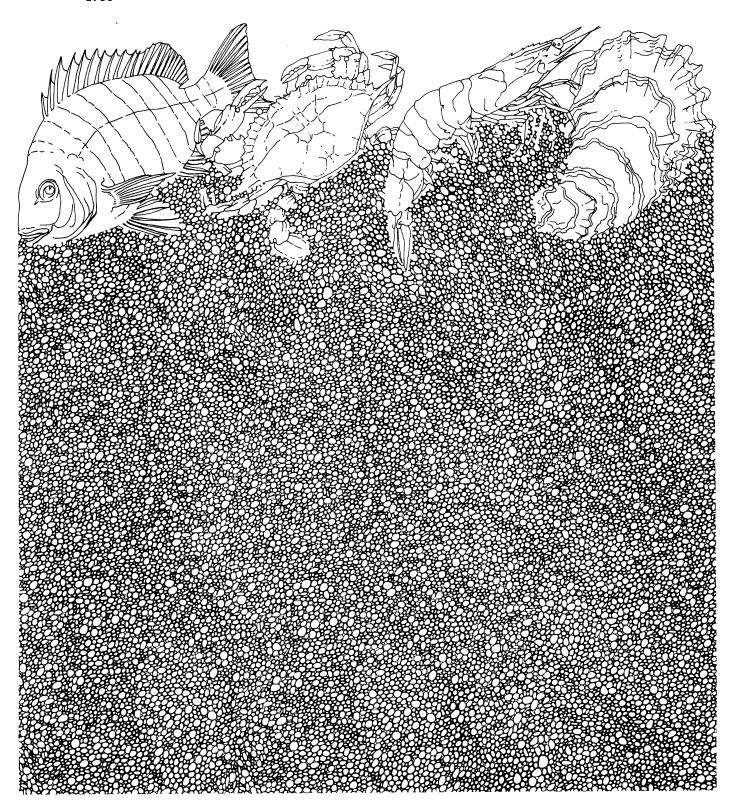
Comparison of 5.1-cm Stretched Mesh Gill Net Catches in Two Texas Bays

by Ken Rice and H.E. Hegen

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COMPARISON OF 5.1-cm STRETCHED MESH GILL NET CATCHES IN TWO TEXAS BAYS

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ABSTRACT

Small (<398 mm total length) spotted seatrout (Cynoscion nebulosus) were caught on submerged reefs in Aransas and Corpus Christi Bays using multifilament 5.1-cm stretched mesh gill nets during January-April 1977. No significant differences were found in mean lengths or catch rates for spotted seatrout between the two bay systems. Spot (Leiostomus xanthurus) catch rates and silver perch (Bairdiella chrysoura) mean lengths differed significantly between Aransas and Corpus Christi Bays; all other species catch rates and mean lengths were similar. Use of 5.1-cm webbing in the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (TPWD) monitoring program could provide information on sizes of fishes not presently caught in TPWD gill nets; initiation of an offshore gill net sampling program is not recommended at this time because of budget and manpower constraints.

INTRODUCTION

In November 1975, the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (TPWD) initiated a coastwide monitoring program using gill nets (7.6-15.2-cm stretched mesh) to monitor the relative abundance of finfishes (Hegen 1983a). Indices of relative abundance are used to assess the status of bay fish populations.

The TPWD sampling program requires that gill nets be set perpendicular to shore to a distance of 183 m. Shoreline sampling with these gill nets may not adequately sample the entire population structure or a given size of a species. For instance, Matlock et al. (1978) noted the absence of small (< 398 mm total length) spotted seatrout (Cynoscion nebulosus) in shoreline areas sampled with 7.6-cm stretched mesh monofilament gill nets. This may be due to the mesh size selectivity of nets or the habitat preference of fish of this size.

Spotted seatrout are found throughout a wide range of habitats, ranging from shallow vegetated areas to deep bays and oyster reefs (Lorio and Perret 1980). The abundance of spotted seatrout in open bay areas and on oyster reefs contributes to the high fishing success for spotted seatrout by private and charter boat recreational fishermen in Aransas Bay, Texas (Heffernan et al. 1977). About 90% of these spotted seatrout ranged in size from 203 to 381 mm total length (TL).

This study was conducted to 1) determine if small spotted seatrout (<398 mm) could be captured on oyster reefs in Aransas Bay and Corpus Christi Bay with a 5.1-cm stretched mesh gill net during winter and early spring and 2) determine the number and size of other fishes caught in these nets.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

During January-April 1977, multifiliment nylon (No. 208) gill nets (76.1 m x 2.1 m) with 5.1-cm stretched mesh were set overnight on selected open water oyster reefs in Aransas and Corpus Christi Bays (Fig. 1; Appendix A). Gill nets were set twice a month in each bay system. Nets were set within 1 h of sunset and picked up within 1 h after sunrise the following morning. Total fishing time (nearest 0.1 h) was recorded. Selected hydrological and meteorological data were recorded at the time of each set and retrieval (Appendix B).

Fish were identified (Parker et al. 1972, Hoese and Moore 1977) and counted for each set in each bay system (Appendix C). Total length of up to 19 individuals of each species were obtained from each set. Mean total lengths for each species were calculated using all individuals which had measured lengths (Appendix C).

Species selected for analyses were based on the criterion that at least one individual of a species was captured in at least four overnight sets in each bay system. These species were hardhead catfish (Arius felis), silver perch (Bairdiella chrysoura), gulf menhaden (Brevoortia patronus), spotted seatrout (Cynoscion nebulosus) and spot (Leiostomus xanthurus); they comprised over 91% of the total catch. Catch rates (No./h) of all species combined and catch rates and mean total lengths of the selected species were examined for significant differences ($P \le 0.05$) between bays using non-transformed data in a one-way analysis of variance (Sokal and Rohlf 1981). Identical results following comparison of log-transformed to non-transformed analyses allowed presentation of non-transformed results.

RESULTS

Small spotted seatrout (\leq 398 mm total length) were caught on submerged oyster reefs in Aransas and Corpus Christi Bays. There were no significant differences in spotted seatrout mean catch rates (0.5 \pm 0.1 fish/hour) or mean sizes (283 \pm 13 mm) between Aransas and Corpus Christi Bays (Tables 1-3). Spotted seatrout comprised 5.8% of the total catch (982 fish) in Aransas Bay and 2.1% of the total catch (2249 fish) in Corpus Christi Bay.

There were significant differences in mean catch rates and mean total lengths between bays for spot and silver perch, respectively (Tables 2 and 3). Mean catch rate of spot in Corpus Christi Bay (2.0 \pm 0.4 fish/h) was ten times higher than recorded in Aransas Bay (0.2 \pm 0.1 fish/h). The mean total length of silver perch in Aransas Bay and Corpus Christi Bay was 177 \pm 3 and 185 \pm 2 mm, respectively (Table 1). All other species mean catch rates and total lengths were similar between bays (Table 1.)

The hydrological and meteorological data ranges were similar between the two bay systems except for salinity, during January-April 1977 (Appendix B). Mean salinity in Aransas Bay was 8.5 ppt while the mean in Corpus Christi Bay was 21.8 ppt.

DISCUSSION

The 5.1-cm mesh gill net catches smaller spotted seatrout than are caught with the smallest mesh (7.6-cm) used in the routine shoreline TPWD monitoring program. The average lengths of spotted seatrout in this study were 88 and 130 mm smaller than the 8-year (1975-1983) mean total lengths of spotted seatrout caught in 7.6-cm mesh nets in Corpus Christi (388 mm TL) and Aransas (396 mm TL) Bays, respectively

(McEachron and Green 1985). The direct relationship between mesh size and fish size (length) is well documented (Hamley 1975, Hegen 1983b).

This study verified that small spotted seatrout (≤ 300 mm TL) could be caught over oyster reefs. The TPWD gill net sampling (minimum mesh size 7.6-cm stretch) during November 1975-March 1976 indicated the presence of spotted seatrout in offshore but not necessarily reef areas (Matlock et al. 1978). Present budget and manpower contraints prohibit the initiation of an extensive offshore gill net sampling program without alteration to the current program and potential loss of data precision.

Although the 5.1-cm stretched mesh gill nets could provide data on spotted seatrout ≤ 300 mm TL from oyster reefs before they are harvested by recreational fishermen (minimum size 356 mm TL) alterations of the current sampling program are not recommended. The TPWD sampling programs are designed to obtain data on all organisms captured in standard gears at randomly selected sites. Shoreline sampling with bag seines currently provides annual relative abundance of pre-harvest size (~ 80 mm TL) spotted seatrout (McEachron and Green 1985). The shoreline gill net sampling program can detect statistical differences in spotted seatrout catch rates among years (Hegen et al. 1983, McEachron and Green 1986).

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Table 1. Seasonal catch rate (No./h ± 1SE) and mean total length (mm) of selected species caught with a 5.1-cm stretched mesh gill net in Aransas and Corpus Christi Bay during January-April 1977.

		Catch rate			Total length	
Species	Aransas	Corpus Christi	Combined	Aransas	Corpus Christi	Combined
Gulf menhaden	4.8 ± 2.2	9.2 ± 4.6	7.0 ± 2.5	181 ± 13	178 ± 7	180 ± 8
Hardhead catfish	2.8 ± 1.4	3.2 ± 2.1	3.0 ± 1.2	254 ± 9	242 ± 5	248 ± 5
Silver perch	0.4 ± 0.2	4.5 ± 2.0	2.4 ± 1.1	177 ± 3	185 ± 2	184 ± 1 ^b
Spot	0.2 ± 0.1	2.0 ± 0.4	1.1 ± 0.2^{a}	170 ± 3	174 ± 2	172 ± 2
Spotted seatrout	0.6 ± 0.2	0.4 ± 0.2	0.5 ± 0.1	266 ± 17	300 ± 19	283 ± 13
All species	9.3 ± 3.7	21.5 ± 6.8	15.4 ± 4.1			

^aCombined catch rate weighted by acreage of bays due to significant differences. Combined mean length weighted by number of fishes caught in each bay due to significant differences.

Table 2. One-way analysis of variance of catch rates of selected species caught with a 5.1-cm stretched mesh gill net between Aransas Bay and Corpus Christi Bay during January-April 1977.

	Source of	Degrees of	Mean	
Group	variation	freedom	square	F
; ts				
Gulf menhaden	Total	15	101.896	
	Bays	1	73.960	0.712
	Error	14	103.891	
Hardhead catfish	Total	15	24.401	
	Bays	1	0.601	0.023
	Error	14	26.101	
Silver perch	Total	15	20.107	
Direct peren	Bays	1	69.306	4.177
	Error	14	16.592	
Spot	Total	15	1.603	
	Bays	1	12.960	16.375*
	Error	14	0.791	
Spotted seatrout	Total	15	0.307	
	Bays	1	0.040	0.123
	Error	14	0.326	
		1.5	266 266	
All species	Total	15	266.266	0 / 0 0
	Bays	1	590.490	2.429
	Error	14	243.107	

^{*} P ≤0.05

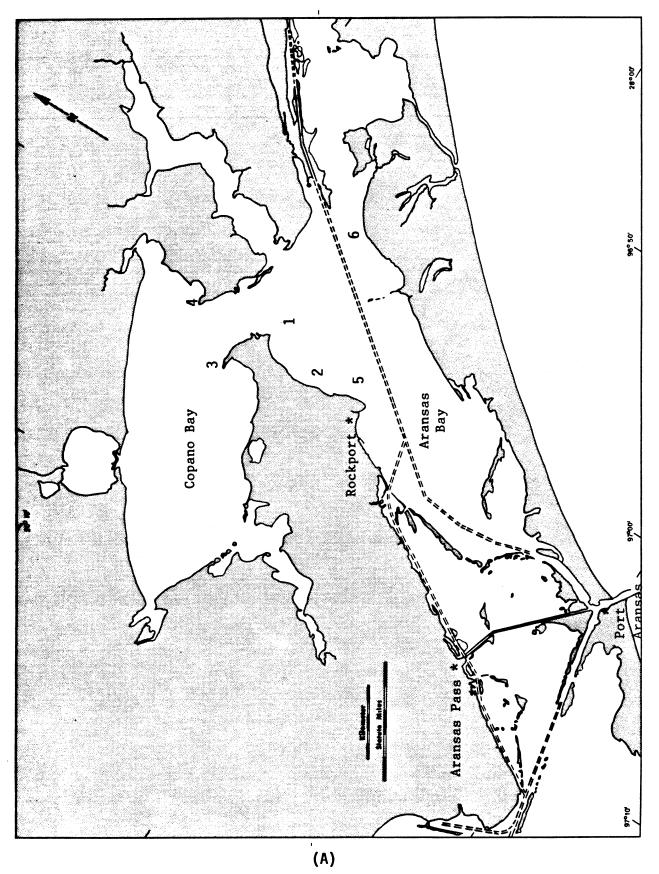
Table 3. One-way analysis of variance of mean total lengths of selected species caught with a 5.1-cm stretched mesh gill net between Aransas Bay and Corpus Christi Bay during January-April 1977.

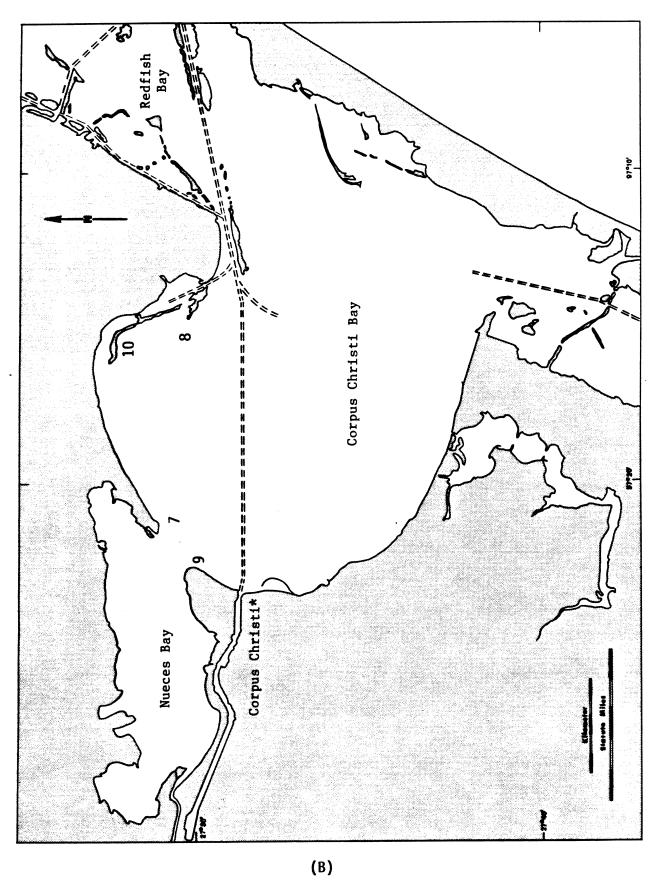
	Source of	Degrees of	Mean	
Group	variation	freedom	square	F
Gulf menhaden	Total	12	914.577	
	Bays	1	36.623	0.037
	Error	11	994.331	
Hardhead catfish	Total	• 7	239.982	
	Bays	1	300.125	1.305
	Error	6	229.953	1.303
Silver Perch	Total	11	41.061	
	Bays	1	184.010	6.875*
	Error	10	26.766	0.075
Spot	Total	14	58.781	
-	Bays	1	73.219	1.270
	Error	13	57.670	1.270
Spotted seatrout	Total	11	2094.545	
-	Bays	1	3536.333	1.813
	Error	10	1950.367	1.013

^{*} P ≤0.05

Figure 1. Gill net station locations during January-April 1977.

- (A) Aransas Bay
- (B) Corpus Christi Bay





Appendix A. Gill net station locations.

Table A.1. Station location and fishing time (h) for 5.1-cm stretched mesh gill nets in Aransas and Corpus Christi Bays during January-April 1977.

		Station	т.	Fishing time		
Bay	Date	number	Location	(h)	Latitude	Longitude
Aransas	Jan 10	-	Half Moon Reef	14.5	28°04'20"	.08,65,96
		2	Broomstick Reef	14.5	28°04'30"	97°01'30"
		3	Redfish Point Reef	13.9	28°06'50"	97°03'45"
		7	Newcomb Reef	14.2	28°09'00"	97°02'30"
		5	Iron Stake Reef	13.7	28°03'00"	97°01'10"
		9	Spaulding Reef	16.0	28°06'30"	96°54'30"
		7	Half Moon Reef	12.2	28°04'20"	96°59'30"
	Apr 07	က	Redfish Point Reef	13.0	28°06'50"	97°03'45"
Corpus Christi		7	Indian Point Reef	14.3	27°50'30"	97°20'30"
		&	Long Reef	14.6	27°50'30"	97°15'30"
		6	Rincon Point Reef	14.1	27°49'40"	97°22'30"
		10	LaQuinta Island Reef	14.0	27°52'00"	97°15'30"
		8	Long Reef	13.2	27°50'30"	97°15'30"
		7	Indian Point Reef	14.1	27°50'30"	97°20'30"
	Apr 13	∞	Long Reef	12.7	27°50'30"	97°15'30"
		6	Rincon Point Reef	12.5	27°49'40"	97°22'30"

Appendix B. Hydrological and meteorological data collected during 5.1 cm mesh gill net sets in Aransas Bay and Corpus Christi Bay during January-April 1977.

Table B.1. Explanation of hydrological and meterological abbreviations and codes.

Code	Explanation
Time	<pre>I = Initial (time of set); F = Final (time of pickup).</pre>
WS	Wind speed (Km/h)
WD	Wind direction from: 1 = north; 2 = northeast; 3 = east; 4 = southeast; 5 = south; 6 = southwest 7 = west; 8 = northwest
Tide	1 = slack; 2 = ebb; 3 = flood
CC	Cloud Cover: $1 = 0-9\%$; $2 = 10-25\%$; $3 = 26-50\%$; $4 = 51-75\%$; $5 = 76-90\%$; $6 = 91-100\%$
Precip	Precipitation: 1 = slight; 2 = heavy; 3 = none
Fog	<pre>1 = fog present; 2 = none</pre>
SC	Sea Conditions: 1 = calm; 2 = choppy; 3 = rough
Depth range	Depth in meters (m) at each end of net
Turb	Turbidity: Jackson Turbidity Units (JTU)
Temp	Temperature: (C)
Sal	Salinity: o/oo
DO	Dissolved Oxygen: ppm
ВР	Barometric Pressure in centimeters (cm) of mercury (Hg) not compensated for temperature.
ВТ	Bottom Type: $1 = mud$; $2 = sand$; $3 = shell$; $4 = clay$
Veg	Vegetation: 1 = none; 2 = sparse; 3 = moderate; 4 = dense

Table B.2. Hydrological and meteorological data recorded during gill net sets in Aransas Bay.

Date	Time	WS (Km/h)	S S	Tide	22	Precin	FOP	SC	Depth Range (m)	Turb (.ITII)	Temp	(C) Water	Sal	DO (mud)	BP (cm Ho)	RT	Veo
					3	1 1 1 1 1	9						(22 (2)	\r\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\\	(9::		0
Jan 10	H 1	8.0	7 6	m m	- 4	m r	2 6	1 2	1.8-1.9	37	5.0	8.0	0.9	13.0	77.01	1,3	
Jan 13	чн	16.1	8 -	3 5	999	3 1 0	7 7	1 2	6-2. 4-2.	27 24	14.0	10.0	8.00.8	13.0 13.0	75.95	, •	
Feb 09	ня	19.3	3	ო ო	9			2	1.5-2.0	78	12.0 14.5	11.5 12.0	8.0	11.0	76.58 76.33	1,3	
Feb 14	IF	12.9 32.2	7 7	2	1	ന ന	2 2	3	2.0-2.1	56 98	19.0 11.0	17.0 13.0	4.0	11.0	76.20 76.61	1,3 1,3	
Mar 22	Η	29.0 24.1	ကက	3	1	, m m	2 2	3	2.4-2.4	125 75	16.5 15.0	18.5 17.0	16.0 15.0	9.0	76.81 76.43	1,3 1,3	
Mar 24	н н	12.9 19.3	7 7	3 %	9	ოო	2		2.0-2.0	40	21.5	18.5 19.0	; 12.0 12.0	12.0	75.84	2,3	
Apr 05	ны	24.1 12.9	7 7	3 2		m m	2 2	2	1.0-1.4	41	18.5 15.5	19.0 19.0	8.0	10.0	76.87 77.01	2,3	
Apr 07	H	29.0 12.9	7 7	2		က က	5 2	2	2.0-2.0	30	22.0 18.5	21.5 20.0	8.0	9.0	77.04	2,3	2 2

Table B.3. Hydrological and meterological data recorded during gill net sets in Corpus Christi Bay.

		LIG							Donth	T.: T.	T	(3)	Cal	2	Δä		l
Date	Time	(Km/h)	MD	Tide	22	Precip	Fog	SC	Range (m)	(JTU)	Air		6	(mdd)	(cm Hg)	BT	Veg
Jan 20	H H	12.9 8.0	7 7	2 3	9	m m	7 7	2	2.4-2.7 2.4-2.9	24 24	10.0	10.5 9.0	20.0 22.0	13.0 12.0	76.81 76.96	1,3 1,3	
Jan 31	Η	12.9	1 2	2 3	9	3	2	1 2	1.8-2.0 1.4-1.8	24 24	6.0	9.5	24.0 23.0	13.0 12.0	76.84 76.51	2,3	7
Feb 03	H	20.9	8	1 2		m m	2	2	2.1-2.4	24 24	14.0 6.5	10.5 9.5	16.0 22.0	13.0	76.33 76.48	2,3	
Feb 24	ны	35.4 40.2	5 5	3	1	en en	2	m m	2.2-3.2	180 230	20.0 18.0	18.5	24.0 24.0	10.0	76.00	1,2,3 1,2,3	
Mar 07	ня	24.1 12.9	7 7	3		, EN EN	2 2	2	1.6-2.0 1.6-2.0	25 24	17.0	16.0 14.0	25.0 25.0	9.0	76.91 76.84	1,2,3 1,2,3	
Mar 29	ны	16.1 3.2	3	3	4	en en	2	3	3.2-3.4 3.0-3.2	45	22.5 21.0	19.5 19.5	26.0 25.0	10.0	73.86	m m	
Apr 14	н ы	45.1	7 7		9	3.3	2	3	1.7-2.0	67	23.0	23.0	28.0 28.0	9.0	75.77	2,3,	
Apr 27	F	25.7 19.3	3	3	1	ന ന	2	3	2.0-2.4 1.8-2.1	24 24	25.0 21.0	25.0 23.0	9.0	10.0 9.0	76.33 76.45	n n	

Appendix C. Species catch data.

Table C.1. Number and mean total length (± 1SE) of each species caught with a 5.1-cm stretched mesh gill net during January-April 1977 in Aransas Bay (AB) and Corpus Christi Bay (CCB). Number in parentheses = hours of set. Blanks = No data.

		January	arv	Fehr	February	March	P	April			Mean total
Species	Bay	Set 1	Set 2	Set 1	set 2	Set 1	Set 2	Set 1	Set 2	Total	length
	AB CCB	(14.5) (14.3)	(14.5) (14.6)	(13.9) (14.1)	(14.2) (14.0)	(13.7) (13.2)	(16.0) (14.1)	(12.1)	(13.0)	(111.9) (109.5)	
Alosa chrysohloris	AB CCB	00	00	00	0	00	0 0	1 0	2 0	0 3	229 ± 11
Arius felis	AB CCB	00	0 0	0 0	00	31 5	61 60	143 45	58 216	293 326	254 ± 9 242 ± 5
Bagre marinus	AB CCB	0 0	0 0	00	0	0 0	0 0	د م	1 13	4 18	551 ± 14 402 ± 39
Bairdiella chrysoura	AB CCB	0 9	0	06	0 18	3	6 161	14	11 185	38 485	177 ± 3 185 ± 2
Brevoortia gunteri	AB CCB	00	0 0	0 0		12 0	0	00	0	14 3	222 ± 16 311 ± 20
B. patronus	AB CCB	19 0	56 0	10 12	50	8 377	1 16	144 374	218 165	506 944	181 ± 13 178 ± 7
Cynoscion arenarius	AB CCB	0	0	0	0 32	0 9	3	00	0	1 59	261 286 ± 4
C. nebulosus	AB CCB	0	0	0 16	18 5	0	5	22 11	10 4	57 48	266 ± 17 300 ± 19
Dasyatis sabina	AB CCB	00	00	0 0	00	1	0 0	0 0	00	1 0	245

Table C.1. (Cont'd.).

		January		Feb	February	March	ch	April	11		Mean total
Species	Bay	Set 1	Set 2	Set 1	Set 2	Set 1	Set 2	Set 1	Set 2	Total	length
	AB	(14.5)	(14.5)	(13.9)	(14.2)	(13.7)	(16.0)	(12.1)	(13.0)	(111.9)	
	8 33	(14.3)	(14.6)	(14.1)	(14.0)	(13.2)	(14.1)	(12.7)	(12.5)	(109.5)	
Dorosoma cepedianum	AB	0		~	2	2	-	3	2	12	190 ± 4
	CCB	0	0	-	0	0	0	0	7	5	197 ± 11
D. petenense	AB	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
	CCB	0	0	-	0		-	0	0	Э	185 ± 4
Gobioides broussonneti	AB	0	0		0	0	0	0	0	1	
	CCB	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
Lagodon rhomboides	AB	0	0	0	0	0	0	8	1	6	139 ± 3
	CCB	1	0	0	80	7	-	7	0	21	141 ± 4
Larimus fasciatus	AB	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
	CCB	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	E	2	191 ± 4
Leiostomus xanthurus	AB	1	0	e	2	10	က	4	5	. 28	+i
	CCB	28	-	7	67	32	38	43	23	221	174 ± 2
Lepisosteus spatula	AB	0	0	0		0	0	0	2	3	1248 ± 82
	CCB	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
Menticirrhus americanus	AB	0	0	0	0	0	0	-	0	-	
	CCB	0	0	0	0	11	0	∞	0	19	231 ± 9
Micropogonias undulatus	AB	0	0	0	0	1	0	-	0	2	177
	CCB	-	0	-	2	-	53	∞	17	29	199 ± 1

Table C.1. (Cont'd.).

		January	arv	Feb	February	March	h	April			Mean total
Species	Bay	Set 1	Set 2	Set 1	Set 2	Set 1	Set 2	Set 1	Set 2	Total	length
	AB CCB	(14.5) (14.3)	(14.5) (14.6)	(13.9) (14.1)	(14.2) (14.0)	(13.7)	(16.0)	(12.1)	(13.0)	(111.9) (109.5)	
Mugil cephalus	AB CCB	00	00	0 0	00	00	0	00	0 0	0	278
Orthopristis chrysoptera	AB CCB	00	00	00	0 2	00	00	0	0	0 6	186 ± 6
Paralichthys lethostigma	AB CCB	00	0 0	00	0 0	00	0	00	0 0	0	177
Peprilus paru	AB CCB	00	0 0	0 0	0 0	00	00	1 0	00	0	116
P. burti	AB CCB	00	00	00	0 0		00	3.0	0 0	1	105 98 ± 11
Pogonias cromis	AB CCB	00	00	0 0	0 0	00	00	1 0	00	0	1130
Porichthys porosissimus	AB CCB	0 0	0 0	0 0	00	0 0	1	1 0	0 8	ოთ	186 ± 1 183 ± 4
Prionotus rubio	AB CCB	00	0 0	0 0	0 0	1 0	0 0	0 0	00	1 0	155
Scomberomorus maculatus	AB CCB	0 0	0 0	00	0 0	00	0 0	0	00	0	478

54 Mean total length 179 ± 4 850 ± 176 106 247 331 (111.9) (109.5) Total 982 2249 0 4 (13.0) (12.5) Set 2 310 658 00 00 00 00 April (12.1) (12.7) Set 1 347 528 00 00 0 -(16.0) (14.1) Set 2 81 318 00 00 00 00 00 March (13.7) (13.2) Set 1 74 444 00 00 00 00 00 (14.2) (14.0) February 1 Set 2 74 120 00 00 00 00 00 00 (13.9) (14.1) Set 1 15 130 00 00 (14.5) (14.6) Set 2 60 00 00 00 January Set 1 Sot (14.5) (14.3) 00 00 21 49 AB CCB Bay Stellifer lanceolatus Urophycis floridanus Trichiurus lepturus Trinectes maculatus Strongylura marina Symphurus plagiusa Species Total

Table C.1. (Cont'd).