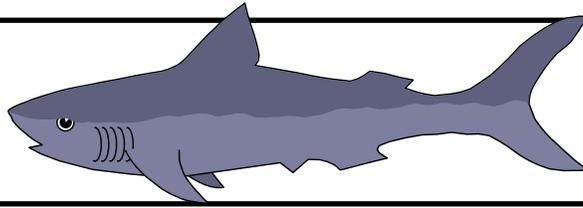


FISH



TALES

Seeing Red Over Snapper

There's something fishy going on at seafood markets in the United States, and it involves the popular red snapper. In a study published in the July 15, 2004 issue of the journal *Nature*, scientists at the University of North Carolina tested fish sold as red snapper in selected grocery stores and markets in eight states: Delaware, Florida, Illinois, Massachusetts, New York, North Carolina and Wisconsin. They discovered that 75 percent of the fish weren't red snapper at all, but cheaper imitations like vermilion snapper, lane snapper, and foreign products.



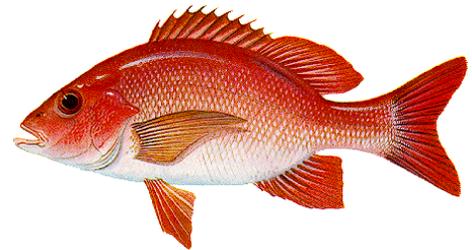
Many marine biologists and environmentalists have long suspected that fish in markets and restaurants are mislabeled. Such practices could be interfering with efforts to protect the nation's fisheries: fish sold as another species can distort the counting system in place to determine the size of certain populations and thus their ability to withstand intense fishing over time. Mislabeled products might give the appearance that a particular species, for example red

snapper, is more plentiful than it actually is. Managers might not develop necessary protective regulations because the fish appear numerous and easy to catch based on falsified sale records.

The *Nature* study is troubling news for a fish that has been depleted for decades and continues to exist without a management plan that would comply with current law. The complete article, "Fisheries: Mislabeled of a Depleted Reef Fish," is available for purchase at <http://www.nature.com>.

FISH OF THE SEASON

Red snapper was considered depleted as early as the late 1980's. To help the population rebuild, scientists recommended that the number of red snapper killed accidentally in shrimp trawl nets (bycatch) and those taken as intentional catch should be lessened. Unfortunately, bycatch reduction efforts have not been as successful as hoped and the annual total allowable catch (TAC) of red snapper remains unacceptably high. After many years of management discussions, red snapper is still depleted.



Description: colored pinkish red over body, whitish below; long triangular snout; anal fin sharply pointed; no dark lateral spot.

Where found: Adults found offshore on the continental shelf; more plentiful through the western Gulf than in south or middle Florida.

Average Adult Size: about 20 pounds.

Remarks: juveniles occur over sandy or mud bottoms and are often caught accidentally in shrimp trawls; adults may live more than 30 years, and can attain 35 pounds or more; sexual maturity at approximately age 2 (30 inches); spawns mainly June to October; feeds on crustaceans and fish.

Management: There is an ongoing battle regarding proper management of red snapper in the Gulf of Mexico. Red snapper is important to the Gulf of Mexico marine ecosystem and is a popular food fish. Its popularity as a seafood item makes it a commercially caught species and a recreational angler target.

Gulf Council Considers Moratorium on Shrimp Permits

The Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council previously established mandatory permits for shrimp fishing in federal waters of the Gulf of Mexico. Under the permitting system, anyone not issued a permit by the control date of Dec. 6, 2003, could not be assured a permit in the future, although permits still are available for purchase.

As part of the shrimp management plan, the council is now considering an amendment that would place a moratorium on issuing any new shrimp permits. If Amendment 13 passes, the moratorium date could be set retroactively to the Dec. 6, 2003, control date or to May 18, 2004, when the council's shrimp committee voted to consider alternatives. However, it is more likely that the council will use the effective date of Amendment 13, probably in early 2005, as the moratorium date.



A requirement for shrimpers to keep detailed logbooks or have observers on their vessels when in federal waters is also being considered as part of the amendment.

New COOL Campaign from NET

The National Environmental Trust recently launched a nationwide effort called the "Conserve Our Ocean Legacy" campaign, COOL for short, to help raise awareness in the United States about ocean issues.

The Florida launch was on July 6, 2004. A number of Florida organizations, including Tampa Bay Watch, Florida Fishermen's Federation, and the Sierra Club, joined together on a 100-foot marine research vessel called the SUN-COASTER for a two-hour boat tour of Tampa Bay.



The participating groups signed a petition in support of these three goals:

- Establish conservation of ocean ecosystems as the primary responsibility of fisheries management.
- Require ecologically sustainable fishing practices to stop overfishing and rebuild depleted populations of fish.
- Reform the institutions responsible for managing fisheries to ensure that their decisions reflect the needs of the entire ecosystem.

COOL is a broad national and state effort to build support for increased protections for our ocean fish and ecosystems. The campaign will help educate citizens in Florida about the problems in Florida's Gulf and Atlantic waters and their potential solutions. Over 45 organizations have joined the COOL Coalition in Florida, with more than 450 member groups nation-

wide. This coalition represents thousands of individuals from the diving community, fishing groups, and environmental organizations, as well as concerned citizens.

For more information visit the COOL website at <http://www.oceanlegacy.org/>.

New Legislation to Reform Fisheries Management Introduced in U.S. House of Representatives

Excerpted from materials written by the Marine Fish Conservation Network

On June 24, the Fisheries Management Reform Act of 2004 (HR 4706) was introduced by Rep. Nick Rahall (D-WV), Ranking Democrat on the U.S. House Resources Committee; Representative Sam Farr (D-CA), Co-Chair of the House Oceans Caucus; and numerous other Members of Congress.



The U.S. Capitol Building in Washington, DC

The Fisheries Management Reform Act would amend the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act, which governs federally managed ocean fish. The bill would restructure the regional fishery management council system in three ways:

1. Significantly reducing financial conflicts of interest of those on the councils;
2. Correcting unbalanced representation by broadening membership on the councils to include members of the public; and
3. Ensuring that political and economic influences do not override scientific conservation decisions on the health of the fish populations.

The eight regional fishery management councils are the management bodies that develop regulations governing how many fish can be caught in U.S. ocean waters, including the Gulf of Mexico. According to the Marine Fish Conservation Network, 58 of the 71 individual positions on the councils are currently held by either commercial or recreational fishermen, many of whom profit from fishing-related businesses in their regions.

As designated by the Magnuson-Stevens Act, the councils manage more than 900 fish stocks in U.S. ocean waters. Council members simultaneously decide which scientific information to put into practice to conserve fish populations and how to allocate these natural resources to fishermen for economic gain. Current law mandates that these councils share a balanced representation between commercial and recreational fishermen, but it does not designate that other interests, such as the public's interest, be represented on the council.



U.S. Representative Nick Rahall

The Fisheries Management Reform Act is the first legislation introduced in Congress that implements specific recommendations made by the U.S. Commission on Ocean Policy in 2004 and the Pew Oceans Commission in 2003. The two commissions spent three years evaluating the health of the world's oceans before releasing their reports.

For more information on HR 4706, visit the Marine Fish Conservation Network Web site at <http://www.conservefish.org> and click on "Reps. Rahall and Farr introduce Fisheries Management Reform Act of 2004."



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This publication is the product of the GRN working on the following issues of concern: over-fishing, essential fish habitat, full implementation of the Sustainable Fisheries Act, and public education on the importance of sustainable fisheries management.

The GRN would like to thank the Pew Charitable Trusts, the Rockefeller Brothers Fund, the Surdna Foundation, and the Curtis and Edith Munson Foundation for making this work possible.

Global Competition Rewards Design of Fishing Gear That Reduces Bycatch

A coalition of fishermen, scientists, and conservation groups recently announced the launch of the International Smart Gear Competition, a contest for the design of fishing gear that can better target certain species while avoiding other unwanted catch.

The contest's grand prize is \$25,000, to be awarded to the design judged to be the most practical, cost-effective method for reducing bycatch of any species. The winner will also be provided with assistance in bringing the design to market.

Two runners-up will receive \$5,000 each.

Entanglement in fishing gear is the leading threat to marine mammals around the globe, as noted in the report released this year by the U.S. Oceans Commission. Commonly used fishing gear like nets, longlines, and trawls often don't allow users to selectively target their catch. As a result, non-target fish species, marine mammals, birds, and sea turtles are caught and sometimes killed.

The competition provides a means for the development of new fishing gear in a fun environment with a monetary incentive. There are three categories for Smart Gear entries: 1) gear that reduces sea turtle bycatch; 2) gear that reduces cetacean bycatch (e.g. dolphins); and 3) gear that reduces bycatch of other non-target species.

The competition's partners and judges include: the American Fisheries Society, the Center for Sustainable Aquatic Resources, the Fisheries Conservation Foundation, the Marine Wildlife Bycatch Consortium, the National Fisheries Institute, the World Wildlife Fund, the National Marine Fisheries Service, and the Center for Environment, Fisheries, and Aquaculture Science.

The competition ends on Dec. 31, 2004, and the prizes will be awarded in the spring of 2005. Visit www.smartgear.org for entry rules and more information.



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