

MISSISSIPPI DEPARTMENT OF MARINE RESOURCES

ENHANCE • PROTECT • CONSERVE

MISSISSIPPI
SALTWATER FISH
IDENTIFICATION GUIDE



SHARE YOUR MISSISSIPPI SALTWATER CATCH

@MississippiDMR

MISSISSIPPI SALTWATER FISHING

From the brackish inshore to deep offshore waters, the Gulf of Mexico is home to a variety of saltwater fish species. This guide features over 30 of the most common fish on the Mississippi Gulf Coast and is designed to help anglers easily identify their catch. The provided illustrations are accompanied with supporting information to allow an accurate comparison between similar species.

MDMR's mission is to enhance, protect and conserve Mississippi's marine resources. Help our conservation mission by familiarizing yourself with current fishing regulations, commonly caught species in your area and learning how to properly handle your fish.

DMR.MS.GOV

TABLE OF CONTENTS

BLUEFISH
01 Bluefish

COBIA
02 Cobia

CUTLASSFISH
03 Atlantic Cutlassfish

DOLPHINFISH
04 Dolphin (Mahi Mahi)

DRUMS
05 Atlantic Croaker
06 Black Drum
07 Red Drum
08 Southern Kingfish (Ground Mullet)
09 Spot
10 Spotted Seatrout (Speckled Trout)
11 Sand Seatrout (White Trout)

JACKS
12 Blue Runner (Hardtail)
13 Florida Pompano
14 Greater Amberjack
15 Jack Crevalle

MACKERELS AND TUNAS
16 King Mackerel
17 Spanish Mackerel
18 Little Tunny (Bonita)
19 Wahoo

MULLETS
20 Striped Mullet
21 White Mullet

PORGIES
22 Pinfish
23 Sheepshead

FLOUNDER
24 Southern Flounder

GROUPERS
25 Black Grouper
26 Gag

SEA CATFISHES
27 Gafftopsail Catfish
28 Hardhead Catfish

SNAPPERS
29 Mangrove (Gray Snapper)
30 Red Snapper

SPADEFISH
31 Atlantic Spadefish

TARPON
32 Tarpon

LADYFISH
33 Ladyfish

TRIGGERFISH
34 Gray Triggerfish

TRIPLETAIL
35 Tripletail

STINGRAY
36 Atlantic Stingray

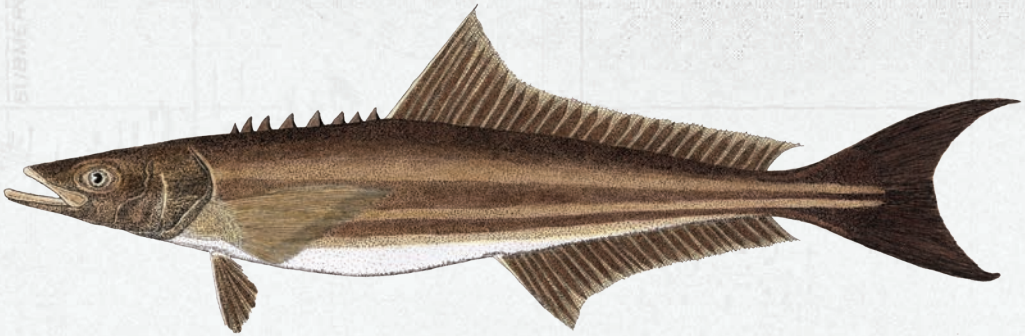
ADVISORY COMMISSION ON MARINE RESOURCES
37 Commission

BLUEFISH *Pomotomus saltatrix*



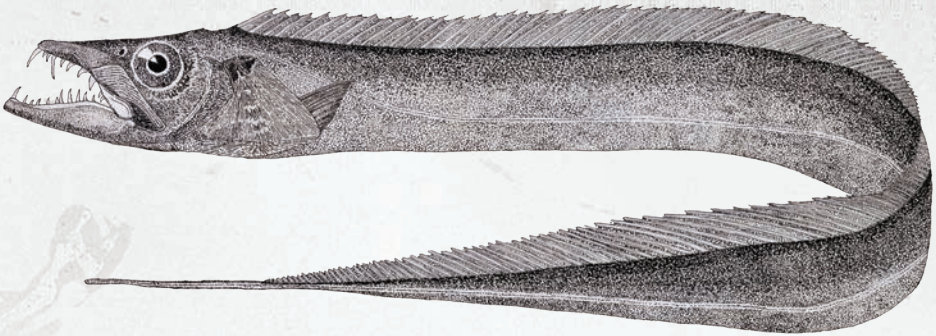
APPEARANCE: Greenish-blue top fades to silver underside. Pronounced teeth.	
HABITAT: Bays, sound and offshore waters	**AVERAGE SIZE:** 3 lbs.
PEAK SEASON: Summer	

COBIA *Rachycentron canadum*



APPEARANCE: Dark brown top fades to white underside. Dark lateral stripe from eye to tail. Long, slender body. Flat head with lower jaw projecting past upper jaw.	
HABITAT: Coastal bays, sandbars and offshore structures	**AVERAGE SIZE:** 20 lbs.
PEAK SEASON: Spring - Fall	**COMMON NAMES:** Lemonfish, Ling

ATLANTIC CUTLASSFISH *Trichiurus lepturus*



APPEARANCE: Iridescent silvery blue to steely blue. Dorsal fin pale dusky yellow. Body tapers to a pointed tail. Large mouth with protruding lower jaw.	
HABITAT: Throughout Gulf waters	**AVERAGE SIZE:** Less than 1 lb.
PEAK SEASON: Summer	

DOLPHIN *Coryphaena hippurus*



APPEARANCE: Varying colors from blue, yellow to green. Laterally compressed body.		
HABITAT: Offshore waters; around floating debris or Sargassum.		**AVERAGE SIZE:** 10 lbs.
PEAK SEASON: Summer - Fall	**COMMON NAMES:** Mahi-Mahi, Dorado	

ATLANTIC CROAKER *Micropogonias undulatus*



APPEARANCE: Silver-gray or bronze color with brown bars on upper sides. Small barbels on chin.	
HABITAT: Bays and estuarine systems	**AVERAGE SIZE:** Under 1 lb.
PEAK SEASON: Summer - Fall	

BLACK DRUM *Pogonias cromis*



APPEARANCE: Juvenile fish have four to five dark vertical bars over its silver body; stripes fade on adult drums. Numerous barbels on chin.	
HABITAT: Bays and estuarine systems	**AVERAGE SIZE:** 5 lbs.
PEAK SEASON: Spring - Fall	

RED DRUM *Sciaenops ocellatus*



APPEARANCE: Copper-brown or reddish color with one or more large spots at base of tail.		
HABITAT: Bays, estuarine systems and island passes	**AVERAGE SIZE:** 5 lbs.	
PEAK SEASON: Spring - Fall	**COMMON NAME:** Redfish	

SOUTHERN KINGFISH *Menticirrhus americanus*



APPEARANCE: Silver-gray to copper color with irregular blotches on side. One barbel under chin.	
HABITAT: Bays and estuarine systems	**AVERAGE SIZE:** Under 1 lb.
PEAK SEASON: Summer	**COMMON NAME:** Ground Mullet

SPOT *Leiostomus xanthurus*



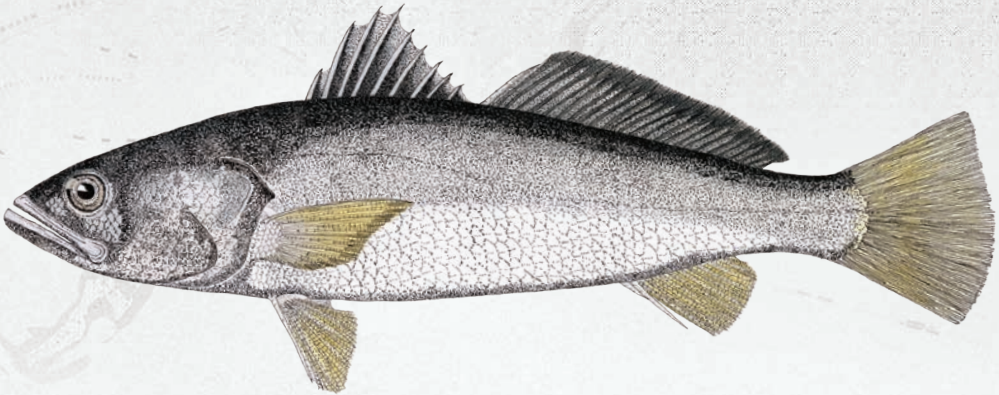
APPEARANCE: Bluish-brown top fades to brassy sides; silver-white underside. Upper sides have 12-15 dark diagonal lines. Dark spot behind gill cover.	
HABITAT: Coastal waters	**AVERAGE SIZE:** Under 1 lb.
PEAK SEASON: Year-round	

SPOTTED SEATROUT *Cynoscion nebulosus*



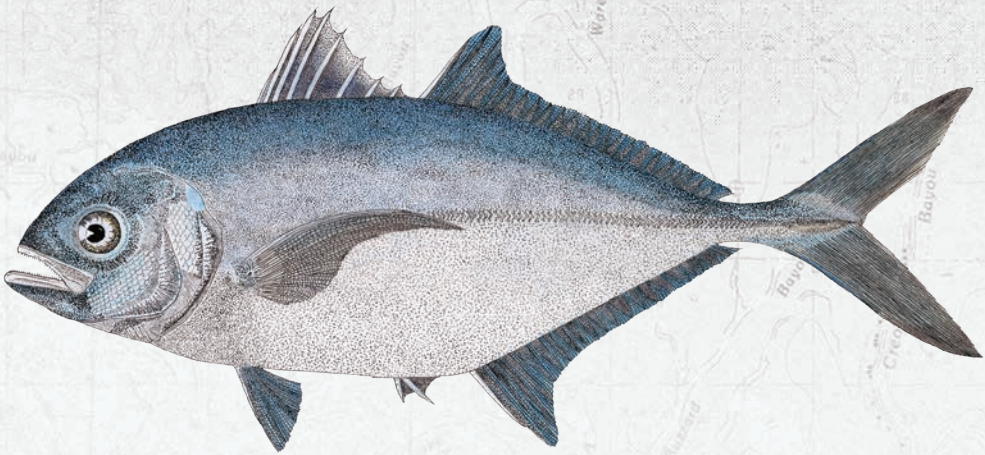
APPEARANCE: Bluish-gray top with multiple black spots; silver-white underside.	
HABITAT: Bays and estuarine systems	**AVERAGE SIZE:** 1 lb.
PEAK SEASON: Spring	**COMMON NAME:** Speckled Trout

SAND SEATROUT *Cynoscion arenarius*



APPEARANCE: Pale, yellowish or tan top; silver or white underside. Inside of mouth is yellow.		
HABITAT: Bays, estuaries and inshore artificial reefs	**AVERAGE SIZE:** Under 1 lb.	
PEAK SEASON: Summer - Fall	**COMMON NAME:** White Trout	

BLUE RUNNER *Caranx crysos*



APPEARANCE: Shiny, bluish fish. Scutes present on sides and in front of deeply forked tail.	
HABITAT: Found offshore near floating objects or structure.	
AVERAGE SIZE: Under 1 lb.	**PEAK SEASON:** Summer

FLORIDA POMPANO *Trachinotus carolinus*



APPEARANCE: Silver color body overall; bluish-silver top; yellow underside. Dark dorsal fin; other fins yellow. Deep, compressed body. Small mouth and forehead that gently slopes top-ward.	
HABITAT: Surf zone of barrier islands and beaches	**AVERAGE SIZE:** Under 1 lb.
PEAK SEASON: Summer	

GREATER AMBERJACK *Seriola dumerili*



APPEARANCE: Body is darker on top; whitish underside. Broad yellow stripe along mid-side. Dark stripe from nose to dorsal fin that "lights up" when fish is in feeding mode.	
HABITAT: Offshore structures, including oil rigs and artificial reefs	
AVERAGE SIZE: 15 lbs.	**PEAK SEASON:** Summer

JACK CREVALLE *Caranx hippos*



APPEARANCE: Bluish-green to greenish-gold top; silver or yellowish underside. Black spot on gill cover and base of pectoral fins. Deep body and steep head.	
HABITAT: Bays to offshore waters.	
AVERAGE SIZE: 15 lbs.	**PEAK SEASON:** Summer

KING MACKEREL *Scomberomorus cavalla*



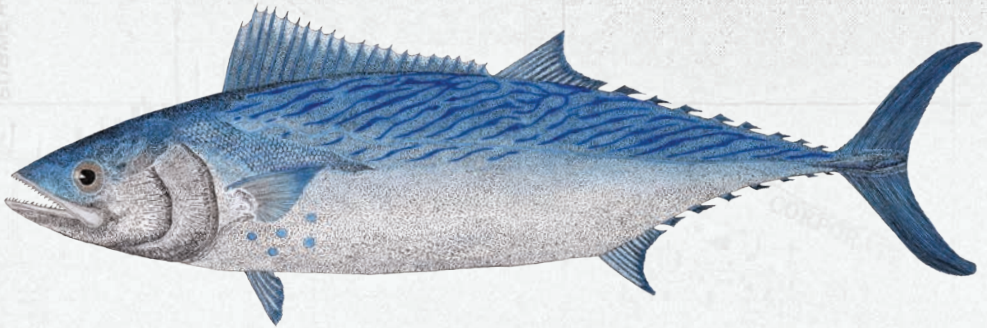
APPEARANCE: Iridescent bluish-green top; silvery underside. First dorsal fin uniformly colored. Lateral line curves sharply under second dorsal fin.		
HABITAT: Oil rigs, offshore wrecks and shoal waters		**AVERAGE SIZE:** 10 lbs.
PEAK SEASON: Spring - Fall	**COMMON NAME:** Kingfish	

SPANISH MACKEREL *Scomberomorus maculatus*



APPEARANCE: Bluish-green top; silver sides and underside. Distinct yellow spots on sides. Bluish-black blotch on front of first dorsal fin. Lateral line slopes evenly downward to the tail.	
HABITAT: Surf zone to offshore	**AVERAGE SIZE:** 1 lb.
PEAK SEASON: Summer - Fall	

LITTLE TUNNY *Euthynnus alletteratus*



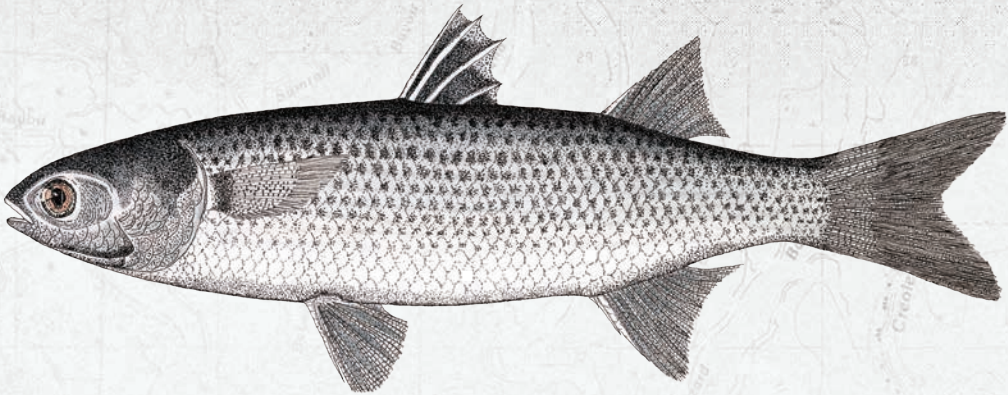
APPEARANCE: Three to seven dark spots below pectoral fin. Wavy, dark stripes on top.	
HABITAT: Offshore waters	**AVERAGE SIZE:** 5 lbs.
PEAK SEASON: Summer	**COMMON NAME:** Bonita

WAHOO *Acanthocybium solandri*



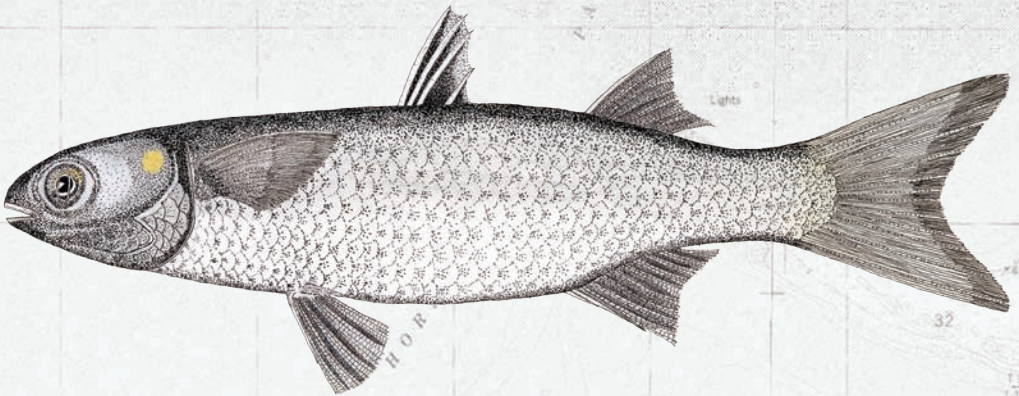
APPEARANCE: Slender body. Dark bluish-green top; silver sides; whitish underside. 24-30 wavy, dark blue bars on sides. Elongated jaw, forming a pointed beak with finely-serrated teeth.	
HABITAT: Offshore pelagic waters	**AVERAGE SIZE:** 30 lbs.
PEAK SEASON: Summer and Winter	

STRIPED MULLET *Mugil cephalus*



APPEARANCE: Grayish olive to grayish brown top; silver sides. Dark spots on scales form stripes along sides.	
HABITAT: Coastal waters	**AVERAGE SIZE:** 1 lb.
PEAK SEASON: Fall	**COMMON NAME:** Popeye Mullet

WHITE MULLET *Mugil curema*



APPEARANCE: Small version of Striped Mullet, but without stripes. Yellow to orangish blotch at upper edge of opercle. Elongated with round cross-section.	
HABITAT: Estuaries and coastal waters	**AVERAGE SIZE:** Under 1 lb.
PEAK SEASON: Spring	

PINFISH *Lagodon rhomboides*



APPEARANCE: Bluish-silver color with many narrow bronze stripes and dark shoulder spot.	
HABITAT: Man-made and natural structures	**AVERAGE SIZE:** Under 1 lb.
PEAK SEASON: Year-round	

SHEEPSHEAD *Archosargus probatocephalus*



APPEARANCE: Light overall color with vertical black bars on sides. Prominent "sheep-like" teeth.	
HABITAT: Man-made and natural structures	**AVERAGE SIZE:** 2 lbs.
PEAK SEASON: Winter - Spring	

SOUTHERN FLOUNDER *Paralichthys lethostigma*



APPEARANCE: Flat, brown body with numerous spots.	
HABITAT: Silty bay and estuary bottoms	**AVERAGE SIZE:** 1 lb.
PEAK SEASON: Spring - Fall	

BLACK GROUPER *Mycteroperca bonaci*



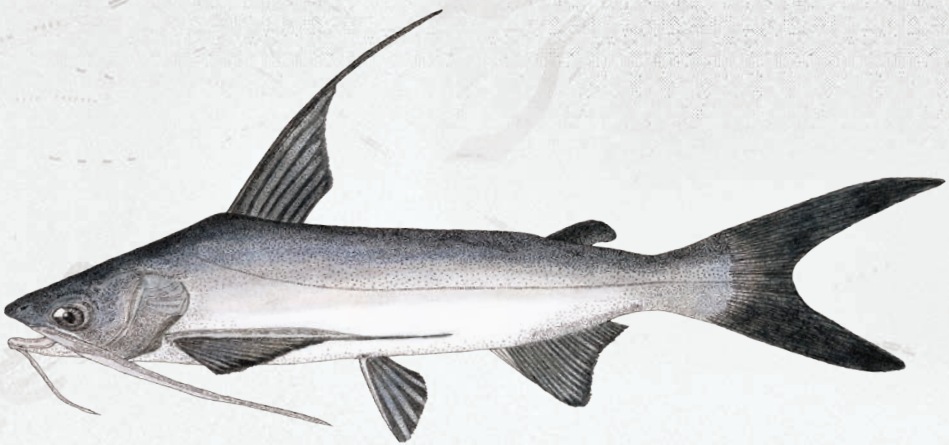
APPEARANCE: Olive or gray overall with rectangular black blotches and brassy spots.	
HABITAT: Coastal waters near structures	**AVERAGE SIZE:** 10 lbs.
PEAK SEASON: Year-round	

GAG *Mycteroperca microlepis*



APPEARANCE: Pale to dark gray overall with worm-like marks. Color may deepen to dark brown after removal from water.	
HABITAT: Offshore structures, including oil rigs and artificial reefs	**AVERAGE SIZE:** 5 lbs.
PEAK SEASON: Fall	

GAFFTOPSAIL CATFISH *Bagre marinus*



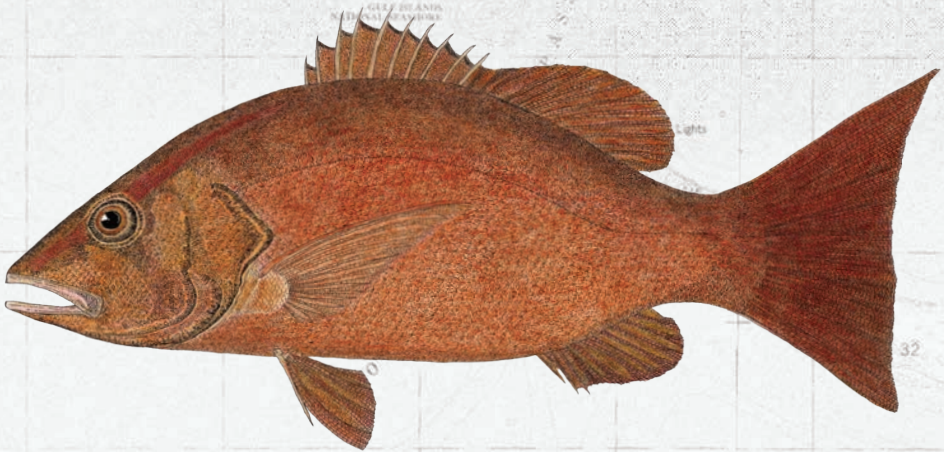
APPEARANCE: Bluish-gray top; silver-white underside. Long fin rays and four whiskers.	
HABITAT: Bays and shallow Gulf waters	**AVERAGE SIZE:** 2 lbs.
PEAK SEASON: Spring - Fall	

HARDHEAD CATFISH *Ariopsis felis*



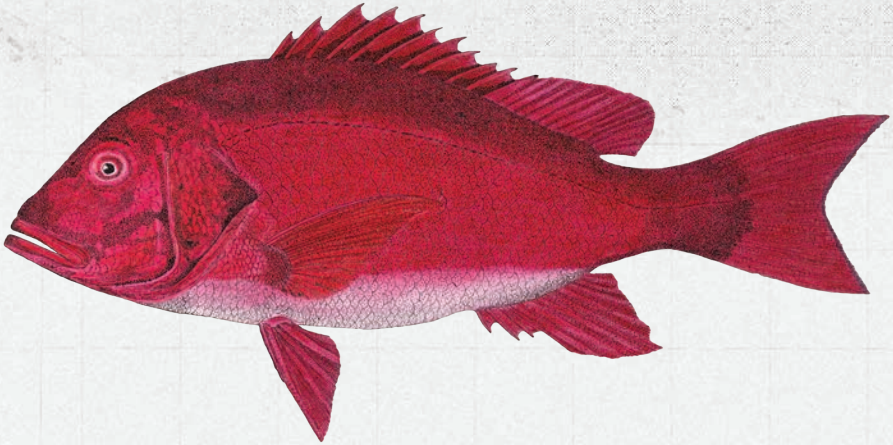
APPEARANCE: Brownish to gray-green color. Flattened head and six whiskers.	
HABITAT: All coastal waters	**AVERAGE SIZE:** 1 lb.
PEAK SEASON: Spring - Fall	

MANGROVE SNAPPER *Lutjanus griseus*



APPEARANCE: Dark red or maroon color. Dark stripe through eye.		
HABITAT: Juveniles inhabit inshore structures. Adults inhabit offshore oil rigs and artificial reefs.		
AVERAGE SIZE: 2 lbs.	**PEAK SEASON:** Summer - Fall	**COMMON NAME:** Gray Snapper

RED SNAPPER *Lutjanus campechanus*



APPEARANCE: Pinkish-red top fades to white underside. Triangular snout. Red iris. Pointed anal fin.	
HABITAT: Offshore structures, including oil rigs and artificial reefs.	
AVERAGE SIZE: 6 lbs.	**PEAK SEASON:** Spring - Fall

ATLANTIC SPADEFISH *Chaetodipterus faber*



APPEARANCE: Deep, compressed body. Grayish-silver with four to six dark vertical bars on sides.	
HABITAT: Offshore oil rigs and other hard structures	**AVERAGE SIZE:** 2 lbs.
PEAK SEASON: Year-round	

TARPON *Megalops atlanticus*



APPEARANCE: Bright silver color with dark blue-green or greenish-black top. Last ray of dorsal is elongated. Large scales and mouth that points upward.	
HABITAT: Sound and offshore waters	**AVERAGE SIZE:** 75 lbs.
PEAK SEASON: Summer	

LADYFISH *Elops saurus*



APPEARANCE: Long, slender and silver body. Head small and pointed.	
HABITAT: Estuaries and bays	**AVERAGE SIZE:** 1 lb.
PEAK SEASON: Spring - Summer	**COMMON NAMES:** Ten-pounder

GRAY TRIGGERFISH *Balistes capriscus*



APPEARANCE: Olive-gray color with irregular dark markings. Small mouth and chisel-like teeth.	
HABITAT: Offshore structures, including oil rigs and artificial reefs	
AVERAGE SIZE: 2 lbs.	**PEAK SEASON:** Year-round

TRIPLETAIL *Lobotes surinamensis*



APPEARANCE: Yellow to copper-brown blotches which are more prominent in juveniles. Anal, dorsal and tail fin are close to the same length; giving the illusion to three tails.		
HABITAT: Open water debris or wreckage. Inshore channel markers and buoys.		
AVERAGE SIZE: 8 lbs.	**PEAK SEASON:** Summer	**COMMON NAME:** Blackfish

ATLANTIC STINGRAY *Dasyatis sabina*



APPEARANCE: Top color ranging from medium to dark brown; white underside. Flat body with pectoral fins that expand toward and fuse with the head.	
HABITAT: Shallow water	**AVERAGE SIZE:** 2 lbs.
PEAK SEASON: Summer - Fall	

COMMISSION

The Mississippi Advisory Commission on Marine Resources is comprised of five members appointed by the governor for four-year terms to represent the following areas: commercial seafood processors, nonprofit environmental organizations, charter boat operators, recreational sports fishermen and commercial fishermen.

STATE OF MISSISSIPPI

The Honorable Tate Reeves, *Governor*

MISSISSIPPI DEPARTMENT OF MARINE RESOURCES

Joe Spraggins, *Director*

MISSISSIPPI ADVISORY COMMISSION ON MARINE RESOURCES

Jonathan McLendon, *Chairman*
Commercial Seafood Processors

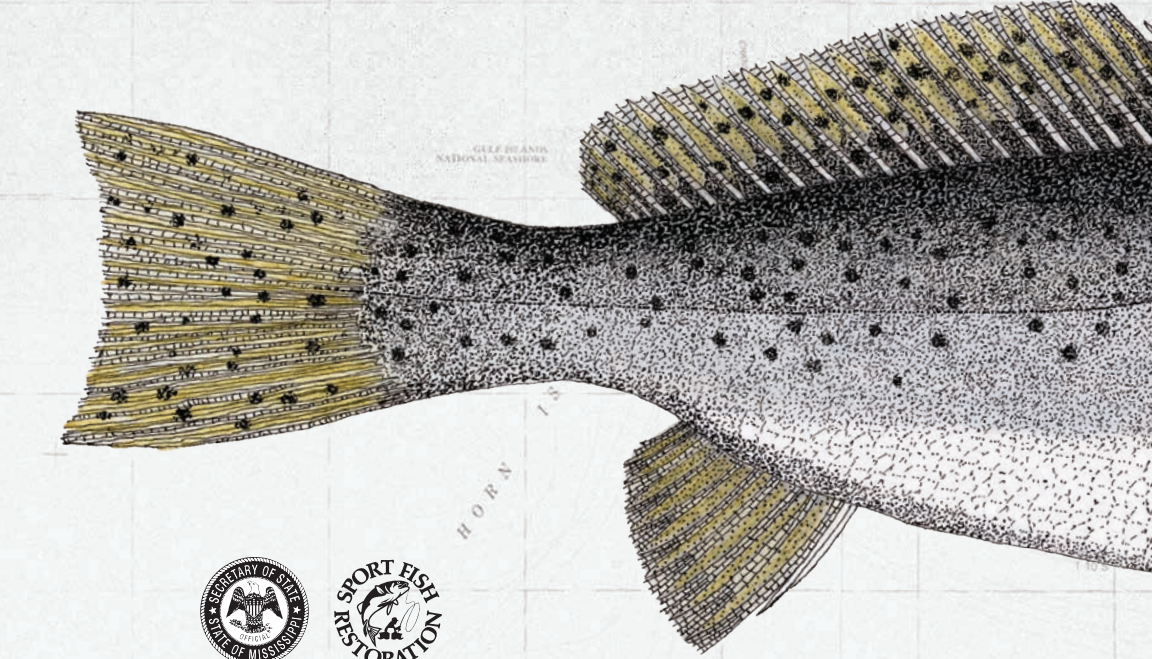
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Recreational Sports Fishermen

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Jason Osborne
Nonprofit Environmental Organizations

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This guide is funded by the USFWS Sport Fish Restoration Program and the Tidelands Trust Fund. Illustrated by Joe Jewell©
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