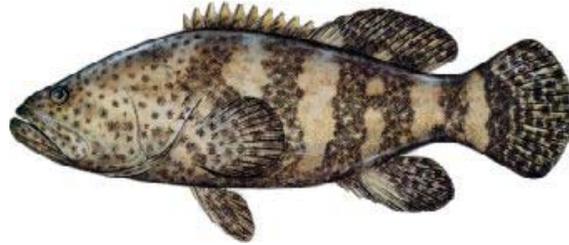


Goliath Grouper (Jewfish)

Epinephelus ityara



Description:

This fish is generally brownish yellow, gray, or olive with small dark spots on head, body, and fins. The body is robust and elongated with a broad head and small eyes.

Size:

The goliath grouper is the largest grouper in the western Atlantic. It can reach up to 8 feet in length and weight up to 800 pounds.

Offspring:

Spawning occurs during the summer months of July, August, and September. Offshore aggregations of up to 100 or more individuals are formed over ship wrecks, rock ledges, and isolated reef patches. Eggs are released into the open waters and carried away by water currents after fertilization. The juveniles inhabit mangroves and brackish estuaries until ready to go into open waters after about one year.

Lifespan:

It is estimated that goliath groupers may live longer than 30 years.

Habitat:

Occurring in shallow, inshore waters to depths of 150 feet, the goliath grouper prefers areas of rock, coral, and mud bottoms. It is one of the few groupers found in brackish waters. This fish is solitary by nature, with the adults occupying limited home ranges. Goliath groupers occur in the Bahamas and the Atlantic Ocean from Florida south to Brazil, including the Gulf of Mexico and the Caribbean Sea.

Food:

Goliath grouper feed largely on crustaceans, such as spiny lobsters, shrimps and crabs, fishes, octopus, and young sea turtles.

Fun Facts:

- The Goliath grouper is territorial near areas of refuge such as caves and ledges. When threatened, it will open its mouth, shake and produce a distinctly audible rumbling sound.
- The Goliath grouper grows so large that some believe it was the great fish that swallowed Jonah, the Jewish prophet of the Old Testament, hence the earlier name "jewfish" which was changed to Goliath grouper in 2001.
- These groupers are so huge that when they open their mouths to feed, they create a suction that is powerful enough to inhale small prey. They can pose a danger to divers, through virtue of their sheer bulk, not because they are known to attack humans.