

Gobiomorus dormitor (Bigmouth Sleeper)

Family: Eleotridae (Sleeper Gobies)

Order: Perciformes (Perch and Cichlids)

Class: Actinopterygii (Ray-finned Fish)



Fig. 1. Bigmouth sleeper, *Gobiomorus dormitor*.

[<http://www.fs.usda.gov/wps/portal/fsinternet/>, downloaded 28 March 2015]

TRAITS. The bigmouth sleeper is dull coloured (Fig. 1), its colour can range from olive to brown. Its average length is 20-60 cm with a weight of up to 2 kg for adults. It has a blunt snout, a short broad head, and a stout body. In addition to the broad, rounded caudal (tail) fin, this species also has two dorsal fins (Fig. 1). There are several rows of small conical shaped teeth on its jaw (Mowbray, 2004). It deserves its common name “bigmouth” (Gregg, 2015) (Fig. 2).

DISTRIBUTION. It can be found in Brazil to south Texas and south Florida (Mowbray, 2004). The bigmouth sleeper is also abundant on most Caribbean islands and in Central America and South America’s Atlantic coast.

HABITAT AND ACTIVITY. Present in lakes, rivers and fresh water streams in forested and mountainous areas (Mowbray, 2004). This species is so well camouflaged and motionless it appears absent in its natural habitat (Fig. 3).

FOOD AND FEEDING. The adult feeds on river shrimps and small fishes (Mowbray, 2004), whereas the juveniles consume insects. One of the most common prey of this ambush predator is cichlid fry (Lehtonen et al., 2012).

REPRODUCTION. May and June are the peak of gonadosomatic indices (size of gonads relative to the body) and the least in January and February. They are diadromous: adult bigmouth sleepers spend most of their time in freshwater, however, when it is time to reproduce, they either venture out into the ocean or allow their eggs and larvae to do so. The juveniles then make their way back into fresh water where they would mature and migrate back into salt water for reproduction (Bacheler et al., 2004).

BEHAVIOUR. Lies motionless at the base of slow moving streams, on logs, in between stones and gravel and also on leaf litter (Mowbray, 2004) due to the colour of the fish and its dormant behaviour, the fish camouflages itself, not only so that it can catch its prey but also to protect it from any predators (Gregg, 2015).

APPLIED ECOLOGY. Because of its diadromous behaviour, this species can be classified as environmentally sensitive. It may therefore fall under the list of vulnerable organisms (Bacheler et al., 2004).

REFERENCES

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- Lehtonen, T.K., McCrary, J.K. and Meyer, A. (2012). Introduced Predator Elicits Deficient Brood Defence Behaviour in a Crater Lake Fish. <http://journals.plos.org/plosone/article?id=10.1371/journal.pone.0030064>, downloaded 28 March 2015
- Bacheler, N. M., Neal, J. W. and Noble, R L. (2004). Reproduction of a Landlocked Diadromous Fish Population: Bigmouth Sleepers *Gobiomorus dormitor* in a Reservoir in Puerto Rico. *Caribbean Journal of Science*, **40**: 223-231.

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Fig. 2. Brownsville's Coastal Fisheries biologist examining a bigmouth sleeper.
[<https://tpwd.texas.gov/fishboat/fish/didyouknow/amazingfish.phtml>, downloaded 28 March 2015]



Fig. 3. Bigmouth sleeper in its natural habitat.
[<http://www.fishbase.org/summary/3831>, downloaded 28 March 2015]