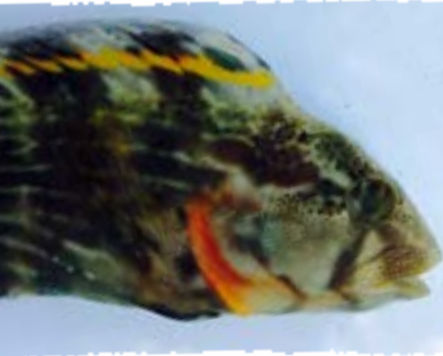


# Juvenile Fish of Northwest Florida

## *Identification Field Guide*

SP 509



**UF** | IFAS Extension  
UNIVERSITY of FLORIDA

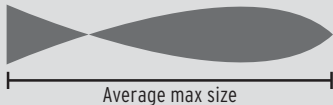


**CHOCTAWHATCHEE  
BASIN ALLIANCE**  
OF NORTHWEST FLORIDA STATE COLLEGE

*University of Florida Institute of Food and  
Agricultural Sciences Sea Grant Program,  
The Choctawhatchee Basin Alliance,  
and the B.T. Washington High School  
Marine Science Academy*

# Common Name

*Scientific name*



Average max size

**RANGE:** General area where species are found on East coast of U.S. and Gulf of Mexico.

**HABITAT:** Typical habitats in which the species are found.

## **FWC REGULATIONS:**

Florida Fish and Wildlife Commission and Gulf of Mexico Fishing Regulations on species.

*Choctawhatchee Basin Alliance strives to ensure the information in this field guide is accurate, but assumes no liability for any errors that may occur in this publication.*

## **ABOUT THIS GUIDE:**

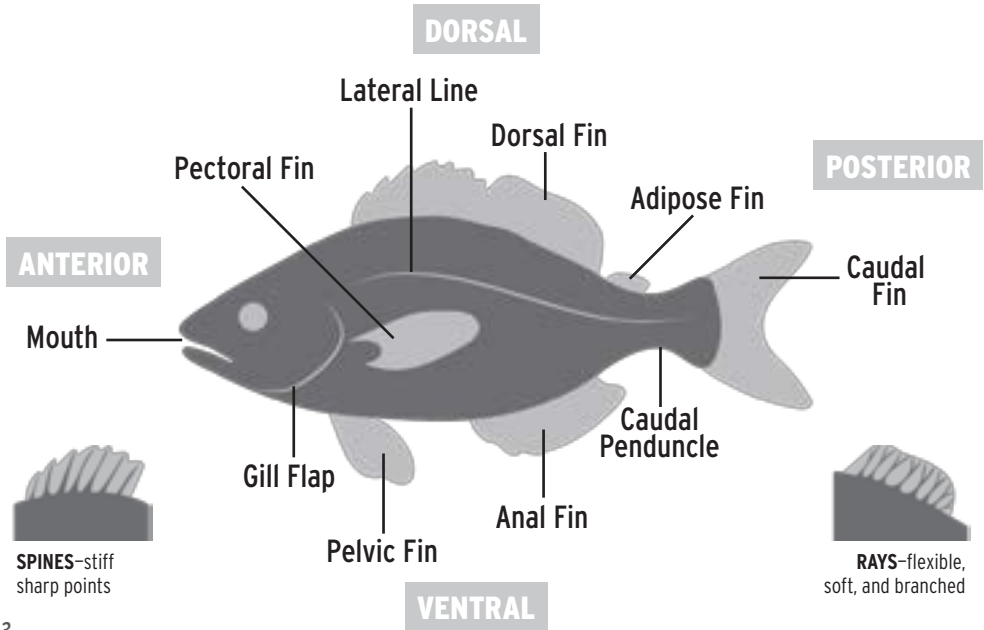
This identification guide was assembled by the Choctawhatchee Basin Alliance in cooperation with University of Florida's Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences Sea Grant Program and the Marine Science Academy of B.T. Washington High School to assist individuals along the northern coast of the Gulf of Mexico to identify juvenile fish species that are commonly misidentified. The guide includes photographs of juvenile fish, range and habitat, physical descriptions, key identifying features, size of fish, and Florida Fish and Wildlife Commission fishing regulations where applicable.

This identification guide is organized by caudal fin shape: truncate, rounded, forked, lunate, or continuous. While there are many different ways to identify fish, the caudal fin shape is a universal identification practice to begin distinguishing between fish families. Most of these species were caught between the Choctawhatchee and Pensacola Bay nearshore with a seine or dip net.



**TAIL & MOUTH SHAPES**

# Fish Morphology



## FISH MOUTH MORPHOLOGY



**TERMINAL** mouth shapes are positioned in the middle of the fish's head. Fish with this mouth shape feed throughout the water column—from surface to bottom (e.g., barracuda, snappers).



**SUPERIOR** mouths are positioned upwards with bottom jaw extending past upper jaw. Fish with this mouth shape feed on prey above them or on the water surface (e.g., needlefish).



**INFERIOR SUB-TERMINAL** mouth shapes are positioned down, towards the sea floor. Fish with this mouth shape feed on prey that inhabit benthic areas (e.g., catfish, searobins).

## CAUDAL FIN MORPHOLOGY



**TRUNCATE**—strong, slow swimmers



**LUNATE**—fastest, maintain rapid speed for long durations



**FORKED**—fast, strong swimmers



**ROUNDED**—strong, slow swimmers



**CONTINUOUS**—able to swim in and around cracks and crevices

# Atlantic needlefish

*Strongylura marina*

Photo Credit: Sean Murphy

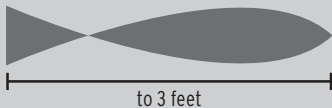
TRUNCATE  
CAUDAL FIN



**FUN FACT:** *Despite their resemblance to gars, needlefish are more closely related to flying fish. They leap from the water when alarmed or pursuing prey.*

# Atlantic needlefish

*Strongylura marina*



**RANGE:** East coast of U.S. to Gulf of Mexico and Brazil.

**HABITAT:** Found in coastal areas of brackish and fresh water.

**FWC REGULATIONS:** No current Florida regulations. Default bag limit for unregulated species: Two fish or 100 pounds per person per day—whichever is more.

## IDENTIFICATION & BIOLOGY:

Body round, slender and elongated, needle-like. Coloration is bluish green dorsally and silvery below. Blue iridescent horizontal lateral line down sides. Two narrow dark lines from top of head to dorsal fin. Long pointed jaws with many sharp, jagged teeth. Dorsal fin located posteriorly. Anal fin aligned with dorsal fin. Pelvic fins small. Pectoral fins small and elongated. Caudal fin truncated with dusky coloration. Superior mouth shape.

Differs from other needlefish because body is round, not compressed, and lacks a caudal keel ridge (horizontal ridge on caudal peduncle).



# Atlantic spadefish

*Chaetodipterus faber*

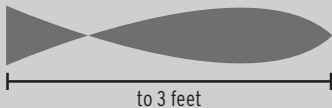
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CAUDAL FIN



**FUN FACT:** *Juveniles mimic dead leaves or floating debris by floating at the surface.*

# Atlantic spadefish

*Chaetodipterus faber*



**RANGE:** East coast of U.S. to Gulf of Mexico and Brazil.

**HABITAT:** Occurs coastally over wrecks, reefs, and pilings. Also around buoys and mangroves, in harbors, and under bridges.

**FWC REGULATIONS:** No current Florida FWC regulations. Default bag limit for unregulated species: Two fish or 100 pounds per person per day—whichever is more.

## IDENTIFICATION & BIOLOGY:

Body deep and compressed, disk-like. Juveniles have dark brown colorations with darker vertical bars and white speckles throughout body. Adult colorations silvery to gray with broad dark vertical bars on body; bars may be absent, especially in large adults.

Snout very short, small terminal mouth shape. First spiny dorsal spines tall in juveniles, shorten with age. Secondary dorsal fin tip tapers to point and is continuous to caudal peduncle. Anal fin also tapers to point and is continuous to caudal peduncle. Pelvic fins pointed. Pectoral fins small and oval-shaped. Caudal fin truncate, dark at base, becomes white to translucent towards margins.





# Burrfish

## Family Diodontidae

Pictured: Striped burrfish, *Chilomycterus schoepfi*, distinguished by various dark blotches and stripes all over body; dark spot on upper mid-body.

TRUNCATE  
CAUDAL FIN



**FUN FACT:** Burrfish are also known as “spiny boxfish.” They’re important predators of shellfish, which they eat with their beak-like mouth and teeth. Some species can contain tetrodotoxin in their organs, which is toxic to most predators.

# Burrfish

## Family Diodontidae



**RANGE:** Northeast coast of U.S. to Gulf of Mexico and Caribbean.

**HABITAT:** Tropical to warm temperate waters. Benthic, found near grassy flats and reefs.

**FWC REGULATIONS:** No current Florida FWC regulations. Default bag limit for unregulated species: Two fish or 100 pounds per person per day—whichever is more.

**IDENTIFICATION & BIOLOGY:** Inflate their body to a round shape when threatened.



Round elongated body when not inflated. Spines are visible all over body, are immovable and typically erect. Body covered in loose elastic skin with darker colorations, spots and mottling dorsally, white ventrally. Pectoral fins rounded, behind small slit gills. Dorsal and anal fin small and located posteriorly. Caudal fin truncate. Terminal shaped mouth, referred to as a “beak.” Two teeth in mouth (one on top and one on bottom).

# Lane snapper

*Lutjanus synagris*

Photo Credit: Sean Murphy

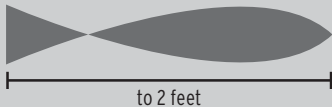
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CAUDAL FIN



**FUN FACT:** *Yellow horizontal stripes (as seen on adults) and rounded anal fin distinguishes lane snapper from other snappers.*

# Lane snapper

*Lutjanus synagris*



**RANGE:** East coast of U.S. to Gulf of Mexico and Brazil.

**HABITAT:** Found in shallow waters over rocky areas, coral reefs, sandy seagrass beds, or muddy bottoms.

## **FWC REGULATIONS:**

Open year-round **I.** Minimum Size Limit: 8 inches (total length) **II.** Daily Recreational Bag Limit: 100 pounds per harvester per day (Gulf of Mexico); 10 per harvester per day (Atlantic).

## **IDENTIFICATION & BIOLOGY:**

Body compressed, slender. Pointed terminal mouth shape.



Juveniles have red to orange horizontal stripes from mouth to caudal fin, darker vertical bars behind horizontal stripes. Colorations fade to silvery pink with pink and yellow horizontal stripes along body. Paired pelvic fins and anal fin have red coloration. Dark spot located in posterior dorsal fin region, does not fade as fish matures. Anal fin rounded. Dorsal and pectoral fin elongated. Dorsal fin continuous to caudal peduncle. Caudal fin truncate.

# Gray snapper (Mangrove snapper)

*Lutjanus griseus*

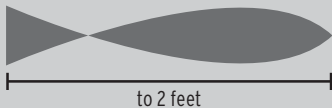
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CAUDAL FIN



**FUN FACT:** *Differs from other snappers because it lacks distinctive black spot on the sides. Mangrove snappers have large canine teeth.*

# Gray snapper (Mangrove snapper)

*Lutjanus griseus*



**RANGE:** East coast of U.S., Gulf of Mexico to Brazil.

**HABITAT:** Juveniles found in estuaries, mangroves, tidal creeks, and grass beds; may enter fresh water bodies. Adults found inshore or offshore in rocky areas and coral reefs.

## **FWC REGULATIONS:**

Open year-round **I.** Minimum Size Limit: 10 inches total length (Atlantic and Gulf of Mexico) **II.** Bag Limit: No more than 5 of 10 snappers per person per day can be gray snappers.

## **IDENTIFICATION & BIOLOGY:**

Juvenile has dark brown to black stripe from snout, across eye, fades after gill. This "bandit" marking fades as fish matures. Light blue, iridescent stripe under eye, also fades. Multiple dark brown dotted stripes run horizontally from head to caudal peduncle. Body is olive to dark green to brown. Fins tinted a gold color. Body is slender with a large pointed terminal mouth. Dorsal fin elongated. Caudal fin is truncate in shape. Paired pelvic fins.

Adult has pinkish tint to scales on belly, becomes grayish to dark green/brown dorsally. Faint vertical, blotchy stripes of olive green color.



# Longnose killifish

*Fundulus similis*

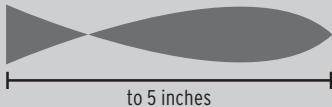
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CAUDAL FIN



**FUN FACT:** Longnose killifish are considered a subspecies of the striped killifish. The longnose killifish can be distinguished from other killifish by its long snout, thin dark vertical bars and spot on last bar near caudal peduncle.

# Longnose killifish

*Fundulus similis*



**RANGE:** East coast of U.S. to Gulf of Mexico.

**HABITAT:** Typically benthic in shallow waters of salt and tidal marshes.

**FWC REGULATIONS:** No current Florida FWC regulations. Default bag limit for unregulated species: Two fish or 100 pounds per person per day—whichever is more.

## IDENTIFICATION & BIOLOGY:

Long snout, superior mouth shape. Body elongate and round. Coloration olive dorsally with silvery, whitish belly. Around 10 or more vertical dark stripes along sides with small dark spot on last bar near caudal peduncle. Dorsal fin located posteriorly. Truncate caudal fin. Pectoral fin rounded. Pelvic fin located centrally. Anal fin long. Fins light to colorless in females, dusky in males.

Males have yellowish coloring around "chin," dorsal fin longer in males.





# Goby

Family Gobiidae

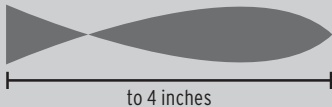
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CAUDAL FIN



**FUN FACT:** *Gobies can adapt to a diverse range of habitats, which makes them both a popular aquarium pet and an ecological threat.*

# Goby

## Family Gobiidae



**RANGE:** Near-shore marine, brackish and freshwater environments from tropical to temperate regions.

**HABITAT:** Found on bottom areas of seagrass, algae, or rocky ridges and reefs.

**FWC REGULATIONS:** Marine Life Harvest Regulations **I.** Bag Limit: 20 organisms per person per day; only 5 of any one species allowed within the 20 organisms bag limit. **II.** Possession Limit: 2 day possession limit, 40 total organisms, no more than 10 of any one species allowed. **III.** Organisms must be landed and kept alive with a continuously circulating live well, aeration or oxygenated system of adequate size to maintain organisms in healthy condition.

## IDENTIFICATION & BIOLOGY:

Head is short and broad. Eyes sit high, towards top of head. Dorsal fin is deeply notched, then continuous to caudal peduncle. Colors vary from dark brown bars, blotches, tans, to bright colors. Colorations transition from body to fins. Slim, elongated round body. Sub-terminal mouth shape with disc-shaped sucker mouth. Pectoral fins are larger and rounded. Caudal fin is truncate. Local species typically have mottled coloring of brown and beige colors to camouflage themselves with the environment. Benthic feeders.

Commonly confused with the species of family Blenniidae; however, most gobies have a deeply notched dorsal fin (which appears as 2 dorsal fins), while Blenniidae have a single, continuous dorsal fin. The pelvic fins of the Gobiidae species are fused at the base, whereas family Blenniidae pelvic fins are not.



# Pipefish

Family Syngnathidae

Photo Credit: Sean Murphy

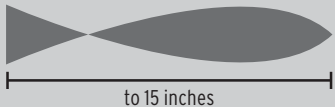
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CAUDAL FIN



**FUN FACT:** Pipefish are in the same family as seahorses, and like them, it is the males who carry the eggs. The opossum pipefish (*Microphis brachyurus lineatus*) is federally listed as "Threatened" and has protected habitat in the Indian River Lagoon.

# Pipefish

## Family Syngnathidae



**RANGE:** Southeast coast of U.S., Gulf of Mexico, Bahamas to South America.

**HABITAT:** Found in shallow estuaries over seagrass and reefs; also found in Sargassum seaweed.

**FWC REGULATIONS:** Marine Life Harvest Regulations **I.** Bag Limit: 20 organisms per person per day; only 5 of any one species allowed within the 20 organism bag limit. **II.** Possession Limit: 2 day possession limit, 40 total organisms, no more than 10 of any one species allowed. **III.** Allowable Gear: Hand collection, handheld net, drop net, barrier net, slurp gun. Use of quinaldine or power tools is prohibited.

### IDENTIFICATION & BIOLOGY:

Body is long and tubular, but thin. Easily overlooked because they resemble blades of seagrass. Single dorsal fin near middle of body with several rays. Most have small pectoral fins directly below the dorsal fin. Snout is long and tubular superior mouth shape; similar to a seahorse snout. Caudal fin truncate.

Colors vary, but most commonly caught pipefish are mottled brown. Colors can be reddish, greenish, yellowish, banded, or striped. Males tend to be more colorful than females and have a brood pouch to hold eggs.

There are 9 species in the northern Gulf of Mexico and they can be difficult to distinguish from each other.



# Pufferfish

Family Tetraodontidae

Pictured: Northern puffer, *Sphoeroides maculatus*, distinguished by 6 to 8 dark bar-like blotches on side of body. Body colorations have margins of yellow with olive green to brown and gray dorsally, with speckles of lighter shades.

Photo Credit: Sean Murphy



**FUN FACT:** Also known as “blowfish.” Their meat is considered a delicacy in Japan. It should only be consumed when prepared by a trained, licensed chef. If the meat is cut off the fish incorrectly it can cause death.

# Pufferfish

## Family Tetraodontidae



to 3 feet, most are smaller

**RANGE:** East coast of U.S. to Caribbean.

**HABITAT:** Inshore and estuarine waters, near seagrass beds and reefs.

**FWC REGULATIONS:** Marine Life Harvest Regulations\* **I.** Bag Limit: 20 organisms per person per day; only 5 of any one species allowed within the 20-organism bag limit. **II.** Possession Limit: 2-day possession limit, 40 total organisms, no more than 10 of any one species allowed. **III.** Allowable Gear: Hand-held net, drop net, rod, barrier net, slurp gun (use of quinaldine prohibited).

*\*Pufferfish harvest is prohibited in Volusia, Brevard, Indian River, St. Lucie, and Martin counties.*

### IDENTIFICATION & BIOLOGY:

Body elongate, round.

Inflates body when

threatened, exposing spines all over body.

Compared to burrfish, puffers have scale-less and loose skin, giving them a smooth body.

Markings range from spots of darker colors to mottling of dark and light markings. Lower sides and belly white. Pectoral fins small. Dorsal and anal fin small and located posteriorly.

Mouth shape terminal with 4 teeth, two on top and two on bottom. Caudal fin truncate.

Almost all pufferfish contain tetrodotoxin, a substance found in the skin and organs that makes them taste bad and lethal to most fish.




# Sand Flounder

## Family Paralichthyidae

Pictured: Gulf flounder, *Paralichthys albigutta*, distinguished by 3 ocellated black spots on eyed side of the body. If the flounder has more than 3 distinct spots, it is likely an ocellated flounder.

TRUNCATE  
CAUDAL FIN



**FUN FACT:** All flatfishes are born with their eyes on either side of their head. As they mature, one eye migrates to either the left or the right side of the body and they become benthic inhabitants. Flounder can be referred to as general “left-eyed” or “right-eyed” depending on their family classification.

# Sand Flounder

## Family Paralichthyidae



**RANGE:** Northeast coast of U.S. to Gulf of Mexico. Temperate to tropical waters.

**HABITAT:** Benthic inhabitants of inshore coastal and estuarine habitats over sandy or muddy bottoms or seagrass beds. Occur in saline, brackish, and freshwater.

### **FWC REGULATIONS:**

- I. Minimum Size Limit: 12 inches.
- II. Daily Recreational Bag Limit: 10 per harvester per day.
- III. May be harvested by spearing. Snatching prohibited.

### **IDENTIFICATION & BIOLOGY:**

Body deeply compressed, oval in shape.

Dorsal and anal fins continuous

until caudal peduncle. Caudal fin truncate. Large, protrusible terminal mouth. Blotchy, spotted, or mottled colorations depend on the environment they are found in; e.g., beige in sandy areas, darker in mixed sediment areas. Eyes on left side of body ("left-eyed"). Pelvic fins are short, same length on the dorsal and ventral sides. Anterior dorsal fin rays are typically longer than others and do not have membrane attaching them.

Many can change body colors rapidly.





# Searobin

Family Triglidae

Pictured: Leopard searobin, *Prionotus scitulus*, distinguished by two dark spots on the first dorsal fin, one between the 1st and 2nd spines, the second between the 4th and 5th spines. All other searobins have no spots or only one on the dorsal fin between spines.

TRUNCATE  
CAUDAL FIN



**FUN FACT:** *Contrary to popular belief, larger sea robins are considered excellent to eat.*

# Searobin

## Family Triglidae



**RANGE:** East coast of U.S. to Gulf of Mexico

**HABITAT:** Bottom dwelling; found in shallow waters of sandy bottom estuaries and Gulf of Mexico.

**FWC REGULATIONS:** No current Florida FWC regulations. Default bag limit for unregulated species: Two fish or 100 pounds per person per day—whichever is more.

### IDENTIFICATION & BIOLOGY:

Searobins get their name from their large pectoral fins that open and close like a bird's wings in flight.

The pectoral fins have 3 rays, or spiny "legs," on each side that are separate. These legs allow the fish to move around on the bottom and search for food with chemoreception, detection of certain chemical stimuli (prey) in the environment. Large, solid skull, some with armored plates, ridges and spines. Body elongated with darker mottled markings and colorations dorsally and white belly. Dorsal fin near back of skull with spiny rays, some have second dorsal fin that runs along back to caudal fin. Caudal fin truncate. Mouth inferior sub-terminal.

Presence of drumming muscle that makes sounds beating against the swim bladder.



# Silver perch

*Bairdiella chrysoura*

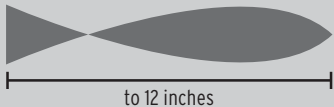
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CAUDAL FIN



**FUN FACT:** Nicknamed “silver croaker” or “sand perch.” Like the other species in the Drum family, Sciaenidae, they get their common name from a large and elaborate swim bladder that, by using certain muscles, can reverberate to produce croaking or drumming sounds.

# Silver perch

*Bairdiella chrysoura*



**RANGE:** East coast of U.S. to Gulf of Mexico.

**HABITAT:** Found along coast in shallow, sandy, muddy bottoms, sea-grass beds, and estuaries. Occasionally found in freshwater. Migrate into estuarine nurseries during summer.

**FWC REGULATIONS:** No current Florida FWC regulations. Default bag limit for unregulated species: Two fish or 100 pounds per person per day—whichever is more.

## IDENTIFICATION &

**BIOLOGY:** Body oblong and laterally compressed. Silvery to gold colors dorsally. All fins dusky to pale yellow. First dorsal fin deeply notched with 10-11 spines. Second dorsal fin has 20-30 soft rays connected with membrane. Lateral line visible. Caudal fin truncate with center slightly protruding out more than other points of fin. Anal fin first ray is separate, remaining are connected with membrane. Pelvic fin large. Terminal mouth shape with small visible teeth.



# Spot croaker

*Leiostomus xanthurus*

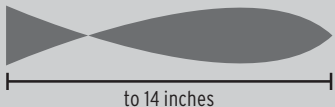
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CAUDAL FIN



**FUN FACT:** *Spot croakers are commonly referred to as "Spots." Like the other species in the Drum family, Sciaenidae, they get their common name from a large and elaborate swim bladder that, by using special muscles, can resonate to produce croaking or drumming sounds.*

# Spot croaker

*Leiostomus xanthurus*



**RANGE:** Northeast U.S. to Gulf of Mexico

**HABITAT:** Adults are common in coastal areas over muddy and sandy bottoms, seagrass beds, and reefs. They tolerate a range of salinities, but prefer moderate salinity. Juveniles utilize low salinity in upper reaches of estuaries, primarily associated with muddy bottom habitats. They progress to higher salinity with age. During winter, they travel to deeper channels and tidal rivers within estuaries.

**FWC REGULATIONS:** No current Florida FWC regulations. Default bag limit for unregulated species: Two fish or 100 pounds per person, per day—whichever is more.

## IDENTIFICATION

**& BIOLOGY:** Silvery gray dorsally, often with deep golden bronze tint.

Narrow, dark lines or rows of spots on back diagonally from caudal peduncle to head. Dorsal fin deeply notched, triangular. After notch, dorsal fin is continuous to caudal peduncle. Dark spot on beginning of lateral line behind gill, hence the name, "spot croaker." Caudal fin truncate to emarginate (tips of fin extend slightly longer than center of fin). Pectoral fins elongated, light golden to translucent. Paired pelvic fins. Anal fin present. Mouth inferior sub-terminal.

Often confused with Atlantic croaker; however, the Atlantic croaker does not have spot on shoulder and is not as golden in color.



# Spotted seatrout

*Cynoscion nebulosus*

TRUNCATE  
CAUDAL FIN



**FUN FACT:** Like the other species in the Drum family, Sciaenidae, they get their common name from a large and elaborate swim bladder that, by using special muscles, can resonate to produce croaking or drumming sounds.

# Spotted seatrout

*Cynoscion nebulosus*



**RANGE:** East coast of U.S. to Gulf of Mexico.

**HABITAT:** Coastal waters and estuary habitats, seagrass beds, rocks, reefs, and marshes. All ages utilize inshore live bottom habitats, primarily estuaries and rivers, but also shallow coastal bays, sounds, and along front beaches of barrier islands. Spawn in bays; juveniles spend first year in seagrass beds.

## FWC REGULATIONS:

**I. Size Limits:** No less than 15 inches or more than 20 inches **II. Daily Recreational Bag Limit:** 5 per harvester per day; May possess no more than 1 over 20 inches.

*\*Management zones are regional;  
refer to FWC regional regulations for  
spotted seatrout in your area.*

## IDENTIFICATION & BIOLOGY:

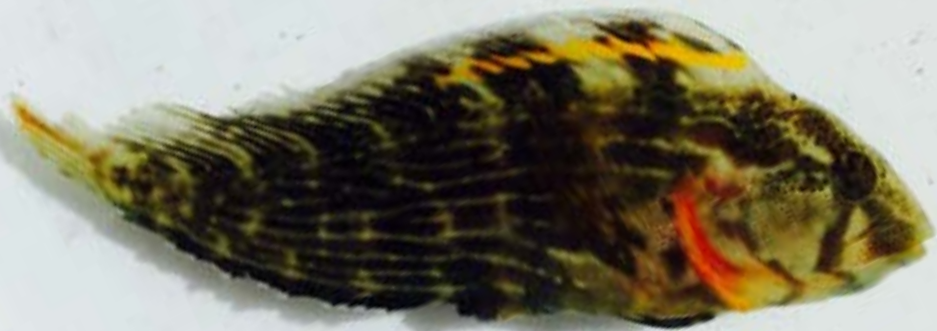
Dark gray dorsally with bluish reflections, silvery white ventrally. Lateral line visible. Numerous round black spots irregularly scattered dorsally and on sides, extends through ends of dorsal and caudal fins. Dorsal fin deeply notched, then continuous to caudal peduncle. Caudal fin truncate. Elongated paired pelvic fins. Pectoral fins narrow. Anal fin present. First dorsal fin with 9-10 spines, second dorsal fin with one spine and 25-28 rays. Terminal mouth shape, large and pointed with lower jaw extending past upper. Two large canine-like teeth at tip of upper jaw.





# Combtooth blenny

Family Blenniidae



ROUNDED  
CAUDAL FIN

**FUN FACT:** *Capable of leaving the water for short periods during low tide. They use their pectoral fins as feet to move around and hold on to objects.*

# Combtooth blenny

Family Blenniidae



Average size 3 inches

**RANGE:** Tropical to warm temperate waters.

**HABITAT:** Brackish and freshwater environments. Bottom dwellers near rocky reefs, sand, mud, and empty shells.

## **FWC REGULATIONS:**

Marine Life Harvest Regulations:

**I.** 20 organisms per person per day; only 5 of any one species allowed within the 20-organism bag limit. **II.** Possession Limit: 2-day possession limit, 40 total.

## **IDENTIFICATION &**

**BIOLOGY:** Very blunt head.

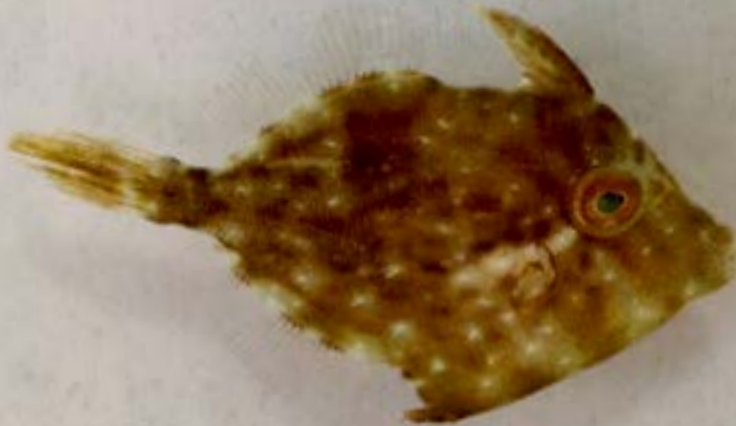
Bodies compressed, elongated, and scale-less. Coloration ranges from bright colors to mottled browns. Continuous dorsal and anal fin to caudal peduncle. Large, rounded pectoral fins. Caudal fin rounded. Small terminal mouth shape. Noted for the comb-like teeth lining their jaws.

Can be confused with species of the Gobiidae family; for comparison, see Gobiidae on page 18.



# Planehead filefish

*Stephanolepis hispidus*



ROUNDED  
CAUDAL FIN

**FUN FACT:** *Very similar to pygmy filefish; however, they lack pelvic spines. Other filefish can be distinguished from the planehead filefish because others have spines on caudal peduncle.*

# Planehead filefish

*Stephanolepis hispidus*



to 10 inches

ROUNDED  
CAUDAL FIN

**RANGE:** East coast of U.S. to Gulf of Mexico.

**HABITAT:** Found in marine subtropical regions. Common near reefs, seagrass beds, and floating macro algae or seaweed, such as Sargassum.

**FWC REGULATIONS:** Marine Life Harvest Regulations **I.** Bag Limit: 20 organisms per person per day; only 5 of any one species allowed within the 20-organism bag limit **II.** Possession Limit: 2-day possession limit, 40 total organisms, no more than 10 of any one species allowed. **III.** Organisms must be landed and kept alive with a continuously circulating live well, aeration or oxygenated system of adequate size to maintain organisms in healthy condition.

## IDENTIFICATION & BIOLOGY:

Deep, laterally compressed body. Tan, dark brown

to olive brown with irregular patterns over body. Skin rough with tiny scale plates. Mouth small, slightly pointed, terminal shaped. Eye color brown. Two dorsal spines can be lowered flat against back. First spine barbed, located over back of eye; second spine smaller. Gill slit very small and vertical. Anal and dorsal fins translucent, continuous to caudal peduncle. No pelvic fins; however, pelvic spine present. Unlike other filefish, planehead filefish have no spines on caudal peduncle. Caudal fin rounded.



# Hogchoker

*Trinectes maculatus*

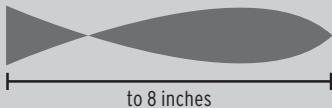


ROUNDED  
CAUDAL FIN

**FUN FACT:** *Hogchokers are rumored to have received their name from when they were fed to hogs. The fish would create a suction with its underside, causing the hog to choke.*

# Hogchoker

*Trinectes maculatus*



ROUNDED  
CAUDAL FIN

**RANGE:** East coast of the U.S., Gulf of Mexico to Central America.

**HABITAT:** Benthic dwellers, found in turbid inshore waters, including rivers, estuaries, and high-salinity coastal waters.

**FWC REGULATIONS:** No current Florida FWC regulations. Default bag limit for unregulated species: Two fish or 100 pounds per person per day—whichever is more.

## IDENTIFICATION & BIOLOGY:

Varying color and patterns. Shades of brown with darker brown wavy spots, blotches, and lines. Approximately 8 dark, separated vertical bars. White to pale underneath. Dorsal and anal fins continuous to caudal peduncle. Caudal fin rounded. Pectoral fins completely absent. Mouth shape is terminal. Small thread-like projections can be viewed around mouth on eye side and largely distributed on the blind side of the head.

Similar to other flatfishes, hogchokers are born with eyes on either side of their head. As they mature, the left eye rotates over to their right side, making them "right-eyed." Hogchokers are in the American Sole family, all of which are right-eyed.



# Topminnow

## Family Fundulidae

Pictured: Diamond Killifish, *Adinia xenica*, distinguished by short, round body with ~15 pale vertical stripes with dark stripes in between on sides. Males have dabbled spots on fins, females lack spots on fins.



ROUNDED  
CAUDAL FIN

**FUN FACT:** Fundulidae family species are typically referred to as "killifish." Mosquitofish are commonly mistaken for members of family Fundulidae; however, they are in the family Poeciliidae.

# Topminnow

Family Fundulidae



to 7 inches

**RANGE:** Tropical to temperate, coastal marine to freshwater.

**HABITAT:** Very adaptable to a range of salinities and temperatures.

**FWC REGULATIONS:** No current Florida FWC regulations. Default bag limit for unregulated species: Two fish or 100 pounds per person per day—whichever is more.

## IDENTIFICATION &

**BIOLOGY:** Body is elongated and cylindrical in shape. Belly rounded. Colorations vary from olive green, brown, to yellowish with spots, stripes, or no patterns. Colorations will coordinate with habitat for camouflage. Head flattened, small superior protrusible mouth. Single dorsal fin located posteriorly. Caudal fin rounded. Pectoral fins behind gills. Anal fin located posteriorly towards caudal peduncle. Males have larger anal fins than females, but female's bodies tend to be larger.



ROUNDED  
CAUDAL FIN



# Sailfin molly

*Poecilia latipinna*

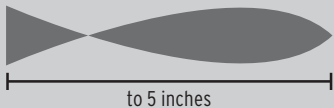


ROUNDED  
CAUDAL FIN

**FUN FACT:** This is the same fish sold in pet stores as the "Black Molly," just a different color phase.

# Sailfin molly

*Poecilia latipinna*



to 5 inches

**RANGE:** Northeast coast of U.S. to Gulf of Mexico.

**HABITAT:** Found in slow-moving, vegetated brackish and freshwater. Tolerant to salinity ranges and temperature changes.

**FWC REGULATIONS:** No current Florida FWC regulations. Default bag limit for unregulated species: Two fish or 100 pounds per person per day—whichever is more.

## IDENTIFICATION &

**BIOLOGY:** Brown to olive dorsally, white underneath.

Dusky shading on scales forms

diamond-shaped pattern along body. Females have pale colorings with shortened dorsal fin. Males have tall and long dorsal fin, resembling a sail, with blue hues on dorsal and caudal fin and throughout body. Yellow to orange margin on top of dorsal fin and in center of caudal fin. Anal fin elongated, with thread-like tips. Caudal fin large and rounded. Mouth shape is superior.

Member of the livebearers family Poeciliidae; mosquitofish are also in this family.



# Western mosquitofish

*Gambusia affinis*

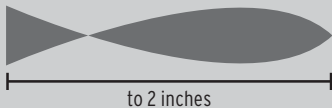


ROUNDED  
CAUDAL FIN

**FUN FACT:** *Eastern mosquitofish hybridize with western mosquitofish when their habitats overlap. Some scientists do not recognize eastern mosquitofish, Gambusia holbrooki, as a valid species.*

# Western mosquitofish

*Gambusia affinis*



to 2 inches

**RANGE:** Northeast coast of U.S. to Gulf of Mexico.

**HABITAT:** Found in slow-moving brackish and freshwater. Tolerant to salinity ranges and temperature changes.

**FWC REGULATIONS:** No current Florida FWC regulations. Default bag limit for unregulated species: Two fish or 100 pounds per person per day—whichever is more.

## IDENTIFICATION &

**BIOLOGY:** Olive, brown, tan or silvery dorsally (depending on habitat), lighter underneath.

Scale margins darker forming diamond-shaped pattern. Belly rounded. Dorsal fin in posterior of body with two to three rows of small, dark spots. Anal fin on male is elongate at tip. Superior mouth shape. Females larger and have dark spot on abdomen. Caudal fin rounded.

Member of livebearers family Poeciliidae; sailfin molly is also in this family.



ROUNDED  
CAUDAL FIN

# False silverstripe halfbeak

*Hyporhamphus meeki*

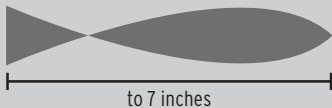


FORKED  
CAUDAL FIN

**FUN FACT:** Often called "Meek's halfbeak" after the ichthyologist Seth Eugene Meek.

# False silverstripe halfbeak

*Hyporhamphus meeki*



**RANGE:** East coast of U.S. to northern Gulf of Mexico and Yucatán.

**HABITAT:** Found in shallow areas of bays, estuaries, and harbors. Schools at surface and over sandy and vegetated bottoms.

**FWC REGULATIONS:** No current Recreational Florida FWC regulations. Default bag limit for unregulated species: Two fish or 100 pounds per person, per day—whichever is more\*.

*\*Bag limits and license requirements for commercial harvest are required.*

## IDENTIFICATION & BIOLOGY:

Coloration is iridescent green dorsally and silvery to whitish ventrally.

Body elongated with highly pointed snout. Horizontal silver stripe along lateral line from pectoral fin to caudal peduncle. Lower jaw has red coloration towards point and is dramatically longer than upper. Upper jaw very short in relation to lower, with green coloration. Three thin, dark lines on back from head to dorsal fin. Base of dorsal and anal fin scaled. Dorsal fin located posteriorly, very close to caudal fin. Single, small pelvic fin. Pectoral fin short. Caudal fin forked with dark dusting. Superior mouth shape.

Often confused with Atlantic silverstripe halfbeak. To differentiate, false silverstripe halfbeak has shorter snout, smaller eyes and smaller body. Pre-orbital length (from mouth to eye) is greater than 70% of eye diameter, versus less than 70% of eye diameter for Atlantic silverstripe halfbeak.



# Florida pompano

*Trachinotus carolinus*

Photo Credit: Sean Murphy

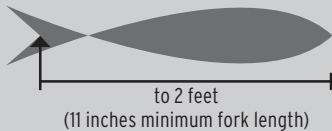


**FORKED  
CAUDAL FIN**

**FUN FACT:** Pompano are fished commercially and for sport. They are also produced in aquaculture farms to meet growing demand.

# Florida pompano

*Trachinotus carolinus*



**RANGE:** East coast of U.S., Gulf of Mexico to Brazil.

**HABITAT:** Found along inshore sandy beaches and in brackish bays and inlets. Adults are pelagic, juveniles occur in beach surf zone. Juveniles form large schools.

**FWC REGULATIONS:** **I.** Minimum size limit: 11 inches fork length. **II.** Daily Recreational Bag limit: 6 per harvester per day. **III.** Allowable Gear: Hook and line, cast net, and beach or haul seine.

## IDENTIFICATION & BIOLOGY:

Body short and deeply compressed.

Silvery with blue-green

iridescent body; abdomen white to silvery to yellowish. Anal and caudal fin regions yellow. First dorsal fin spines small and spaced, no membrane. Second dorsal fin, separated by membranes, continues to caudal peduncle. Anal fin elongated and continuous to caudal peduncle. Pectoral fins elongated and small. Caudal fin forked. Head profile somewhat rounded; snout very blunt. Terminal mouth shape.





# Grunt

Family Haemulidae

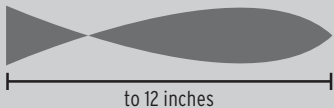


FORKED  
CAUDAL FIN

**FUN FACT:** Grunts are nicknamed "sweetlips" because of their large, scale-less lips. Black grouper prey on grunts.

# Grunt

Family Haemulidae



**RANGE:** Tropical to warm temperate waters.

**HABITAT:** Found in shallow coastal waters, brackish and periodically freshwater.

**FWC REGULATIONS:** No current Florida FWC regulations. Default bag limit for unregulated species: Two fish or 100 pounds per person per day—whichever is more.

FORKED  
CAUDAL FIN

## IDENTIFICATION &

**BIOLOGY:** Body shape is oval. Gently sloped face. Small terminal mouth shape, can be short or long. Dorsal fin is continuous and can be deeply notched or without notch. Forked caudal fin. Elongated pectoral fin. Large lips without scales. Colorations vary greatly from bright tropical colors to pale grays. With stripes or lack of distinct stripes/blotches.

Creates grunting noise by grinding their pharyngeal, throat teeth, hence the common name.



# Herring

Family Clupeidae



**FORKED  
CAUDAL FIN**

**FUN FACT:** *Herring play a pivotal role in the history of marine fisheries. Studies on them have led fisheries science.*

# Herring

Family Clupeidae



to 2 feet,  
most are smaller

**RANGE:** Tropical to polar seas

**HABITAT:** Coastal or estuarine habitats. Schooling species.

**FWC REGULATIONS:** No current Florida FWC regulations. Default bag limit for unregulated species: Two fish or 100 pounds per person per day—whichever is more.

FORKED  
CAUDAL FIN

## IDENTIFICATION & BIOLOGY:

Laterally compressed body, some are cylindrically round. Deeply forked caudal fin. Dark, iridescent dorsally; silver underneath. Some have a darker spot or spots behind gill. Superior mouth shape. Single dorsal fin midway.

Most are plankton filter-feeders, “planktivores.”



# Gulf menhaden

*Brevoortia patronus*



**FORKED  
CAUDAL FIN**

**FUN FACT:** A keystone species vital to the food chain. To feed, they swim with their mouths open and filter plankton from the water, known as filter feeding. They are very oily fish and are harvested commercially for their oils.

# Gulf menhaden

*Brevoortia patronus*



to 12 inches

**RANGE:** Northeast central Atlantic U.S. coast and Gulf of Mexico.

**HABITAT:** Occur in shallow marine coastal waters; inshore in summer, but may move into deeper waters with cooler weather.

**FWC REGULATIONS:** No current Florida FWC regulations. Default bag limit for unregulated species: Two fish or 100 pounds per person, per day—whichever is more\*.

*\*Commercial baitfish regulations apply to Gulf menhaden harvest.*

**IDENTIFICATION & BIOLOGY:** In herring family Clupeidae.

Greenish blue to bluish gray dorsally with brassy to silvery sides, silver underneath. Body deeply compressed. Black spot behind gills followed by single or double row of smaller spots. Two rows of enlarged scales in front of dorsal fin. Single dorsal fin, short and triangular. Small round pelvic fin. Anal fin narrow and continuous to caudal peduncle. Caudal fin deeply forked with yellow coloring. Terminal mouth shape.



FORKED  
CAUDAL FIN

# Mojarra

Family Gerreidae

Photo Credit: Sean Murphy

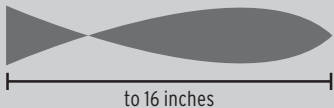


**FORKED  
CAUDAL FIN**

**FUN FACT:** *“Silver biddy” is the name used to refer to the Gerreidae (Mojarra) family. They are known as blanches in French and mojarras in Spanish.*

# Mojarra

## Family Gerreidae



**RANGE:** Occur worldwide in tropical to warm temperate seas.

**HABITAT:** Most are found along the coast; many enter brackish water, some live in freshwater.

**FWC REGULATIONS:** No current Florida FWC regulations. Default bag limit for unregulated species: Two fish or 100 pounds per person per day—whichever is more.

FORKED  
CAUDAL FIN

### IDENTIFICATION &

**BIOLOGY:** Mojarras' bodies

are deep and compressed.

Most are silvery in color,

some have dorsal mottling. The upper jaw is highly protrusible, meaning that they can extend their jaws downward into the sediment to search for food. Mouth is a pointed, terminal mouth shape. The dorsal fin is notched and continuous to caudal peduncle. Lateral line visible from gills to caudal fin. The bases of the dorsal and anal fins are scaled. Caudal fin is deeply forked. Anal fin has three separated spines, connected by membrane; continuous. Paired pelvic fins. Elongated pectoral fin. Dorsal fin typically has dark margins.





# Leatherjack

*Oligoplites saurus*



**FORKED  
CAUDAL FIN**

**FUN FACT:** *Some research suggests that smaller leatherjacks practice lepidophagy, a specialized feeding behavior that involves eating scales of other fish.*

# Leatherjack

*Oligoplites saurus*



to 12 inches

**RANGE:** Northeast coast of U.S. to South America.

**HABITAT:** Found inshore near sandy beaches and estuaries, typically in turbid water.

**FWC REGULATIONS:** No current Florida FWC regulations. Default bag limit for unregulated species: Two fish or 100 pounds per person per day—whichever is more.

FORKED  
CAUDAL FIN

## IDENTIFICATION &

**BIOLOGY:** Slender, elongated compressed body. Metallic green to blue dorsally, silvery iridescent ventrally. Terminal mouth shape. First few dorsal spines small, separate. Second dorsal fin silvery to yellow, has continuous spines semi-attached to caudal peduncle. Pectoral fins translucent. Anal fin silvery, first few spines separate, with continuous semi-attached spines to caudal peduncle. Spines can cause a painful wound and may carry mild venom. Forked caudal fin, yellowish to translucent.



# Lizardfish

## Family Synodontidae

Pictured: Inshore lizardfish, *Synodus foetens*, distinguished from other lizardfish by extremely pointed snout with eyes close to top of head. Colorations are light tan to dark brown with around 8 diamond-shaped spots along lateral line. No additional colors besides shades of brown.

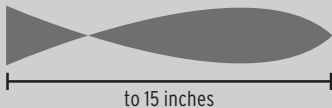


FORKED  
CAUDAL FIN

**FUN FACT:** Eight species of lizardfish occur in the Gulf of Mexico. Not considered a fish to eat, very bony.

# Lizardfish

## Family Synodontidae



**RANGE:** Northeast coast of U.S. to Caribbean.

**HABITAT:** Benthic inshore and estuarine habitats over sandy, muddy, shelly, or rocky bottoms. Benthic predators that ambush prey.

**FWC REGULATIONS:** No current Florida FWC regulations. Default bag limit for unregulated species: Two fish or 100 pounds per person per day—whichever is more.

FORKED  
CAUDAL FIN

### IDENTIFICATION &

**BIOLOGY:** Body cylindrical and elongated. Snout pointed with small needle-like teeth.

They get their name from their large terminal mouth that when opened looks similar to a lizard's head.

Dorsal fin located in middle of back. Pectoral fin located directly behind gill, narrow elongated shape. Pelvic fin located near middle of body. Caudal fin forked. Very small dorsal adipose fin, a soft fleshy fin, located towards caudal peduncle. Posterior anal fin. Colorations vary, dark to light blotches or mottling dorsally with light coloration or lack of color ventrally.



# Lookdown

*Selene vomer*

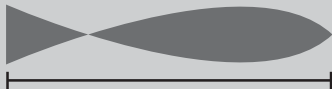


FORKED  
CAUDAL FIN

**FUN FACT:** *The lookdown gets its name because it appears to be “looking down.” The fish is also able to generate loud grunts when it feels threatened.*

# Lookdown

*Selene vomer*



to 12 inches

**RANGE:** East coast of U.S. to Gulf of Mexico.

**HABITAT:** Found near the bottom of shallow coastal waters. Juveniles found in estuaries near seagrass beds and inshore.

**FWC REGULATIONS:** No current Florida FWC regulations. Default bag limit for unregulated species: Two fish or 100 pounds per person per day—whichever is more.

FORKED  
CAUDAL FIN

## IDENTIFICATION & BIOLOGY:

Body deeply laterally compressed, very thin. Silver sides with metallic

bluish to yellowish sheen. Juveniles have vertical yellow bars on body, while adults' fade to a darker silver.

Profile of head extremely steep. First dorsal fin spines elongated; thread-like extensions dark in juveniles, reduced in adults. Second dorsal and anal fin lobes elongated. Pelvic fins elongated and dark in juveniles, very small in adults. Pectoral fins elongated. Caudal fin forked. Lateral line with anterior arch. Terminal mouth, lower jaw protrudes out past upper jaw.

Looks similar to Atlantic moonfish; however, the elongated dorsal and anal fin can distinguish the lookdown.



# Pigfish

*Orthopristis chryoptera*

Photo Credit: Sean Murphy

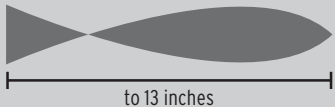


**FORKED  
CAUDAL FIN**

**FUN FACT:** *Grunts when distressed, like others in the Grunt family.*

# Pigfish

*Orthopristis chrysoptera*



**RANGE:** East coast of U.S. to Gulf of Mexico.

**HABITAT:** Nearshore in shallow waters over soft bottoms. Often in bays and estuaries.

**FWC REGULATIONS:** No current Florida FWC regulations. Default bag limit for unregulated species: Two fish or 100 pounds per person per day—whichever is more.

## IDENTIFICATION &

**BIOLOGY:** Greenish gray dorsally with iridescent highlights, silvery on sides, pearly below.

Dark orange spots create irregular horizontal lines from mouth to caudal fin. Upper body may have pale to dark gray vertical bars. Fins dusky to yellowish, may have darker margins. Forked caudal fin; upper caudal-fin lobe slightly longer than lower lobe. Terminal mouth shape.

Mainly nocturnal.





# Pinfish

*Lagodon rhomboides*

Photo Credit: Sean Murphy

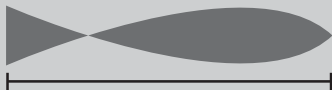


**FORKED  
CAUDAL FIN**

**FUN FACT:** *It gets its common name from the pin-like rays on its dorsal fin. It is the only member of the genus Lagodon—this means it has no subspecies in its genus.*

# Pinfish

*Lagodon rhomboides*



to 14 inches

**RANGE:** East coast of U.S. to Gulf of Mexico.

**HABITAT:** Adults prefer waters between 30-50 feet deep, while juveniles are more common in seagrass beds, rocky bottoms, jetties, pilings, and mangroves.

**FWC REGULATIONS:** No current Florida FWC regulations. Default bag limit for unregulated species: Two fish or 100 pounds per person per day—whichever is more.

FORKED  
CAUDAL FIN

## IDENTIFICATION &

**BIOLOGY:** Silvery sheen with five to six dark vertical bars on sides. Many horizontal, silver to golden lines extending from mouth to caudal fin. Olive dorsally with yellow and white pigmentation; blue, green, and purple iridescence. Black spot on lateral-line origin near gills. Dorsal fin continuous, with yellowish bands having 12 rigid, spiny, pin-like rays. Pectoral fin elongated. Paired pelvic fins with yellow coloration. Anal fin continuous. Forked caudal fin. Terminal mouth shape.

Used as bait by anglers targeting red drum, spotted sea trout, and flounder.



# Spottail pinfish

*Diplodus holbrookii*

Photo Credit: Sean Murphy

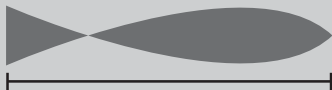


**FORKED  
CAUDAL FIN**

**FUN FACT:** *Also known as spottail seabream. Commonly used as bait.*

# Spottail pinfish

*Diplodus holbrookii*



to 18 inches

**RANGE:** East coast of U.S. to northwestern Gulf of Mexico.

**HABITAT:** Shallow coastal waters, seagrass beds, rocks and reefs, bays, and harbors. Highest populations are found in northwestern Gulf of Mexico and the Florida Keys.

**FWC REGULATIONS:** No current Florida FWC regulations. Default bag limit for unregulated species: Two fish or 100 pounds per person per day—whichever is more.

## IDENTIFICATION &

**BIOLOGY:** Body deeply compressed. Large black spot on upper caudal peduncle, hence the name "spottail." Faint, thin, darker stripes may be visible. Iridescent coloration on sides, silvery white ventrally. Dorsal and anal fin continuous with yellow to gold dusting. Approximately 9 dark, faint, and narrow vertical bars dorsally (fade with age). Caudal fin forked. Pectoral fin elongated. Paired pelvic fins with dusky margins. Terminal mouth shape.



# Scaled sardine

*Harengula jaguana*

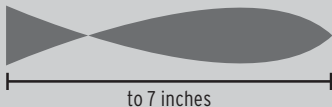


**FORKED  
CAUDAL FIN**

**FUN FACT:** *The scaled sardine is much sought-after as a bait fish for several inshore fishing methods. This fish is sometimes called "white bait" by fishermen.*

# Scaled sardine

*Harengula jaguana*



**RANGE:** East coast of the U.S., Gulf of Mexico to Brazil.

**HABITAT:** Pelagic, found in shallow coastal and estuarine waters near sandy to muddy bottoms along coast.

**FWC REGULATIONS:** No current Florida FWC regulations. Default bag limit for unregulated species: Two fish or 100 pounds per person per day—whichever is more.

## IDENTIFICATION & BIOLOGY:

Body deeply compressed. Bluish green, iridescent dorsally. Silver

sides with faint horizontal streaks. Small, faint spot behind gill. Pale yellow dorsal fin. Forked caudal fin with yellow base and dusky margins. Large eyes.

Superior mouth shape with dusky margins.



FORKED  
CAUDAL FIN

# Silverside

Family Atherinopsidae “New World silversides”

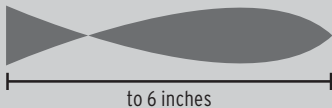


**FORKED  
CAUDAL FIN**

**FUN FACT:** *Some refer to silversides in general as planktivores—schooling fish that eat plankton—or tidewater silversides. It can be very difficult to distinguish species within the family Atherinopsidae.*

# Silverside

Family Atherinopsidae “New World silversides”



**RANGE:** Northeast coast of U.S. to Gulf of Mexico.

**HABITAT:** Inshore along coast and in estuaries. Typically found near surface of water column. Schooling species.

**FWC REGULATIONS:** No current Florida FWC regulations. Default bag limit for unregulated species: Two fish or 100 pounds per person per day—whichever is more.

## IDENTIFICATION &

**BIOLOGY:** Body colorations are silvery to bluish green, translucent. Elongated, round body. Thick, silver, iridescent stripe down lateral line, hence the name “silversides.” Scales rough to touch. Superior mouth shape. Two dorsal fins—first is small and short halfway down dorsally; second is larger, located towards caudal peduncle. Pectoral fins small, elongated, and directly behind gills. Pelvic fins paired. Anal fin aligned closer to second dorsal fin. Caudal fin forked.





# Striped anchovy

*Anchoa hepsetus*

Photo Credit: Sean Murphy

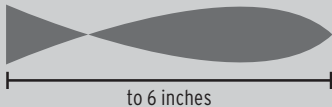


**FORKED  
CAUDAL FIN**

**FUN FACT:** *Anchovies are an important food source for every predatory fish in its environment, including marine mammals, birds, and even humans!*

# Striped anchovy

*Anchoa hepsetus*



**RANGE:** East coast of U.S., northern Gulf of Mexico, to south Brazil.

**HABITAT:** Found in estuaries and along coast to about 200 feet deep. Tolerant of varying salinities and temperatures.

**FWC REGULATIONS:** No current Florida fishing regulations. Default bag limit for unregulated species: Two fish or 100 pounds per person per day—whichever is more.

## IDENTIFICATION & BIOLOGY:

Translucent with darker gray shading dorsally. Abdomen area pale to translucent. Silver horizontal mid-body stripe. Caudal and dorsal fin may have darker dusky edges. Large eyes. Jaw extends past first gill cover; bottom jaw shorter than upper. Terminal mouth shape. Caudal fin forked.

Found in large schools.



FORKED  
CAUDAL FIN

# Striped mullet

*Mugil cephalus*

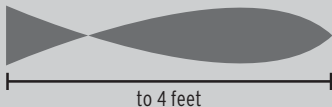


**FUN FACT:** *Striped mullet are catadromous, meaning they swim from freshwater to sea for spawning. Caught and raised commercially, great for eating.*

**FORKED  
CAUDAL FIN**

# Striped mullet

*Mugil cephalus*



**RANGE:** Northeast coast of U.S. to South America

**HABITAT:** Benthic dwellers in shallow waters over sandy or muddy bottoms. Temperate to tropical waters from salt, brackish, to freshwater habitats; highly tolerant to salinity changes. Schooling fish.

## **FWC REGULATIONS:**

**I.** Minimum Size Limit: None. **II.** Daily Recreational Bag Limit: 50 aggregate per person per day. **III.** Aggregate vessel limits: September to January –50 fish per vessel; February to August–100 fish per vessel.

## **IDENTIFICATION & BIOLOGY:**

Olive, gray to brown dorsally; silvery, iridescent sides; white ventrally. Darker scales form stripes horizontally down sides. Larger scales. Head flattened and broad. Large eyes. Terminal mouth shape, short. Caudal fin forked, dusky gray. Two dorsal fins, first one located dorsally, midway down the body. Second dorsal fin located posteriorly, slightly longer. Pectoral fins elongated and translucent. Terminal mouth shape.



# Tonguefish

Family Cynoglossidae

Pictured: Blackcheek tonguefish, *Symphurus plagiosa*, distinguished by dark patch on gill plate, hence its name "blackcheek."

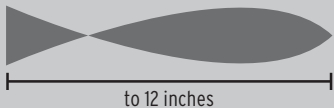


**FUN FACT:** Most tonguefish do not grow more than 12 inches. Some are used as food, but most have no commercial value.

CONTINUOUS  
CAUDAL FIN

# Tonguefish

## Family Cynoglossidae



**RANGE:** Northeast coast of U.S. to Gulf to South America.

**HABITAT:** Temperate to tropical waters. Live and feed near the bottom, or demersal. Found in shallow estuaries over sandy and muddy bottoms and seagrass beds.

**FWC REGULATIONS:** No current Florida FWC regulations. Default bag limit for unregulated species: Two fish or 100 pounds per person per day—whichever is more.

### IDENTIFICATION &

**BIOLOGY:** Very compressed body, “flat fish,” with oval or tongue-like shape. Dorsal and anal fins continuous with tail fin. White underneath, coloration is similar to environment in which it’s found; e.g., beige in sandy bottoms. Long hook on snout overhanging mouth; terminal mouth shape. No pectoral or pelvic fins.

Eyes rotate from both sides of body to left side of body in early stages of life. Tonguefish are known as “left-eyed,” while soles are “right-eyed.” Flatfishes like these can be distinguished by at least the family order by determining this.



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## **PHOTOGRAPHY:**

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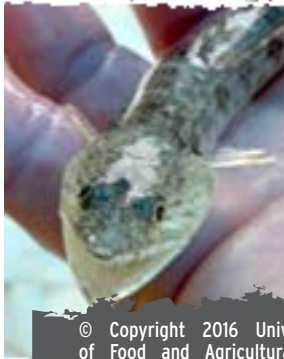
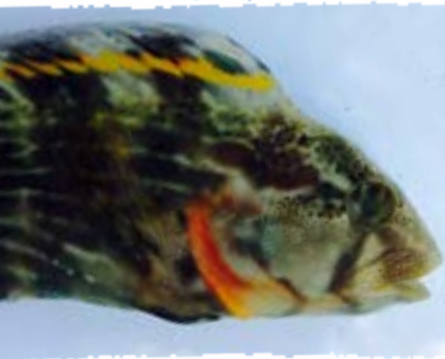
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