

THE WILD SIDE by Dave Gibson

RED DRUM



Red drum, also known as channel bass, “spottail” bass, and redfish, is a game fish found in the United States coastal waters from Massachusetts to Texas. The only member of its species, the largest ever recorded was caught in 1984 off Hatteras Island, NC, weighing in at 94 pounds. Spending at least the first 3 years of its life in rivers, bays, and estuaries, it feeds on crustaceans, mollusks, and other fish until reaching maturity and moving to deeper seas. Most easily identified by the eyespot ahead of its tailfin, it is thought to confuse predators and bigger “reds” are often multi-spotted. A feisty fighter,

red drum make a croaking or drumming sound when attracting females to spawn or are removed from the water by a lucky angler.

1.5 to 3 million lbs. of red drum was harvested per year in U.S. for more than century. When Cajun cooking became popular in the early 1980s with dishes such as chef Paul Prudhomme’s “blackened redfish”, commercial and recreational catches reached 20 million lbs. each year. With plummeting fish stocks, states instilled catch and size restrictions. On October 20th, 2007, President George W. Bush designated the red drum a protected game fish prohibiting the sale of any caught in federal waters. Today populations are rebounding providing hours of line-stripping enjoyment for sport-fishermen. Red drum is also available for consumers’ dinner plates through commercial fish farms.

*Dave Gibson is a photographer & writer focusing on the natural world around us.
His imagery and previous articles can be found on his web site at www.davegibsonimages.com*