U.S. Salt Water Fish Guide

Game fish of the Atlantic, Caribbean, and Gulf of Mexico
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Information compiled from the National Game and Wildlife Association

Illustrations by
Jorge Luis Coya
About This Book

This is field guide reference to 15 of the top game marine fishes of the eastern North American coast from Arctic Canada to the Gulf of Mexico. This is a easy to use reference designed to identify 15 of the top game fish that live in coastal waters of these regions. Each illustration is as exact to each species as can be with all marks included to scale for identification of species.

Areas Covered

The areas covered run from the north Atlantic down the eastern coast of the United States down into the Florida Keys, the Caribbean Sea, and the Gulf of Mexico. This guide will tell you what regions each species can be found, approximate size for keeping, and what times of year each species is in season if they have a hunting regulation.

How To Use This Guide

This guide uses field guide identification of fishes seen either living underwater or caught and held in the hand. It is based on the illustrations and the text provided. To identify a fish in the guide first find similar body types that match that of your specimen. Then look for familiar markings and colors that might help identify your species. Pay particular attention to features such as fins and gill markings.
Map of Area Covered

Atlantic Ocean

Gulf of Mexico

Caribbean Sea
Atlantic Ocean
The second largest of the earth’s four oceans the most heavily fished. Divided into two halves; North Atlantic and the South Atlantic. Its marginal seas— as followed. Gulf of Mexico and the Caribbean Sea.

Average Depth 12,881 ft  Surface Area 31,660,000

Gulf of Mexico
The ninth largest body of water in the world. Largely surrounded by the North American continent and Cuba. It connects with the Atlantic ocean thru the Florida Straits. It is an ocean basin with a circular shape.

Average Depth 14,383 ft  Surface Area 615,000,000

Caribbean Sea
The body of water adjacent to the Atlantic Ocean, south of the Gulf of Mexico. The entire area of the Caribbean Sea, especially the numerous islands in the sea, is known just as the Caribbean; Cuba, Haiti, Dominican Rep., Puerto Rico.

Average Depth 25,000 ft  Surface Area 1,063,000
Dolphin (mahi)

Coryphaena hippurus

**Identification**
Head and body bluish above: golden yellow with dark flecks on the side; fins bluish or greenish to a yellow. Pectoral fin which is the fin located above the fishes head ranges to more than half the head length. They grow up to 5.25ft. and weigh up to 88lbs.

**Range**
worldwide in tropical waters

**Size Requirements**
no size limit

**Catch Per Day**
60 per person on boat

**Seasonal requirement**
no closed season
Atlantic Bonito

*Sarda sarda*

**Identification**
Body entirely scaled; Bluish above, silvery to whitish below. 7 or more oblique dark stripes on back. They can grow up to 3ft and weigh up to 19lbs.

**Range**
South Gulf of St. Lawrence to Argentina

**Size Requirements**
no size limit

**Catch Per Day**
60 per person on boat

**Seasonal requirement**
no closed season
Red Grouper

*Epinephelus morio*

**Identification**
Dark Brown with a redish cast, particularly around the mouth. Body frequently blotched with poorly defined pale areas. Small black spots around eye. They grow up to 3.5ft and weigh up to 50lbs.

**Range**
Massachusetts, Bermuda and north Gulf of Mexico to south east Brazil.

**Size Requirements**
20” minimum

**Catch Per Day**
5 per person on boat

**Seasonal requirement**
no closed season
Jew Fish

*Epinephelus itajara*

**Identification**
Head and body pale dark brown with irregular brown bands. Large adults have brown spots on heads and fins. Spots are rounded at all sizes. They can grow up to 8ft and weigh up to 680lbs.

**Range**
Bermuda, Florida, and north Gulf of Mexico to southeast Brazil

**Size Requirements**
No size limit

**Catch Per Day**
Catch and release only

**Seasonal Requirement**
No closed season
Red Snapper

*Lutjanus campechanus*

**Indentification**
Head and body entirely pinkish red, becoming whitish below. Iris red and anal fin pointed. They grow up to 3ft and weigh up to 35lbs.

**Range**
North Carolina to the Florida Keys and around the Gulf of Mexico to the Yucatan.

**Size Requirements**
20” minimum

**Catch Per Day**
No more than 2 per person on boat

**Seasonal requirement**
no closed season
Yellow Tail

*Ocyurus chrysurus*

**Identification**
Bright yellow stripes from snout to tail tip. Deeply forked tail olive or bluish spots and stripes with olive yellow spots. Dorsal fins mostly yellow. Grow up to 30” and weigh up to 5lbs.

**Range**
Massachusetts, Bermuda, and north Gulf of Mexico to south east Brazil. Also in east Atlantic

**Size Requirements**
12” minimum

**Catch Per Day**
10 per person on boat

**Seasonal requirement**
no closed season
Tarpon

*Megalops atlanticus*

**Indentification**
Silvery, with a dark greenish or bluish back. Mouth large, oblique, superior; lower jaw projects. They can grow up to 8ft and wiegh up to 300lbs.

**Range**
Virginia, Bermuda, and Gulf of Mexico to Brazil; also east Atlantic; occasionally near the Panama Canal

**Size Requirements**
no size limit

**Catch Per Day**
1 per person on boat

**Seasonal requirement**
no closed season
Barracuda

*Sphyraena barracuda*

**Indentification**
Grey with a greenish cast above. Whitish below. Many irregular, small black blotches on lower side. Dark stripe on side.

**Range**
Massachusetts to south east Brazil; nearly worldwide in warm waters

**Size Requirements**
No size limit

**Catch Per Day**
4 per person on boat

**Seasonal requirement**
No closed season
King Mackerel
*Scomberomorus maculatus*

**Indentification**
Dark bluish above; silvery whitish below. Adults have no markings but young (not shown) have many round dark spots with a gold yellow cast. They grow up to 66” and weigh up to 100lbs.

**Range**
Massachusetts to north Gulf of Mexico to south Brazil.

**Size Requirements**
24” minimum

**Catch Per Day**
3 per person on boat

**Seasonal requirement**
March 1 to February 28
Wahoo

*Acanthocybium solanderi*

**Identification**
Body slender and elongated jaw form a pointed beak. Dark bluish above with 30 or so dark wavey bars. They grow up to 83” and weigh up to 183lbs.

**Range**
New Jersey, Bermuda, and north Gulf of Mexico to northern South America; worldwide in warm-temperate oceanic waters.

**Size Requirements**
no size limit

**Catch Per Day**
2 per person on boat

**Seasonal requirement**
no closed season
Spanish Mackerel
*Scomberomorus maculatus*

**Indentification**
Many large dark brown and brassy spots, even in adults. Lateral line slopes evenly downward. 1st dorsal fin blackish. They grow up to 37” and weigh about 11lbs.

**Range**
Cape Cod to south Florida and entire Gulf of Mexico, Cuban waters and Hatian waters.

**Size Requirements**
12” minimum

**Catch Per Day**
15 per person on boat

**Seasonal requirement**
March 1 to February 28
Common Snook

Centropomus undecimalis

**Indentification**
Body slender and lateral line boldly outlined in black. Golden luster above with a fade to white. They grow up to 4ft and weigh up to 50lbs.

**Range**
South Carolina and Texas to south Brazil.

**Size Requirements**
8” minimum

**Catch Per Day**
8 per person on boat

**Seasonal requirement**
no closed season
Blue Marlin

*Makaira nigricans*

**Identification**
Lateral line branches into a network of hexagons that cover the sides of the fish. Dorsal fins are very spiny with a dark tint to them which lightens towards the belly. They can grow up to

**Range**
Gulf of Mexico, Bermuda, and north Gulf of Mexico to south Brazil; in tropical warm-temperate waters.

**Size Requirements**
99” minimum

**Catch Per Day**
15 per person on boat

**Seasonal requirement**
May be caught but not sold.
Tiger Shark
*Galeocerdo cuvieri*

**Identification**
Dark bluish gray to white with dark blotches and bars. Snout very short, broadly rounded from below. They can grow up to 24 ft. but is rare.

**Range**
Cape Cod to Uruguay, but most common from Florida thru the Carribean; nearly worldwide in warm waters.

**Size Requirements**
54” minimum

**Catch Per Day**
Catch and release

**Seasonal requirement**
no closed season
Ballyhoo

Hemiramphus brasiliensis

**Identification**
Tip of lower jaw and upper jaw pointed. Pectoral fin short. They grow up to 16”

**Range**
Massachusetts and north Gulf of Mexico to Brazil.

**Size Requirements**
No size requirement

**Catch Per Day**
15 per person on boat

**Seasonal requirement**
Caught by net only with intent to be used as bait
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More information please visit  www.fws.gov