

Brown Shrimp Fact Sheet

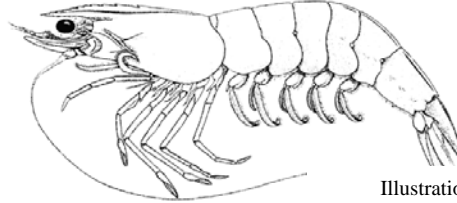


Illustration courtesy of NOAA



Common name: Brown shrimp

Latin name: *Farfantepenaeus aztecus* (formerly *Penaeus aztecus*)

Characteristics:

- Many people consider brown shrimp to be sweeter and superior in taste to white shrimp, though the brown shrimp harvested in the early summer are much smaller than the white roe (egg bearing) shrimp from the spring harvest.
- Brown shrimp spawn offshore in the fall. The postlarvae remain in ocean sediments through winter then in early spring ride tidal currents into the estuarine salt marshes, the “nursery” habitat that offers food and protection from predators. Young adult brown shrimp begin to leave the estuaries in the summer.
- Brown shrimp can be differentiated from white shrimp by the presence of small grooves along the raised mid-line on the top of the head. White shrimp also have a thin black line at the edge of the tail, which typically appears iridescent green or yellow.
- Brown shrimp prefer muddy bottom over sandy or hard substrate.

Distribution:

- From Florida to New York, though the northern-most major harvest occurs in North Carolina.

Local Fisheries:

- The brown shrimp season usually begins in June and ends in August, though the season may extend further into the fall when stock abundance is high. Small adult brown shrimp are harvested at the beginning of the season, with shrimp size increasing through the summer as the adults grow.
- The best fishing seasons usually are associated with mild (warm) spring temperatures that promote growth soon after the shrimp arrive in the estuaries.

Management:

- The number of brown shrimp post-larvae entering the estuaries is relatively constant and does not seem to be greatly impacted by the number of spawners from the previous year or by the number harvested.
- A 1988 study by the South Carolina Department of Natural Resources (SC DNR) found no clear evidence of damage to the ocean bottom-dwelling communities by commercial shrimp trawling. Studies have shown substantial damage to hard bottom habitats by trawls, but distribution of hard bottom habitat is limited in South Carolina waters and trawling is prohibited there. Commercially-important shrimp species do not live in such habitat.
- All shrimp trawls in South Carolina are required to use a certified Bycatch Reduction Device (BRD) and Turtle Excluder Device (TED) to allow unwanted finfish and sea turtles to escape the trawl nets. BRDs are estimated to reduce bycatch by 30% and TEDs reduce retention of turtles by 97%.
- Cannonball jellyfish comprise the largest component of shrimp trawl bycatch, with fish comprising much of the remainder. There is no evidence that this fish bycatch is having an adverse effect on the sustainability of those stocks.

Sources: South Carolina Department of Natural Resources, 2004

SAFMC Shrimp Fishery Management Plan

Van Dolah, Wendt, and Levisen, 1988 – Report from the Marine Resources Research Institute