

Cobia (*Rachycentron canadum*)

Description:

Cobia are the only member of their genus. Cobia are long and slim with a broad, flat head. The dorsal side of the fish is dark brown in color, while the ventral side is milky white. The lateral line is dark and obvious, and runs through the eye to the forked tail. Cobia have many small teeth in their mouths, and approximately eight short, unconnected spines between the head and dorsal fin. They can reach lengths of over two meters (6 ft), and weigh over 45 kg (100 lbs).

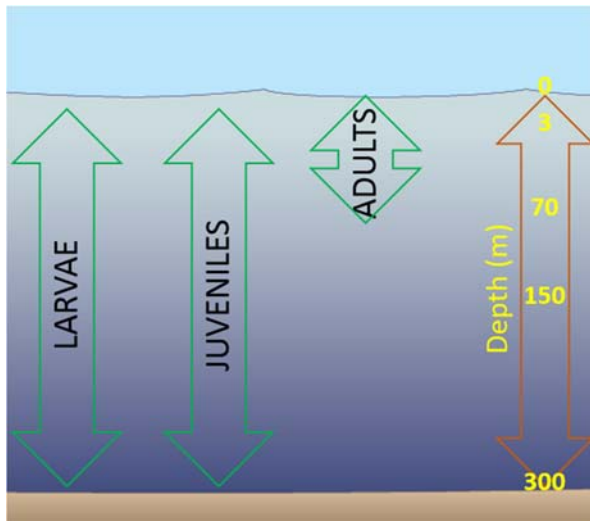


Gulf of Mexico Stock Characteristics: (SEDAR 28 2013; fishbase.org)

Natural mortality rate (M): 0.38/year (based on max age of 11 years)
50% are sexually mature: ~Two years; 33 inches fork length (FL)
Maximum age: ~11 years
Maximum weight: ~68 kg (150 lbs) whole weight
Maximum length: ~198 cm (78 in) total length

Distribution:

Cobia migrate seasonally, and can be found in the northern Gulf from March to October and in the southern Gulf and south Florida from November to March. In the Gulf, spawning occurs in coastal waters from April to September at temperatures ranging from 23-28 °C (73-82 °F). Cobia which are ready to spawn display a white horizontal stripe down each side of the body. Eggs are found in the top meter (3 ft) of the water column, drifting with the currents, and are estimated to hatch within 36 hours. From May to September, larvae are commonly found in surface waters, and occasionally at depths of up to 300 m (984 ft), where they likely feed on zooplankton. Larvae transition to coastal and offshore waters as juveniles after approximately 25 days, often guided by currents, feeding on small fishes, squid, and shrimp.



Adult cobia are found in coastal and offshore waters in depths up to 70 m (230 ft). Adults feed on fishes and crustaceans, including crabs.

Current Gulf Council Regulations:

Two fish may be kept, per person, regardless of the length of the fishing trip or number of people on board a vessel. The minimum size limit is 33 inches FL. Size-limit cobia weigh approximately 8 kg (~17 lbs). The fishing season is year-round, and there are no sector allocations for the Gulf of Mexico migratory group of cobia.