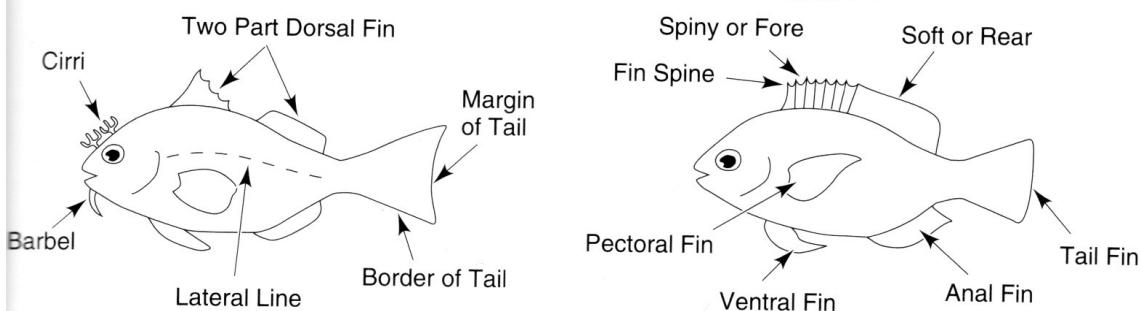
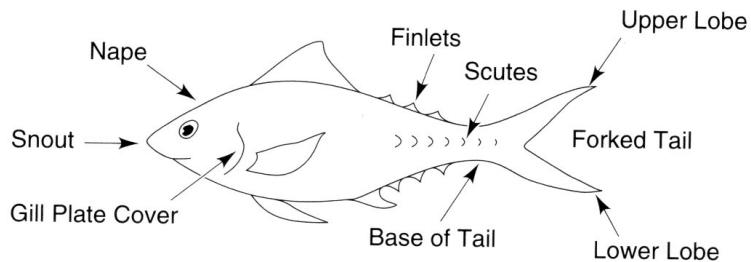
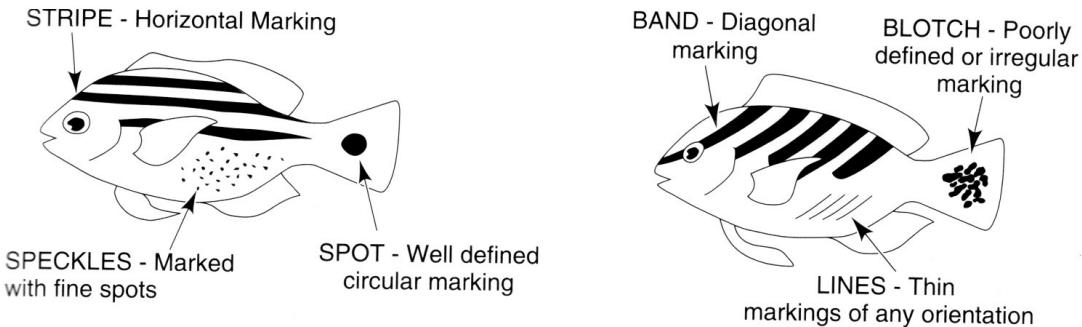
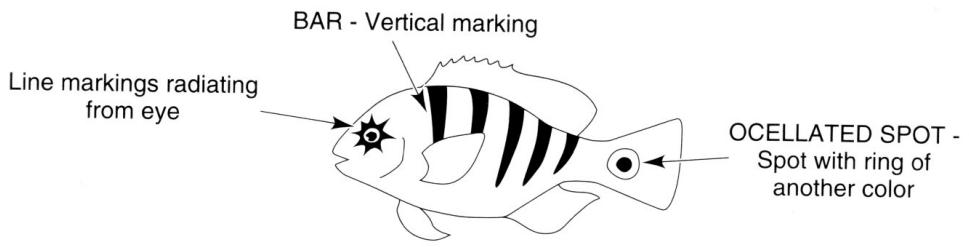


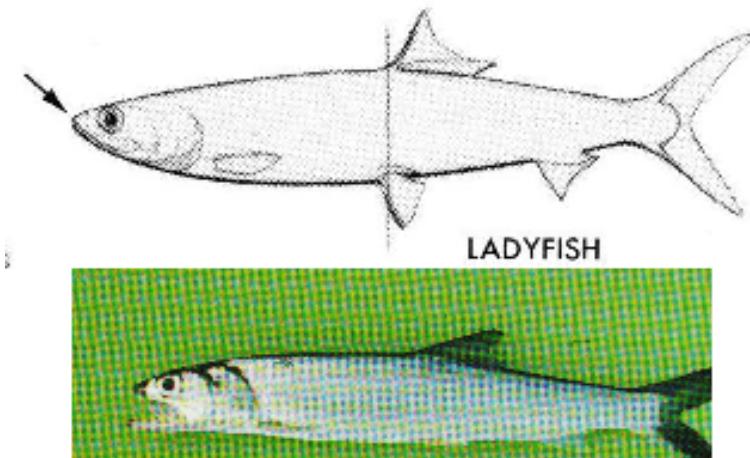
# Common Species of Sarasota Bay and nearby Shallow Waters

David Dayan



## Tarpons: Family Elopidae

The order elopiformes includes three families, the tarpons, ladyfish and bonefish. They are sometime placed together into the same family. All have an elongate bony plate in the throat (gular plate). They are all important gamefishes. Their larvae are referred to as leptocephalus indicating the close relationship between the tarpons and the eels.



### Ladyfish *Elops saurus*

ID: Silvery overall, bluish reflections on upper body. Mouth is large oblique and terminal Single dorsal fin starts slightly behind pelvic fin.

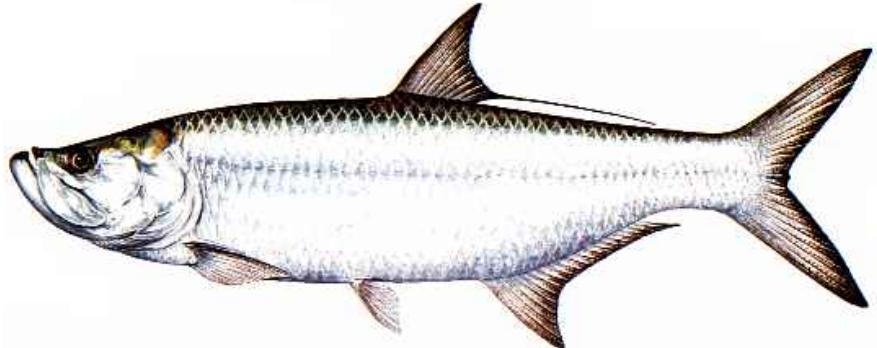
Size: to 3ft

### Tarpon *Megalops atlanticus*

ID: Produced last ray in dorsal fin, very large silver plate-like scales, underslung mouth. Silvery with green or otherwise darker countershading on back.

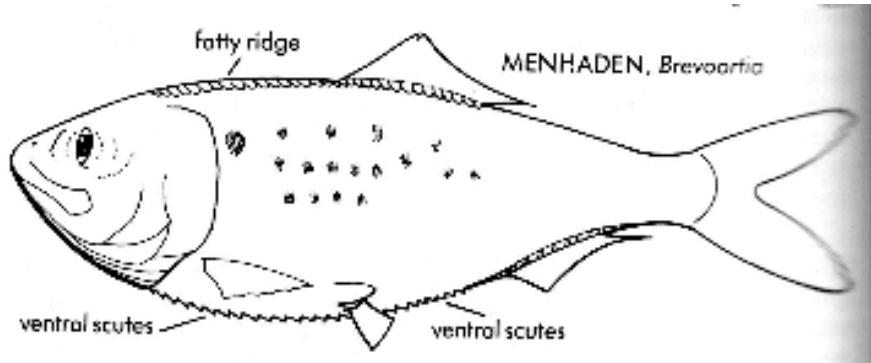
Remarks: Extremely popular gamefish. Juveniles inhabit low salinity while adults prefer higher salinity in bays and frequent reefs and open ocean.

Size: giant (to 8ft)

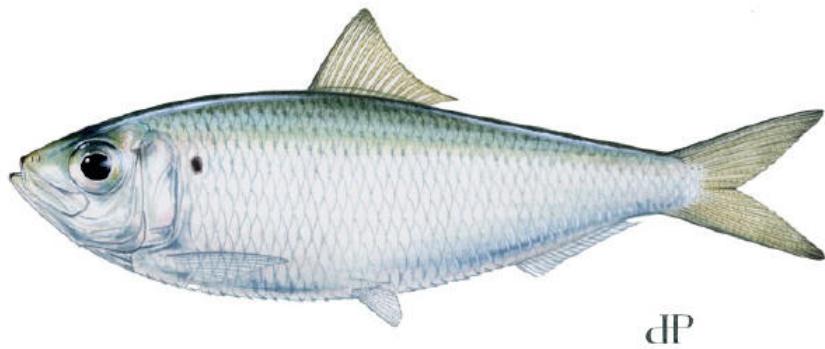


## Herrings: Family Clupeidae

Herrings are highly specialized schooling fishes. They school by the thousands or more and are very important as food fishes for larger species. They have many long and closely set gill rakers for filtering plankton. ID: Very Silvery with darker backs, scales deciduous (easily shed), body strongly compressed, caudal fin deeply forked, single dorsal fin at midbody, no adipose fin, paired fins have axillary process at base, scales on ventral edge of body form sharp edge/keel.



Scaled Sardine *Harengula jaguana*



SCALED SARDINE

*Harengula jaguana*

ID: Herring body shape, silvery sides green back single humeral spot (not always apparent).

Size: to 6in

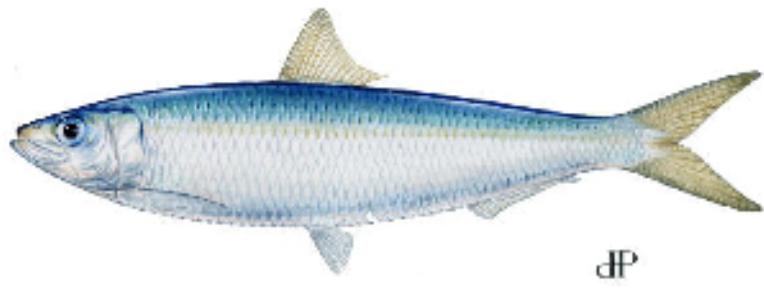
Remarks: This is by far the most common of the clupeidae for this area. As noted above in family description they are an important food fish. They are commonly referred to as white bait or greenbacks.

Threadfin Herring *Opisthonema oglinum*



ID: similar to scaled sardine but with last spine of dorsal fin greatly extended and more deeply curved ventrally. Light striping sometimes apparent a row of spots.  
Size: to 10 in

**Spanish Sardine** *Sardinella aurita*



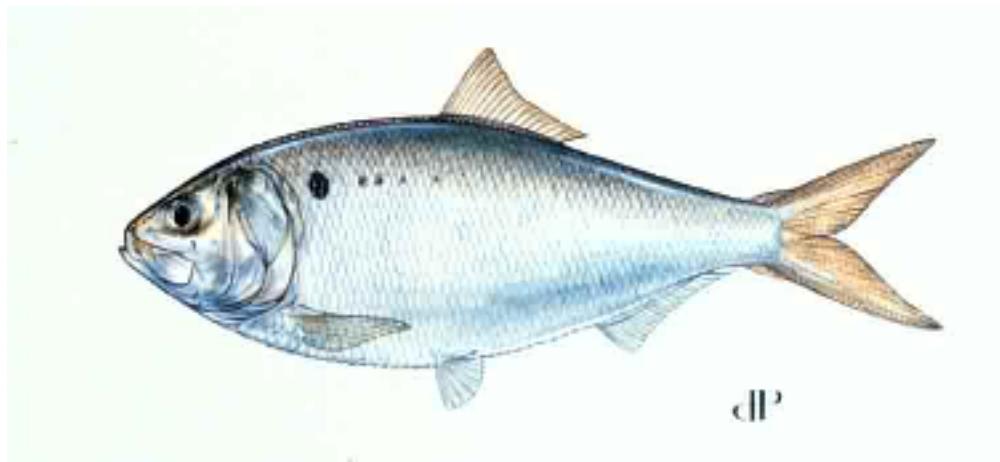
ID: back bluish, body of more elongate shape than most herring. No spots or streaks, last two rays on anal fin extended. Head length almost equal to depth.

Size: to 25cm

SPANISH SARDINE

*Sardinella aurita*

**Gulf Menhaden** *Brevoortia patronus*



ID: Silvery with brassy sides and bluish green back. Yellowish green fins and a black shoulder spot that is followed by a series of black spots.

Remarks: this is the commercially important fish, the “pogy”

Size: to 30 cm, rarely over 25cm

## Anchovies: Family Engraulidae

The anchovies are similar to the herrings in their behavior and, generally, their life style. They are plankton feeding fishes, with deciduous scales and a single dorsal fin located at midbody. They also possess a silvery stripe along each side. The eyes are large and the snout is bulbous. The maxilla in most species extends beyond the eye. The species are difficult to distinguish.

Anchovies are common in tropical coastal waters. They are common as food fish where abundant species grows to large size and labor is cheap. Shallow bays and sounds are common habitats. They are also incredibly fragile and susceptible to injury under handling.

### Bay Anchovy *Anchoa mitchilli*

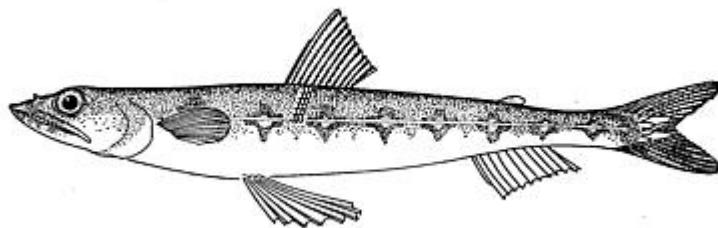
ID: anchovy characteristics (see family description), snout very short, silvery stripe narrow, faint towards head, body deep relative to family



## Lizardfishes: Family Synodontidae

The lizardfishes are small to medium sized bottom dwelling predacious fish. They have an elongate body, a large oblique mouth with many teeth. They have a single dorsal fin with no spines, and a fleshy adipose fin and small cycloid scales. They are commonly caught as "pest" fish by anglers.

### Inshore Lizardfish *Synodus foetens*



ID: 8 diamond shaped markings along side, lizard fish body shape and mouth

Size: to 16 inches

## Sea Catfishes: Family Ariidae

Sea catfishes have four to six fleshy barbels that descend from below the mouth, and deeply forked caudal fin. In addition to these characteristics they also resemble the true catfishes in having naked skin, and a well developed spine in each pectoral fin.

Interestingly in both species, the male incubates the eggs in his mouth and does not eat during this period.

### Hardhead Catfish *Arius felis*



ID: Sides blue or gray, back brown or dark, venter white, barbels relatively short. Very abundant in shallows and bays. Deeply forked caudal tail, naked skin, 4 chin barbels

Remarks: Spines covered in poisonous tissue that inflicts painful wound. Both sea catfish are a good food fish but are considered pests by anglers due to their mucous, spines and diverse food habits. It is also evidenced that these fish use a crude sonar system.

Size: to 2 ft

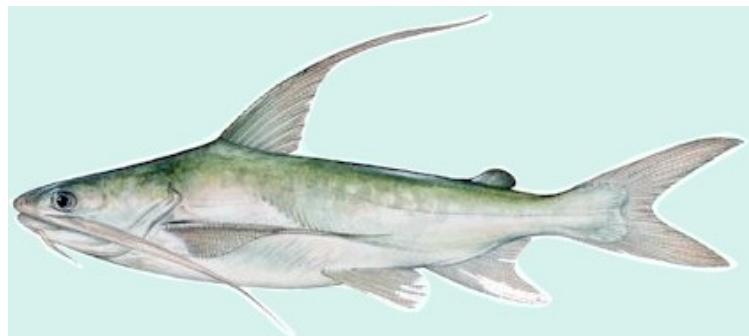


### Gafftop Catfish, Sail Catfish *Bagre marinus*

ID: Only two chin barbels, upper barbels extremely long, ribbon like, often reach anal fin. First rays of pectoral and dorsal fins elongate.

Remarks: Spines covered in poisonous tissue that inflicts painful wound. Both sea catfish are a good food fish but are considered pests by anglers due to their mucous, spines and diverse food habits. It is also evidenced that these fish use a crude sonar system.

Size: to 2 ft



## Toadfishes: Family Batrachoididae

The toadfishes are small to medium sized fishes that live in shallow coastal waters. They have large, distinctly flattened heads and a wide gill opening. They have two dorsal fins, the first is short and spinous consisting of 2 or 3 short stout spines. The anal and second dorsal fins, however, are long and consist of more than 18 rays. The pelvics are jugular in position and small with 1 spine and a few rays. The caudal fin is rounded and generally short. The pectorals are large and fanlike.

The toadfishes are generally belligerent, benthic or hole-dwelling fishes that use their large mouths to capture prey. Interestingly, the toadfishes attach their eggs to hard substrate and are usually guarded by the male.

### Gulf Toadfish *Opsanus beta*



ID: body dark with irregular light blotches or crossbars. Cross bars on pectorals composed of a series of light round spots. Dorsal and anal fins diagonally barred.  
Size: to 30cm

### Leopard Toadfish *Opsanus pardus*



ID: Head and body distinctively yellowish or straw colored with darker brown markings. Fleshy tabs on jaw better developed.  
Pectoral fin blotching irregular.  
Remarks: The leopard toadfish is similar to the gulf (same genus) and replaces it gradually as depth increases in the gulf.

Size: to 30 cm

## Cods: Family Gadidae

The cods are extremely important food fishes. They have no fin spines and the pelvic fins are very far forward. The lateral line is prominent. As they are not very important in this region the family description here is short. The hakes, however, are important in this region. They are often separated into their own family "Phycidae"

### Southern Hake *Urophycis floridana*

ID: Reddish brown above, silvery below with dark spots around eye. Series of distinctive black spots above and behind eye and two spots on opercle. Lateral line alternately black and white. Pelvic fin rays long.

Remarks: although all of the cods and hakes are generally found far offshore, the young of the southern hake often inhabit shallow bays during cold months.

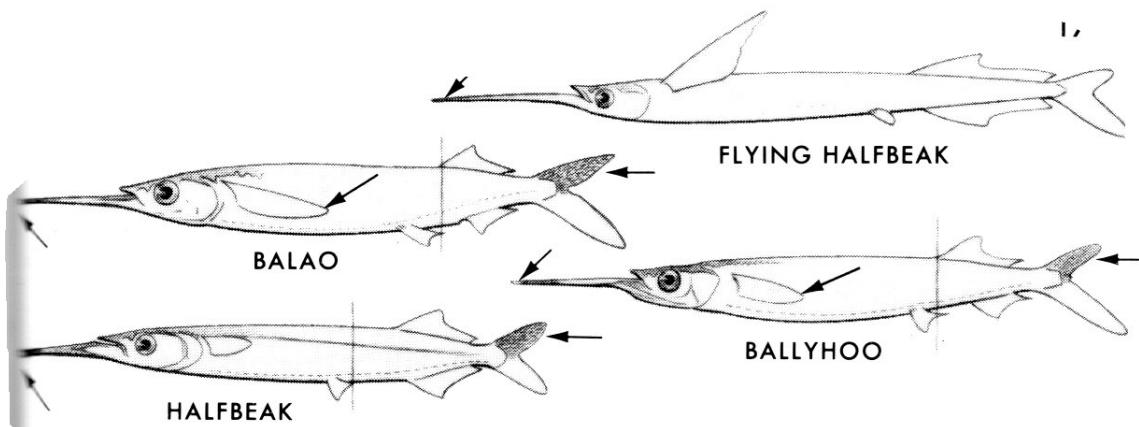
Size: to 35 cm



## Flyingfishes: Family Exocoetidae (Halfbeaks)

The infamous flying fish and the odd halfbeaks reside within the same group. The flying fishes exit the water and using their large pectorals glide above the water. The halfbeaks do not glide but exhibit similar behavior in their surface skipping. The distinguishing characteristic of the halfbeaks is the elongate lower jaw. There are, however, too many intermediates, halfbeaks with shorter jaws or flyingfish with short pectorals, between the two groups to warrant separation into different families.

### American Halfbeak *Hyporhamphus unifasciatus* or *Hyporhamphus meeki*



ID: compressed, silvery with lower jaw extended into long flattened blade. Pectorals and pelvics small, only 1 dorsal fin and 1 anal fin, both placed far back. Tip of lower jaw and upper lobe of caudal fin red-orange.

Remarks: used to be *h. unifasciatus* (Halfbeak) now American Halfbeak

Size: to 27cm

## Needlefishes: Family Belonidae

The needlefishes are very elongate, surface dwelling fishes common in shallow temperate and tropical seas. Both jaws are greatly elongated to form a long beak. One dorsal and one anal fin both placed far back. Pelvic fins are abdominal and the lateral line runs on the lower portion of the body.



### Atlantic Needlefish: *Strongylura marina*

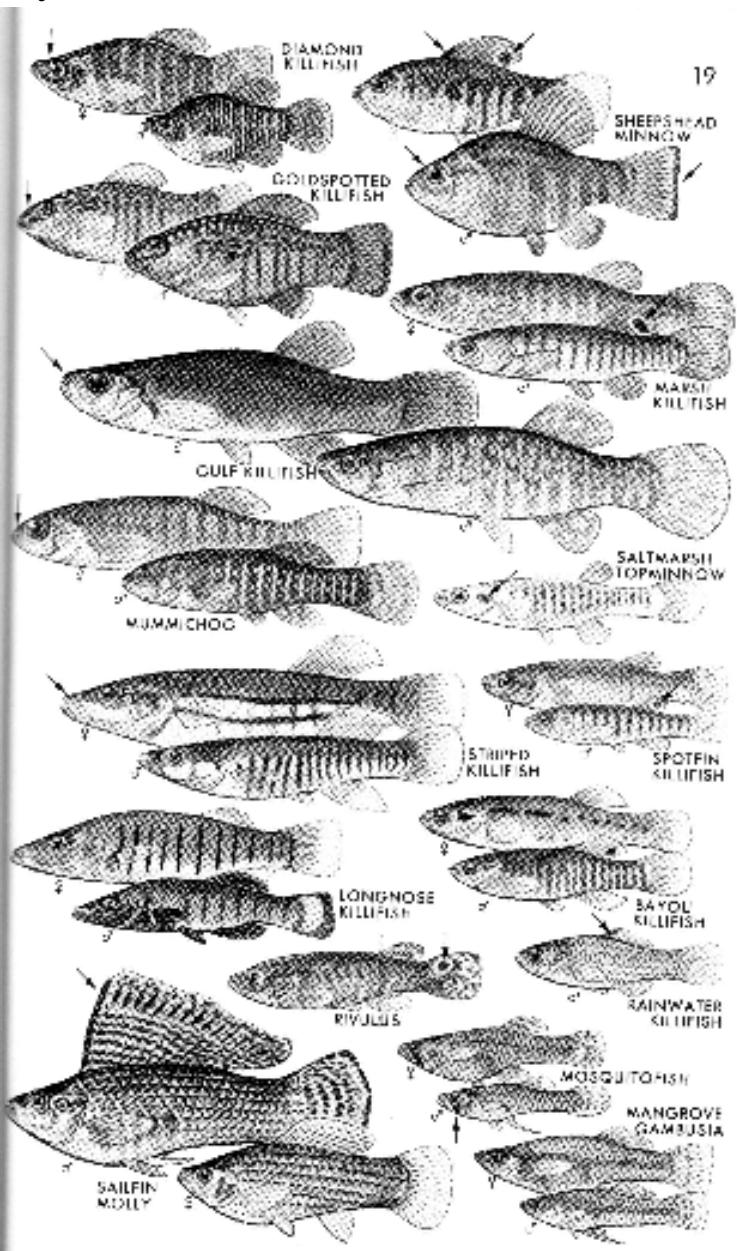
ID: Caudal fin bluish, needlefish body type.

Remarks: only right gonad developed.

Size: to 61 cm

## Killifishes: Family Fundulidae

The killifishes were until very recently in the cyprinodontid family. The killifishes are shore fishes that seldom even penetrate into the shallows of bays. They all are tolerant of extremely wide range of salinities. In fact, most coastal fresh water contains killifish. They are of usually drab color except males during mating season, who display brilliant iridescent blues. Killifishes and the related groups, the cyprinodontids and the saltwater livebearers, are very important as experimental, bait and aquarium fishes due to their extreme tolerance of salinity. Most killifish and cyprinodontids are sold as bait under the name "chubs" or "mudminnows."



\*Plate includes related groups

### **Longnose Killifish *Fundulus similis***



ID: head long and pointed, both sexes have many black bars along side, females can possess two stripes  
Remarks: one of the largest and most common killis  
Size: to 15 cm

### **Gulf Killifish *Fundulus grandis***



ID: Head blunt. Caudal peduncle relatively deep. Dark above yellowish below with many pale spots, mottling and inconspicuous bars. Breeding male pattern: orange-yellow below with black cheeks  
Size: to 18 cm

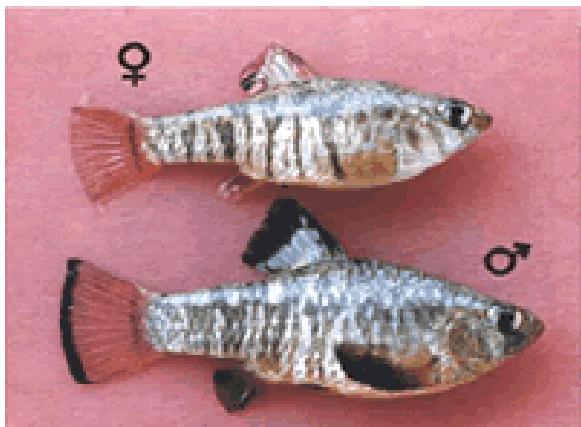
### **Rainwater Killifish *Lucania parva***



ID: body and head straw colored, each scale darkly outlined. Male: dark spot on dorsal fin, orangish fins.  
Size: to 4 cm

## Pupfishes: Family Cyprinodontidae

The pup fishes are closely related to killifish. They share all of the above mentioned traits.



### Sheepshead Minnow *Cyprinodon variegatus*

ID: Upper profile straight or slightly concave. Irregular dark bands extend most of side. Dark spot at base of dorsal fin. Male: caudal fin with dark edge, breeding males have a brilliant blue nape, orange cheeks and underside and lack the banding. Female: ocellus on rear of dorsal. Remarks: often the only fish found in some areas due to its ability to survive in the most extreme of environments.

Tolerates massive heat (dissolved oxygen) and salinity ranges. In fact the sheepshead minnow possesses the greatest salinity range of all known fish.

### Goldspot Killifish *Floridichthys carpio*



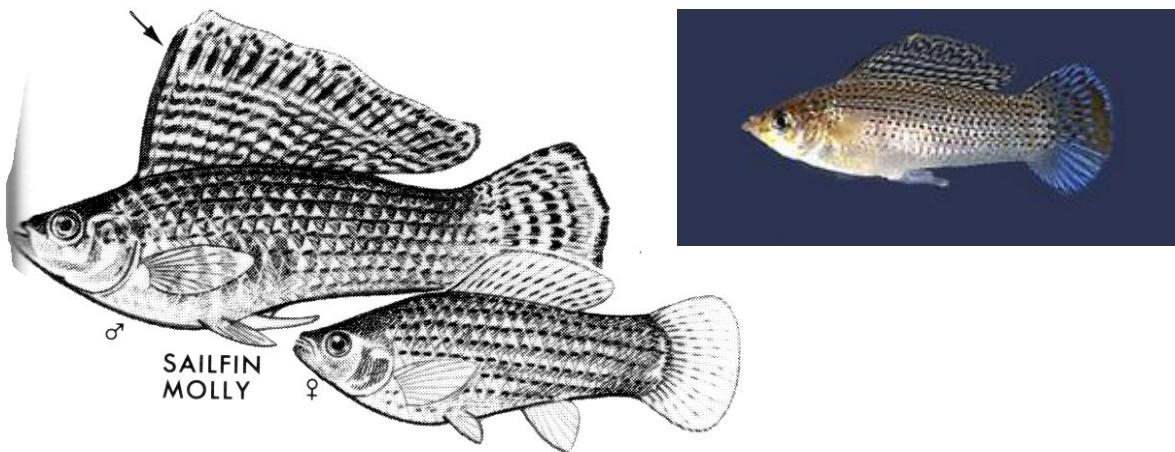
ID: Upper profile convex. Bands on side irregular and confined to lower half. No dark spot on 1<sup>st</sup> ray of dorsal. Breeding male: orange gold spots on cheeks and body. Size: to 7 cm

## Livebearers: Family Poeciliidae

The livebearers are a mostly freshwater family that has two species that commonly enter salt water in the area. These fish bear live young. The male is distinguishable by its smaller size and an elongated anal fin used as an intromittent organ for sperm transfer.

The common guppy is part of this family.

### Sailfin Molly *Poecilia latipinna*



### Mosquitofish *Gambusia affinis*



ID: small fish with diamond pattern (similar to rainwater killifish) but with rows of dark spots on body and caudal fin, dark bar under eye, black peritoneum sometimes visible through belly  
Size: to 4 cm

## Silversides: Family Atherinidae

The silversides are small schooling fishes. They possess a prominent silver stripe along the side, a short spiny 1st dorsal fin. The pectoral fins are set high on the body, pelvics thoracic. Species distinction is difficult, so habitat and distribution is most important.

Tidewater Silverside *Menidia peninsulae*



ID: anal fin straight edged, 3 dorsal fins, silverside body shape

Size: to 15 cm

Remarks: Easily injured fish, handle carefully, flesh over head is transparent allowing the brain to be visible.

## Pipefishes and Seahorses: Syngnathidae

The pipefishes and seahorses are extremely important aquarium fishes because of their popularization in various media. The body is divided into two regions about the anus. One group, the seahorses, swim erect and possess a coiled, caudal finless, prehensile tail. The pipefishes are straight bodied and have a caudal fin. The skeleton of syngnathids is highly modified with rings along the body forming a protective armor plating. The dorsal fin is small and located at midbody. The snout is modified into a tube, with a trap door mouth that functions similarly to a slurp gun. Prey is sucked down the tube in a fast suction and the mouth is closed. They feed on zooplankton, larval fishes and tiny crustaceans. Males have a brood pouch in which the young are reared.



Lined Seahorse *Hippocampus erectus*

ID: Color extremely variable. Light lines sometimes visible, bony or filamentous protuberances may appear on body as camouflage.

Size: to 17 cm



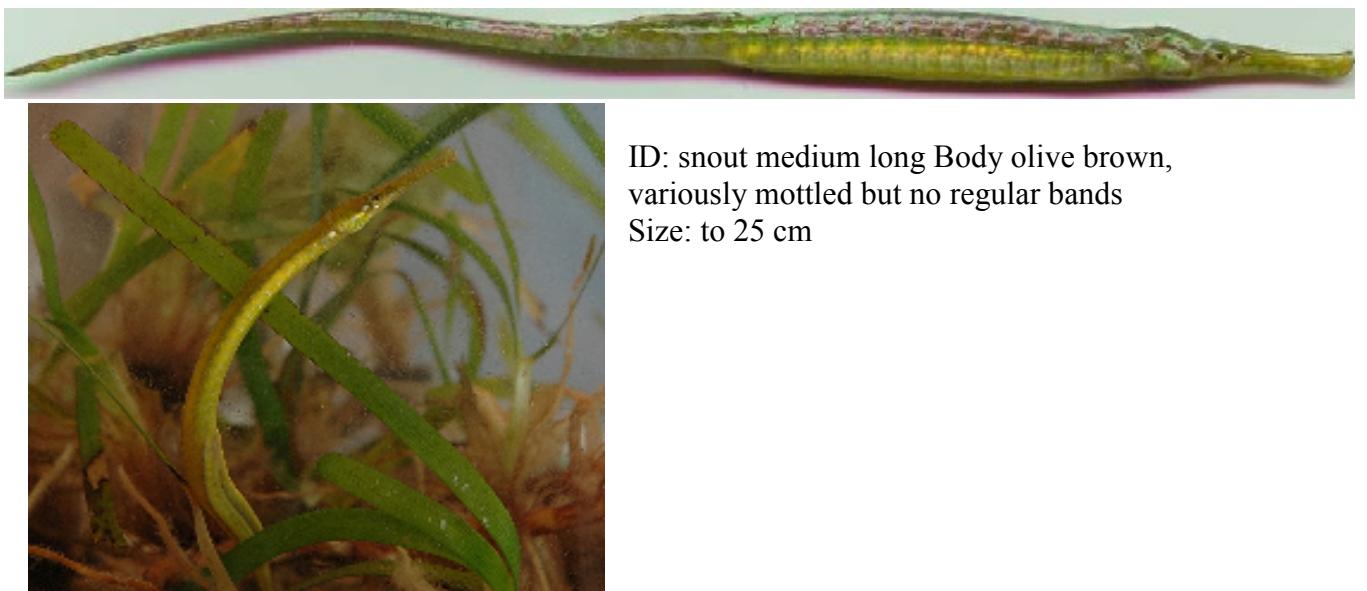
**Dwarf seahorse** *Hippocampus zosterae*  
ID: body usually tan, dark submarginal stripe

**Gulf Pipefish** *Syngnathus scovelli*



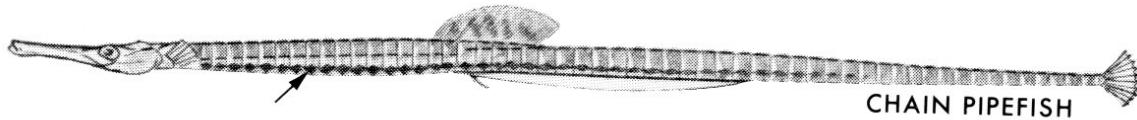
ID: snout short Female: trunk deep, belly v shaped, silvery bar on each bony ring Male: more elongate flat bellied, more uniformly colored  
Size: to 8cm

**Dusky Pipefish** *Syngnathus floridae*



ID: snout medium long Body olive brown, variously mottled but no regular bands  
Size: to 25 cm

### Chain Pipefish *Syngnathus louisianae*



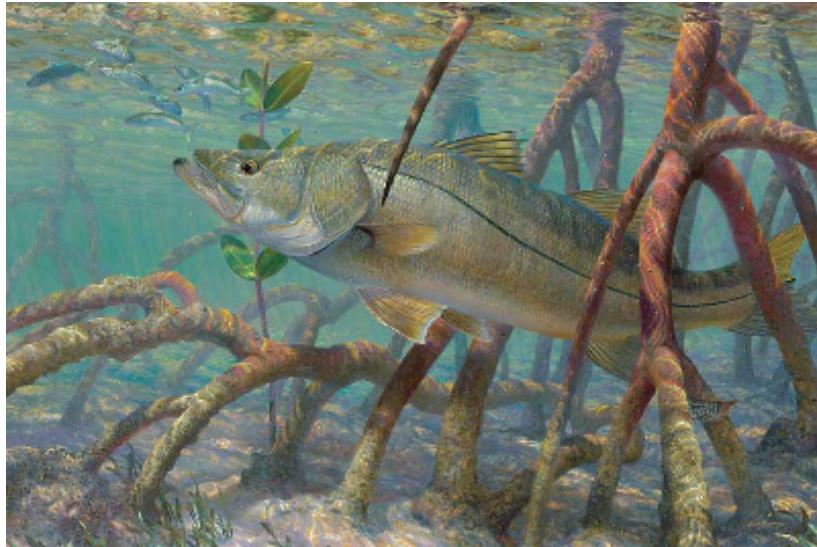
ID: snout long, lower part of body has series of chainlike dark, diamonds or rings

### Snooks: Family Centropomidae

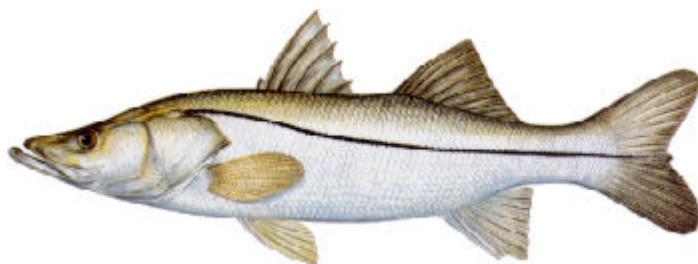
Snook are possibly the most coveted gamefish in Florida and the most coveted inshore gamefish in the atlantic as well. They have a long, distinct, black lateral line that extends to the end of the caudal fin. Sides are silvery, fins are sometimes yellowish. A

distinguishing feature is the extended flat lower jaw.

Pelvic fins are thoracic each with one spine and 5 soft rays. There is a well developed spinous dorsal fin (8 spines) and a near separation from the second dorsal fin with 1 spine and 8 rays. Although there are strict regulations on taking fish, they are an excellent food fish. There are 4 species: snook, swordspine snook, fat snook and tarpon snook.



### Snook *Centropomus undecimalis*



strictly regulated due to sensitivity, reproductive lifestyle and large size, commercial sale prohibited

Size: to 1.4 m

ID: body slender, lateral line boldly outlined in black, sloping forehead, high divided dorsal fin, large mouth, snook underslung jaw

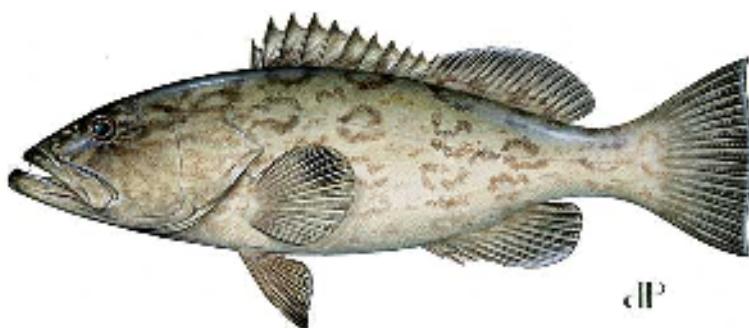
Remarks: extremely popular gamefish, excellent food fish, very successful ambush predator,

## Sea Basses: Family Serranidae

The sea basses are a very wide group of fishes that include the small sea basses, dwarf sea basses, streamer basses and the groupers. The fish range from 2 cm plankton feeders to 1000lb predators. Although most of the sea basses occur in our area only the most common will be described: two of the groupers and two of the dwarf sea basses.

### Groupers:

#### Gag Grouper *Mycteroperca microlepis*



ID: pale to dark gray sometimes brown or olive. Many dark worm, or kiss shaped markings, grouped in blotches. Dorsal, anal and caudal fins darkly outlined.  
Remarks: this is the most commonly eaten grouper in our area, and interestingly one of the smaller ones  
Size: to 120 cm

Remarks: like all groupers, protandric hermaphrodites: begin life as females and become males, long lived

#### Black Sea Bass *Centropristes striata*

ID: short white tabs on dorsal fin.

Juvenile with dark stripe.

Size: to 28 cm



### Dwarf Sea Basses

#### Belted Sandfish *Serranus subligarius*



ID: bradly barred, abruptly white “belt” dark spots on all fin rays except pelvics. Large blotch at base of soft dorsal fin

Size: to 10 cm

Remarks: instantaneously hermaphroditic

**Dwarf Sand Perch** *Diplectrum bivittatum*



ID: body buff, paler below, triangular “ear” mark on opercle. Dark stripes intersected by short irregular bars. Cheek orangish with bluish lines. Preopercle with a single dominant cluster of radiating spines. Young: two broad stripes on side that end in dark blue edged spot

Size: to 25cm

Remarks: incredibly frequent on some flats but rarely caught by nets

**Cobia: Family Rachycentridae**

The Cobia is the only species in the family. It is a prized game and food fish. They are found from coastal areas to open ocean and commonly travel in small schools or follow large rays. They are closely related to the remoras and jacks.



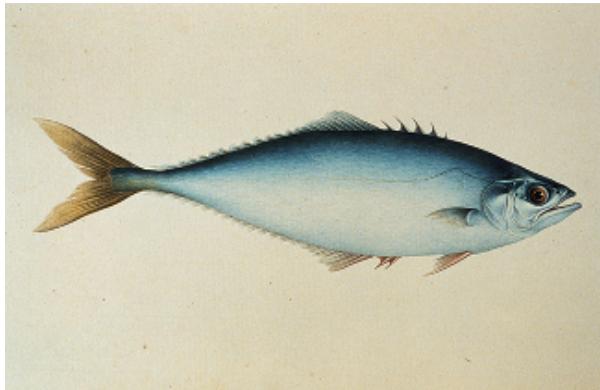
**Cobia** *Rachycentron canadum*

ID: Almost entirely dark brown with a dark stripe on the side. Underparts are paler and the belly is white. The caudal fin is forked and the lower jaw protrudes, the head is flattened above and the spinous dorsal fin is low with 8 spines.

Size: to 1.8 m

## Jacks: Family Carangidae

Jacks are large, fast swimming, predaceous fish that commonly school. The Pompanos and Permits are prized food fishes and many of the other jacks are gamefish. They all have silvery sides, a deeply forked caudal fin, a slender caudal peduncle, and a deeply notched or separated dorsal fin.



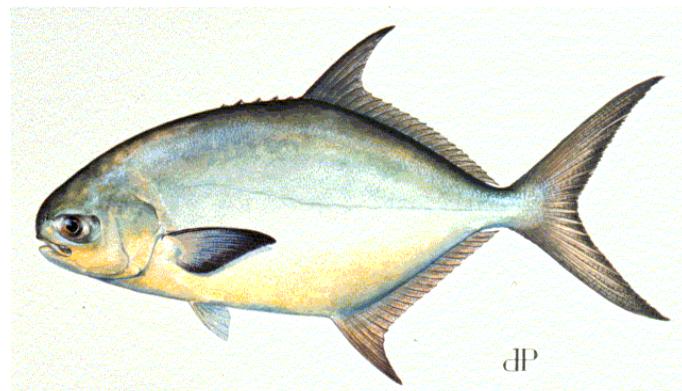
### Florida Pompano *Trachinotus carolinus*

ID: sides silvery body deep, deeply notched or separated dorsal fin, a deeply forked caudal fin, narrow caudal peduncle head profile rounded, 1<sup>st</sup> dorsal fin very low, dark back, no fleshy keel on peduncle,

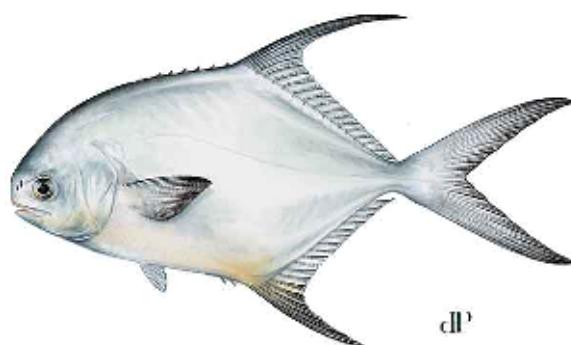
Remarks: most popular jack in terms of food fish and gamefish

Size: to 64 cm

**Leatherjacket** *Oligoplites saurus*  
ID: silvery, compressed body, slender caudal peduncle dorsal and anal finlets fins yellow lateral line almost straight, deeply notched or separated dorsal fin, a deeply forked caudal fin,  
Remarks: poisonous spines on first dorsal fin  
Size: to 25 cm

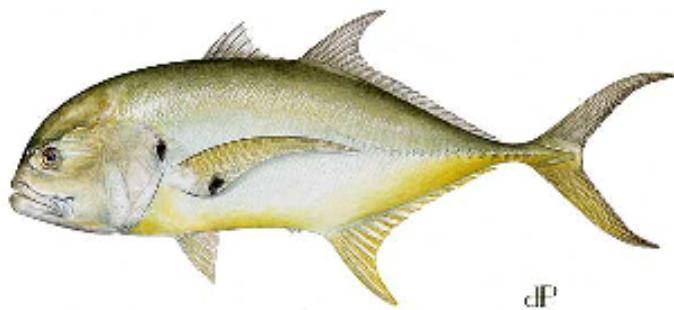


### Permit *Traheinotus falcatus*



ID: very similar to above but body deeper. Many have a large dark spot behind pectoral fin  
Remarks: another popular game and food fish  
Size: to 114 cm

### **Jack Crevalle** *Caranx hippos*

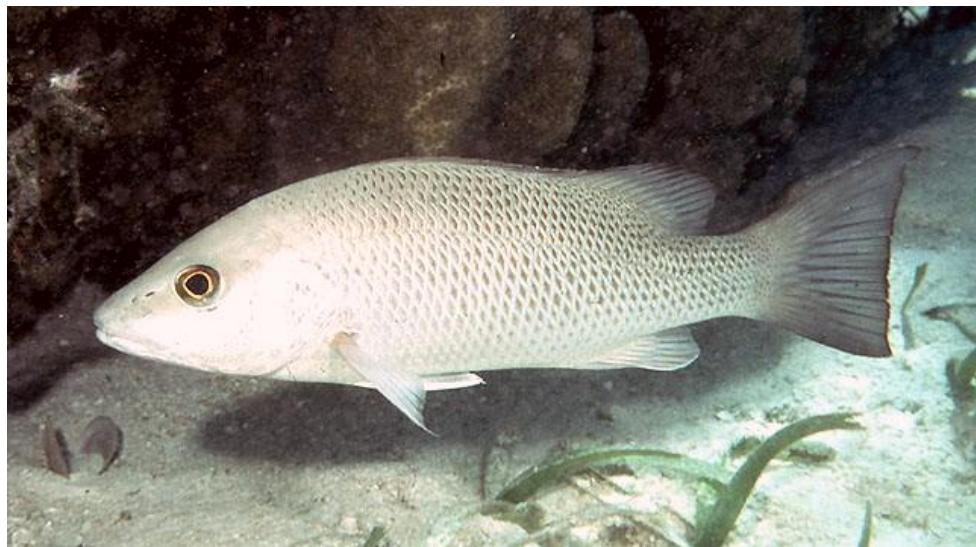


ID: silvery sides, deeply notched or separated dorsal fin, a deeply forked caudal fin, Body deep Bony scutes on narrow caudal peduncle. Head profile steep. Vertically elongate spot at edge of opercle and broad dark mark on pectoral fin rays. Much of thoracic area unscaled

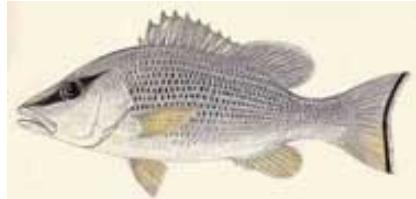
Remarks: aggressive predator, large schools  
Size: to 1.5 m

### **Snappers: Family Lutjanidae**

Snapper are a medium to large sized group of predaceous fishes. They are characterized by the trait of the maxilla sliding under the suborbital rim and the presence of large canine-like teeth. They are all popular as sport and food fishes.



### **Mangrove snapper, Gray Snapper** *Lutjanus griseus*



ID: pale to reddish coppery depending on habitat and stress, broad dark band from snout over eye to beginning of dorsal fin, variously mottled, young display blue striping under eye.

Size: to 65 cm  
Remarks: excellent food fish, picture above

**Lane Snapper** *Lutjanus synagris*



ID: Large round dark spot on side, series of parallel yellow and pink stripes, dorsal and caudal fin reddish, edge of caudal fin dark, all other fins yellowish.  
Remarks: often confused with pinfish during rapid net searching, excellent food fish  
Size: to 36 cm



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**Mojarras: Family Gerreidae**

Mojarras are small schooling coastal fishes that possess extremely protrusible mouths, specialized for picking invertebrates off the bottom. Scales are often deciduous.



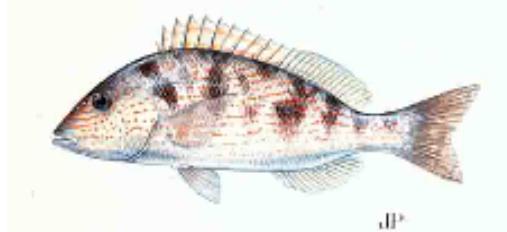
**Mottled Mojarra** *Eucinostomus gula*

ID: irregular brown bands above lateral lines somewhat apparent. Silvery body, protrusible mouth  
Size: to 23 cm

## Grunts: Family Haemulidae

The grunts are medium sized perch-like fishes that inhabit coastal waters. Young most always have stripe along side that ends in spot. They use pharyngeal teeth to produce grunting noise.

### Pigfish *Orthopristis chrysoptera*



ID: Gray often with blue undertones. Many bronze or yellow spots or bars organized into stripes along body. Mouth small and inferior  
Size: to 38 cm

## Porgies: Family Sparidae

The porgies are extremely important fishes in terms of populations and food for larger organisms. The front teeth are usually incisor like while the rear teeth are molar like in addition to the pharyngeal “mill” used to crush harder prey. They have deep, compressed bodies with very short and deep heads. The eyes are usually large and the mouth small.

They are generally silvery but most have a secondary blotched pattern that can be engaged.

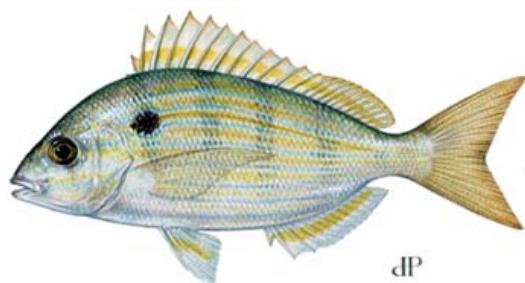


**Spottail Pinfish** *Diplodus holbrookii*  
ID: Silvery overall with dark black saddle on caudal peduncle, body relatively deep  
Size: to 46 cm

### Pinfish *Lagodon rhomboids*

ID: bluish silver with many narrow yellowish stripes, dark spot on shoulder centered on lateral line, 4 darker crossbars present, porgy body plan  
Size: to 35 cm

Remarks: this is a keystone species



### **Sheepshead** *Archosargus probatocephalus*



ID: Sides silvery or yellowish with 5-6 broad slightly diagonal bars, porgy shaped

Size: to 91 cm

Remarks: an extremely important predator, very common fish, feeds on hard prey (barnacles, crustaceans) with large molar like teeth



### **Grass Porgy** *Calamus arcuitfrons*



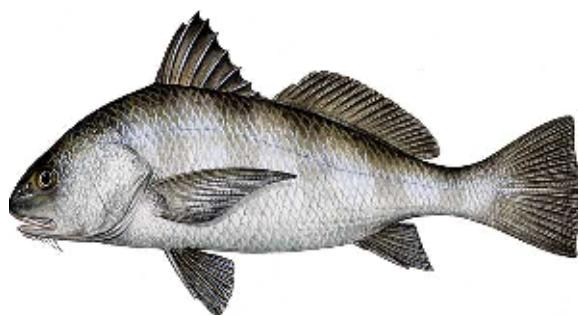
ID: pale tan or silvery, dark bar across nape to corner of mouth, dark blotches on body in about 5 vertical and horizontal series with blotch nearest lateral line prominent

Size: to 25 cm

## **Drums: Family Sciaenidae**

Drums are small to medium sized coastal fishes that produce sound by “drumming” on their swim bladder. They have a low set mouth, deep shoulder regions (in most), lateral lines that continue to end of tail, an anal fin with two spines, and a maxilla that slides beneath suborbital rim. Many are gamefish and food fish.

### **Black Drum** *Pogonias cromis*

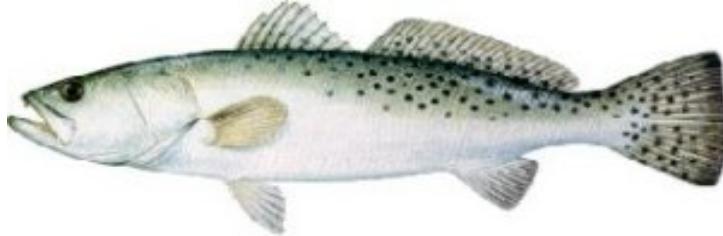


ID: Body deep, dark gray, 4-5 broad dark bars, all fins black or dark, long chin barbels

Size: to 1.7 m

Remarks: gamefish, flesh sometimes infected with parasitic worms

**Speckled Seatrout** *Cynoscion nebulosus*



ID: lower jaw protrudes, mouth large with enlarged canine teeth, body elongate, bluish gray above with light countershading, many black spots on upper side, 2<sup>nd</sup> dorsal fin and caudal fin

Size: to 91 cm

Remarks: an extremely important gamefish, excellent foodfish, strictly protected, commercial sale prohibited

**Redfish** *Sciaenops ocellatus*

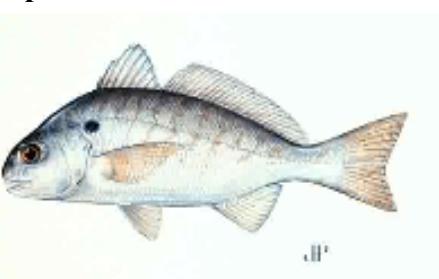


ID: mouth large and inferior, body elongate, bronze colored, darker above, scales line up to form obscure stripes, conspicuous black spot or spots near or on caudal peduncle, large shoulders

Remarks: extremely important gamefish, excellent foodfish, strictly protected, commercial sale prohibited

Size: to 1.3 m

**Spot** *Leiostomus xanthurus*



ID: similar in body shape to red drum but gray to silvery with forked caudal fin and 12-15 narrow dark bars on back, brownish spot on shoulder

Size: to 36 cm

## Wrasses: Family Labridae

Most wrasses are small tropical fish that swim with their pectoral fins imparting a jerky motion. They have protruding tusk like teeth.



### Slippery Dick *Halichoeres bivittatus*

ID: body with two dark stripes, a small well defined spot at base of last dorsal fin ray. Pale ringed, dark ocellus on opercle, male with bright russets, greenish yellow tints, bright colors  
Remarks: buries itself in sand on side

Size: to 20 cm

## Mullets: Family Mugilidae

The body of mullets is rounded in front and compressed towards rear. The mouth is small, terminal, triangular and the pelvic fins are located on belly far back from pectorals.

Mullets feed on detritus on the bottom, organisms growing on plants, or the film on water. They travel in large schools. Mullets are important as a commercial fishery. They are commonly caught and sold smoked, whole or their roes are sold.

### White Mullet *Mugil curema*



and anal fin Bluish black axillary blotch at pectoral fin base, black at edge of caudal fin when in water

Size: to 91 cm

ID: Body rounded in front and compressed towards rear, mouth small terminal triangular, pelvic fins located on belly far back from pectorals. No distinct stripes, scales on soft dorsal



### Striped Mullet *Mugil cephalus*

ID: dark above silvery on sides, each scale has a dark spot at base, series of these form stripes.  
Dorsal and anal fins unscaled

Size: to 50 cm

## Parrotfishes: Family Scaridae

Parrotfishes possess a parrot-like beak. The spinous and soft dorsal fin is continuous with no notches. Swim with pectorals.

### Bucktooth Parrotfish *Sparisoma radians*



ID: body variably mottled, usually red turquoise or green, base of pectoral fin black, turquoise stripe from eye to corner of mouth  
Size: to 20 cm

## Blennies (combtooth): Family Blenniidae

The combtooth blennies are small territorial fishes. Many are adorned with cirri on head.

### Seaweed Blenny *Parablennius marmoreus*



ID: Generelly tan with scattered dark brown spots, top of head bronzish, broad dusky stripe down side, disappears as it approaches rear of body  
Size: to 85mm



### Feather Blenny *Hypsoblennius hentzi*

ID: cirrus above eyes with many short side branches, lip narrowly attached to snout, lower lip narrow, yellow to brown above, lighter below, with abundant brown spots  
Size: to 10cm  
Remarks: very common on grassflats

## Gobies: Family Gobiidae

The gobies are perhaps the largest family of fishes with over two thousand members. The smallest vertebrate is, in fact, a goby. Most gobies fulfill a very specific niche and are therefore uniquely colored and many form symbiotic relationships with other organisms.



### Code Goby *Gobiosoma robustum*

ID: unscaled, many irregular dark brown bands, with white spots that cause a chain like appearance, back dots and dashes along midside  
Size: to 5 cm

## Mackerels: Family Scombridae

The mackerels are fast swimming, oceanic fishes. They have a streamlined body, stiff fins and a rigid caudal peduncle that allows them to achieve some of the highest speeds in the sea. Some mackerels are such consistently fast swimmers that they rely on ram ventilation of their gills. This group includes the tunas which even have the ability to raise their body temperature 10 degrees celcius so they can maintain such fast speed. Most travel in large schools, many are pelagic migrators. They possess finlets after the dorsal and anal fins. They have a lunate caudal fin. Almost all are excellent food and gamefish

### Spanish Mackerel *Scomberomorus maculatus*

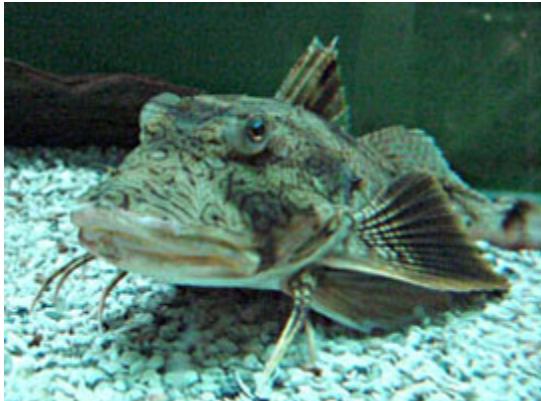
ID: mackerel shaped, many large dark brown and brassy spots, lateral line slopes evenly downward with no sudden drop (King Mackerel).

Remarks: a popular game and food fish, pelagic migratory

Size: to 83 cm

## Searobins: Family Triglidae

Searobins are peculiarly armored fishes with large pectoral fins that can be spread out like wings. The lower rays of the pectorals are spread out with no webbing. These feelers have taste receptors and are commonly used to walk.



### Bighead Searobin *Prionotus tribulus*

ID: searobin, head extremely large for body, pectorals large with many dark bands

Size: to 36 cm



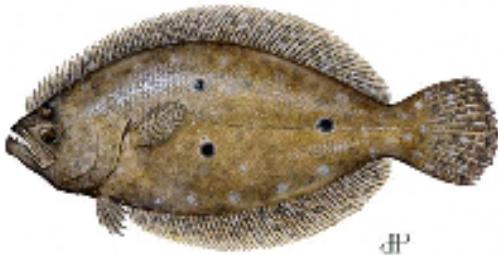
## Flounders: Order Pleuronectiformes

Flounders are strongly compressed fishes with both eyes and most coloration on same side of body. The order is divided into four families, two with eyes on the right side (righteye flounders, soles) and two with eyes on the left (left eye flounders, tonguefishes).

Many flounders are food fishes. Many flounders possess the ability to rapidly change their coloration.

Lefteye Flounders: Bothidae

**Gulf Flounder** *Paralichthys albigutta*



ID: three dark centered ocelli: two on top of one another just behind front curve of lateral line, and the third on lateral line towards the rear.  
Size: to 38 cm

Soles: Soleidae

**Lined Sole** *Achirus lineatus*



ID: pectoral fins present, many narrow bars  
Size: to 10 cm



**Hogchoker** *Trinectes maculatus*

ID: pectoral fin absent, cirri scattered, color variable, usually dark brown with darker bars  
Size: to 20 cm  
Remarks: as common in fresh water

## Filefish and Triggerfish: Balistidae

Filefishes and triggerfishes possess a stout independent dorsal spine. What separates the two groups is the locking device in the triggerfish. They share the family name leatherjacket. They are extremely maneuverable, using their dorsal and anal fins in undulating waves. Most are known to be very intelligent fish as well. They have a rough skin earning the name leatherjacket and filefish.

**Planehead Filefish** *Monacanthus setifer*



ID: variously colored, upper profile slightly concave or straight, dorsal spine strongly barred, many markings:bars, blotches, mottling  
Size: to 25 cm  
Remarks: this is the most common inshore filefish



### Fringed Filefish *Monacanthus ciliatus*

ID: Dewlap extends very far, caudal fin with two dark bars, broad irregular blackish stripes. Upper profile of head concave

Size: to 20 cm

## Puffers: Family Tetraodontidae

Puffers are so named for their ability to swallow large amounts of water or air becoming large to discourage predation. The mouth is small and terminal with many small teeth fused to create powerful crushing plates and incisors. They possess a powerful neurotoxin.

### Southern Puffer *Sphoeroides nephelus*



ID: dark olive gray above, white below, often with pale tan rings or semicircles, variously mottled

Size: to 30 cm

### Bandtail Puffer *Sphoeroides spengleri*

ID: caudal fin with two dark bands, one across base the other over edge, variably colored row of large brown spots on lower part of body

Size: to 18 cm



## Spiny Puffers: Family Diodontidae

These puffers have erectile (porcupinefishes) or rigid (burrfishes) spines and possess the ability to inflate themselves by swallowing water or air. The teeth are fused into powerful beaks.

### Striped Burrfish *chilomycterus schoepfi*



ID: burrfish (erect spines) body yellowish brown above with dark brown stripes, large dark patches  
Size: to 25 cm

### Balloonfish *Diodon holocanthus*



ID: long erectile spines, spines are forehead larger than rest, many black spts and several large brown blotches  
Size: to 50 cm

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