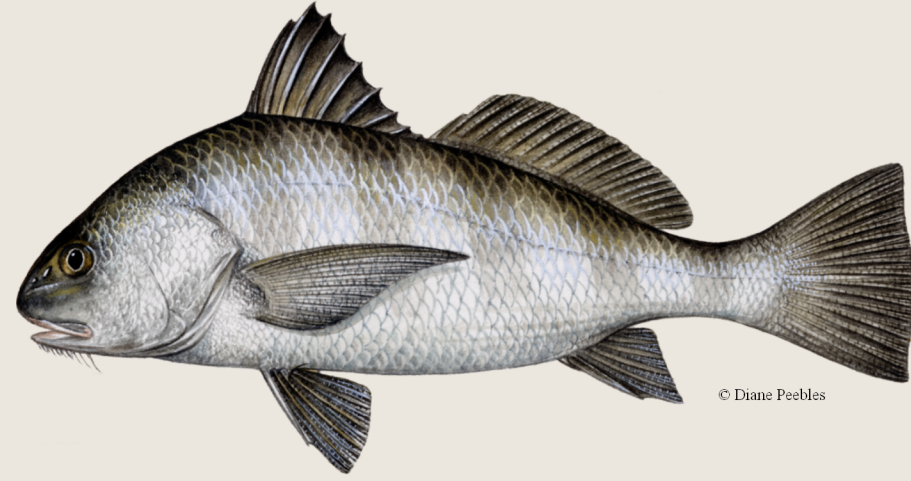


Black Drum

(Pogonias cromis)

Black drum are black or reddish-gray in color with whisker-like barbels under the chin. Juvenile black drum have four to five vertical bars along each side that fade with age. Closely related to red drum, black drum are well known as the largest species in the drum family. Black drum have rounded teeth and powerful jaws capable of crushing oysters and other shellfish.



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Spawning Season

Black drum spawn from January through April, with peak activity in February and March. Black drum are batch spawners, meaning they spawn multiple times in one season. Individual female black drum may release between 0.5 and 2.4 million eggs during each spawning event. Peak black drum spawning activity usually occurs near sunset during new and full moons in nearshore and offshore waters at depths of 10 to 165 feet. The majority of male black drum mature by age four, while females are mostly mature by age five. Both male and female black drum have the ability to produce "drumming" sounds from muscles associated with the swim bladder. These "drumming" sounds can be loud, especially in spawning aggregations.

Habitat

Black drum range along the coast of the United States from the Chesapeake Bay to the mouth of the Rio Grande River. Highest black drum abundance occurs in the northern Gulf of Mexico, near the Mississippi River Delta. Postlarval and juvenile black drum inhabit shallow estuarine nursery areas. They move to open bayous and bays by their first summer. Black drum are found offshore and in inshore waters along the coast, depending on the season.

Diet

Juvenile black drum feed mainly on amphipods, mollusks, marine worms, shrimp, crabs, and small fish. Black drum have pharyngeal molars (teeth in the throat) that allow them to crush and consume hard-bodied prey like oysters and crabs. Black drum can consume large quantities of oysters during the spring when they return from spawning in nearshore coastal waters. Large schools of feeding black drum have been known to "dredge" the ocean floor and leave large turbid plumes that can be seen from the air.

Age and Growth

Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries use "earstones", called otoliths, to calculate the age of fish. Biologists remove these hard structures from the skull of bony fish and cut them into small sections. In a process similar to ageing trees, biologists count the rings that are visible in the thinner otolith slices. Finfish age, length, and weight data are used by fishery managers to estimate growth rates, mortality rates, and population size. The chart shows that fish grow rapidly during the first few years of life and then growth begins to stabilize as they get older. Once fish reach maturity, energy is invested in reproduction rather than growth.



Your purchase of fishing equipment and motor boat fuels supports Sport Fish Restoration and boating access facilities.

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AGE (YEARS)	APPROX. AVERAGE LENGTH	APPROX. LENGTH RANGE
1	11.5"	9" - 13.5"
2	17.5"	14" - 21"
3	21"	17" - 25"
4	23.5"	19" - 28"
5	25"	20" - 29.5"
6	25.5"	21" - 30.5"
7	26.5"	21.5" - 31"
8	27"	22" - 32"
9	27.5"	22" - 32"
10+	28"	23" - 42"

Black Drum Quick Facts

The oldest female black drum aged by LDWF was 42.5 years of age, 36.5 inches long, and collected in 2000 from the recreational fishery.

The longest female black drum aged by LDWF was 43.5 inches long, 41 years of age, and collected from the recreational fishery.

The oldest and longest male black drum aged by LDWF was 45 years of age, 41.8 inches long, and collected in 2008 from the commercial fishery.

Black drum are a long-lived species; fish up to 59 years of age have been recorded on the east coast.

LDWF Contact Information

Recreational Fishing License
225-765-2887

Commercial License
225-765-2898

Boating Registration
225-765-2898

Lifetime License
225-765-2887

Enforcement
225-765-2989

Fish Tagging Program
225-763-5415