

Porgy



Stenotomus chrysops

(Drawing reprinted with permission from National Museum of Natural History, Smithsonian Institute. Illustrated by Serman Foote Denton, 1888)

The Facts

There has been a tremendous increase in this species' population and they are known for having a fine flavor flesh in spite of their bony bodies, and they support a large recreational fishery. They possess a steeply sloping brow, and have a sharp dorsal spine for defense; they are silvery in color. Although the name that is generally used by New Englanders is "scup," they are known as "porgy" from New York to Florida. The name "scup" is a remnant of an old Indian name *mishcuppauog*. Unfortunately, not many grow over 6 lb (which would be considered a trophy). There are local names used to denote different size classes; they include "sand porgy" (1/2 lb), "bay porgy" (1 lb) and "humpback" or "sea porgy" (1 1/2 - >3 lb).

Migration

Although these fish occur from Nova Scotia to Florida, they are rare south of North Carolina. Adults form large schools, and they prefer areas with a hard bottom and submerged structures where they browse on invertebrates. Porgies are seasonal migrants, traveling inshore during the spring and summer months, and offshore during the winter. They can be found in coastal waters in May, where they remain until October when the majority swim to deeper water offshore, and southward. Porgies are highly susceptible to changes in temperature, and many succumb to sudden cooling in the water. Sexual maturity occurs at approximately age 2 (about 6 inches in length) for both genders.



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Fishing Season

Fishing is usually confined to the warmer months of the year. The first fish arrive in late April to early May, but June is the best month to catch them. Catches generally remain good into September before the fish start to form larger schools. By October, the larger schools start moving back into deeper water offshore, and also southward. Conservation measures are being implemented for this fish and you should contact New York State Department of Environmental Conservation or call 1-800-REGS-DEC for update information on fishing regulations.

Angling

In spite of their relatively small size, porgies pack a lot of punch and fight frantically when hooked, which makes for a great angling experience. Most fish are taken by bottom fishing over inshore banks using light to medium rod and tackle. Porgies can be found around bridges, piers and bulkheads, but the bigger schools prefer deeper waters in the middle of a bay (so you will need a boat to reach them). Inshore charter boat fishing is a good choice for new anglers because this fish is usually abundant, they are less difficult to hook, and they require ordinary bait and tackle. The rigging is usually comprised of a rod that is light and sturdy (e.g. 5 ft rod) loaded with 15 lb test line, accompanied by baitholder hooks. These fish will rise up about one foot above the bottom to feed, and the weight sinker used will depend on the water depth and tidal strength.

Contact your local bait & tackle store for advice about fishing with artificial lures.

Visit our website at www.seagrant.sunysb.edu/Fishery/ResourceCenter.htm for additional information.



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This information sheet was prepared by the Fishery Resource Center to address the needs in angling and charter boat communities.