

Alectis ciliaris (African Pompano)

Family: Carangidae (Jacks and Pompanos)

Order: Perciformes (Perch and Allied Fish)

Class: Actinopterygii (Ray-finned Fish)



Fig. 1. African pompano, *Alectis ciliaris*.

[<http://www.mexfish.com/mexico/african-pompano/>, downloaded 8 March 2016]

TRAITS. *Alectis ciliaris*, better known as the African pompano or cobblerfish, has a compressed, deep body that lengthens with age so that the depth decreases from 88% to 38% of body length. They are silver in colour with a bluish metallic touch dorsally, with a dark spot on the upper end of the gill opening (Fish Base, 2015). Their main feature are the long dorsal and anal fin rays (Fig. 1). These fin rays are very long in juveniles, which also have dark bars on the body (Fig. 2). Maximum size of the adult can reach 150cm and at least 22kg (Snow, 2016).

DISTRIBUTION. Worldwide distribution in tropical and subtropical marine waters (Fig. 3). It is native to Trinidad and Tobago and other Caribbean islands as well as other areas such as Costa Rica, South Africa and Singapore to name a few (IUCN, 2010).

HABITAT AND ACTIVITY. The adult African pompano lives over sandy bottoms and stony formations of no more than 60m in depth. They are demersal which mean they can be found near the bottom of the water, while the juveniles are pelagic or found in the open sea. In some cases,

juveniles can be found near the shore. These fish prefer temperatures ranging from 18-27⁰C (Big water adventures, 2016).

FOOD AND FEEDING. The juvenile fish's diet is made up of shrimp, crabs and bony fish. The adult fish also eat such organisms as well as squid, slow moving crustaceans and cuttlefish. They feed near coral/ barrier reefs and close to ship wreckage or debris.

REPRODUCTION. A study done in India shows that these fish lay eggs that are globular in shape, and contain a yolk as well as an oil bubble for buoyancy. The larvae are pelagic, and show differences in head size, dorsal rays, pectoral fins and spines during development (Fig. 4). The greatest number of larvae was collected from March to May, with the highest amount being found in April (National Bioresource Development Board, 2016).

BEHAVIOUR. The adult African pompano is solitary, circulating in shallow waters around 60m in depth, while the juveniles are drifters. While the African pompano is a predator, this fish is also prey to sharks and other fish higher in the food web. The juveniles exhibit a type of mimicry, appearing similar to jellyfish medusae. This allows them to deter some predators with the appearance of their elongated dorsal and anal fins.

APPLIED ECOLOGY. The species is listed by the IUCN red list but not under any conservation threat. To date it is of least concern but it is seen as a "game fish" (Fig. 5) whereby hunting it is mainly for sport but also involves the fish being used commercially since it is a relatively large fish.

REFERENCES

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- National Bioresource Development Board (2016) Department of Biotechnology, Government of India, New Delhi http://web.archive.org/web/20070810125841/http://www.nio.org/Biology/fish/Fishe_larvae_48.pdf downloaded on March 9th 2016
- Snow, J. (2016) Mexico Fish, Flora and Fauna. African Pompano, *Alectis ciliaris* <http://www.mexfish.com/mexico/african-pompano/> downloaded on March 8th 2016

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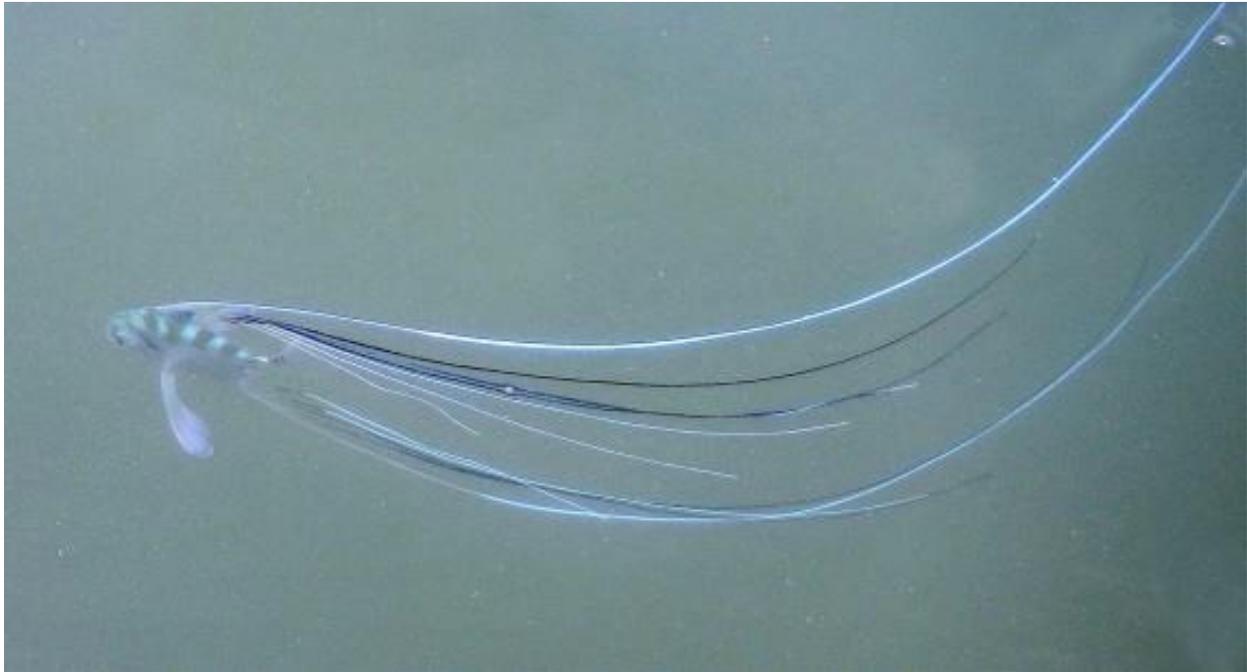


Fig. 2. Juvenile African pompano.

[<http://www.mexfish.com/mexico/african-pompano/> downloaded 8 March 2016]

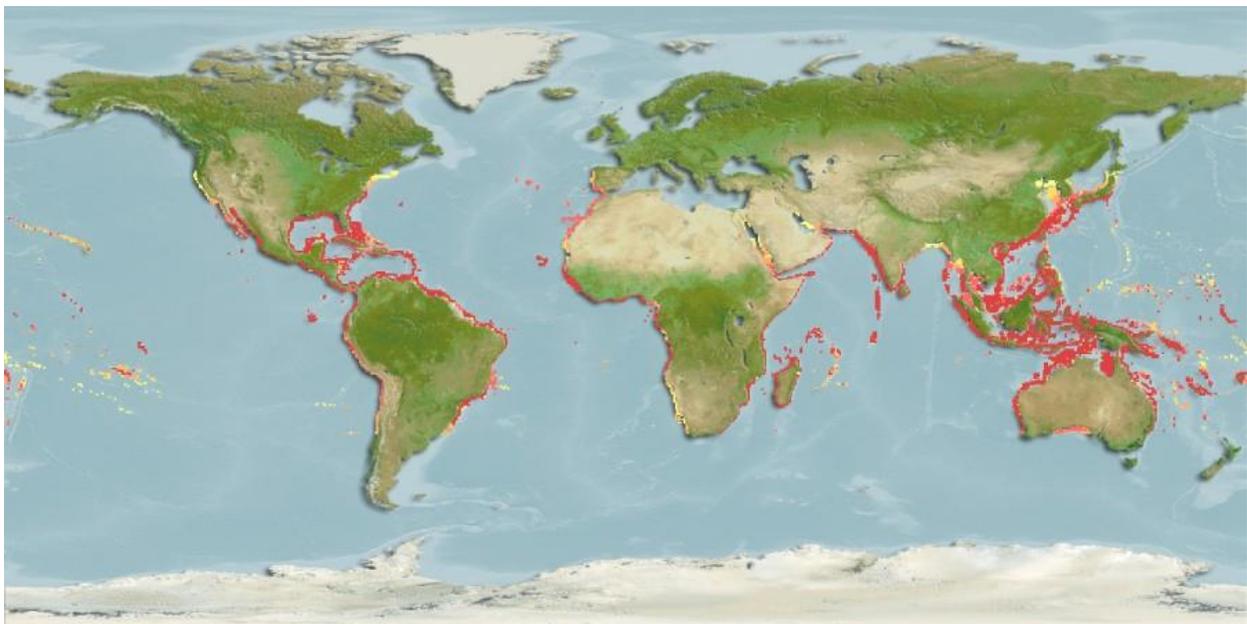


Fig. 3. African pompano native distribution.

[http://www.aquamaps.org/receive.php?type_of_map=regular downloaded 8 March 2016]

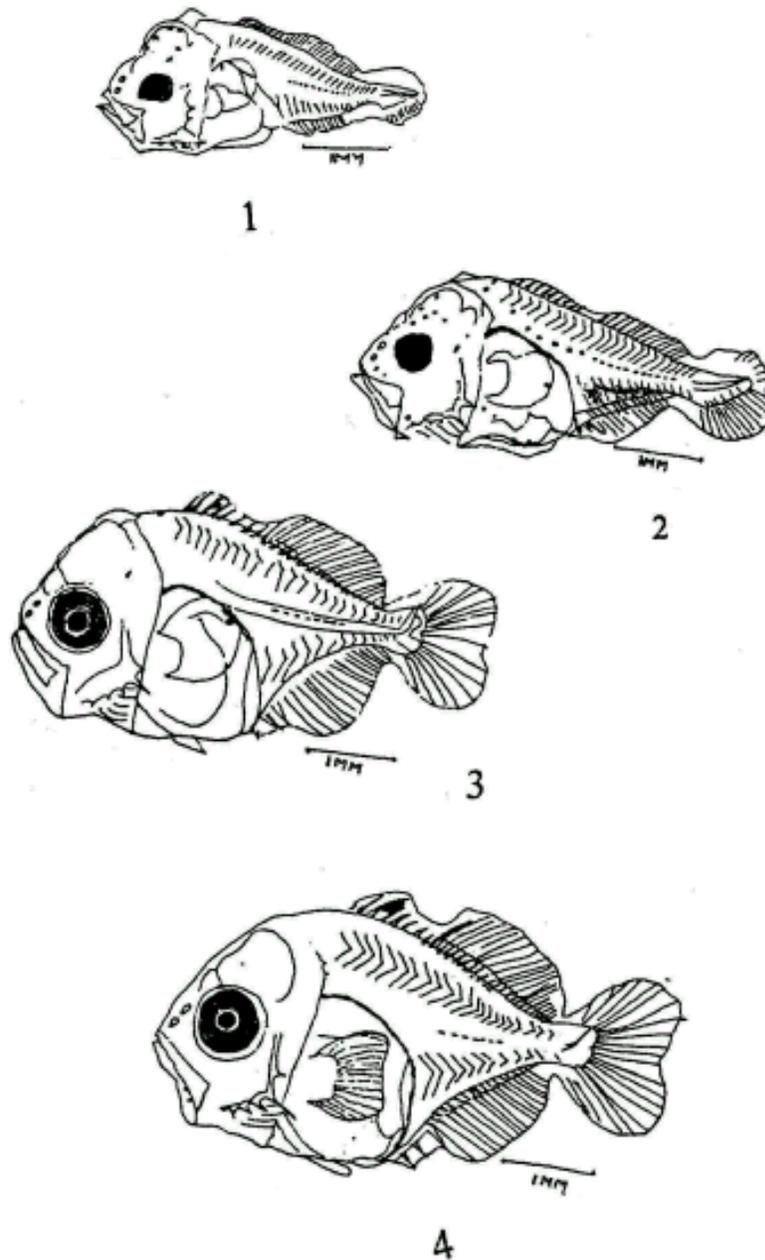


Fig. 4. *Alectis ciliaris* larvae at length 4.3, 5.0, 6.0 and 6.8mm.

[http://web.archive.org/web/20070810125841/http://www.nio.org/Biology/fish/Fishe_larvae_48.pdf downloaded 9 March 2016]



Fig. 5. The African pompano as a game fish. Note the worn fins in this large adult.

[<http://www.mexfish.com/mexico/african-pompano/> downloaded 23 April 2016]

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