Gray (Mangrove) Snapper

Lutjanus griseus

Description:
Also known as the Mangrove snapper, these fish are dark brown or gray in color with red tinted rows along the sides; a dark horizontal band from snout through the eye (juvenile only); two conspicuous canine teeth at front of upper jaw; dorsal fins have dark or reddish borders; no dark spot on side underneath dorsal fin. The Gray snapper has a slender body, a large mouth and pointed snout.

Size:
The gray snapper is one of the smaller snappers, rarely exceeding 18” in length, and is almost always less than 10 lbs.

Offspring:
Gray snappers spawn June through August. Eggs are pelagic and hatch after approximately 20 hours at 27°C. Larvae grow to approximately 15 mm in 36 days. At lengths less than 10 mm, postlarvae are planktonic and are transported on favorable currents to nursery habitats in estuaries. Upon reaching 10 mm in length, they enter nursery habitats of seagrass beds and other vegetated areas. Estuarine areas offer rich sources of food as well as protection from predators. The pre-juvenile and juvenile snapper feed by day until they reach relative maturity and then move into shallow rocky areas and the coastal reefs where they are commonly found as adults.

Lifespan:
The estimated maximum age for this snapper is 25 years.

Habitat:
The gray snapper is found in the western Atlantic Ocean from Massachusetts to Bermuda, southward to Brazil, including Bermuda, Bahamas, West Indies, Gulf of Mexico and Caribbean Sea. It is especially abundant around the coastline of Florida. Juveniles can be found inshore in tidal creeks, mangroves, and grass beds and adults are generally found near shore or offshore on coral or rocky reefs.

Food:
Gray snapper are opportunistic, usually nocturnal foragers that prey upon small fishes, shrimps, crabs, gastropods, and cephalopods.

Fun Facts:
- Adults and juveniles both have been found in freshwater lakes and rivers in south Florida, indicating that the species is tolerant of a broad range of salinity levels.
- Gray snapper landings totaled 2,421,786 pounds in 2003. The recreational fishery made 86% of the statewide landings. Landings were greater on the gulf coast, where about 69% of the statewide landings were made in 2003. Commercial and recreational catch rates have remained relatively stable since 1982 on the Atlantic and gulf coasts.
- Offshore catches are commonly up to 5 lbs with a Florida record of 161/2 lbs.