

The commercial catch has varied little from year to year, and the general trend has been toward a decline in the total landings. The average catch from 1916 through 1935 was about 480,000 pounds and from 1936 through 1947 was only half that amount. This drop does not necessarily show a decline in the availability of the fish but rather a reduction of the fishing effort for local market fish, especially for those species with which the rock bass fishery is associated. Unfavorable economic conditions have caused many fishermen to pursue other, more profitable species.

Few regular commercial fishermen are engaged primarily in rock bass fishing. The demand for this fish is a limited one, existing only in the fresh fish market. Therefore, the price per pound to the fisherman is seldom high enough to attract full time fishing effort. Rock bass are caught by every conceivable fishing method and are taken incidentally by boats fishing for other species such as rockfish, sheepshead and lobster. Rod and reel, hand and set lines, gill nets, traps and trawls all contribute to the catch.

A large portion of the commercial rock bass landings have consisted of fish taken by sportsmen with sport tackle and live bait. This practice of selling the catch became more and more popular among ardent fishermen who regularly fished on the live bait sportfishing vessels, for it helped considerably to defray the cost of the day's recreation. In 1947 a law was passed to stop this practice and make sportfishing boats for sportsmen only.

TABLE 14

ROCK BASS

Pounds

	Commercial	Sportcatch		Commercial	Sportcatch
1936.....	416,145	705,114	1942.....	122,812	-----
1937.....	325,000	470,518	1943.....	198,132	-----
1938.....	286,087	901,488	1944.....	229,032	-----
1939.....	266,153	904,140	1945.....	163,846	-----
1940.....	245,559	926,181	1946.....	207,548	824,636
1941.....	141,977	-----	1947.....	251,413	1,356,241

TABLE 14
ROCK BASS
Pounds

The amount of fish reported by the numerous live bait sportfishing boats and not included in the commercial record, is shown in the Table 14. This constitutes the major part of the sportsmen's catch, but not all, since these fish are also taken by pier fishermen, skiff fishermen, and on private party boats. The abrupt rise in the sport catch of rock bass in 1947 is the result of more complete records collected by the Bureau of Marine Fisheries from the operators of the sportfishing vessels.—*Robert D. Collyer.*

References (see page 210): 30, 133.