

SCIENTIFIC NAME: POGONIAS CROMIS

**B**lack drum are fish in the Sciaenidae family (drum fish). Black drum are the largest members of the drum family, able to reach 90 lbs. and 44 years old. The genus *Pogonias* evolved during the Miocene epoch, around 23 million years ago. Geographically, they range from Nova Scotia to Argentina in coastal waters. Similar to sheepshead, they are silver in color with 4 to 6 bold, black, vertical stripes, which fade in older fish. Dissimilar to sheepshead, they have an elongated body and sensitive barbells on their chin, which they use to find food. As larvae (less than 0.1 inch), they mainly eat zooplankton, but switch to worms and small fish at about 8 inches in length. They achieve their adult form around 0.5 inch. Juvenile drum prefer shallow, muddy, low salinity areas within an estuary; whereas adults prefer saltier bays and passes. Similar to other fish in the drum family, they make drumming sounds by beating special abdominal muscles against their swim bladder. With a downward-placed mouth, they hunt for food along water bottoms and oyster beds, waiting near structures to ambush prey washed in by currents. With strong jaws and pharyngeal teeth, they easily crush mollusks, crabs and oysters. Occasionally, parasitic worms can be found in the tail of large drum. "Spaghetti worms" are part of a complex lifecycle between sharks, copepods, small fish and the drum that is completed when the drum is eaten by a shark. Black drum spawn in open bays and passes leading to the Gulf of Mexico between November and July, when they reach 17 to 21 inches in length. Recreationally, they account for a large number of fish

taken through angling in saline waters along the Gulf Coast. Commercially, they can negatively affect oyster harvests from leases and are able to eat 1-2 commercial-sized oysters per pound of body weight each day.



Freshwater drum teeth

# Black Drum

