Spotted Seatrout Cynoscion nebulosus





The spotted seatrout, commonly called speckled trout, is one of the most popular sport fish along the Texas coast. It occurs in the western Atlantic and Gulf of Mexico, ranging from Massachusetts to the Yucatan peninsula.



Spotted Seatrout

Cynoscion nebulosus



APPEARANCE

Length: Males: average 19 inches (48 cm) Females: 25 inches (63 cm) Weight: 2 to 3 pounds (1 to 1.3 kg)

Distinguishing Characteristics

- Dark gray or green back with distinct round spots on back, fins and tail
- Silvery-white below
- Black margin along the edge of tail
- Soft dorsal (back) fin has no scales
- One or two prominent canine teeth usually present at tip of upper jaw

LIFE HISTORY

Bays along the Atlantic Coast and
Gulf of Mexico
Small trout feed primarily on small
crustaceans. Medium-size trout feed on
shrimp and small fish. Large fish feed
almost exclusively on other fish.
Alligator gar, striped bass, Atlantic
croaker, tarpon and barracuda
At one to two years
February through October
100,000 to a million
16 to 20 hours after fertilization
Up to ten years

HABITAT

Spotted seatrout prefer shallower bays and estuaries with oyster beds and seagrass beds that attract prey species.

BEHAVIOR

A female spotted seatrout may spawn several times during the season. Younger females may release 100,000 eggs and older, larger females may release a million eggs. Recent studies indicate that spotted seatrout spawn between dusk and dawn and usually within coastal bays, estuaries and lagoons. They prefer shallow grassy areas where eggs and larvae have some cover from predators. Spotted seatrout swim near seagrass beds of shallow bays and estuaries during spring and summer, looking for prey. As water temperatures decline during fall, they move into deeper bay waters and the Gulf of Mexico. As water temperatures warm in the spring, the fish return to the shallows of the primary and secondary bays.

NOW YOU KNOW!

- Some trout caught may have worms embedded in the flesh along the backbone. These "spaghetti" worms are larval stages of a tapeworm that can only reach maturity in sharks. The worms cannot survive in man even if the seatrout is eaten raw. The worms can easily be removed when the fish is cleaned to make the meat more appealing.
- The fish is a member of the croaker family (Sciaenidae) and is a first cousin to the Atlantic croaker, red drum, black drum, and sand seatrout.

SPOTTED SEATROUT AND PEOPLE

Its abundance, willingness to hit natural and artificial baits, and fine eating qualities make the species extremely popular with anglers. It has been commercially harvested in all the states bordering the Gulf of Mexico. However, a decline in harvest of spotted seatrout in recent years caused Alabama and Texas to close commercial fishing of the species. The decline in the seatrout catch is linked to destruction of seagrass beds and over-fishing.

> In Texas, the record spotted seatrout caught was 33.75 inches (85.7 cm) and 13 pounds 9 ounces (about 6 kg).

PWD LF D0200-849G (8/02) NOTICE: Texas Parks and Wildlife Department receives federal financial assistance from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Under Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, the Age Discrimination Act of 1975, and Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, the U.S. Department of the Interior and its bureaus prohibit discrimination on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, disability or sex (in educational programs). If you believe that you have been discriminated against in any Texas Parks and Wildlife Department program, activity, or facility, or if you desire further information, please call or write: The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Office for Diversity and Civil Rights Programs - External Programs, 4040 N. Fairfax Drive, Webb 300, Arlington, VA 22203, (703) 358-1724.