

## 2.17. BARRACUDA

The barracuda, *Sphyræna argentea*, ranges from Alaska to the Gulf of California, but is taken in commercial quantities only from Point Conception southward to Cape San Lucas, Lower California. Practically all the commercial catch is sold fresh; barracuda is one of the chief sources of revenue for the fresh fish markets of Southern California. At the same time, by total poundage landed, barracuda ranks first among the marine sport fishes of the State.

The catch figures exhibit a rather wide annual variation, as may be seen from Figure 43. The trend of the commercial catch in California

**TABLE 11**  
**BARRACUDA**  
**Comparison of Commercial Catch With Catch of Sport Fishing Vessels**

Year	Commercial catch			Sport catch*	Total pounds
	California waters	Mexican waters	Total	California and Mexican waters	
1936.....	2,247,800	730,000	2,977,800	2,399,200	5,377,000
1937.....	1,799,000	1,139,500	2,938,500	2,991,500	5,930,000
1938.....	1,260,800	1,269,000	2,529,800	1,636,500	4,166,300
1939.....	2,969,300	1,122,800	4,092,100	3,379,500	7,471,600
1940.....	2,545,600	1,169,200	3,714,800	3,609,500	7,324,300
1941.....	2,971,300	1,230,600	4,201,900	-----	-----
1942.....	2,243,100	1,211,400	3,454,500	-----	-----
1943.....	2,382,900	1,392,400	3,775,300	-----	-----
1944.....	2,317,400	1,330,900	3,648,300	-----	-----
1945.....	1,744,600	2,128,700	3,873,300	-----	-----
1946.....	1,637,300	1,469,700	3,107,000	1,824,800	4,931,800
1947.....	1,695,800	969,900	2,665,700	3,744,700	6,410,400

\* No records available for 1941-1945; 1946 record incomplete.

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waters is downward since 1939. Unfortunately the record of landings by marine sport fishermen was not complete or available from 1941 through 1946. The 1947 sport catch figures, however, indicate that a larger portion of the total catch is now taken by sportsmen than before the war.

Barracuda are taken by means of artificial lures, live bait, gill nets, and round haul nets, including purse seines. It is unlawful to catch barracuda with a round haul net in the waters of the State. However, the largest part of the catch south of the international boundary is made by purse seiners. Most of the catches are sold to fresh fish markets at Los Angeles and San Diego, with a few catches sold at Santa Barbara.

The landings from California waters are greatest from April through September, with a small part landed throughout the year. Catches originating in Mexican waters are greatest from September through April.

Barracuda are caught for the most part in shallow water along the coast and nearby islands. They feed upon anchovies, young sardines, and small organisms. The spawning season is from April through September, with greatest spawning in May and June. Young fish of the year have appeared in the latter part of July (Walford 1932). Evidence of definite northward movement as the fishery progresses indicates barracuda are migratory (Walford 1929).