



Juvenile. Photo credit: US Geological Survey.

KEY INFORMATION

Area of Concern

Western Atlantic: South Atlantic and the Gulf of Mexico.

Year Identified as “Species of Concern”
1997

Factors for Decline

- Recreational fishing
- Commercial fishing
- Bycatch

Conservation Designations

IUCN: Critically Endangered
American Fisheries Society: Endangered

Current Status:

Demographic and Genetic Diversity Concerns:

The stock has not been assessed and population size is unknown. Available information suggests there has been a decline mean size, mean age, and percentage of males of speckled hind in the South Atlantic (Ziskin 2008).

Existing Protections and Conservation Actions:

Both recreational and commercial fisheries for speckled hind are currently regulated in the South Atlantic with a one fish per vessel trip limit. For the South Atlantic, the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) 2007 Report to Congress indicates speckled hind is undergoing **overfishing** but the **overfished** status is unknown. In the Gulf of Mexico, there is a one fish per vessel trip limit for the recreational fishery and possession limits for the species for federally permitted commercial reef fish vessels are managed under the Deep-water grouper commercial trip limit and quota. For the Gulf of Mexico Fishery the (NMFS) 2007 Report to Congress indicates the overfishing status of speckled hind as “unknown” and overfished status as “undefined”.



Species of Concern

NOAA National Marine Fisheries Service

Brief Species Description:

Speckled hind derive their name from the multitude of tiny white spots that cover their reddish-brown head, body and fins. Juvenile specimens tend to have yellow body color with white spots (Ross 1988). Adults inhabit offshore rocky habitat in depths of 80 to 1300 feet (25 to 400 m) but are most common between 200 and 400 feet (60 and 120 m). Bullock and Smith (1991) indicate most commercial catches are taken from depths of 164 ft (50 m) or more. Preferred habitats include high- and low-profile hard bottoms. Juveniles occur in shallower water (SAFMC 2005). Speckled hind are protogynous hermaphrodites (change sex from female to male); females mature at 4 or 5 years of age and 18 to 24 inches (45-60 cm) TL. Spawning occurs from May to October in spawning aggregations (SAFMC 2005, Ziskin 2008). Maximum size is about 43 inches (110 cm) TL and maximum weight is 66 pounds (30 kg). Maximum age is at least 35 years (Ziskin 2008). Prey items, which can be engulfed whole, include fishes, crabs, shrimps, lobsters, and mollusks, including squids.

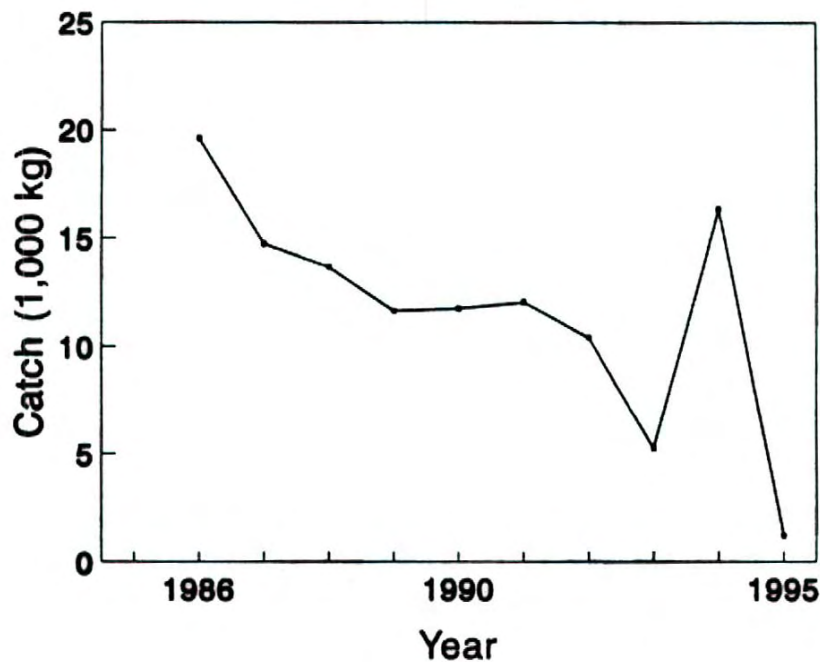


Figure 1. Speckled hind catch (kg), all fisheries combined (Parker and Mays 1998).

Contact Information

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References:

- Bullock, L.H. and G.B. Smith. 1991. Seabasses. St. Petersburg [Mem Hourglass Cruises.], vol. 8, no. 2. Florida Marine Research Institute, St. Petersburg, FL.
- Parker, R.O., Jr. and R.W. Mays. 1998. NOAA Technical Report NMFS 138.
- Ross, S.W. 1988. Copeia 1988: 780.
- SAFMC (South Atlantic Fishery Amangement Council). 2005. Stock Assessment and Fishery Evaluation report for the snapper grouper fishery of the south Atlantic.
- Ziskin, G.L. 2008. Age, growth, and reproduction of speckled hind, *Epinephelus drummondhayi*, off the Atlantic coast of the Southeast United States. Masters Thesis, The College of Charleston.