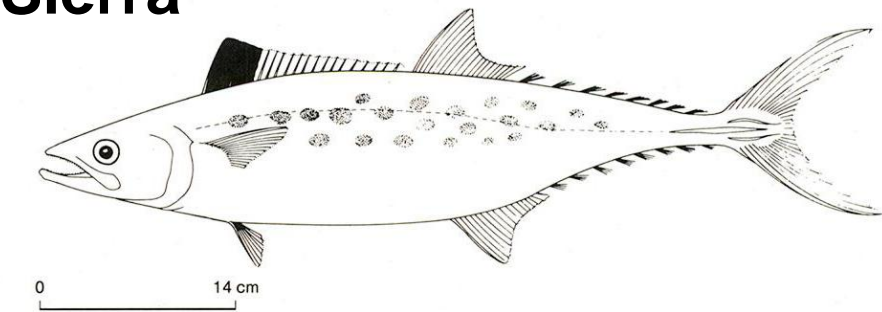


Spanish mackerel

Scomberomorus maculatus

Sierra



Description

Range: The Spanish mackerel, a bony fish of the family Scombridae, is found along the coast of the western Atlantic from New England to the northern Yucatan Peninsula and throughout the coastal zone of the Gulf of Mexico.

Habitat: The Spanish mackerel is a pelagic species found in estuaries and on the continental shelf to depths of 100 meters. This fish can tolerate brackish to oceanic waters.

Feeding and Behavior: A carnivore, the Spanish mackerel feeds throughout the water column on small fishes, especially herrings. Some shrimp and squid are also eaten. A schooling fish, the Spanish mackerel is often found in association with bluefish, king mackerel, cero, little tunny, and Atlantic bonito.

Reproduction: Spawning grounds are located offshore. The spawning season of the Spanish mackerel is April to September with spawning occurring more than once per season. Spawning is believed to occur at night. Year-round nursery areas are found in estuaries and coastal waters.

Movement: Spanish mackerel move from south Florida into the northeast Gulf and return to Florida in the fall. One tag recovery indicated some movement of individuals from Texas waters to Veracruz, Mexico in the fall. Large aggregations occur in south Florida in the winter.

Fisheries: Prized for its high quality flesh, the Spanish mackerel is harvested commercially in south Florida and northwest Florida to Louisiana with catches marketed both fresh and frozen. Recreational fishermen harvest this fish throughout its U.S. range. In Mexico, commercial fishing occurs off Veracruz and the Yucatan Peninsula.

References: Berrien, P., and D. Finan, 1977a; Collette, B.B., J.L. Russo, and L.A. Zavala-Camin, 1978; Nakamura, E.L., and H.R. Bullis, Jr., eds., 1979; Powell, D., 1975; US DOI, FWS, Office of Biological Services, 1978.

- Adult Area (Year-round)
- Spawning Area (April to September)
- Migration (Spring, Summer)
- Migration (Fall, Winter)
- Commercial Fishing Ground*
- Recreational Fishing Ground**

Spawning areas shown are only two of several in Gulf, but are the only ones that have been positively identified. Spawning in western Gulf is in summer and fall and in eastern Gulf is in spring and summer. Nursery area (year-round) is in estuarine and coastal waters.

*Seasons for commercial fishing are as follows:
A. Cape San Blas to Alabama – April to May; September to October
B. Ft. Pierce to southwest Florida coast – November to April
C. Southwest Gulf – Spring and Fall
D. Yucatan Coast – Fall and Winter

**Seasons for recreational fishing are as follows:
1. Northern Gulf – March to October
2. Southern Florida and east coast – Year-round

References

Fischer, W., ed., 1978; Heald, E.J., 1970; Houde, E.D., et al., 1979; McEachran, J.D., and J.H. Finucane, 1979; Messenger, J.F., pers. comm.; Moe, M.A., Jr., 1972; Sutherland, D.F., and W.A. Fable, 1980; Trent, L., and E.A. Anthony, 1979; Wollam, M.B., 1970.