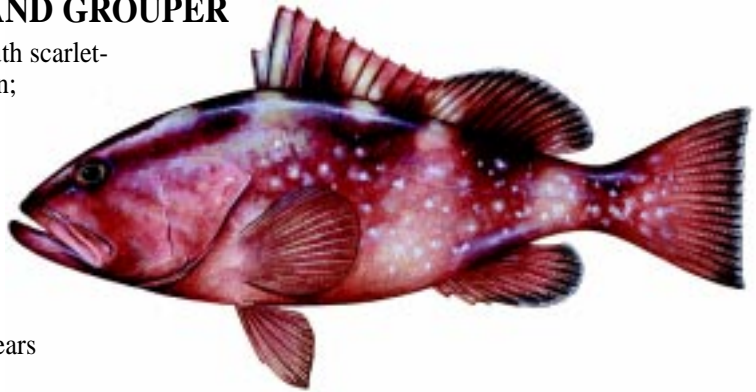
Similar fish: nassau grouper, *E. striatus*.

Where found: bottom dwelling fish associated with hard bottom; juveniles OFFSHORE along with adults greater than 6 years old; NEARSHORE reefs.

Size: common to 15 pounds.

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

Florida record: 39 lbs., 8 ozs.



SCAMP - *Mycteroperca phenax*

Family Serranidae, SEA BASSES AND GROUPER

Description: 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.

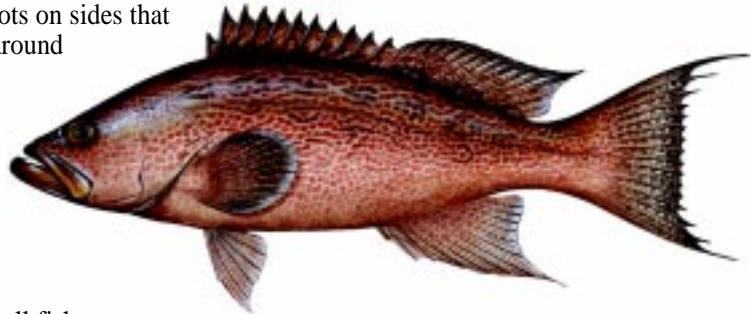
Similar fish: yellowmouth grouper, *M. interstitialis*.

Where found: NEARSHORE reefs off the northeastern coast, and on OFFSHORE reefs in the Gulf.

Size: generally smaller than gags or blacks.

Remarks: spawns in late spring; feed on small fish, squid, and crustaceans; undergoes sex transformation from female to male as it becomes older.

Florida record: 28 lbs.



YELLOWFIN GROUPER - *Mycteroperca venenosa*

Family Serranidae, SEA BASSES AND GROUPER

Description: color highly greenish olive or bright red with longitudinal rows or 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.

Where found: OFFSHORE on reefs off southern portions of Florida.

Size: common to 20 pounds.

Remarks: undergoes sex change 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.

Florida record: 34 lbs., 6 ozs.



YELLOWMOUTH GROUPER - *Mycteroperca interstitialis*

Family Serranidae, SEA BASSES AND GROUPER

Description: 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.

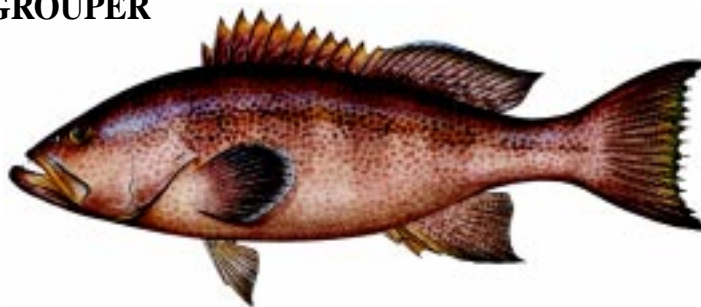
Similar fish: scamp, *M. phenax*.

Where found: OFFSHORE over reefs and rocks; not as common as scamp in the Gulf; range limited to southern Florida.

Size: common to 15 pounds.

Remarks: undergoes sex change, young individuals female, becoming male; young fish are bicolored, dark above, white below; feeds on small fish and crustaceans.

Florida record: 28 lbs.



WARSAW GROUPER - *Epinephelus nigritus*

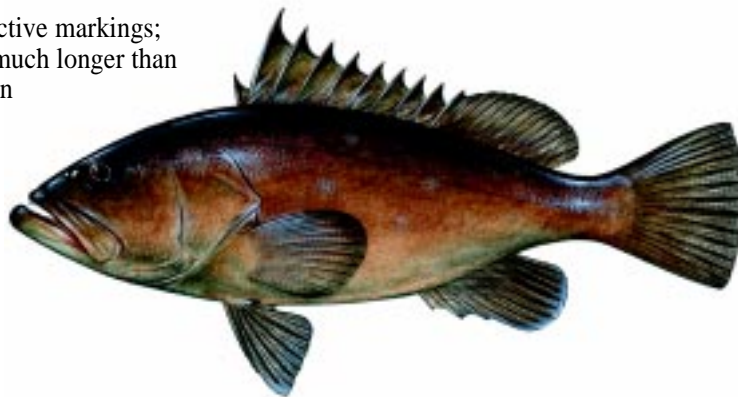
Family Serranidae, SEA BASSES AND GROUPER

Description: 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.

Size: to 1.8 m (6 ft.) and 263 kg (580 lbs.).

Habitat: deep rocky ledges and sea mounts, in 90-300 m (300-1000 ft.); young are sometimes caught in inshore waters.



SAND PERCH - *Diplectrum formosum*

Family Serranidae, SEA BASSES AND GROUPER

Description: 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.

Size: to 30 cm (1 ft.).

Where found: bays, coastal grassy areas, and shallow banks.

Remarks: popular as a pan fish despite its small size.



BLUEFISH - *Pomatomus saltatrix*

Family Pomatomidae, BLUEFISHES

Description: 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, *C. crysos*.

Where found: 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.

Remarks: 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.

Florida record: 22 lbs., 3 ozs.



COBIA (ling) - *Rachycentron canadum*

Family Rachycentridae, COBIA

Description: 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; when young, has conspicuous alternating black and white horizontal stripes.

Similar fish: remora, *Eceneis naucrates*.

Where found: both INSHORE and NEARSHORE inhabiting inlets, bays, and among mangroves; frequently seen around buoys, pilings, and wrecks.

Size: common to 30 pounds.

Remarks: spawns in spring and early summer; feeds on crabs, squid, and small fish.

Florida record: 103 lbs., 12 ozs.



ALMACO JACK - *Seriola rivoliana*

Family Carangidae, JACKS AND POMPANOS

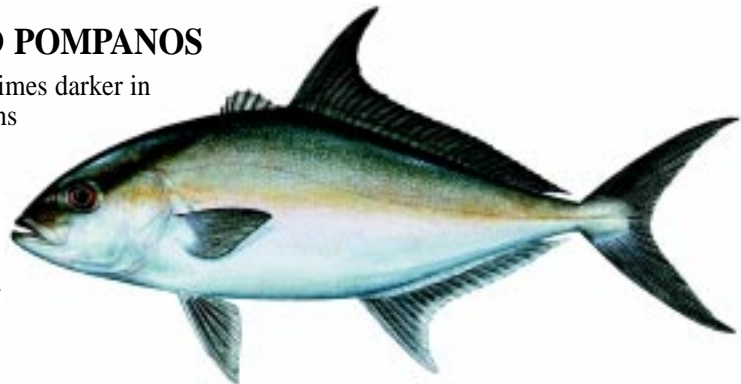
Description: deep-bodied amberjack; sometimes darker in coloration; front of soft dorsal and of anal fins high and elongated; body more flattened than banded rudderfish or greater amberjack; no scutes.

Similar fish: other *Seriola*.

Where found: wide-ranging in OFFSHORE waters, not a common catch; young are associated with Sargassum.

Size: usually less than 20 pounds.

Remarks: spawns offshore, apparently during spring, summer, and fall.



BANDED RUDDERFISH - *Seriola zonata*

Family Carangidae, JACKS AND POMPANOS

Description: fish less than 11 inches long have 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*.

Where found: 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.

Remarks: adults feed on fish and shrimp; spawns OFFSHORE most of year.



GREATER AMBERJACK - *Seriola dumerili*

Family Carangidae, JACKS AND POMPANOS

Description: 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*.

Where found: 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: common to 40 pounds.

Remarks: largest of the jacks; thought to spawn OFFSHORE throughout much of the year; feeds on squid, fish, and crustaceans.

Florida record: 142 lbs.



LESSER AMBERJACK - *Seriola fasciata*

Family Carangidae, JACKS AND POMPANOS

Description: 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*.

Where found: NEARSHORE and OFFSHORE, apparently living deeper than other *Seriola* (commonly 180-410 feet deep).

Size: usually under 10 pounds.

Remarks: believed to spawn offshore; adults eat fish, and squid.



BLUE RUNNER - *Caranx crysos*

Family Carangidae, JACKS AND POMPANOS

Description: 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, *Pomatomus saltatrix*; other *Caranx*.

Where found: juveniles found OFFSHORE; adults NEARSHORE in schools, but something ranging INSHORE as well.

Size: usually less than 1 pound (11 inches).

Remarks: 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 bell of jellyfish; adults feed on fish, shrimp, and squid.

Florida record: 7 lbs.



CREVALLE JACK - *Caranx hippos*

Family Carangidae, JACKS AND POMPANOS

Description: 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.

Similar fish: other *Caranx*.

Where found: common to both INSHORE waters and the open sea.

Size: usually 3 to 5 pounds.

Remarks: 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.

Florida record: 51 lbs.



PALOMETTA - *Trachinotus goodei*

Family Carangidae, JACKS AND POMPANOS

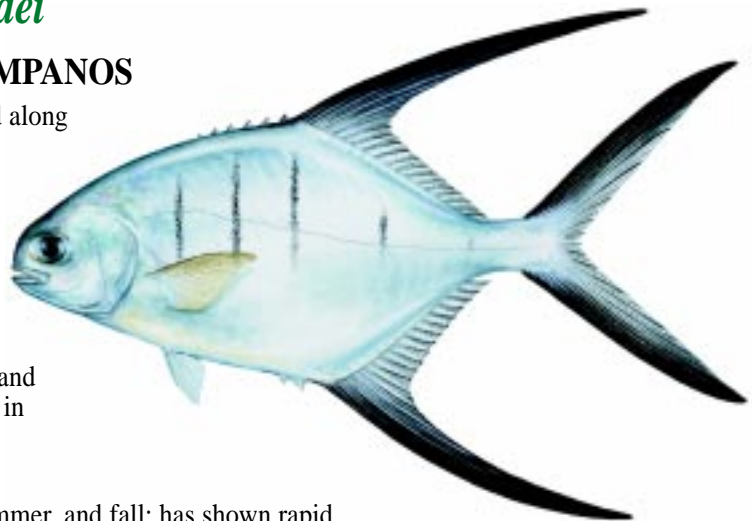
Description: gray to blue-green on top of head and along the back; bright silvery sides; yellow on breast; elongated dorsal and anal fins, dusky or black with bluish edges; deep body, with four narrow bars high on the sides, and traces of a fifth nearer the tail; no scutes.

Similar fish: pompano, *T. carolinus*; permit, *T. falcatus*.

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

Size: rarely over 1 pound, reported to 3 pounds.

Remarks: 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

Description: 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 40 pounds.

Where found: 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 25 pounds.

Remarks: feeds mainly on bottom-dwelling crabs, shrimp, small clams, and small fish.

Florida record: 51 lbs., 8 ozs.



FLORIDA POMPANO - *Trachinotus carolinus*

Family Carangidae, JACKS AND POMPANOS

Description: 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.

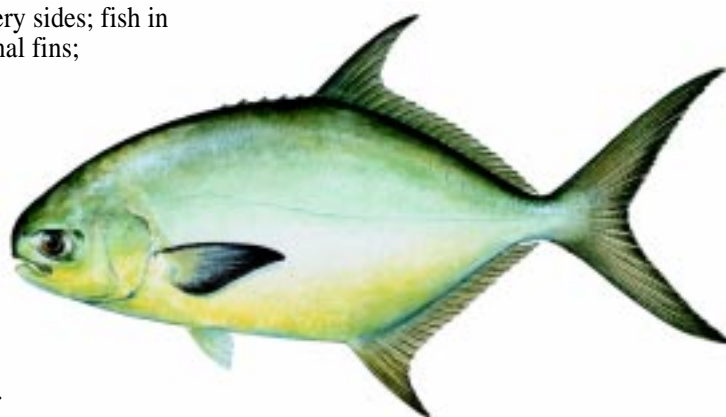
Similar fish: permit, *T. falcatus*; palometa, *T. goodei*; the permit is deeper bodied; dorsal body profile not strongly angled at insertion of second dorsal fin; pompano rarely grow larger than 6 pounds, permit common to 40 pounds.

Where found: 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: usually less than 3 pounds.

Remarks: 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.

Florida record: 8 lbs., 1 oz.



ROUND SCAD - *Decapterus punctatus*

Family Carangidae, JACKS AND POMPANOS

Other local names: cigar minnow

Description: long, fusiform; greenish-blue fading to silver on sides, belly white; narrow, yellowish stripe from head to caudal peduncle.

Where found: midwater or bottom from shallow water to about 50 fathoms, juveniles sometimes at surface.

Size: to 12"

Remarks: 2 small papillae on shoulder distinguish scads from other carangids.



BIGEYE SCAD - *Selar crumenophthalmus***Family Carangidae, JACKS AND POMPANOS**

Description: eye very large – diameter greater than snout length; no detached dorsal and anal finlets; two widely separated fleshly tabs on inside of rear edge of gill chamber; scutes present only on rear part of lateral line.

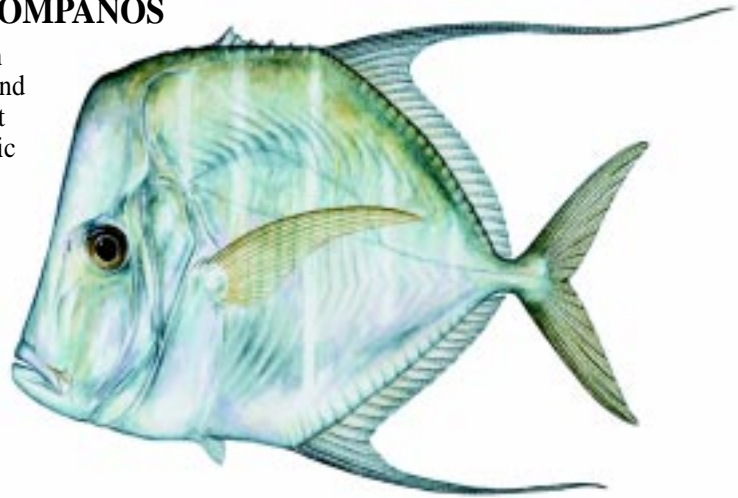
Size: to 60 cm (2 ft.), but usually less than 30 cm (1 ft.).

***LOOKDOWN - *Selene vomer******Family Carangidae, JACKS AND POMPANOS**

Description: 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.

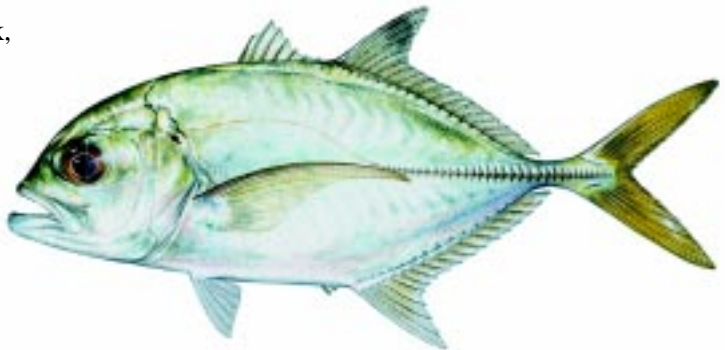
Young: spines at front of dorsal fin and rays in pelvic fin streamerlike.

Size: to 30 cm (1ft.).

***HORSE-EYE JACK - *Caranx latus******Family Carangidae, JACKS AND POMPANOS**

Description: 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 75 mm (3 in.) long; scutes usually blackish; caudal fin yellowish; 20 to 22 soft rays in dorsal fin; 14 to 18 gill rakers on lower limb of 1st arch.

Size: to 75 cm (30 in.) and 3.8 kg (8.5 lbs.).



LEATHERJACKET - *Oligoplites saurus*

Family Carangidae, JACKS AND POMPANOS

Description: 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.

Size: to 30 cm (1 ft.).

Where Found: enters bays and estuaries, often in turbid water.



ATLANTIC BUMPER - *Chloroscombrus chrysurus*

Family Carangidae, JACKS AND POMPANOS

Description: 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.

Size: to 30 cm (1 ft.).

Where found: one of the most abundant inshore fishes in tropical America; commonly enters bays and estuaries.



AFRICAN POMPANO - *Alectis ciliaris*

Family Carangidae, JACKS

Description: Body is deep and compressed. Coloration is metallic -blue above, silvery below. Snout is blunt. Pelvic fins are longer than the maxilla. Second dorsal and anal fins are falcate.

Size: to 91cm (3 ft.) and 19 kg (42 lbs)

Where found: Young are found in the open ocean. Adults are found to depths of 55m (180 ft.) often associated with reefs, wrecks and rock ledges.

Remarks: Great fighter and good to eat. Often found in schools over structure.

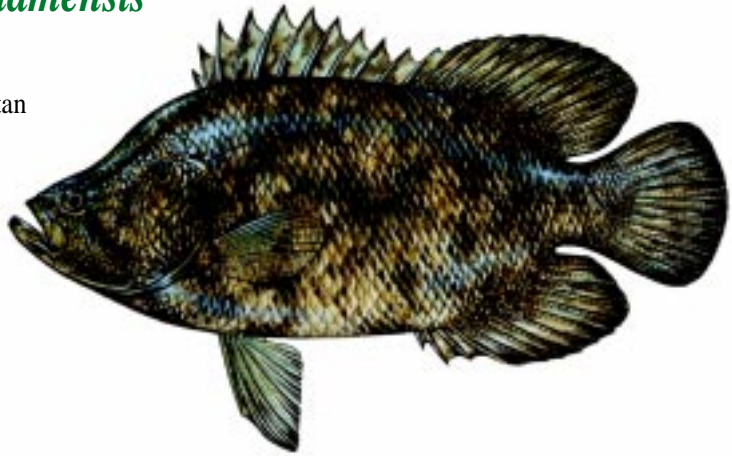


TRIPLETAIL - *Lobotes surinamensis*

Family Lobotidae, TRIPLETAILS

Description: 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 1.1 m (42 in.)



BLACKFIN SNAPPER - *Lutjanus buccanella*

Family Lutjanidae, SNAPPERS

Description: 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.

Similar fish: other snappers.

Where found: adults OFFSHORE near continental shelf break.

Size: common to 20 inches, larger individuals found in deeper waters.

Remarks: sometimes marketed as red snapper; feeds on smaller fishes.



CUBERA SNAPPER - *Lutjanus cyanopterus*

Family Lutjanidae, SNAPPERS

Description: color dark brown or gray, may have a reddish tinge; broad-based triangular 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.

Where found: juveniles INSHORE in grass beds; adults OFFSHORE or NEARSHORE over wrecks, reefs, and ledges.

Size: common to 40 pounds.

Remarks: 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.

Florida record: 116 lbs.



DOG SNAPPER - *Lutjanus jocu*

Family Lutjanidae, SNAPPERS

Description: color brown with a bronze tinge, lighter on sides; canine teeth very sharp, one pair notably enlarged, visible even when mouth is closed; 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.

Where found: large adults OFFSHORE over coral and rocky reefs; juveniles associated with estuaries.

Size: large snapper, attaining 30 pounds.

Remarks: spawns from spring through fall; known as a night feeder, taking fishes, mollusks, and crustaceans.



GRAY SNAPPER (mangrove snapper) - *Lutjanus griseus*

Family Lutjanidae, SNAPPERS

Descriptions: 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*.

Where found: juveniles INSHORE in tidal creeks, mangroves, and grass beds; adults generally NEARSHORE or OFFSHORE on coral or rocky reefs.

Size: offshore catches common to 10 pounds.

Remarks: spawns June through August; feeds on crustaceans and small fish.

Florida record: 16 lbs., 8 ozs.



LANE SNAPPER - *Lutjanus synagris*

Family Lutjanidae, SNAPPERS

Descriptions: color silvery-pink to reddish with short, irregular pink and yellow lines on its sides; diffuse black spot, about as large as the eye; the dorsal fin centered above the lateral line; outer margin of caudal fin blackish.

Similar fish: mutton snapper, *L. analis* (anal fin rounded in lane snapper, pointed in mutton).

Where found: juveniles INSHORE over grass beds or shallow reefs; adults OFFSHORE; most common in south Florida.

Size: usually less than 1 pound.

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

Florida record: 6 lbs., 6 ozs.



MAHOGANY SNAPPER - *Lutjanus mahogoni*

Family Lutjanidae, SNAPPERS

Descriptions: 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* (also with dark spot below soft dorsal; the blotch placed higher in relation to the lateral line on lane snapper).

Where found: NEARSHORE or OFFSHORE in clear water, usually over reefs.

Size: relatively small snapper, common to 15 inches.

Remarks: the Spanish name, ojanco, refers to its large eyes; a night feeder, with diet of smaller fishes.



MUTTON SNAPPER - *Lutjanus analis*

Family Lutjanidae, SNAPPERS

Descriptions: 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* (anal fin pointed in mutton snapper, rounded in lane).

Where found: INSHORE associated with grassbeds, mangroves, and canals; larger adults found on OFFSHORE reefs.

Size: common to 15 pounds.

Remarks: spawns in July and August; feeds on fish, crustaceans, and snails.

Florida record: 27 lbs., 6 ozs.



QUEEN SNAPPER - *Etelis oculatus*

Family Lutjanidae, SNAPPERS

Descriptions: 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.

Where found: OFFSHORE over rocky reefs of the continental shelf to 450 feet; young suspend at mid-depths.

Size: small species, usually less than 20 inches.

Remarks: little is known, but it is reported that adults live at depths greater than 400 feet.



RED SNAPPER - *Lutjanus campechanus*

Family Lutjanidae, SNAPPERS

Descriptions: 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*.

Where found: OFFSHORE on the continental shelf, more plentiful off the Panhandle than in south or middle Florida.

Size: to 20 pounds

Remarks: 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.

Florida record: 46 lbs., 8 ozs.



SCHOOLMASTER - *Lutjanus apodus*

Family Lutjanidae, SNAPPERS

Descriptions: 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, becoming interrupted in adults; no dark lateral spot.

Similar fish: dog snapper, *L. jocu*; other snappers.

Where found: juveniles in grass flats; adults NEARSHORE especially around elkhorn coral reefs; large adults sometimes found on continental shelf.

Size: usually less than 1 pound.

Remarks: 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

Descriptions: 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*.

Where found: OFFSHORE over rocky ledges in very deep water; most common in south Florida.

Size: usually less than 5 pounds.

Remarks: little is known.



VERMILION SNAPPER - *Rhomboplites aurorubens*

Family Lutjanidae, SNAPPERS

Descriptions: 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.

Where found: suspends at mid-depths over rocky reefs OFFSHORE.

Size: usually less than 2 pounds.

Remarks: 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

Description: 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.

Where found: juveniles INSHORE on grassbeds and back reefs; adults NEARSHORE or OFFSHORE over sandy areas near reefs.

Size: common to 3 pounds.

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

Florida record: 7 lbs., 5 ozs.



HOGFISH - *Lachnolaimus maximus*

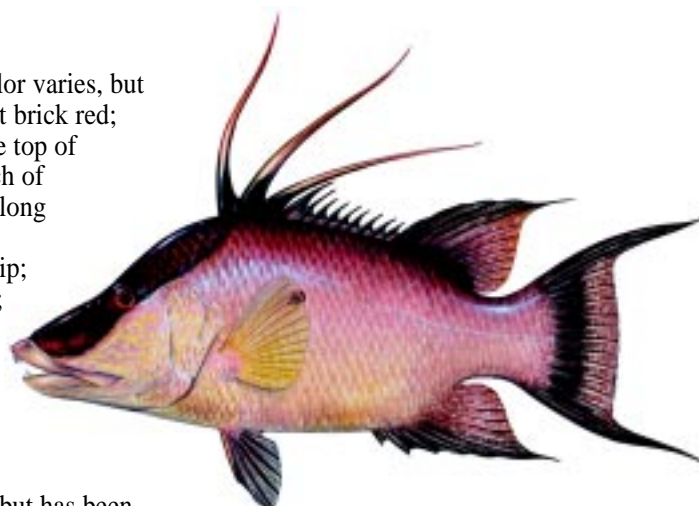
Family Labridae, WRASSES

Description: 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; 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; mouth very protrusible.

Young: greenish or brownish, mottled with dark.

Size: to 91 cm (3ft.).

Remarks: esteemed as a food fish in some areas, but has been implicated in ciguatera; usually marketed as Hog Snapper.



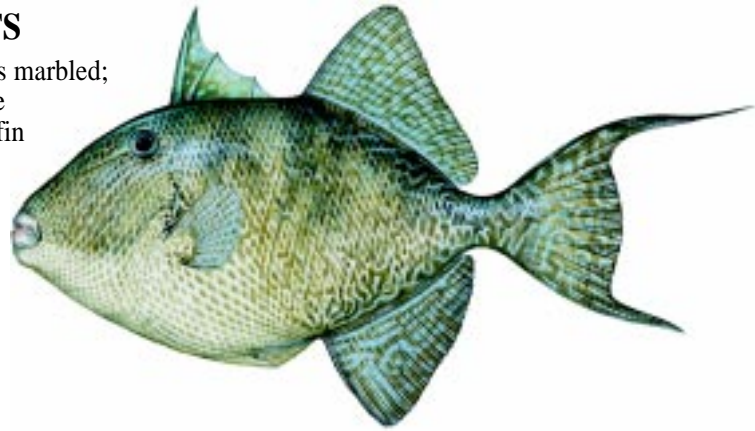
GRAY TRIGGERFISH - *Balistes capriscus*

Family Balistidae, LEATHERJACKETS

Description: 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.

Where found: hardbottom, reefs, ledges.



SHEEPSHEAD - *Archosargus probatocephalus*

Family Sparidae, PORGIES

Description: 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* (black drum have barbels on lower jaw, sheepshead do not; vertical barring on sides of black drum and spadefish disappear as fish mature; spadefish have small, brush-like teeth).

Where found: 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.

Remarks: feeds on mollusks and crustaceans such as fiddler crabs and barnacles; famed nibblers, prompting the saying that "anglers must strike just before they bite."

Florida record: 15 lbs., 2 ozs.



RED PORGY - *Pagrus pagrus*

Family Sparidae, PORGIES

Description: the only American porgy with a rear nostril that is round (not slit-like); head and body silvery red, with many tiny blue spots.

Size: to 91 cm (3 ft.).

Where found: deeper part of continental shelf, but young occur in water as shallow as 18 m (60 ft.).



JOLTHEAD PORGY - Calamus bajonado

Family Sparidae, PORGIES

Description: 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.

Size: to 60 cm (2 ft.) and 3.6 kg (8 lbs.).

Where Found: coastal waters to 45 m (150 ft.).



KNOBBED PORGY - Calamus nodosus

Family Sparidae, PORGIES

Description: 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.

Size: to 46 cm (18 in.).

Where found: hardbottom, reefs, ledges



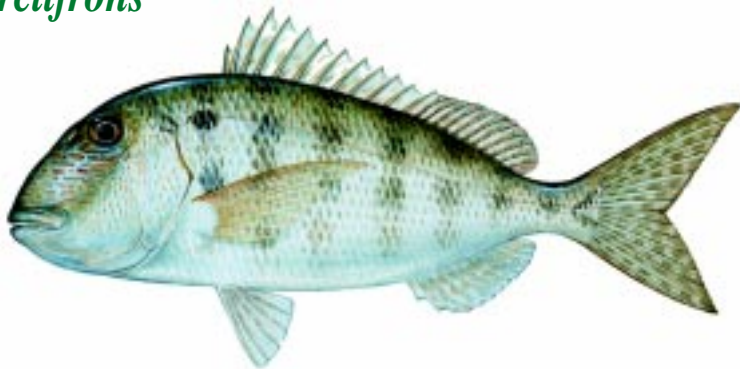
GRASS PORGY - Calamus arctifrons

Family Sparidae, PORGIES

Description: 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.

Size: to 25 cm (10 in.).

Where Found: inshore seagrass beds.



LITTLEHEAD PORGY - Calamus proridens

Family Sparidae, PORGIES

Description: similar to the knobbed porgy, but 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.

Size: to 46 cm (18 in.).



PINFISH - Lagodon rhomboides

Family Sparidae, PORGIES

Description: 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.

Where found: seagrass beds, bridges, piers, marker pilings, and around natural and artificial reefs; spawn offshore.

Size: usually less than 8 in.

Remarks: popular live bait, notorious bait stealers.



SPOTTAIL PINFISH - Diplodus holbrooki

Family Sparidae, PORGIES

Description: 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.

Size: to 46 cm (18 in.).

Where Found: inshore seagrass beds, offshore rocks and reefs.



WHITE GRUNT - *Haemulon plumieri*

Family Haemulidae, GRUNTS

Description: 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.

Where found: 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: most catches 1.5 pounds (15 inches).

Remarks: 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

Description: gray, often with a bluish cast; many bronze to yellowish spots, dashes, and other small markings; mouth small, ending below front nostril.

Size: to 38 cm (15 in.).

Where found: bay and banks; not on reefs in water less than 60 ft.



TOMTATE - *Haemulon aurolineatum*

Family Haemulidae, GRUNTS

Other local names: silver grunt

Description: 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.

Where found: bottom fish found around reefs and hard bottom areas.

Size: can reach 10 to 11 inches, weighs less than 1 lb.

Commonly used to catch: larger fish

Remarks: not usually eaten due to small size.



ATLANTIC CROAKER - *Micropogonias undulatus*

Family Sciaenidae, DRUMS

Description: inferior mouth; 3 to 5 pairs of small barbels on chin; silver-gray or bronze body with dark oblique wavy bars or lines; iridescent especially on head; preopercle strongly serrated.

Similar fish: spot, *Leiostomus xanthurus* (has no chin barbels and has a dark blotch on shoulder).

Size: usually less than 2 pounds.

Where found: 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 the winter months and move into bays and estuaries during the spring, summer, and fall.

Remarks: 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

Description: high arched back; 10 to 14 pairs of chin barbels; gray or black colored body in adults; young have 4 to 6 vertical bars; has cobblestone-like teeth capable of crushing oysters; scales large.

Similar fish: red drum, *Sciaenops ocellatus*; the vertical bars on juvenile black drum are somewhat similar to those on sheepshead, *Archosargus probatocephalus*; and spadefish, *Chaetodipterus faber*.

Where found: INSHORE fish common to bays and lagoons; bottom dweller often found around oyster beds; also OFFSHORE.

Size: common to 30 pounds.

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

Florida record: 93 lbs.



RED DRUM - *Sciaenops ocellatus*

Family Sciaenidae, DRUMS

Other local names: redfish

Description: 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, *Pogonias cromis*.

Where found: juveniles are an INSHORE fish, migrating out of the estuaries at about 30 inches (4 years) and joining the spawning population OFFSHORE.

Size: common to 20 pounds.

Remarks: 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.

Florida record: 51 lbs., 8 ozs.



SAND SEATROUT - *Cynoscion arenarius*

Family Sciaenidae, DRUMS

Description: 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, *C. nothus*.

Where found: 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 (10 to 12 inches).

Remarks: 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

Description: 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 seatrouts.

Where found: most common over sand or sandy mud bottoms OFFSHORE along both the Gulf and the Atlantic coasts of Florida.

Size: usually no more than 1/2 pound (less than 10 inches).

Remarks: 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

Description: 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; no scales on the soft dorsal fin; one or two prominent canine teeth usually present at tip of upper jaw.

Similar fish: other seatrout.

Where found: INSHORE and/or NEARSHORE over grass, sand, and sandy mud bottoms; move into slow-moving or still, deep waters in cold weather.

Size: common to 4 pounds on west coast, larger on east coast.

Remarks: 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 degrees F, may be killed if trapped in shallow water during cold weather; longevity 8 to 10 years.

Florida record: 15 lbs., 6 ozs.



SILVER PERCH - *Bairdiella chrysoura*

Family Sciaenidae, DRUMS

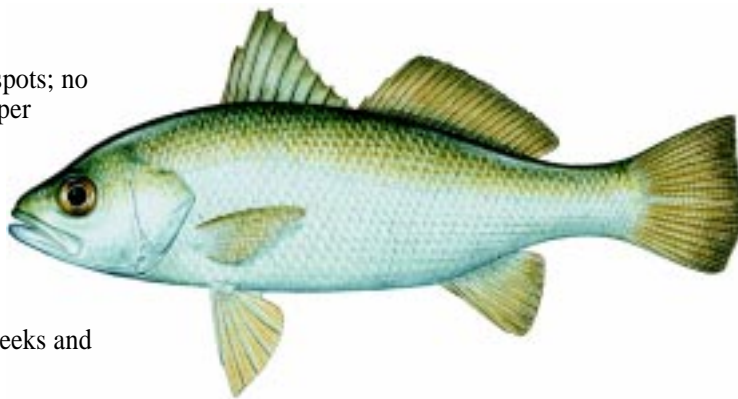
Description: color silvery with yellowish fins; no spots; no chin barbels; no prominent canine teeth at tip of upper jaw; preopercle finely serrated; 5 to 6 chin pores; mouth terminal.

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

Where found: INSHORE in seagrass beds, tidal creeks and rivers, and marshes.

Size: small, not exceeding 9 inches.

Remarks: 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

Description: 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; mouth yellow inside.

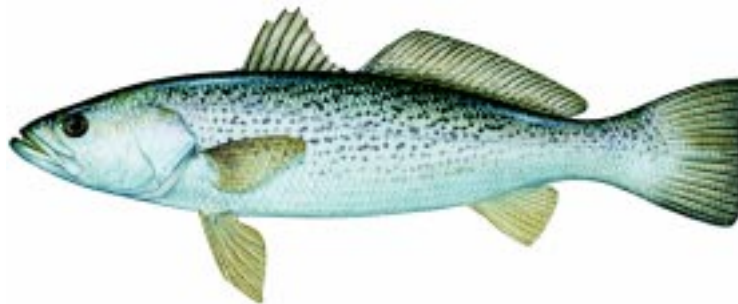
Similar fish: other seatrouts.

Where found: 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: 2 to 3 pounds.

Remarks: 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.

Florida record: 10 lbs.



GULF KINGFISH - *Menticirrhus littoralis*

Family Sciaenidae, DRUMS

Description: 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.

Size: to 46 cm (18 in.).

Where found: at water's edge, in surf.



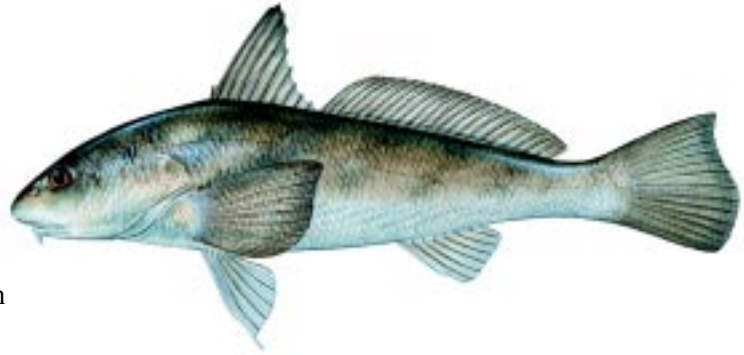
SOUTHERN KINGFISH - Menticirrhus americanus

Family Sciaenidae, DRUMS

Description: grayish brown above, with silvery sides; 7 to 8 diagonal dusky bars or blotches on each side, but these marks are obscure and never form V-shaped marks on side; scales on chest about same size as those on body.

Size: to 38 cm (15 in.) and 1 kg (2 lbs.).

Where found: shallow coastal waters; common along beaches.



SPOT - Leiostomus xanthurus

Family Sciaenidae, DRUMS

Description: 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 36 cm (14 in.)

Remarks: a popular pan fish.



GULF FLOUNDER - Paralichthys albigutta

Family Bothidae, LEFTEYE FLOUNDERS

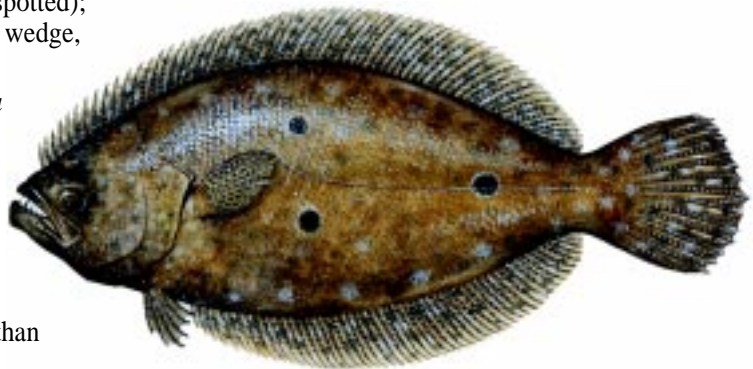
Description: body color brown, its shade depending on color of bottom, with numerous spots and blotches; 3 prominent eye-like spots forming a triangle; one spot on lateral line, one above, one below; numerous white spots scattered over body and fins (albigutta, white spotted); strong canine-like teeth; caudal fin in shape of wedge, its tip in the middle.

Similar fish: southern flounder, *P. lethostigma* (no eye-like spots; color pattern is key to distinguishing the two species).

Where found: INSHORE on sandy or mud bottoms, often ranging into tidal creeks; occasionally caught on NEARSHORE rocky reefs.

Size: common to 2 pounds, generally smaller than southern flounder.

Remarks: hatches into usual fish form, but right eye migrates overt 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

Description: 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.

Size: to 60 cm (2 ft.) and 5.5 kg (12 lbs.) but usually much smaller.

Where found: same as for gafftopsail catfish usually much more common.

Remarks: 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

Description: bluish above; silvery below; dorsal and pectoral fins with long, fleshy filaments on spines; barbel at corner of mouth flattened, bandlike, and very elongate, sometimes reaching anal fin; only 2 barbels on chin.

Size: to 60 cm (2 ft.) and 2.5 kg (5 to 6 lbs.).

Where found: continental waters; enters brackish waters; usually less common than the hardhead catfish.

Remarks: commonly caught by anglers along bridges, piers, and catwalks; a good food fish, but not much used.



ATLANTIC SPADEFISH - *Chaetodipterus faber*

Family Ehippidae, SPADEFISHES

Description: 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.

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

Where found: INSHORE and NEARSHORE, around natural and artificial reefs, and especially near navigation markers in 15 to 20 feet of water.

Size: most catches less than 2 pounds, known to reach 15 pounds.

Remarks: 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, MULLETES

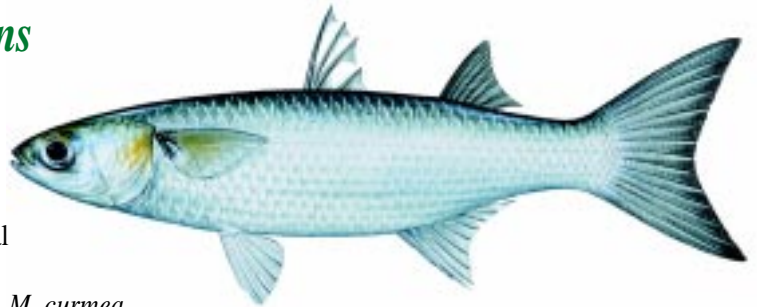
Description: color olive green with blue tints on back, shading to silvery sides, white below; anal and pelvic fins yellowish; dark blotch at base of pectoral fin; inverted V-shaped mouth; insertion of second dorsal over that of the anal fin.

Similar fish: striped mullet, *M. cephalus*; white mullet, *M. curema* (note difference in shape of fins and opercular margins, see inset).

Where found: INSHORE, occurring along beaches in the fall.

Size: small mullet, less than 1 pound.

Remarks: 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, MULLETES

Description: 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).

Where found: INSHORE.

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

Remarks: 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, MOJARRAS

Description: 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; and anal fins sometimes dark orange; pelvic spine and first 2 anal spines pale; dorsal and anal spines long and stout; 3 anal spines.

Size: to 30 cm (1ft.).

Where found: brackish and coastal fresh waters (in limestone regions), grassy areas.



STRIPED ANCHOVY - *Anchoa hepsetus*

Family Engraulidae, ANCHOVIES

Description: 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 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 15 cm (6 in.).



BAY ANCHOVY - *Anchoa mitchilli*

Family Engraulidae, ANCHOVIES

Description: 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.

Size: to 10 cm (4 in.).

Where Found: in shallow bays and estuaries; common in brackish waters, but occurs to 120 ft.



GREAT BARRACUDA - *Sphyraena barracuda*

Family Sphyraenidae, BARRACUDAS

Description: 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.

Size: to 2 m (6 ft.) and 48 kg (106 lbs.); reports of larger fish unverified.

Where Found: young live in inshore seagrass beds; adults range from inshore channels to open ocean.

Remarks: 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

Description: 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*.

Where found: NEARSHORE and OFFSHORE; occasionally taken from piers running into deep water.

Size: common to 20 pounds.

Remarks: 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.

Florida record: 90 lbs.

CERO (cero mackerel) - *Scomberomorus regalis*

Family Scombridae, MACKEREL AND TUNAS

Description: 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*.

Where found: NEARSHORE and OFFSHORE fish occurring mainly in south Florida, especially over coral reefs and wrecks.

Size: common to 5 pounds.

Remarks: unlike other mackerels, does not stray far from south Florida waters; spawns OFFSHORE in mid summer; feeds on small fish and squid.

Florida record: 15 lbs., 8 ozs.

SPANISH MACKEREL - *Scomberomorus maculatus*

Family Scombridae, MACKERELS AND TUNAS

Description: 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*.

Where found: INSHORE, NEARSHORE, and OFFSHORE, especially over deep grass beds and reefs; absent from north Florida waters in winter.

Size: average catch less than 2 pounds (20 inches).

Remarks: schooling fish that migrates northward in spring, returning to southerly waters when water temperatures drop below about 70 degrees F; spawns OFFSHORE, spring through summer; feeds on small fish and squid.

WAHOO - *Acanthocybium solanderi*

Family Scombridae, MACKERELS AND TUNAS

Description: body slender; elongate jaws form a pointed beak; dark bluish above, with about 30 dark wavy bars; whitish below 1st dorsal fin long and low, with 21 to 27 spines; no gill rakers.

Size: to 2.1 m (83 in.) and 83 kg (183 lbs.).

Where found: offshore Gulfstream; bluewater

Remarks: 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

Description: 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.

Size: to 1 m (3.25 ft.) and 12 kg (26 lbs.), but usually much smaller.

Where found: common offshore, but also occurs regularly in bays and over reefs.

Remarks: probably the most common tuna in the w. 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

Description: pectoral fin moderately long, reaching point below beginning of 2nd dorsal fin; 2nd dorsal fin and all finlets yellow; no white rear edge on caudal fin; golden stripe on side; 2nd dorsal and anal fins become much longer with age (to about 1/5 of total length); eye small; 26 to 35 gill rakers.

Size: to 2.1 m (82 in.) and 176 kg (367 lbs.)

Where found: offshore mostly bluewater; in or near the Gulfstream.



BLACKFIN TUNA - *Thunnus atlanticus*

Family Scombridae, MACKERELS AND TUNAS

Description: pectoral fin moderately long, reaching point below beginning of 2nd dorsal fin; 2nd 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; eye large; 19 to 25 gill rakers (usually 21 to 23) on 1st arch.

Size: to 1 m (3.25 ft.) and 19 kg (42 lbs.).

Where found: near shore and offshore.



DOLPHIN - *Coryphaena hippurus*

Family Coryphaenidae, DOLPHINS

Description: 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).

Where found: OFFSHORE in warm waters.

Size: common to 30 pounds.

Remarks: 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.

Florida record: 77 lbs., 12 ozs.



SWORDFISH - *Xiphias gladius*

Family Xiphiidae, SWORDFISHES

Description: color of back variable, black, grayish blue, brown, metallic purple, or bronze; sides dusky; underbelly dirty white; 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; large eyes.

Similar fish: no close resemblance to other billfishes.

Where found: 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: once averaged 200 pounds, but overharvest has reduced size of commercially caught swordfish to average of 48 pounds.

Remarks: 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.

Florida record: 612 lbs., 12 ozs.



LONGBILL SPEARFISH - *Tetrapturus pfluegeri*

Family Istiophoridae, BILLFISHES

Description: 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*.

Where found: OFFSHORE in deep water.

Size: relatively small species.

Remarks: 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.

Florida record: 61 lbs., 8 ozs.



BLUE MARLIN - *Makaira nigricans*

Family Istiophoridae, BILLFISHES

Description: 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.

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

Where found: OFFSHORE, a bluewater fish.

Size: largest of the Atlantic marlins, common to 11 feet, known to exceed 2,000 pounds.

Remarks: 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.

Florida record: 980 lbs., 8 ozs.



WHITE MARLIN - *Tetrapterus albidus*

Family Istiophoridae, BILLFISHES

Description: 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.

Similar fish: blue marlin, *M. nigricans*.

Where found: OFFSHORE, a bluewater fish.

Size: common to 8 feet.

Remarks: 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.

Florida record: 161 lbs.



SAILFISH - *Istiophorus platypterus*

Family Istiophoridae, BILLFISHES

Description: 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).

Where found: OFFSHORE species, in south Florida associated with waters near the Gulfstream; off the Panhandle near the 100 fathom line.

Size: common to 7 feet.

Remarks: 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.

Florida record: 116 lbs.

