



Wreckfish Fact Sheet

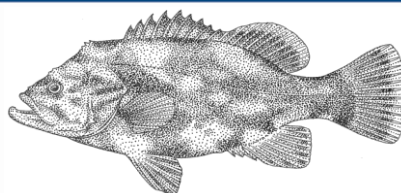


Image courtesy of Val Kells

Basic Biology

Latin name: *Polyprion americanus*

Range: Atlantic Ocean (northern and southern hemisphere); Western Indian Ocean; Southwest Pacific (New Zealand)

Habitat: Deepwater coral and rocky ledges from 1,300 to 3,000 feet deep

Diet: Crustaceans, cephalopods and fish

Age and growth: Maximum age 30 years, maximum length 3 feet, maximum weight 60 lbs.

Sustainability

- Wreckfish harvested in the U.S. are from the same genetic population as fish harvested in Bermuda, the Azores, Madeira, and southwestern Europe.
- Wreckfish are not overfished or experiencing overfishing.
- The fishery is managed with an annual harvest quota divided between the permitted fishermen and a spawning season closure from January 15-April 15.
- Wreckfish are harvested with vertical hook and lines, minimizing impact on bottom habitats. Bycatch is minimal and very little is discarded.

Info for Chefs

- The availability of wreckfish can be very sporadic because there are only two or three boats that fish for it and they can be highly affected by weather. Wreckfish may not be harvested during winter months (January 15-April 15).
- Wreckfish are unlikely to bite if the bottom water is too cold so fishermen must monitor sea surface temperatures and current patterns to find the most promising fishing grounds; this also contributes to the sporadic availability.
- Wreckfish has a flavor similar to grouper but a texture and consistency similar to swordfish.

Info for Servers

- These fish are called "wreckfish" because as juveniles they congregate at lines of floating wreckage (debris) and seaweed where ocean currents converge.
- Wreckfish are caught throughout the Atlantic Ocean, but the only place they are harvested in the U.S. is off the coast of South Carolina at a place called the Charleston Bump, 80-130 miles offshore.
- The Charleston Bump is the only documented spawning ground in the North Atlantic. Scientists believe the eggs and larvae may be transported north and east across the ocean by the Gulf Stream to the coast of Europe where they mature into juveniles and young adults. Mature adults migrate back across the Atlantic to the spawning grounds off the U.S. coast.

Sources:

Fishbase.org

South Carolina Department of Natural Resources, Marine Resources Division, 2004

Sedberry et al. 1999. Wreckfish *Polyprion americanus* in the North Atlantic: Fisheries, Biology and Management of a Widely Distributed and Long-Lived Fish. American Fisheries Society Symposium 23:27-50.