

Index of Common Names

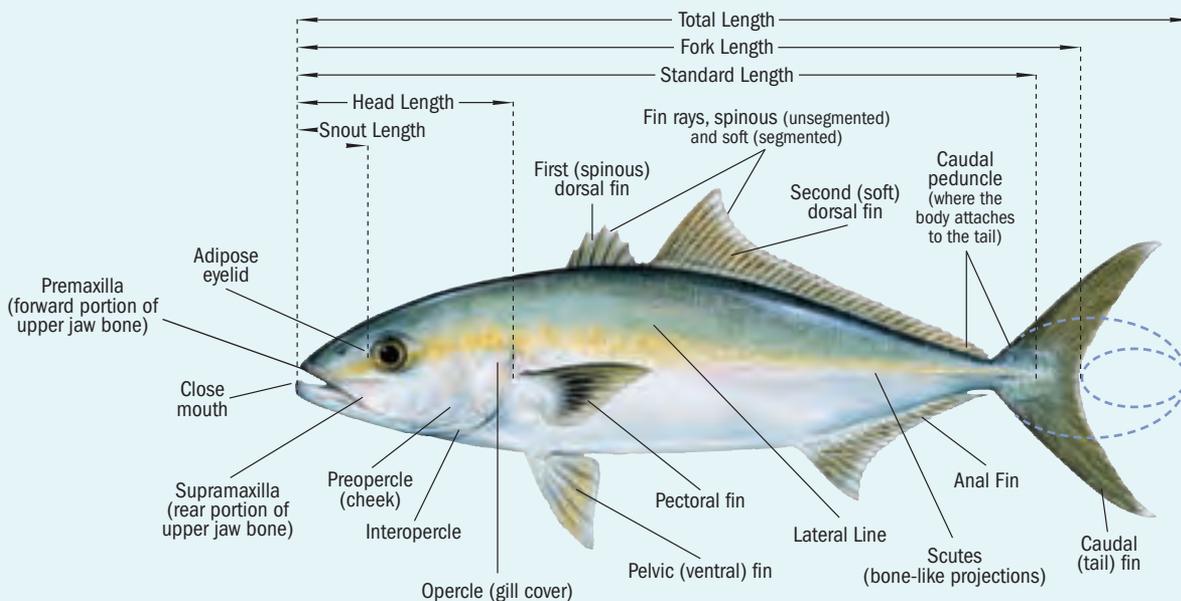
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What Is It?

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.

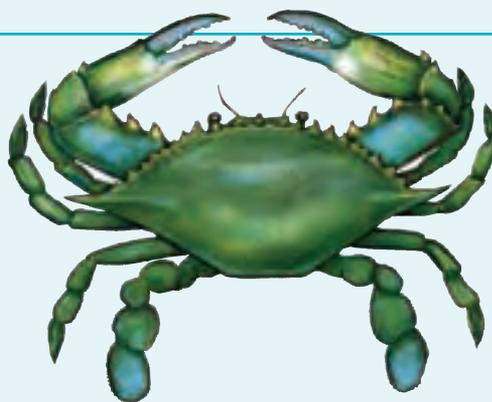
Blue Crab

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 Adults can grow up to 9 inches



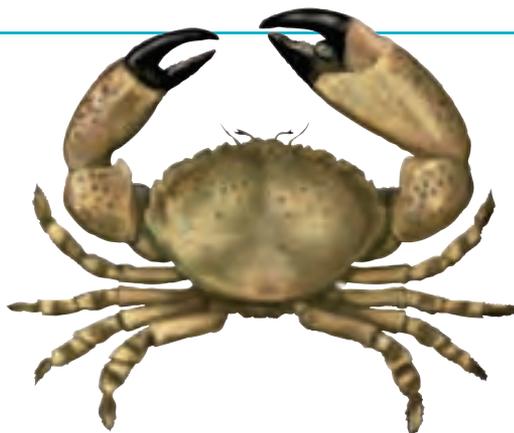
Stone Crab

Menippe spp
Family: Xanthidae

- Features**
- Carapace is smooth and 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 Adults 2 ½ - 4 in



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 They 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" thick across the 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 3 inches

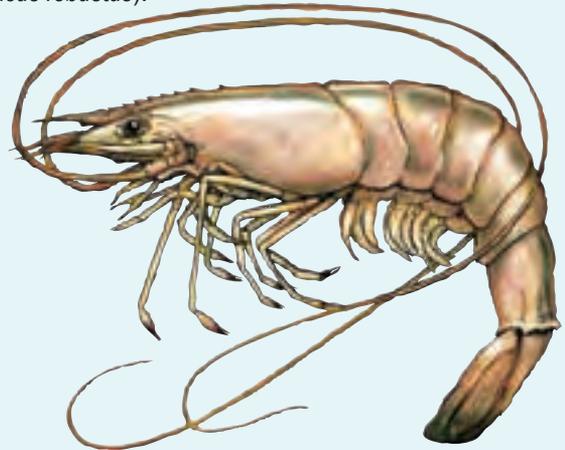


Shrimp

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

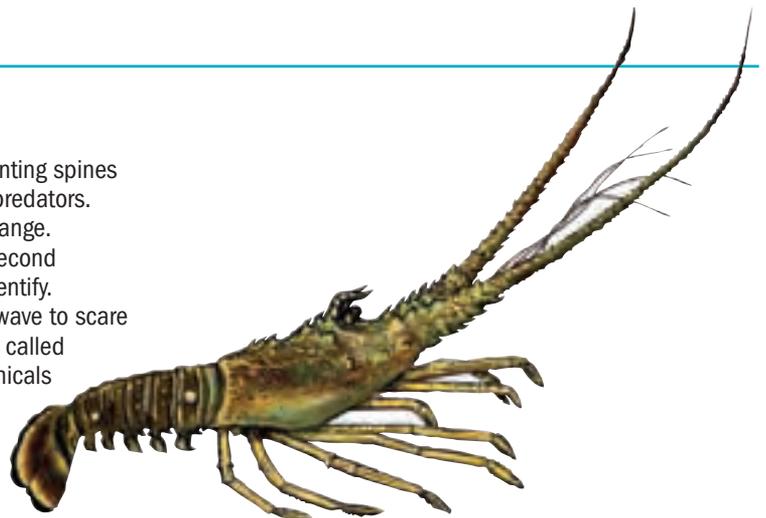
Panulirus argus

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 Maximum size approximately 9-10 inches carapace length (15-20 pounds)



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 fin entirely behind base of pectoral fins
 - second dorsal fin slightly in front of anal fin
 - slender, recurved teeth with smooth edges

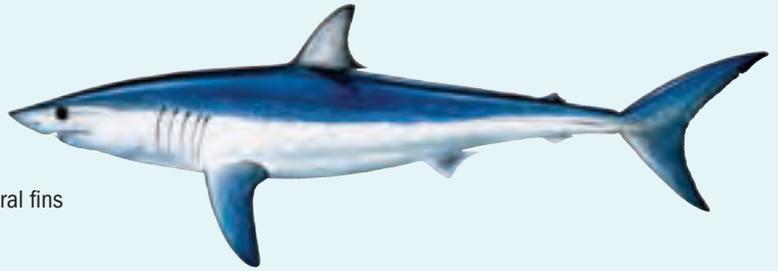
Similar fish white shark, *Carcharodon carcharias*; longfin mako, *Isurus paucus*

Habitat offshore fish often seen near the surface

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

Notes 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 lb 12 oz



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 notched
 - 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 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*

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

Notes 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

- 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 1.5 m (5 ft.)

Habitat common in bays and lagoons



Blacktip Shark

Carcharhinus limbatus

Family Carcharhinidae, Requiem Sharks

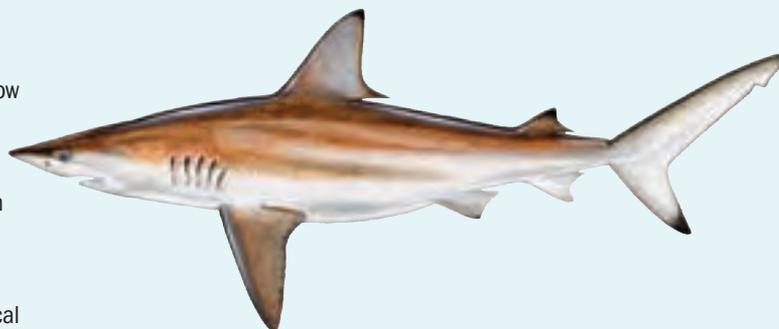
- Features**
- dark bluish gray (young paler) above, whitish below
 - distinctive whitish stripe on flank
 - Inside tip of pectoral fin conspicuously black
 - dorsal fin, anal fin, and lower lobe of caudal fin also black-tipped in young, fading with growth
 - first dorsal fin begins above axil of pectoral fin
 - snout long, almost V-shaped from below
 - no middorsal ridge
 - upper and lower teeth serrated, nearly symmetrical

Size to 2.5 m (8.25 ft.)

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 Fla. and Bahamas

Similar species in the Spinner Shark the first dorsal fin begins above a point behind the pectoral fin, and the snout is longer

Record 152 lb



Scalloped Hammerhead

Sphyrna lewini

Family Sphyrnidae, Hammerhead Sharks

- Features**
- fifth gill slit shorter than 4 preceding ones, 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
 - 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

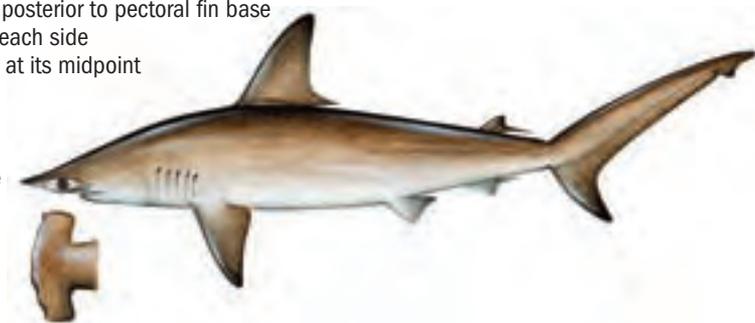
Similar fish other hammerhead sharks

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

Florida record 991 lb



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 commonly 3 to 4 feet

Notes 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

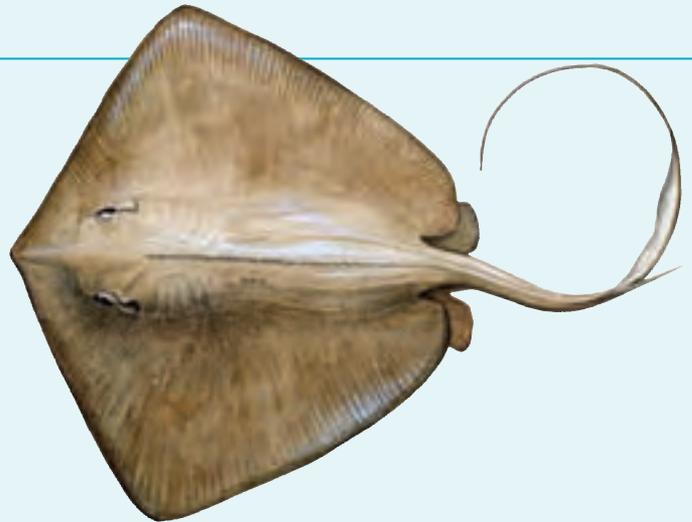
Family Dasyatidae, Stingrays

- 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

Size to 1.8 m (6 ft.) across disk

Habitat common in bays and estuaries

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

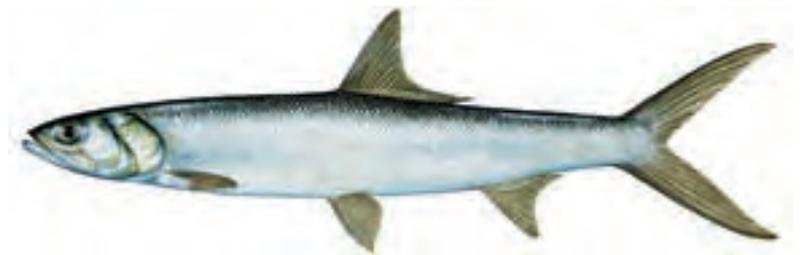
Similar fish juvenile tarpon, *Megalops atlanticus*

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

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

Florida record 6 lb 4 oz



Tarpon

Megalops atlanticus

Family Elopidae, 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 species (as juveniles) ladyfish, *Elops saurus*

Habitat 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

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

Florida record 243 lb



Bonefish

Albula vulpes

Family Albulidae, Bonefishes

- Features**
- 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*

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 3 to 5 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

Florida record 16 lb 3 oz



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 other 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

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.



Atlantic Thread Herring

Opisthonema oglinum

Family Clupeidae, Herrings

Other names gizzard shad

Features ■ back dark blue/gray, sides silvery, belly white
■ small head

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

Size up to 16"

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 up to 18"

Notes commonly caught with strings of 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 up to 10"

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



Gulf Menhaden

Brevoortia patronus

Family Clupeidae, Herrings

Other names shad, pogies

Features ■ 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

Habitat 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

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
 - w27-30 (usually 28-29) ventral scutes

Size to 32 cm (13 in.)



Ballyhoo

Hemiramphus brasiliensis

Family Exocoetidae, Flying Fishes

- 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 up to 16"



Fat Snook

Centropomus parallelus

Family Centropomidae, Snooks

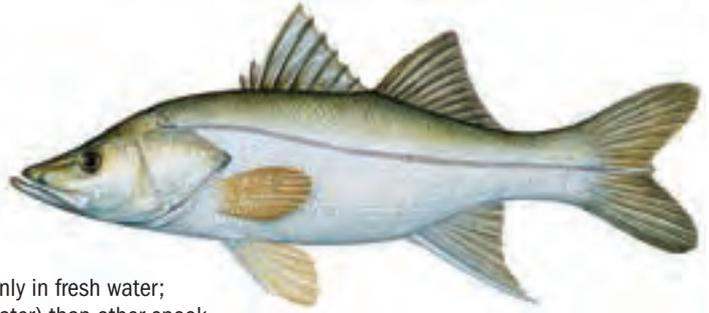
- Features**
- deeper body than other snooks
 - black lateral line extends onto tail
 - mouth reaches to or beyond center of eyes
 - yellow-brown to green-brown above silvery on sides
 - usually no dusky outer edge of all snook

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 a small species, rarely more than 20 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

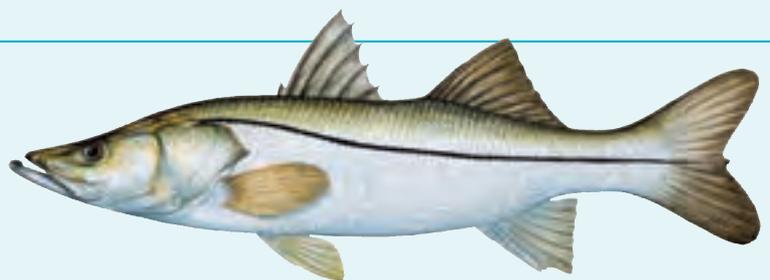
Similar fish other Centropomus

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

Size most catches 5 to 8 pounds

Notes 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 lb 3 oz



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, hence the name
 - 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 usually less than 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

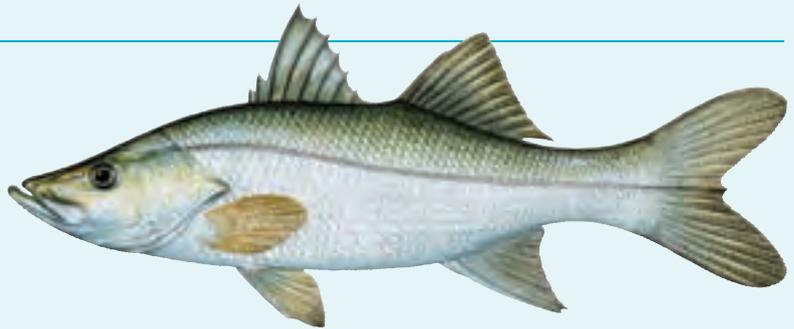
- Features**
- only snook with 7 anal fin rays (others have 6)
 - lower jaw curves upward
 - compressed body
 - prominent black lateral line extends through tail
 - tips of pelvic fins reach beyond anus

Similar fish other Centropomus

Habitat inshore in south Florida; frequently in fresh water

Size usually less than 1 pound (12 inches)

Notes 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

- 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 purplishblue
 - caudal fin tri-lobed on adults
 - edge of nape unscaled

Similar fish rock sea bass, *C. philadelphia*; other *Centropristis*

Habitat offshore in deep water with rocks and reefs

Size usually 0.3 pounds (8 inches)

Notes 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 Grouper

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

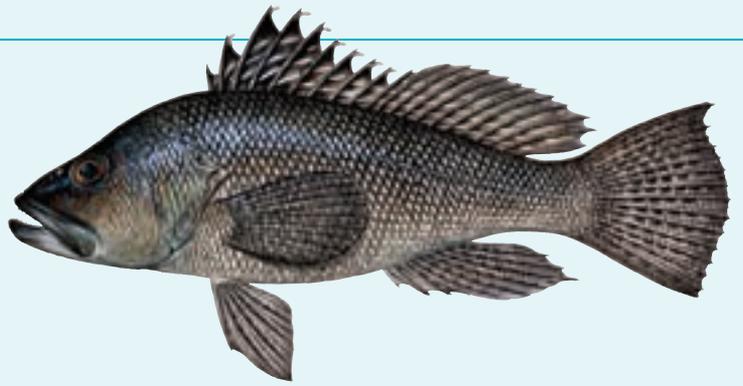
Similar fish bank sea bass, *C. ocyurus*; other *Centropristis*

Habitat 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)

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

Florida record 5 lb 1 oz



Rock Sea Bass

Centropristis philadelphica

Family Serranidae, Sea Basses and Grouper

- 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 Grouper

- 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
 - adults huge, up to 800 pounds
 - eyes small

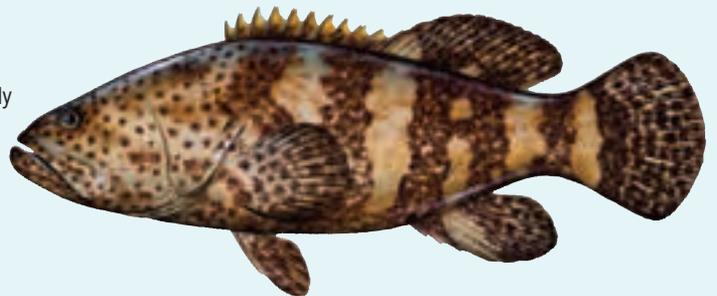
Similar fish other grouper

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

Notes spawns over summer months; lifespan of 30 to 50 years; feeds on crustaceans and fish
Goliath Groupers are totally protected from harvest in Florida waters

Florida record 680 lb



GAG

Mycteroperca microlepis

Family Serranidae, Sea Basses and Grouper

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



Similar fish black grouper, *M. bonaci*

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

Size 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

Florida record 80 lb 6 oz

Black Grouper

Mycteroperca bonaci

Family Serranidae, Sea Basses and Grouper

- Features**
- olive or gray body coloration with black blotches and brassy spots
 - gently rounded preopercle (See gag above)

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 common to 40 pounds, may attain weights exceeding 100 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

Florida record 113 lb 6 oz



Nassau Grouper

Epinephelus striatus

Family Serranidae, Sea Basses and Grouper

- 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 most catches under 10 pounds

Notes forms large spawning aggregations, making this species highly vulnerable to over-harvest
all harvest of this species is prohibited

Florida record 9 lb



Red Grouper

Epinephelus morio

Family Serranidae, Sea Basses and Grouper

- 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 common to 15 pounds

Notes 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 42 lb 4 oz



SCAMP

Mycteroperca phenax

Family Serranidae, Sea Basses and Grouper

- 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

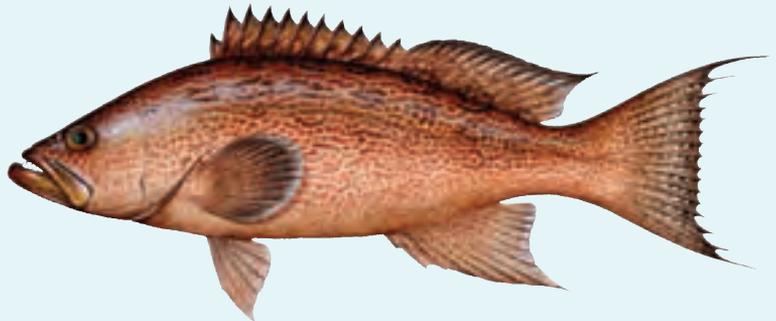
Similar fish yellowmouth grouper, *M. interstitialis*

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

Size generally smaller than gags or blacks

Notes 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 lb 6 oz



Yellowfin Grouper

Mycteroperca venenosa

Family Serranidae, Sea Basses and Grouper

- Features**
- 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

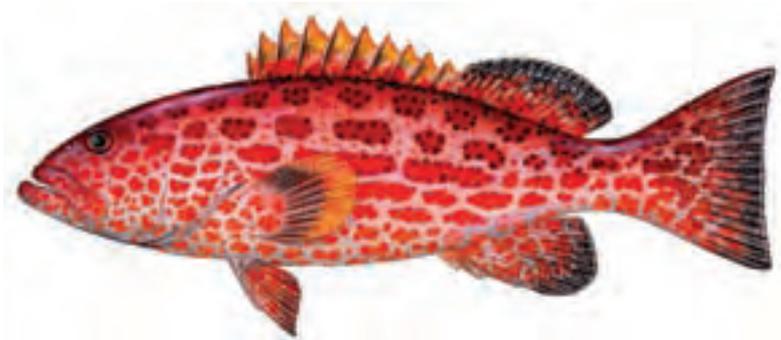
Similar fish black grouper, *M. bonaci*, other grouper

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

Florida record 34 lb 6 oz



Yellowmouth Grouper

Mycteroperca interstitialis

Family Serranidae, Sea Basses and Grouper

- 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

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 common to 15 pounds

Notes 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 lb



Warsaw Grouper

Epinephelus nigritus

Family Serranidae, Sea Basses and Grouper

- 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

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

Florida record 436 lb 12 oz



Sand Perch

Diplectrum formosum

Family Serranidae, Sea Basses and Grouper

- 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

Size to 30 cm (1 ft.)

Habitat bays, coastal grassy areas, and shallow banks

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

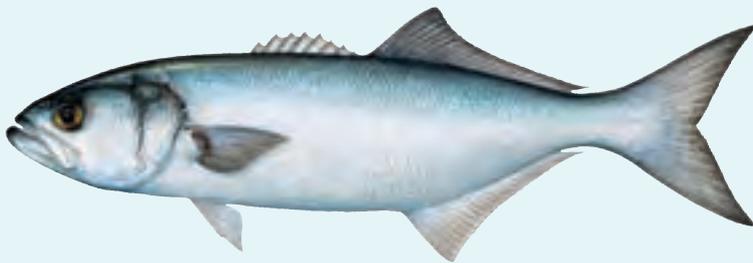
Similar fish blue runner, *C. crysos*

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

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

Florida record 22 lb 2 oz



Cobia (ling)

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
 - when young, has 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 common to 30 pounds

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

Florida record 130 lb 1 oz



Almaco Jack

Seriola rivoliana

Family Carangidae, Jacks and Pompanos

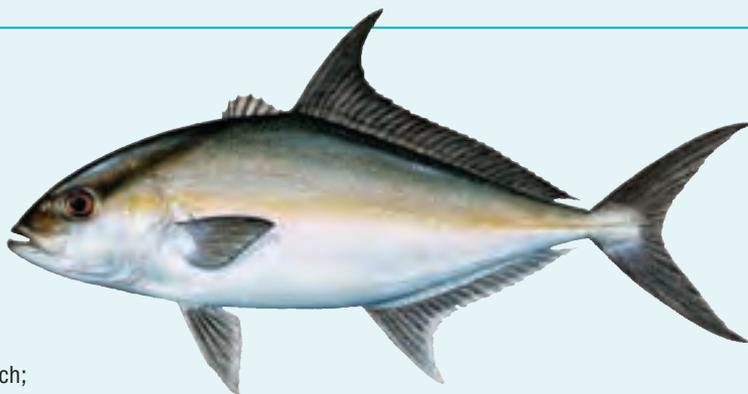
- Features**
- deep-bodied amberjack
 - sometimes darker in coloration
 - front of soft dorsal and of anal fins high and elongated
 - body more flattened than banded rudderfish or greater amberjack
 - no scutes

Similar fish other *Seriola*

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

Size usually less than 20 pounds

Notes spawns offshore, apparently during spring, summer, and fall



Banded Rudderfish

Seriola zonata

Family Carangidae, Jacks and Pompanos

- Features**
- 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*

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

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



Juvenile

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 common to 40 pounds

Notes largest of the jacks; thought to spawn offshore throughout much of the year; feeds on squid, fish, and crustaceans

Florida record 142 lb



Lesser Amberjack

Seriola fasciata

Family Carangidae, Jacks and Pompanos

- Features**
- olive green or brownish back and silver sides
 - darkband (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 under 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, Pomatomus saltatrix, other Caranx

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

Size usually less than 1 pound (11 inches)

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

Florida record 8 lb 5 oz



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

Similar fish other Caranx

Habitat common to both inshore waters and the open sea

Size usually 3 to 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

Florida record 57 lb



Palometa

Trachinotus goodei

Family Carangidae, Jacks and Pompanos

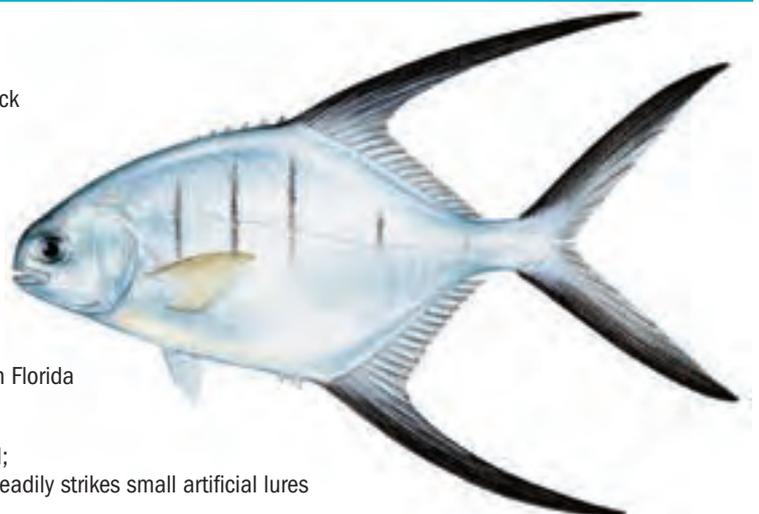
- Features**
- gray to blue-green on top of head and along the back
 - bright silvery sides, yellow on breast
 - elongated dorsal and anal fins, dusky or black with bluish edges
 - deep body, with four narrow bars high on the sides, and traces of a fifth nearer the tail
 - no scutes

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 rarely over 1 pound, reported to 3 pounds

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 40 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 25 pounds

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

Florida record 56 lb 2 oz



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

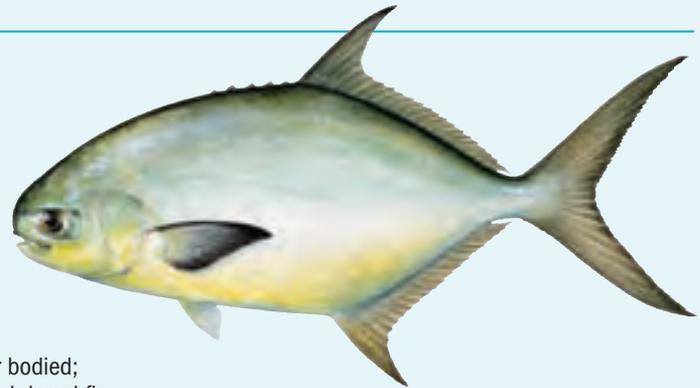
Similar fish permit, *T. falcatus*; palometa, *T. goodei*; the permit is deeper bodied; dorsal body profile not strongly angled at insertion of second dorsal fin; pompano rarely grow larger than 6 pounds, permit common to 40 pounds

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 usually less than 3 pounds

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

Florida record 8 lb 4 oz



Round Scad

Decapterus punctatus

Family Carangidae, Jacks and Pompanos

Other names cigar minnow

- Features**
- long, fusiform
 - 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 12"

Notes 2 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 60 cm (2 ft.), but usually less than 30 cm (1 ft.)



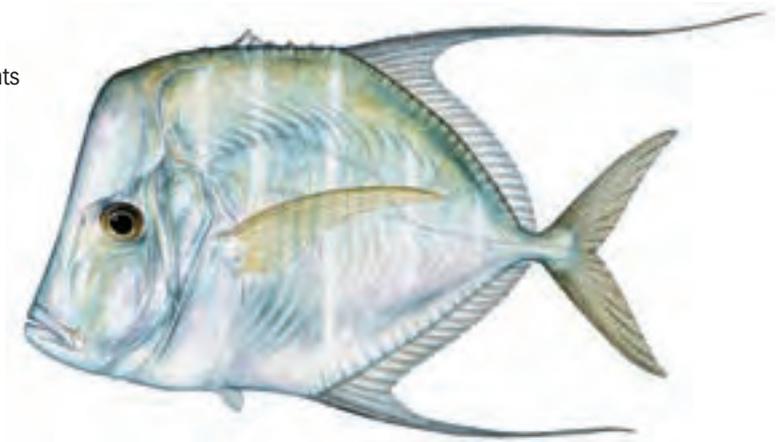
Lookdown

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 streamerlike

Size to 30 cm (1ft.)



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 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 first arch

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

Florida record 25 lb 12 oz



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

Size to 30 cm (1 ft.)

Habitat enters bays and estuaries, often in turbid water



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

Size to 30 cm (1 ft.)

Habitat one of the most abundant inshore fishes in tropica



African Pompano

Alectis ciliaris

Family Carangidae, Jacks

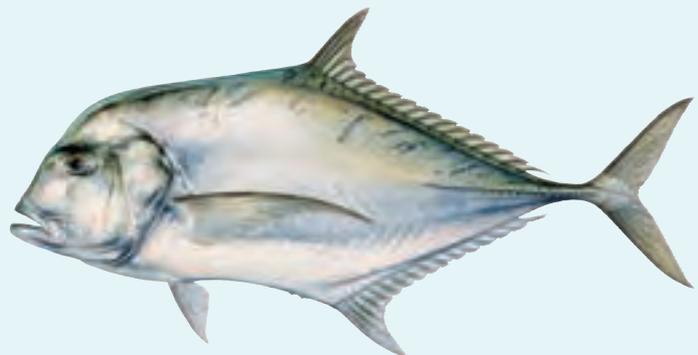
- Features**
- body is deep and compressed
 - coloration is metallic-blue above, silvery below
 - snout is blunt
 - pelvic fins are longer than the maxilla
 - second dorsal and anal fins are falcate

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

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

Notes great fighter and good to eat. Often found in schools over structure

Florida record 50 lb 8 oz



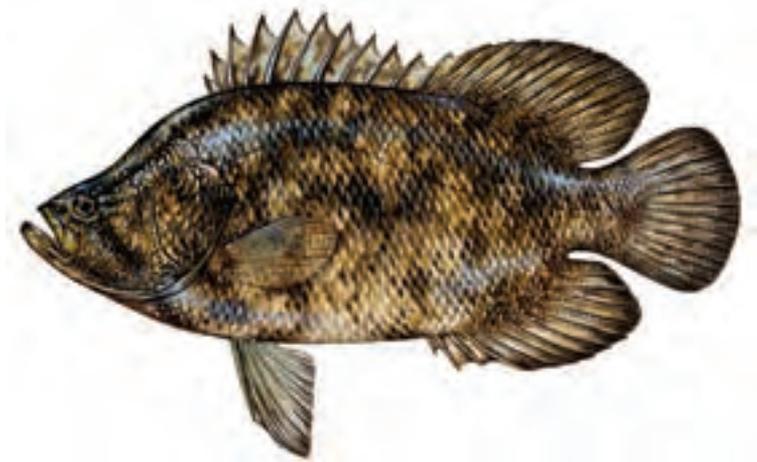
Tripletail

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 1.1 m (42 in.)

Florida record 40 lb 13 oz



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

Similar fish other snappers

Habitat adults offshore near continental shelf break.

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

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 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

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

Size 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

Florida record: 116 lb



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
 - 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 large snapper, attaining 30 pounds

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 offshore catches common to 10 pounds

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, 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)

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

Size usually less than 1 pound

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

Florida record 6 lb 6 oz



Mahogany Snapper

Lutjanus mahogoni

Family Lutjanidae, Snappers

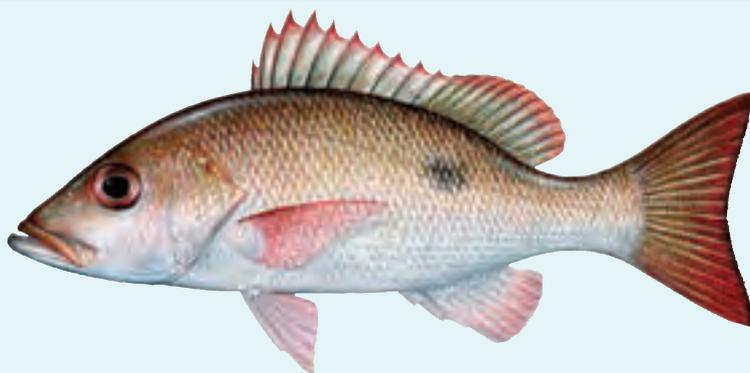
- Features**
- color grayish-olive with a reddish tinge
 - conspicuous dark spot, about the size of the eye, below the soft dorsal fin, 1/4 to 1/2 of it below the lateral line
 - the large eye and caudal fin are bright red
 - lower margin of the preopercle has prominent spur with strong and sharp serrations

Similar fish lane snapper, *L. synagris* (also with dark spot below soft dorsal the blotch placed higher in relation to the lateral line on lane snapper)

Habitat nearshore or offshore in clear water, usually over reefs

Size relatively small snapper, common to 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* (anal fin pointed in mutton snapper, rounded in lane).

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

Size common to 15 pounds

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

Florida record 30 lb 4 oz



Queen Snapper

Etelis oculatus

Family Lutjanidae, Snappers

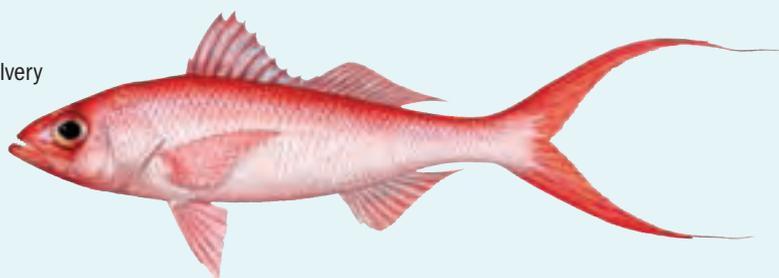
- Features**
- color of back and upper sides red, lower sides silvery
 - body long and slender
 - dorsal fin distinctly notched
 - large eyes
 - caudal fin deeply forked
 - no dark lateral spot

Similar fish other snappers

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

Size small species, usually less than 20 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

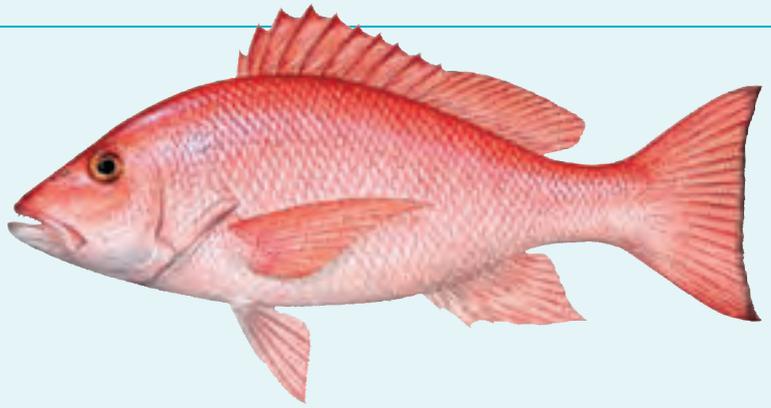
Similar fish silk snapper, *L. vivanus*

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

Size to 20 pounds

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

Florida record 46 lb 8 oz



Schoolmaster

Lutjanus apodus

Family Lutjanidae, Snappers

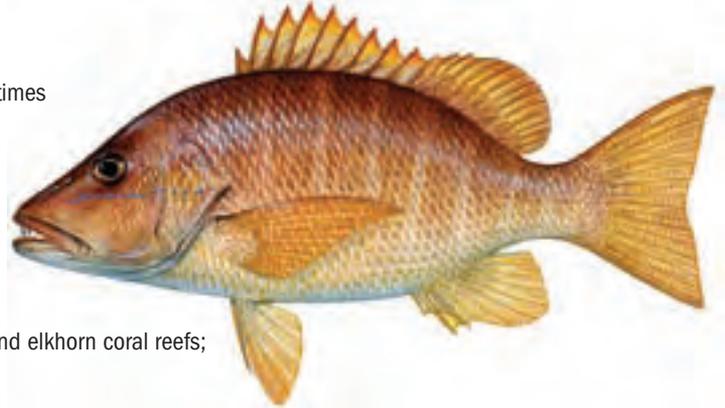
- Features**
- color olive gray on upper sides with yellow tinge, sometimes with reddish tinge around head
 - long triangular snout
 - eight pale vertical bars on the side of the body
 - yellow fins
 - blue stripe below eye, becoming interrupted in adults
 - no dark lateral spot

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 usually less than 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

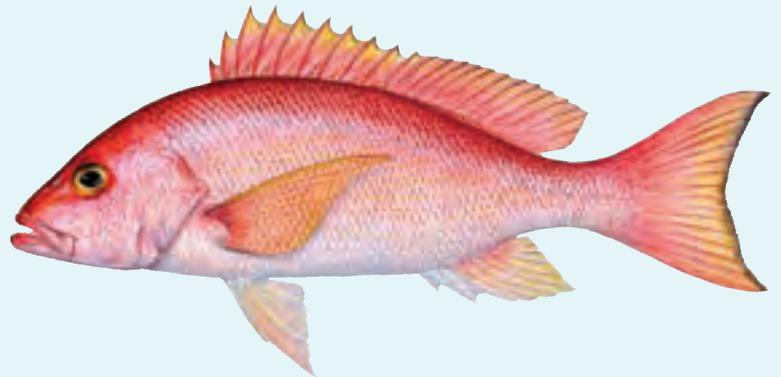
- Features**
- back and upper sides pinkish red, shading to silvery sides with undulating yellow lines
 - pectoral fins pale yellow
 - back edge of caudal fin blackish
 - anal fin pointed
 - no dark lateral spot
 - yellow eye

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

Notes little is known



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 darklateral 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 common to 3 pounds

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

Florida record 8 lb 9 oz



Hogfish

Lachnolaimus maximus
Family Labridae, Wrasses

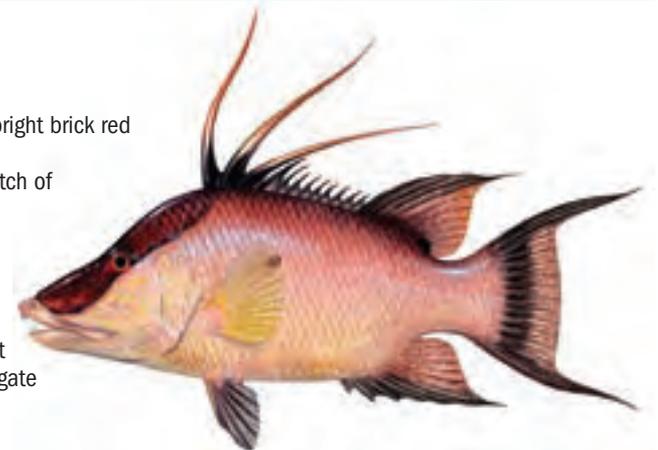
- Features**
- body deep, strongly compressed
 - color varies, but never bicolored, usually reddish, sometimes bright brick red
 - soft dorsal fin with a large dark spot at base
 - entire top of head nape purplish brown in large males, this patch of color continuous with blackish area that extends along 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 91 cm (3ft.)

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

Florida record 19 lb 8 oz



Gray Triggerfish

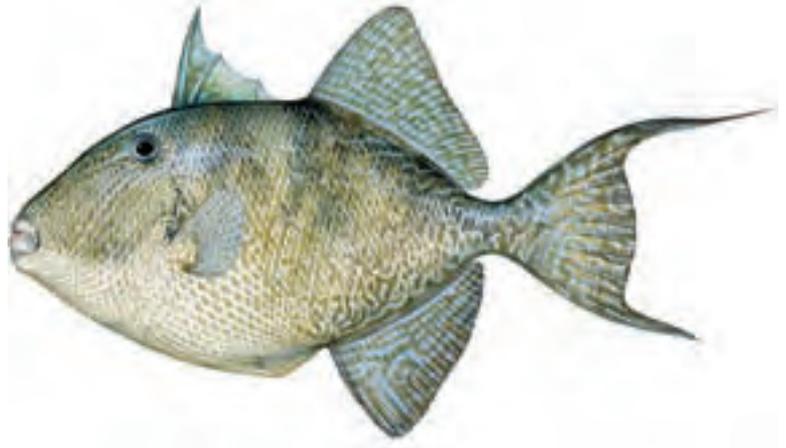
Balistes capriscus

Family Balistidae, Leatherjackets

- 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

Florida record 12 lb 7 oz



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* (blackdrum 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)

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”

Florida record 15 lb 2 oz



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

Size to 91 cm (3 ft.)

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



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

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

Habitat coastal waters to 45 m (150 ft.)



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

Size to 46 cm (18 in.)

Habitat hardbottom, reefs, ledges



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

Size to 25 cm (10 in.)

Habitat inshore seagrass beds



Littlehead Porgy

Calamus proridens

Family Sparidae, Porgies

- Features**
- 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

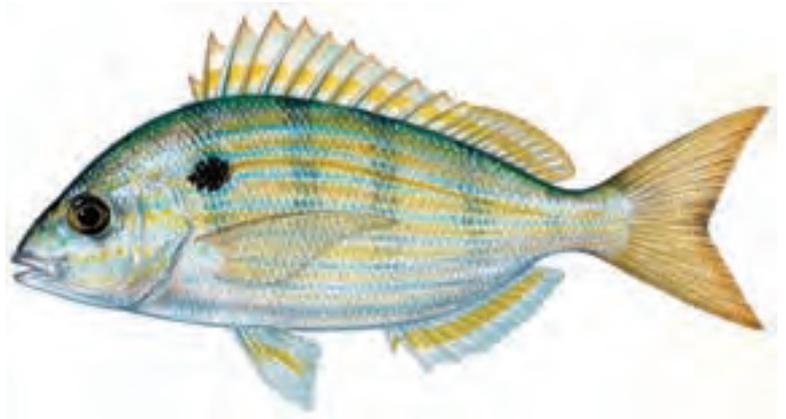
Family Sparidae, Porgies

- 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 in

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

Size to 46 cm (18 in.)

Habitat inshore seagrass beds, offshore rocks and reefs



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 most catches 1.5 pounds (15 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

Size to 38 cm (15 in.)

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



Tomtate

Haemulon aurolineatum

Family Haemulidae, Grunts

Other names silver grunt

- 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 can reach 10 to 11 inches, weighs less than 1 lb.; commonly used to catch larger fish

Notes not usually eaten due to small size



Atlantic Croaker

Micropogonias undulatus

Family Sciaenidae, Drums

- Features**
- inferior mouth
 - 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* (has no chin barbels and has a dark blotch on shoulder)

Size usually less than 2 pounds

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 the winter months and move into bays and estuaries during the spring, summer, and fall

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

Florida record 4 lb 15 oz



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

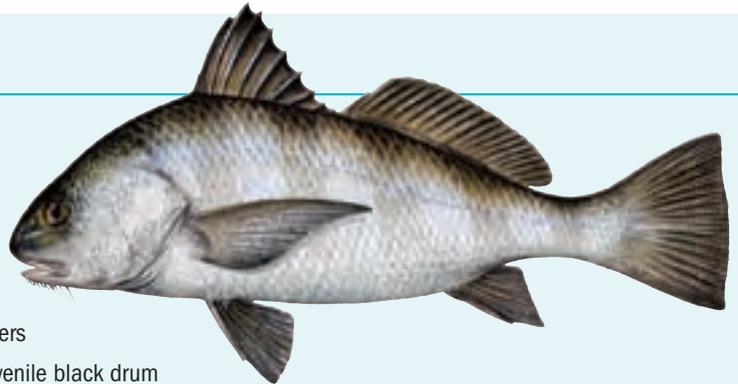
Similar fish red drum, *Sciaenops ocellatus* the vertical bars on juvenile black drum are somewhat similar to those on sheepshead, *Archosargus probatocephalus*; and spadefish, *Chaetodipterus faber*.

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, oysters, crabs, shrimp, and occasionally fish; longevity to 35 or more years

Florida record 96 lb



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, *Pogonias 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 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

Florida record 52 lb 5 oz



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, *C. 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 (10 to 12 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
 - lower half of tail longer than upper half.

Similar fish other seatrouts.

Habitat 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).

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

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

Florida record 17 lb 6 oz



Silver Perch

Bairdiella chrysoura

Family Sciaenidae, Drums

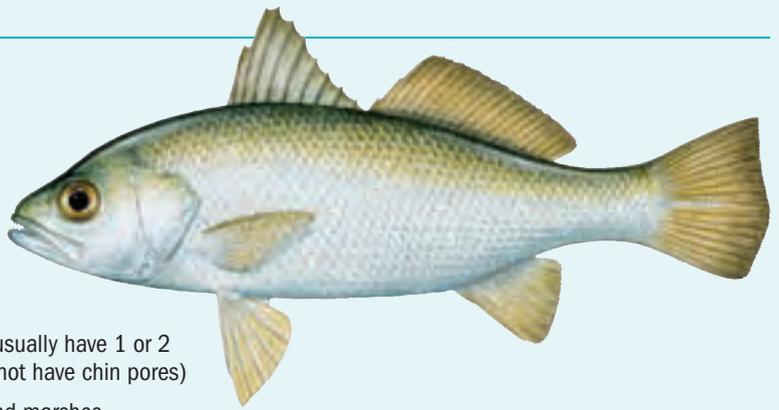
- Features**
- color silvery with yellowish fins
 - no spots
 - no chin barbels
 - no prominent canine teeth at tip of upper jaw
 - preopercle finely serrated
 - 5 to 6 chin pores
 - mouth terminal

Similar fish sand seatrout, *Cynoscion 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 and rivers, and marshes

Size small, not exceeding 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 seatrouts

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 2 to 3 pounds

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.

Florida record 10 lb



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

Size to 46 cm (18 in.)

Habitat at water's edge, in surf



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 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.).

Habitat shallow coastal waters; common along beaches



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 36 cm (14 in.)

Notes a popular pan fish



Gulf Flounder

Paralichthys albigutta
Family Bothidae, Lefteye 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 (albigutta, white spotted)
 - strong canine-like teeth
 - caudal fin in shape of wedge, its tip in the middle.

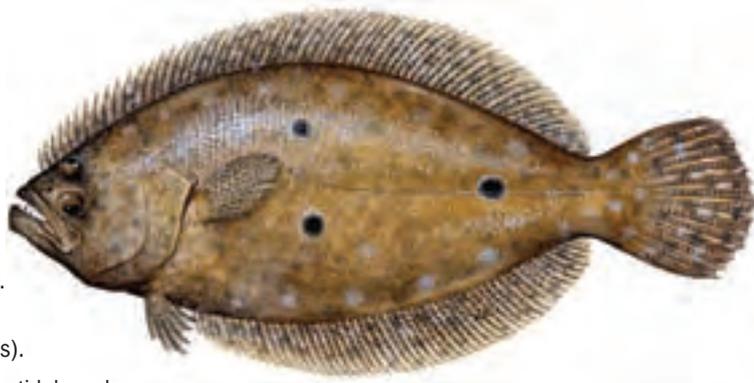
Similar fish southern flounder, *P. lethostigma* (no eyelike spots; color pattern is key to distinguishing the two species).

Habitat inshore on sandy or mud bottoms, often ranging into tidal creeks; occasionally caught on nearshorerocky reefs.

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

Notes 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.

Florida record 20 lb 9 oz



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

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

Habitat same as for gafftopsail catfish usually much more common.

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

Florida record 3 lb 5 oz



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.

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

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

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

Florida record 8 lb 14 oz



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

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 most catches less than 2 pounds, known to reach 15 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

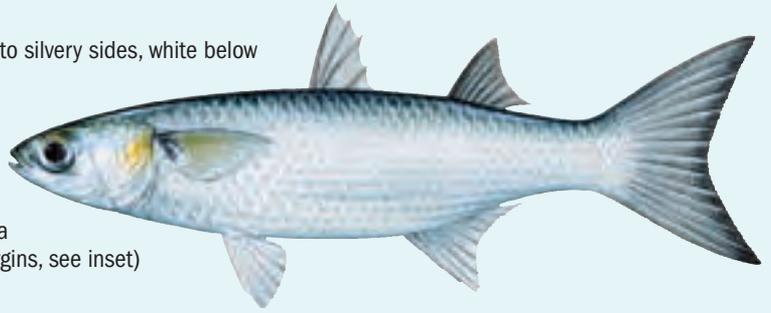
- Features**
- color olive green with blue tints on back, shading to silvery sides, white below
 - anal and pelvic fins yellowish
 - dark blotch at base of pectoral fin
 - inverted V-shaped mouth
 - insertion of second dorsal over that of the anal fin

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

Habitat inshore, occurring along beaches in the fall

Size small mullet, 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

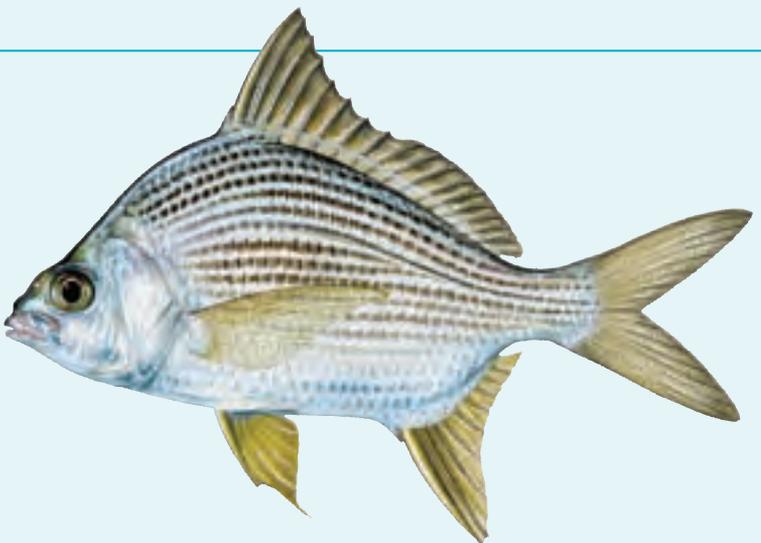
Diapterus plumieri

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.

Size to 30 cm (1ft.).

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



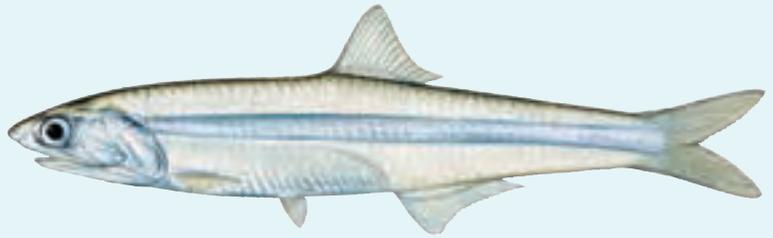
Striped Anchovy

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 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

- 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

Size to 10 cm (4 in.)

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



Great Barracuda

Sphyraena barracuda

Family Sphyraenidae, 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

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

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

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

Florida record 67 lb



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 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

Florida record 90 lb



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 fin black
 - lateral line curves gradually to base of caudal fin

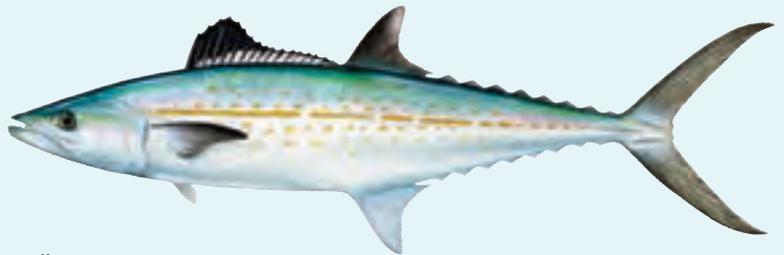
Similar fish spanish mackerel, *S. maculatus*; king mackerel, *S. cavalla*

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

Size 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

Florida record 17 lb 2 oz



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 average catch less than 2 pounds (20 inches)

Notes 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

Florida record 12 lb



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

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

Habitat offshore Gulfstream; bluewater

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

Florida record 139 lb



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

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

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

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

Florida record 27 lb



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)

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

Habitat offshore mostly bluewater; in or near the Gulfstream

Florida record 240 lb



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

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

Habitat near shore and offshore

Florida record 45 lb 8 oz



Dolphin

Coryphaena hippurus

Family Coryphaenidae, Dolphins

- 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 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

Florida record 77 lb 12 oz



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

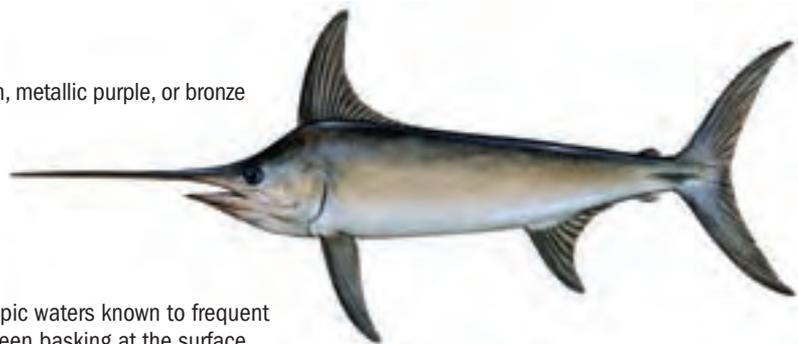
Similar fish no close resemblance to other billfishes

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 once averaged 200 pounds, but over harvest has reduced size of commercially caught swordfish to average of 48 pounds

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

Florida record 612 lb 12 oz



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

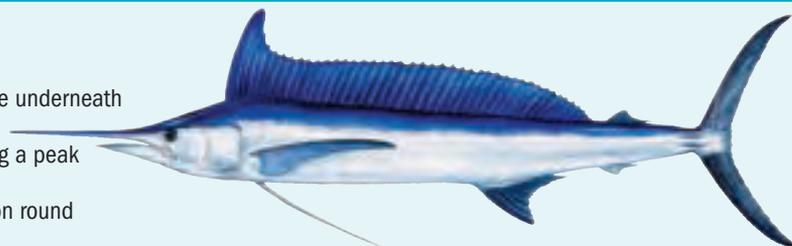
Similar fish white marlin, *Tetrapterus albidus*

Habitat offshore in deep water

Size relatively small species

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

Florida record 61 lb 8 oz



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

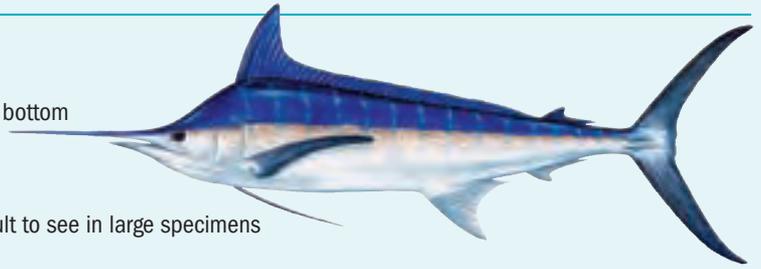
Similar fish white marlin, *T. albidus* (white has rounded dorsal at front end, rounded tip of pectoral and anal fins, and spots on the dorsal fin)

Habitat offshore, a bluewater fish

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

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

Florida record 1046 lb



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

Similar fish blue marlin, *M. nigricans*

Habitat offshore, a bluewater fish

Size 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

Florida record 161 lb



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 common to 7 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

Florida record 116 lb 10 oz

