

Spot

Leiostomus xanthurus Lacépède 1802
[Jordan and Evermann, 1896-1900, p. 1458.]

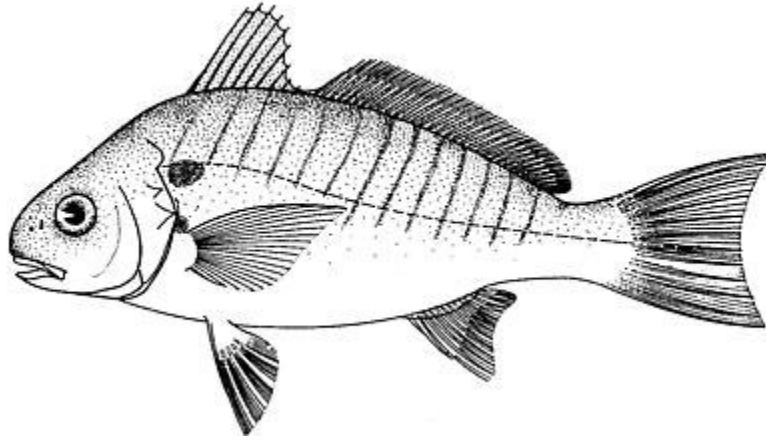


Figure 218 - Spot (*Leiostomus xanthurus*), Rhode Island.
From Goode. Drawing by H. L. Todd.

Description

The spot agrees closely with the weakfish in the arrangement and general shapes and relative sizes of its fins, and in lacking chin barbels. But it is a much deeper fish relatively (body about one-third as high as it is long, measured to base of tail fin), with blunt snout instead of pointed; it has no large canine teeth; its tail fin is more forked; and it is marked on either side with a conspicuous black spot close behind the upper corner of each gill opening.

The forward (spiny) subdivision of the dorsal fin, of 10 spines, is triangular, with rounded apex; the posterior part, of one short spine and 30-34 soft rays, is about one-half as high vertically as the spiny part. The caudal fin is moderately concave. The anal fin of two short spines and 12 or 13 soft rays, has a somewhat concave margin, and the pectorals are pointed.

Color

Bluish gray above with golden reflections, silvery below. Medium-sized fish are marked on each side with 12-15 oblique yellowish cross bars[90] dipping obliquely forward, but these fade with age. And there is a conspicuous black spot close behind the upper corner of each gill opening. The fins are partly yellowish, partly dusky.

Size

The spot grows to a length of about 13 to 14 inches and to a weight of 1 pound 6 ounces.[91] But adults average only about 10 to 10½ inches long, and few weigh more than three-quarters of a pound.

General range

Inshore waters from Texas[92] to southern New England, and recorded from Massachusetts Bay as a stray.

Occurrence in the Gulf of Maine

The spot is plentiful in some years as far north as New York, while young ones are described as common in autumn about Woods Hole. But its normal range is bounded so sharply by Cape Cod that it has been reported only once from the Gulf of Maine; a single specimen, taken in Massachusetts Bay, November 1936.[93]

[90] Dusky on preserved specimens.

[91] these were the longest of many measured in Chesapeake Bay by Hildebrand and Schroeder (Bull. U. S. Bureau of Fisheries, vol. 43, Part 1, 1928, p. 272). The maximum length previously recorded was 11¾ inches (Nichols and Breder, Zoologica, New York Zool. Soc., vol. 9, 1927, p. 95).

[92] Once reported doubtfully from Martinique.

[93] Reported by Goffin, Copeia 1937, No. 4, p. 236.

Fishes of the Gulf of Maine by Bigelow & Schroeder is the seminal work on North Atlantic fishes. It was originally published in 1925 with William Welsh, a Bureau of Fisheries scientist who often accompanied Henry Bigelow on his research cruises. In the late 1920's, Bigelow began a long association with William C. Schroeder, publishing a number of papers and reports on fishes of the North Atlantic, including the first revision of *Fishes of the Gulf of Maine*. This excerpt is from that 1953 edition.

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