

Gray Triggerfish (*Balistes capriscus*)

Description:

Gray triggerfish, also known as triggerfish or leatherjackets, are prevalent in temperate and tropical areas of the western Atlantic from Nova Scotia, throughout the northern Gulf of Mexico, and Bermuda through the Caribbean to Argentina. They are also found in the eastern Atlantic near the Mediterranean Sea. Its coloration is solid gray; occasionally three faint irregular broad dark bars can be seen on the body along with small light blue spots on the upper half of the body and fins. It has a small mouth and distinct spines on its dorsal fins. The stock is not experiencing overfishing but was designated as overfished after SEDAR 43. Subsequently, the Council modified the overfished status determination criteria which changed the gray triggerfish stock status to not overfished but rebuilding.



Photo credit: NOAA Fisheries

Gulf Stock Characteristics: (SEDAR 43 2015)

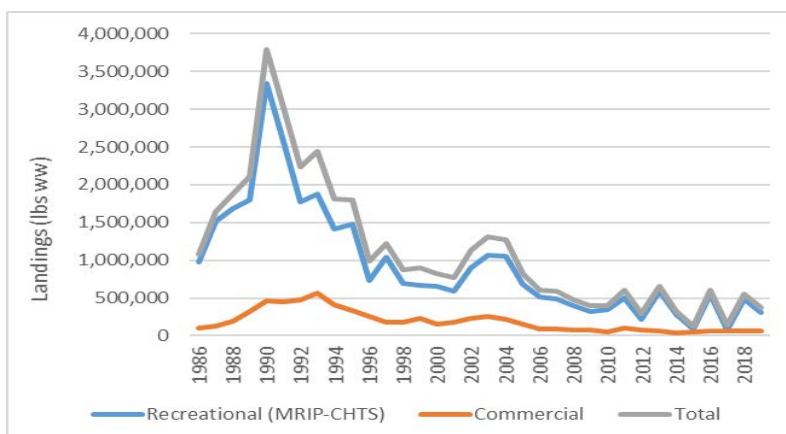
Natural mortality rate (M):	0.27 (SEDAR 9 Update; unchanged in SEDAR 43 2015)
Reproductive maturity:	Females are 50% mature at 1.5 years (6 inches FL) & 100% mature by age-2
Maximum age:	15 years
Maximum weight:	13.2 lbs (6.0 kg) whole weight
Maximum length:	23.2 inches (59.0 cm) FL
Discard mortality:	~5.0% (SEDAR 43 2015)

Life History and Distribution: (SEDAR 43 2015)

Gray triggerfish are common on natural reefs and artificial structures. Early life history studies indicate young fish, after hatching, are associated with floating *Sargassum* and remain up in the water column for 4 to 7 months before settling to benthic habitats. In the Gulf of Mexico, adults may spawn as early as May and as late as August, with peak spawning occurring in June and July. Adult male fish reach significantly larger sizes than females and are territorial, particularly during spawning. Male fish build demersal nests in the sand around reefs and attract females to spawn in harem groups. Females remain on the nest to guard and fan the eggs for 24-48 hours.

Current Regulations:

Gray triggerfish has separate recreational and commercial annual catch limits (ACL). The recreational ACL is 241,200 lbs ww. The commercial ACL is 64,100 lbs ww. There is a fixed closed season in June-July for both sectors to protect spawners.



Source: Recreational FES landings from the MRIP FES database and LA Creel. Commercial landings from the ACL database.

Recreational sector:

15-inch FL minimum size limit and a daily bag limit of 1 fish per person per day within the 20-reef fish aggregate bag limit. Additionally, there is a January-February fixed closed season.

Commercial sector: 14-inch FL minimum size limit and a daily trip limit of 16 fish.