

Common Name: **Warsaw grouper**



Drawing from: Fisherman's Guide: Fishes of the Southeastern United States. By Charles S. Manooch, III. 1984

Scientific Name: *Epinephelus nigritus*

Area of Concern: Western Atlantic: south Atlantic and Gulf of Mexico

Year First Listed as a "Species of Concern": 1997

Species Description:

Warsaw groupers are classified as deep-water groupers; they inhabit reefs on the continental shelf break in waters 76-219 m deep. They are characterized by an elongated second spine in the dorsal fin, the rear margin of the caudal fin convex or truncate with rounded corners, and pelvic fins longer than pectoral fins. They are dark reddish brown or brownish grey to almost black in color dorsally, dull reddish grey below. Juveniles have a yellow caudal fin and a few randomly scattered whitish spots on body. Adults are usually found on rough, rocky bottoms in depths of 55 to 525 m; juveniles are occasionally seen on jetties and shallow-water reefs. Very little information is available about the reproduction of the warsaw grouper; eggs and larvae are presumed to be pelagic. The warsaw grouper is long-lived (up to 41 years) and has a slow growth rate. Maximum size is about 235 cm TL and about 200 kg. The warsaw grouper's large mouth enables it to engulf prey whole after capturing it in ambush or after a short chase. Diet items include crabs, shrimps and fishes.

Rationale for "Species of Concern" Listing:

Demographic and Diversity Concerns:

Historically, warsaw grouper were rarely landed; currently less than a few hundred, often less than 50, are landed annually in the Atlantic. Fishing is primarily by hook and line and bottom longlines; the species is caught incidentally in the deepwater snapper/grouper fishery.

Factors for decline:

The major threat to the Warsaw grouper is mortality as a result of fishing or by-catch release mortality (due to barotrauma). Both recreational and commercial fisheries for warsaw grouper are currently regulated in the south Atlantic; the South Atlantic Fisheries Management Council considers the species as overfished and undergoing overfishing. In the Gulf of Mexico commercial fishery, there are no possession limits for the species for federally permitted reef fish vessels, and the species is managed under the Deep-water grouper commercial quota. The Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council classifies the status of Warsaw grouper as "unknown."

Last updated 4/13/2004

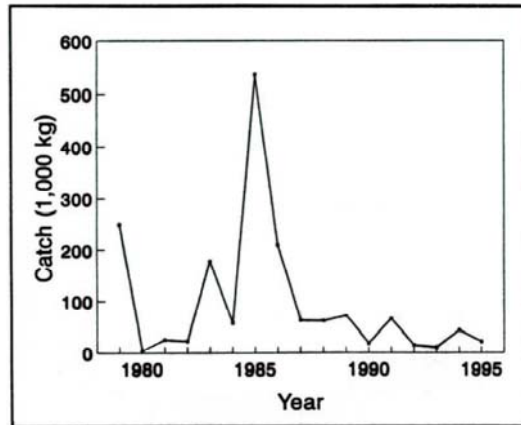


Figure 1. Warsaw grouper catch (kg), all fisheries combined (Parker and Mays 1998).

Status Reviews/Research Completed or Underway:

NMFS funded, via Recover Protected Species funds to SEFSC in 2000, a project entitled “Identifying aggregations of candidate grouper species through acoustic signatures.”

For further information on this Species of Concern, or on the Species of Concern Program in general, please contact Ms. Marta Nammack, NMFS, Office of Protected Resources, 1315 East West Highway, Silver Spring, MD 20910, (301) 713-1401, Marta.Nammack@noaa.gov; Dr. Stephania Bolden, NMFS, Southeast Region, Protected Resources Division, 9721 Executive Center Drive N., St. Petersburg, FL 33702, (727)570-5312, Stephania.Bolden@noaa.gov; or Dr. Anne Marie Eklund, NMFS, Southeast Fisheries Science Center, 75 Virginia Beach Dr., Miami FL 33149 (305) 361-4271 anne.marie.eklund@noaa.gov.

Web Links:

http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/prot_res/species/fish/Warsaw_grouper.html

References:

- FAO Species Identification Guide for Fishery Purposes. 2002. Pp. 1346 *In*: K.E. Carpenter (ed). Volume 2: Bony fishes part 1. Rome, FAO.
- Heemstra, P.C. and J.E. Randall. 1993. FAO Species Catalogue. Groupers of the world (Family Serranidae, Subfamily Epinephelinae). An Annotated and illustrated catalogue of the grouper, rockcod, hind, coral grouper and lyretail species known to date. FAO Fisheries Synopsis 16 (125), 382 p.
- Huntsman, G.R., J. Potts, R.W. Mays and D. Vaughan. 1997. Groupers (Serranidae, Epinephelinae): Endangered Apex Predators of Reef Communities. *Am. Fish. Soc. Symp.* 23:217-231.
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- Parker, R.O., Jr. and R.W. Mays. 1998. Southeastern United States deepwater reef fish assemblages, habitat characteristics, catches, and life history summaries. NOAA Technical Report NMFS 138.