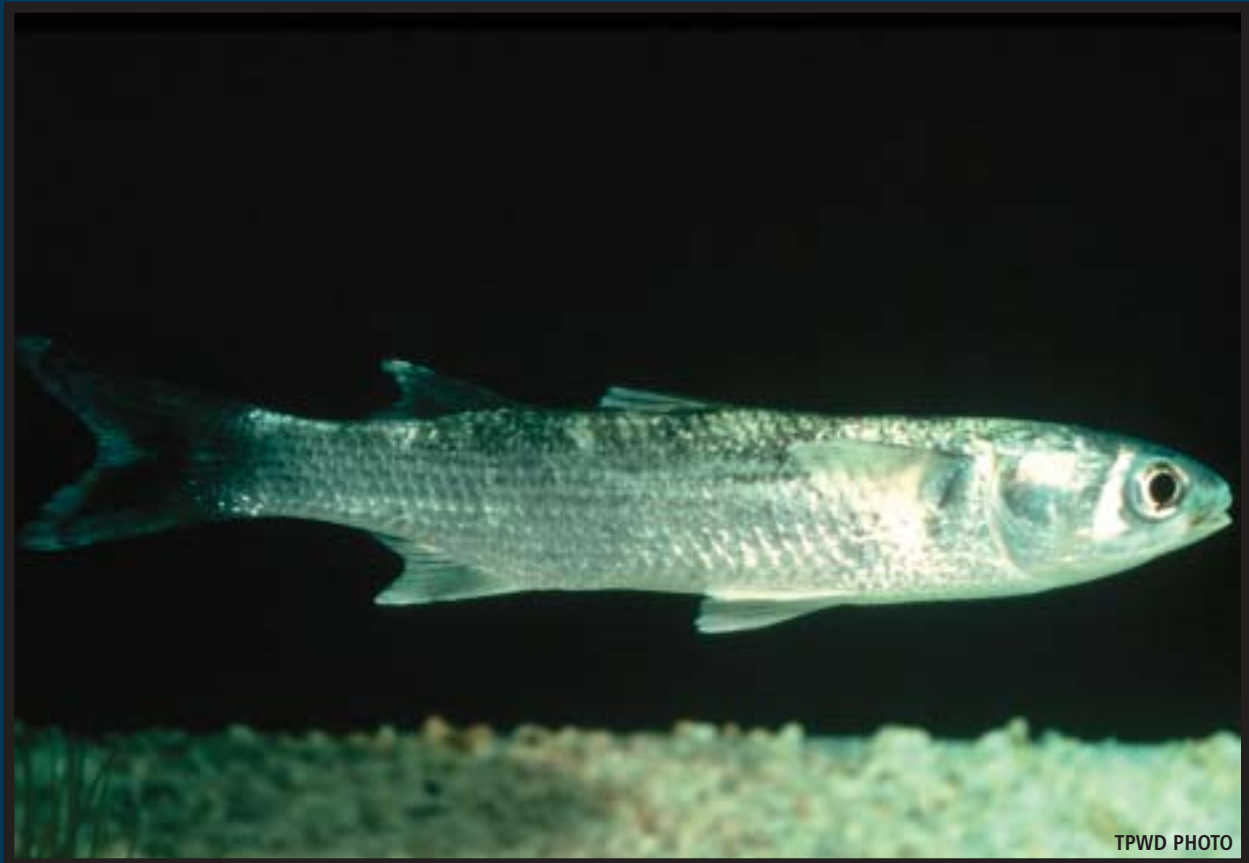


# Striped Mullet

*Mugil cephalus*

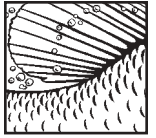


Striped mullet can often be seen in coastal waters, jumping to evade predators. Because they are one of the most common prey items of other commercially important coastal fish such as spotted seatrout, people often use them as bait.

*Coastal Wetlands*

# Striped Mullet

*Mugil cephalus*



## APPEARANCE

**Length:** Adults: 9 to 19.5 inches (35 to 50 cm)

Immature: 3 to 8 inches (7.6 to 17.8 cm)

### Distinguishing Characteristics

- Irregularly round, silvery body
- Dark bluish green back and dark longitudinal stripes on the sides
- Small mouth

## LIFE HISTORY

**Range:** Worldwide in warm to temperate coastal waters

**Diet:** Zooplankton, benthic (bottom-dwelling) organisms and *detritus* (dead plants and animals), and small invertebrates

**Predators:** Larger fish, turtles, water snakes and wading birds

**Sexual maturity:** Three years

**Mating season:** Late October to December for Texas species; mature adults leave bays, collect in large schools and migrate offshore to mate

**Eggs:** One to seven million round eggs scattered on the bottom; not guarded by adults

**Incubation:** 36 to 38 hours at 24° C and 48 to 50 hours at 22° C

**Young:** Of millions of eggs spawned in offshore waters, most are eaten by other species. Juveniles return to coastal locations to mature after they have reached 15 to 32 mm long.

**Life span:** Seven years for males; eight years for females, with a probable average life span of five years

## HABITAT

Striped mullet are found in highly salty to fresh waters that are warm or temperate (8° to 24° C). They spend a great deal of time close to shore around the mouths of streams and rivers or in brackish bays, inlets and lagoons with sand or mud bottoms.

## BEHAVIOR

Striped mullet tend to *school* (swim together in groups) for protection from predators in the daylight hours, although they feed around the clock.

## NOW YOU KNOW!

- The oldest striped mullet on record is one that lived 13 years.
- Florida, Georgia, Mississippi, and Alabama harvest many tons of mullet for commercial use.
- The roe (eggs) are harvested and shipped to markets in Asia where they are considered a delicacy.

## STRIPED MULLET AND PEOPLE

In Florida, striped mullet can be found on the menus of many restaurants, but in the western Gulf of Mexico (Texas and Louisiana waters), they take on an oily taste and are generally not eaten. Instead, mullet are harvested for use as a bait fish. Striped mullet are also widely cultivated in freshwater ponds in Southeast Asia where they are marketed fresh, dried, salted, and frozen. They are a very important commercial species in many parts of the world.