

Equetus punctatus (Spotted Drumfish)

Family: Sciaenidae (Croakers)

Order: Perciformes (Perch and Allied Fish)

Class: Actinopterygii (Ray-finned Fish)



Fig. 1. Spotted drumfish, *Equetus punctatus*.

[http://space.mit.edu/home/kenton/Bonaire_2005/fish/spotted_drum_1.html, downloaded 31 October 2016]

TRAITS. The spotted drumfish has a total of 11-13 dorsal spines and 45-47 dorsal soft rays (in two dorsal fins), 2 anal spines, and 6-8 anal soft rays. The very high first dorsal fin has a short base. The caudal (tail), anal and second dorsal fins are dark with white spots (Smith, 1997). The head and first dorsal fin have vertical white and dark brown bars, which bend to form horizontal stripes on the body (Fig. 1). The mouth is low, small and almost horizontal. The spiny first dorsal fin is higher than the length of the head. They have a maximum length of 27cm (Claro, 1994) and a common length of 18cm.

DISTRIBUTION. The spotted drum fish is distributed in the western Atlantic, from Bermuda, Florida (USA), the Gulf of Mexico, the Bahamas and the Caribbean, to Brazil (Claro, 1994; (Smith, 1997).

HABITAT AND ECOLOGY. Spotted drumfish are marine fish, found in coral reefs, within the vicinity of small caves and under ledges. They are usually very secretive and solitary, frequently seen around the bases of corals during the daytime (Smith, 1997). They are easily approachable and feed at night on shrimps, polychaetes and crabs at a depth range of 3-30m (Lieske and Myers, 1994).

REPRODUCTION. Spotted drumfish are dioecious, with separate sexes, and fertilization is external. They are oviparous, in that the young are hatched after the parent has laid the eggs. They belong to the reproductive guild of nonguarders and egg scatterers in open water; there is no parental care for the young (Thresher, 1984).

BEHAVIOUR. Spotted drumfish frisk through the sand in search for food, resulting in the water around them having a cloudy appearance. They do this to shake up detritus in the sand. *Equetus punctatus* is a nocturnal species and therefore has maximum activity at night, so is no surprise that they feed at night. They feed on crustaceans, shrimps and polychaetes, as well as smaller fish. Spotted drumfish make drum noises as a mating call and to communicate with each other.

APPLIED BIOLOGY. Spotted drumfish have been successfully bred in captivity (Moe, 1992). If these fish are eaten, they can cause ciguatera poisoning (Olsen et al., 1984).

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