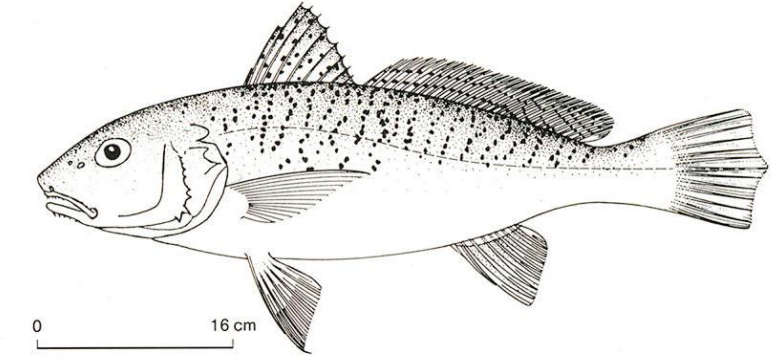


Atlantic croaker

Micropogonias undulatus

Gorrubata



Description

Range: The Atlantic croaker, a bony fish of the family Sciaenidae, ranges in the western Atlantic from the coast of Cape Cod, Massachusetts to Campeche Bank in the Gulf of Mexico. It is considered the most common estuarine species of this family in the northern Gulf.

Habitat: A demersal fish, the Atlantic croaker is usually found over mud and sandy/mud bottoms in coastal waters to about 120 meters.

Feeding and Behavior: The trophic mode of this species changes with age: larvae eat zooplankton; young juveniles progress to micro-benthos, then detritus, and eventually become opportunistic carnivores preying on organisms such as crustaceans, molluscs, and fish. Atlantic croaker form spawning aggregations that become more strongly defined in the summer and fall. The species also makes a "drumming" sound.

Reproduction: In the Gulf, the Atlantic croaker spawns near passes and channel entrances to estuaries, in depths of up to 20 meters. The season runs from September through March with a peak in October. Nurseries are situated near fresh or brackish water bayous or rivers, and in estuaries. Older juveniles move offshore into the Gulf and join the stock of older fish.

Movement: In addition to life cycle movements, there are inshore-offshore movements correlated with seasonal water temperature fluctuations.

Fisheries: The Atlantic croaker is the basis of a major commercial fishery operating throughout the northern waters of the Gulf. Major harvesting areas are located between Mobile Bay, Alabama and Lake Calcasieu, Louisiana, with less important fishing grounds throughout the adult range in the northern Gulf. This species is also fished recreationally throughout its range. Large bull croakers are especially sought around oil rigs off Louisiana, west of the Mississippi delta.

References: Austin, C.B., et al., eds., 1978; Guthertz, E.J., 1977; Overstreet, R.M., and R.W. Heard, 1978a; US DOI, FWS, Office of Biological Services, 1978; White, M.L., and M.E. Chittenden, Jr., 1977.