

Pinfish

Lagodon rhomboides

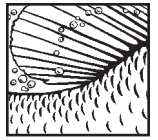


The jewel tones and abundance of the pinfish make it a welcome and familiar sight in the coastal waters of Texas.

Coastal Wetlands

Pinfish

Lagodon rhomboides



APPEARANCE

Length: Adults around 4.5 inches (11.43 cm)

Distinguishing Characteristics

- Back olive, sides bluish with yellow stripes and five to six faint dusky bars
- Silvery sheen overall
- Dark spot on shoulder
- Fins yellow

LIFE HISTORY

Range: In coastal waters from Cape Cod, Massachusetts south through the Gulf of Mexico and the north coast of Cuba to the Yucatan peninsula

Diet: Juveniles eat shrimp, fish eggs, insect larvae, polychaete worms and amphipods. Adults eat all of those plus plant material.

Predators: Alligator gar, longnose gar, ladyfish, spotted seatrout, red drum, southern flounder and bottlenose dolphin

Sexual maturity: About one year when the fish has reached 80 to 100 mm in length

Spawning season: Takes place in the fall and winter with eggs that are broadcast in the water by the female, then fertilized by the male

Eggs: Number of eggs varies; approximately 7,000 to 90,000 that hatch after 48 hours

Young: Not protected by adults; larval stage until they reach about 12 mm in length, then juvenile stage until they reach 80 mm

Life span: Because they are eaten by many other species, the life span is generally short.

HABITAT

Adult pinfish prefer protected waters of the Gulf between 30 and 50 feet deep, while juveniles are common over seagrass beds or other structure such as rocky bottoms, jetties, pilings, and in mangrove areas where there is cover from predators. They prefer water that has a higher salinity.

BEHAVIOR

Pinfish rarely *school* (swim in groups) and are most active in daytime, although some nocturnal activity has been observed. Extremely high and low temperatures cause pinfish to migrate from shallow areas to deeper areas. Adults and juveniles migrate out of the shallower waters in the fall to their spawning grounds in the deeper waters of the Gulf.

NOW YOU KNOW!

- Pinfish are so abundant and eat so many amphipods, that they are an important limiting factor to amphipod populations, keeping them in balance within the seagrass community.
- Pinfish are also called bream, pin perch, sand perch and butterfish.

PINFISH AND PEOPLE

Although they have a good flavor, pinfish are rarely eaten because they are relatively small fish. Still, pinfish are a favorite among young anglers because they are fun to catch. Also, pinfish are a main prey item of larger fish that are prized by anglers, providing an important link in the food chain. Scientists have also used pinfish extensively to test the toxicity of hydrocarbons to determine the effects oil spills might have on marine life.