



Black Grouper Fact Sheet



Image courtesy of Duane Raver

Basic Biology

Latin name: *Mycteroperca bonaci*

Range: Primarily in southern Florida and the Florida Keys; have been recorded from Massachusetts to Texas, throughout the Atlantic Ocean as far south as Brazil

Habitat: Rocky ledges and coral reefs in waters 50-500 feet deep

Diet: Fish and crustaceans

Age and growth: Maximum age of 33 years; maximum size of 59"; common size of 27". Age at first maturity is generally 3-7 years.

Sustainability

- The most recent assessment for black grouper was conducted in 2010. The population size has increased and is at a very healthy level. The rate of fishing is sustainable.
- Black grouper are harvested primarily in the waters off South Florida. Fish harvested on the Atlantic and Gulf sides of Florida are from the same population but are managed under different regulations. In the Atlantic, regulations include gear restrictions, a minimum size limit of 24" and a January through April spawning season closure for all shallow water groupers. In addition, if the annual quota of gag grouper is harvested before the year ends, the entire shallow water grouper fishery, including black grouper, is closed to harvest. In the Gulf regulations include annual quotas for shallow water grouper (includes black grouper), trip limits, a minimum size limit of 20", area gear restrictions, a January-April spawning season closure in an area known as The Edges, and mandatory satellite tracking systems.
- Vertical hook-and-line is the primary gear type used by grouper fishermen, followed by spearfishing. These gears have very little interaction with surrounding habitat. Many other snapper and grouper species co-occur with black grouper but there is little real bycatch; virtually every species caught is harvested.

Info for Chefs

- Gag grouper is often mislabeled as black grouper because these two species look very similar. On gag, the tail and anal fins have white margins, while the black grouper does not. Gag is more common in both the Gulf and South Atlantic, where black grouper comprises only 9% and 12% of harvest respectively.

Info for Servers

- Black grouper, like most grouper and sea bass, are hermaphrodites. They start life as female and eventually become male. For black grouper the transition usually occurs by age 16.
- Though black groupers live far offshore as adults, during their juvenile stage they live in near shore estuaries like salt marshes.

Sources: SEDAR (Southeast Data, Assessment and Review). 2010. SEDAR 19 Stock Assessment Report 1: South Atlantic and Gulf of Mexico Black Grouper. Accessed at www.sefsc.noaa.gov/sedar/ on 30 June, 2010.

South Atlantic Fishery Management Council. 2009. Amendment 16 to the Snapper Grouper Fishery Management Plan. Accessed at www.safmc.net on 1 December, 2009.

www.fishbase.org