

Lagniappe

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Southern Stingrays

When many people think of stingrays, they think about the fatal stingray attack on the self-proclaimed “Crocodile Hunter” Steve Irwin. Like all animals, stingrays are defensive and will protect themselves when they believe they are in trouble. But there is a lot more that meets the eyes to these misjudged, but fascinating animals.

The southern stingray was not the one that killed Irwin, but it is a species close to home. The southern stingray (*Dasyatis americana*) can be found in the Gulf of Mexico, western Atlantic and southern Brazil. They like waters with temperatures ranging from 82-90 degrees Fahrenheit. Like most stingrays, they are bottom dwellers and prefer sandy floors and sea grass beds. Sometimes they are found in lagoons and reefs near a “cleaning station” where they have a mutualistic relationship with bluehead wrasses and Spanish hogfishes that will clean the stingrays. The southern stingray measures up to three feet from one wing tip to wing tip. They can weigh up to 300 pounds. When first born, juvenile southern stingrays are a grayish color, whereas adults are an olive/brown green color. Both juveniles and adults have white bellies, and like all stingrays they are equipped with a long tail and matching barb.



Southern Stingray. Illustration by Diane Rome Peebles

The southern stingray can be seen alone, in pairs, or in migrating schools. They typically feed at night and love to grub on bivalves and worms. To find crustaceans and small fishes to eat, southern stingrays will flap their wings to create depressions on the sandy bottoms. This scares the animals out of hiding and into their waiting mouths. Southern stingrays are ovoviviparous. This means that in a female, the eggs are kept inside her body in a chamber where the embryo can develop with the help of a yolk sac. The babies will hatch inside the uterus and are born soon after into the water. Pregnancy lasts 4-11 months, and litter sizes range from 2-10 pups.

Stingrays are also important economically. They are important for ecotourism around the world, and their venom is being used for research in the biomedical and neurobiological industries. In some

areas, indigenous people will use stingray spines for spears, knives and tools. The southern stingray is listed on the World Conservation Union (IUCN) as “data deficient.” This means there is not enough information on the species to make a proper conservation assessment on the species.

Most stingrays, including our southern stingray, are harmless to humans, posing little threat unless bothered by being stepped on or touched in an uncomfortable way. The scary myth that stingrays are mean stabbing machines can be banished quickly if taken the time to learn more about each species, especially if it is close to home and can be seen or found commonly in waters around certain areas. Having knowledge on this species can prevent injury accidents from happening, but will also help you enjoy and appreciate the species a little more without being afraid of them. For more information, visit: <http://www.flmnh.ufl.edu/fish/Gallery/Descript/southernstingray/southernstingray.html>
<http://marinebio.org/species.asp?id=521>

-Angie Nguyen

Regulations to Protect Marine Mammals During Navy Training and Testing

The United States Navy must implement protective measures during training and testing activities in the Atlantic Ocean and Gulf of Mexico to reduce effects on marine mammals like dolphins and whales. The sound generated by active sonar, the sound and pressure generated by detonating explosives, and other associated activities could affect the behavior of some marine mammals, or cause a temporary loss of their hearing sensitivity or other injury. NOAA Fisheries recently made a final determination that the effects of these Navy operations would have a negligible impact on the overall species or stocks involved. Based on that final determination, NOAA is requiring that the Navy use mitigation measures and, if properly followed, expects the exercises will not to result in serious injury or death to a large number of marine mammals.

Under the authorization, the Navy will use the following mitigation measures to minimize effects on marine mammals, including:

- establishing marine mammal mitigation zones around each vessel using sonar;
- using Navy observers to shut down sonar operations if marine mammals are seen within designated mitigation zones;
- using mitigation zones to ensure that explosives are not detonated when animals are detected within a certain distance;
- implementing a stranding response plan that includes a training shutdown provision in certain circumstances, and allows for the Navy to contribute in-kind services to NOAA Fisheries if the agency has to conduct a stranding response and investigation; and,
- using specific mitigation measures at certain times to reduce effects on North Atlantic right whales.

These measures should minimize the potential for injury or death and significantly reduce the number of marine mammals exposed to levels of sound likely to cause temporary loss of hearing.

The final rulemaking is posted online at <http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/pr/permits/incidental.htm#aftt>.

Red River Stocked

The Red River was recently stocked with more than 28,000 Florida strain largemouth bass fingerlings. This endeavor is a renewal of cooperative stocking efforts between the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries (LDWF) and the Red River Waterway Commission (RRWC). The RRWC has agreed to a five-year plan to stock \$50,000 worth of bass fingerlings annually into the five pools of the Red River. The fingerlings were evenly distributed amongst the five pools of the river in order to improve fishing opportunities for the recreational angler. The fish range in size between 4 and 7 inches.

“These fish should have a huge impact on recreational fishing,” explained LDWF Secretary Robert Barham. “A few years from now, some of these fish will grow to be 10 pounds or more.”

About 12,000 more fish will be released by the end of the year, including a stocking on Dec. 5 in Avoyelles Parish.

GULF OF MEXICO REGULATION

Recreational Gag Season

The recreational gag season closed at 12:01 A.M. (local time) on Dec. 3. The harvest of gag will remain closed until July 1, 2014. The recreational harvest of other shallow-water groupers remains open.

Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council October 2013 Update

The Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council met in New Orleans on Oct. 28-31 to discuss a number of fishery issues. Here are some of the actions taken by the council.

Regional Management of Red Snapper - Reef Fish Amendment 39

Amendment 39 examines dividing the recreational red snapper quota among states or regions and delegating authority to establish certain management measures for the harvest of a region's portion of the quota. Red snapper would remain a federally managed stock, but regions would have more flexibility in choosing management measures.

Additional preferred alternatives were chosen, which include allowing delegation to sunset after five calendar years of the regional management program, and allowing individual regions to establish a maximum recreational red snapper size limit.

Lagniappe Fisheries Newsletter

Editor: Julie Anderson

Web coordinator: Melissa Castleberry

Copy editor: Roy Kron

Layout/design: Jessica Schexnayder

Amendment 28 - Red Snapper Allocation

The purpose of the amendment is to reallocate red snapper resources between the commercial and recreational sectors to increase the net benefits from red snapper fishing and improve the stability of the red snapper component of the reef fish fishery, particularly for the recreational sector.

The council heard a status report on red snapper allocation analysis and directed staff to work with the Southeast Fisheries Science Center to develop supporting material necessary for consideration of Amendment 28 in time for the February 2014 Council meeting.

Sector Separation

For the purposes of this amendment, sector separation refers to dividing the recreational red snapper quota into separate private angler and for-hire components. Council reviewed previous sector separation documents and discussed the potential use of red snapper IFQ shares donated by the commercial sector to for-hire operators. Staff will include a voluntary sector separation option in Reef Fish Amendment 40 - Red Snapper Sector Separation.

Amendment 30B Permit Conditions

The council reviewed a preliminary draft of alternatives to modify or rescind the provision adopted under Amendment 30B that requires federally permitted charter vessels and headboats to comply with the more restrictive federal regulations when fishing in state waters. The council requested stronger rationale for the proposed action, additional alternatives, and an analysis of the impact the proposed changes would have on the projected length of the recreational fishing season.

Mackerel

The council took final action on Amendments 20A (formerly 19) and 20B (formerly 20) to the Coastal Migratory Pelagic Fishery Management Plan. Amendment 20A addresses sale and permit provisions for Gulf of Mexico Spanish and king mackerel. Amendment 20B addresses season length, transit provisions, allocation, and framework procedures for coastal migratory pelagics. The council voted to send both documents to the Secretary of Commerce for approval and implementation; however, the South Atlantic Council will need to review Amendment 20B once more before it is transmitted to the secretary. If approved by the secretary, here is what is included in each amendment:

Amendment 20A

- In the Gulf of Mexico, prohibits the sale of king and Spanish mackerel caught under the bag limit, with the exception of for-hire trips in which the vessel also holds a federal king and/or Spanish mackerel commercial permit. Prohibits all sales during a commercial closure.
- Allows king or Spanish mackerel harvested during a fishing tournament to be donated to a dealer who will sell those fish and donate the proceeds to a charity, provided that the tournament organizers have the appropriate state permits to conduct the tournament, and that the transfer and reporting requirements are followed.
- Eliminates the income requirements for commercial king and Spanish mackerel permits.

Amendment 20B

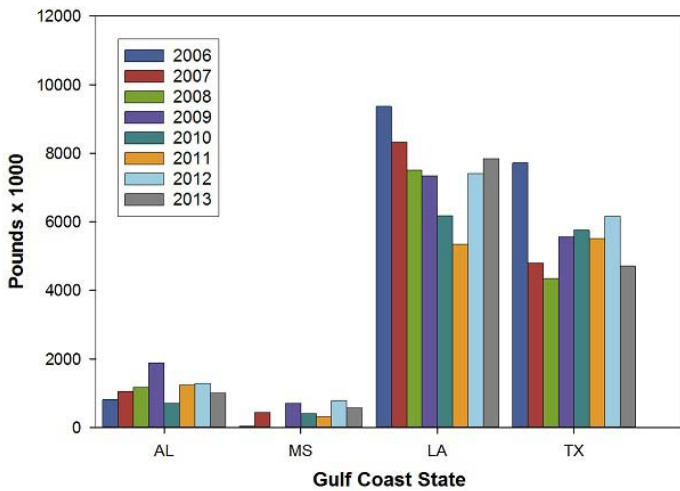
- Sets the trip limit at 3,000 pounds with no reduction for the western zone.
- Sets the commercial hook-and-line trip limit at 1,250 pounds with no reduction for both the eastern zone, northern subzone, and the eastern zone, southern subzone.

- Changes the fishing year for Gulf group king mackerel for the western zone to 9/1 through 8/31, and for the eastern zone, northern subzone to 10/1 through 9/30.
- Allows transit through areas closed to king mackerel fishing for vessels possessing king mackerel that were legally harvested in the EEZ off of areas open to king mackerel fishing.
- Increases the ACL for Gulf migratory group cobia.

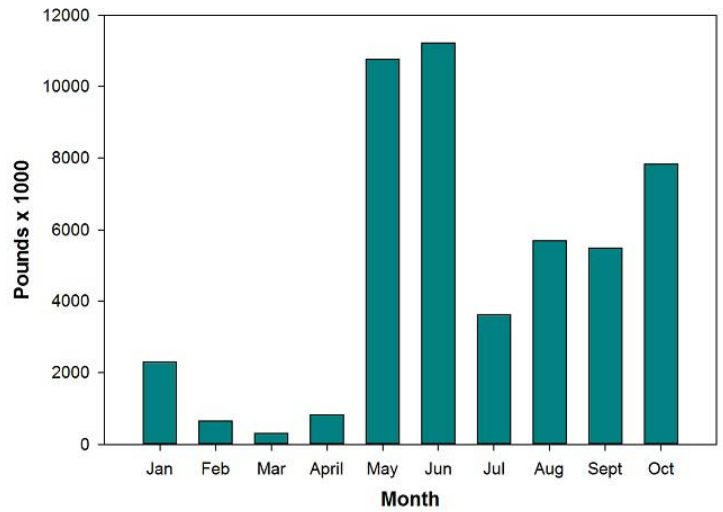
Louisiana Shrimp Watch

Louisiana specific data portrayed in the graphics are selected from preliminary data posted by NOAA on its website. All data portrayed are subject to final revision and approval by NOAA. Shrimp landings are ex-vessel prices, inclusive of all species harvested. Missing, inadequate or withheld reports are portrayed as “zero” in these graphics. Price graphics reflect central Gulf states only (Texas and Florida are reported independently). For more information, please refer to: www.st.nmfs.noaa.gov/st1/market_news/index.html.

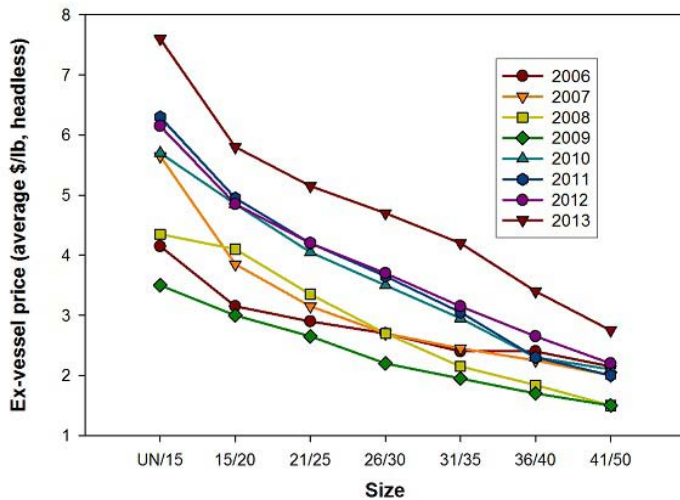
October Shrimp Harvest



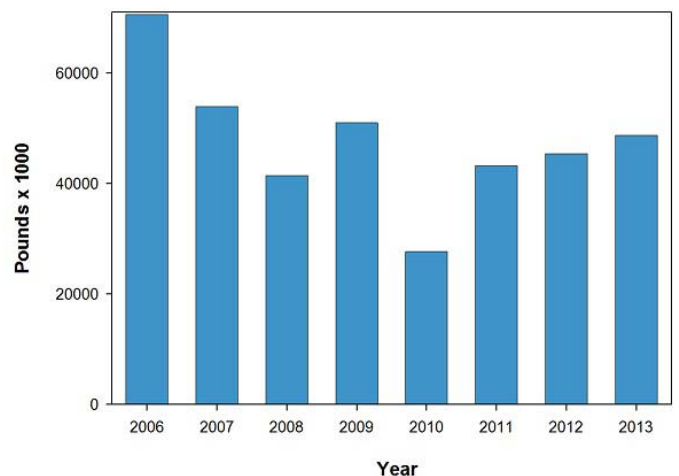
Louisiana 2013 Shrimp Harvest



October 2013 Northern GoM Shrimp Prices



Louisiana Year to Date Shrimp Harvest January-October



The Gumbo Pot

Recipe courtesy of *Louisiana Kitchen & Culture*. For more recipes or to subscribe to their magazine or free newsletter, please visit <http://louisiana.kitchenandculture.com/>.

Cream of Oyster Soup

Ingredients:

- 1 pint Gulf oysters
- 1 stick unsalted butter
- 4 tablespoons flour
- 1 medium onion, finely chopped
- 2 stalks celery, finely chopped
- 2 cups half and half
- 2 teaspoons fresh chopped parsley (1 teaspoon dried)
- salt and pepper
- hot buttered French bread



Photo credit: Louisiana Kitchen & Culture

Method:

Drain oysters, reserving liquor and oysters separately.

Melt butter in a 4-quart saucepan over medium heat; add flour and whisk well. Cook, whisking constantly, for 5 minutes or until roux is golden. Add onion and celery; cook 5 minutes, stirring often. Add reserved oyster liquor and half and half. Cover, reduce heat to low, and simmer 20 minutes. Add reserved oysters and parsley. Season with salt and pepper; stir well. Simmer 1 minute or until the edges of the oysters begin to curl.

Remove from heat and serve immediately with hot buttered French bread.

If you have a favorite seafood recipe that you would like to share, please send it to Julie Anderson janderson@agcenter.lsu.edu for inclusion in future issues.



For more information, contact your local extension agent:



Thu Bui – Assistant Extension Agent, Fisheries
St. Mary, Iberia, and Vermilion Parishes
St. Mary Parish Court House
500 Main Street Rm. 314
Franklin, LA 70538-6199
Phone: (337) 828-4100, ext. 300
Fax: (337) 828-0616
tbui@agcenter.lsu.edu

Carol D. Franze – Associate Area Agent
Southeast Region
21549 Old Covington Hwy
Hammond, LA 70403
Phone: (985) 543-4129
cfranze@agcenter.lsu.edu

Albert 'Rusty' Gaudé – Area Agent, Fisheries
Jefferson, Orleans, St. Charles and St. John Parishes
Phone: (504) 433-3664
agaude@agctr.lsu.edu

Twyla Herrington – Associate Area Agent, Plaquemines Parish
479 F. Edward Hebert Blvd., Suite 201
Belle Chasse, LA 70037
Phone: (504) 433-3664
Fax: (504) 392-2448
therrington@agcenter.lsu.edu

Thomas Hymel – Watershed Educator
Iberia, St. Martin, Lafayette, Vermilion,
St. Landry, & Avoyelles Parishes
Phone: (337) 276-5527
thymel@agctr.lsu.edu

Alan Matherne – Area Agent (Fisheries & Coastal Issues)
Terrebonne, Lafourche, and Assumption Parishes
511 Roussell Street
Houma, LA 70360
Phone: (985) 873-6495
amatherne@agcenter.lsu.edu

Kevin Savoie – Area Agent (Southwest Region)
Natural Resources-Fisheries
Phone: (337) 475-8812
ksavoie@agctr.lsu.edu

Mark Shirley – Area Agent (Aquaculture & Coastal Resources)
Jefferson Davis, Vermilion, Acadia, St. Landry, Evangeline,
Cameron, Calcasieu, Lafayette, Beauregard, & Allen Parishes
Phone: (337) 898-4335
mshirley@agctr.lsu.edu

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We would like to hear from you! Please contact us regarding fishery questions, comments or concerns you would like to see covered in the Lagniappe. Anyone interested in submitting information, such as articles, editorials or photographs pertaining to fishing or fisheries management is encouraged to do so.

Please contact Lagniappe editor Julie Anderson at janderson@agcenter.lsu.edu.

Julie A. Anderson
Assistant Professor
LSU Agcenter & Louisiana Sea Grant
114 RNR Building
Baton Rouge, LA 70803
Phone: 225-578-0771
Fax: 225-578-4227
janderson@agcenter.lsu.edu