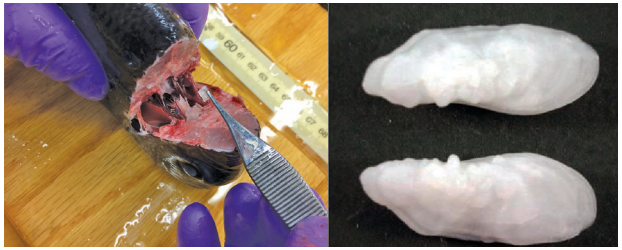
How this information is used:

The N.C. Division of Marine Fisheries regularly collects information about fish stocks in state waters. Information, such as age, size and reproductive potential, is vital to assess the number of fish in the population. Age information about fish are collected by analyzing scales or hard body parts, such as otoliths (ear bones) and spines, for annual growth rings. By determining the age of a fish, biologists can begin to get an idea about the age-structure of the population and the growth rate of the fish. In a healthy population age-structure, fish of all ages are represented, while missing age classes may indicate a problem with that stock.

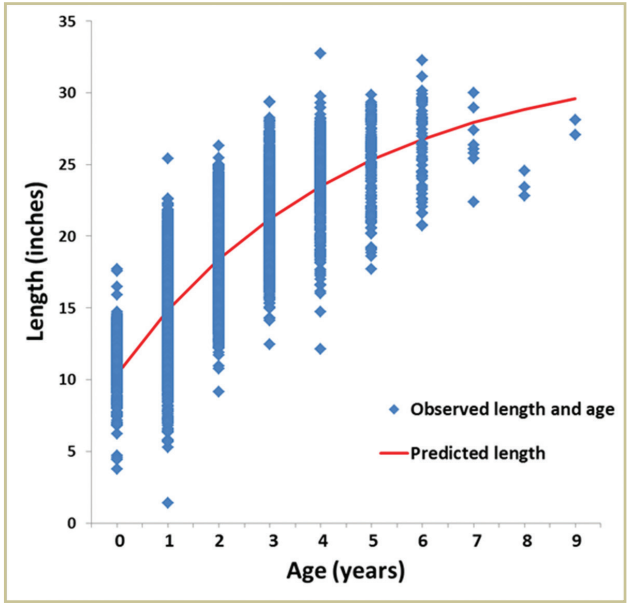


Left—Biologist removing otoliths from a carcass
Right—Spotted seatrout whole otoliths

This information is then used in stock assessments and fishery management plans to help officials better mange the fisheries resources of the state.

Otolith section of a spotted seatrout under a microscope (7 years)

Current Species Accepted:	
Gray Trout	Sheepshead
Spotted Seatrout	Croaker
Black Sea Bass	Snapper/Grouper
Red Drum	Cobia
Black Drum	Triggerfish
Spanish Mackerel	Striped Bass
	Sea Mullet (Kingfish)



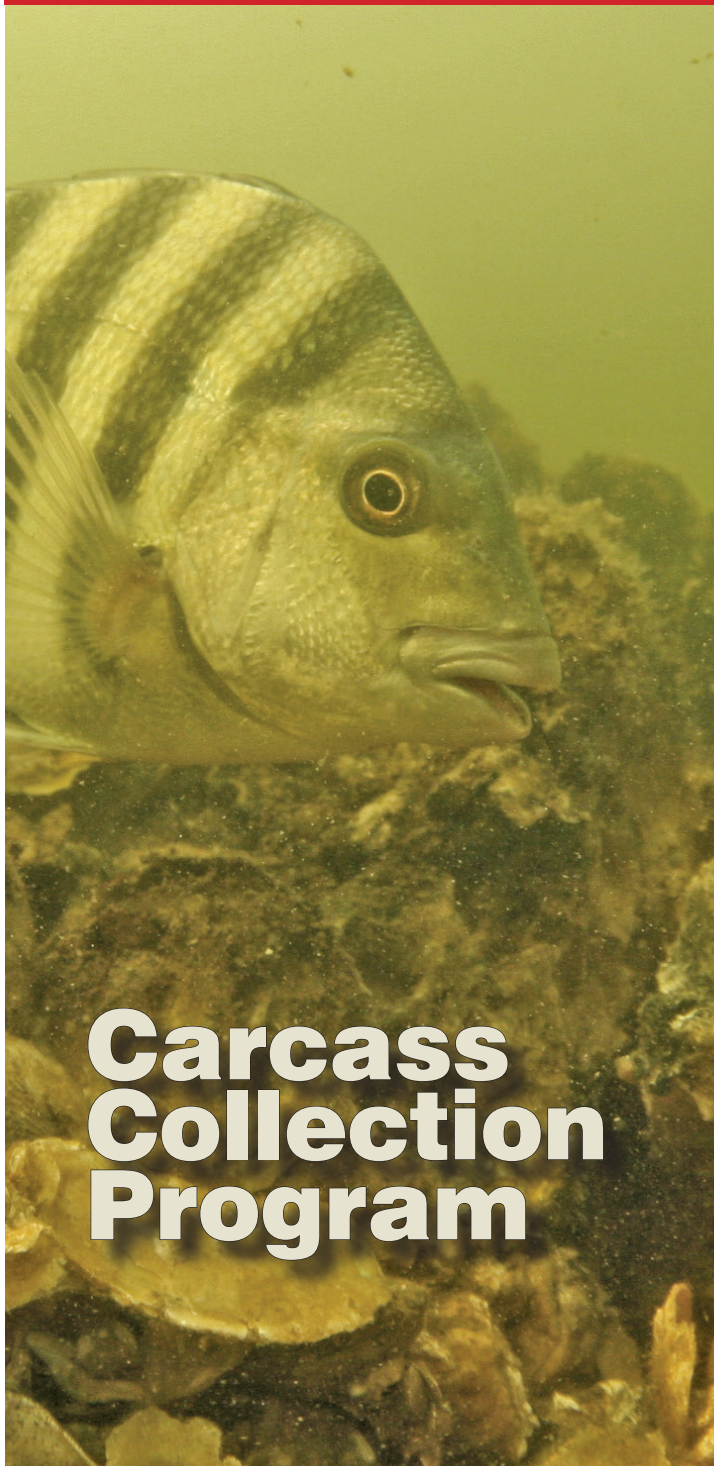
Age-length key for spotted seatrout harvested in North Carolina

Contact Carole Willis at
252-808-8081 or via email at
Carole.Y.Willis@ncdenr.gov
for comments or questions about the program.

http://portal.ncdenr.org/web/mf/carcass-collection

500 copies of this brochure were printed at a cost of $0.223 per copy.

Getting to the Bones of the Catch



Carcass Collection Program

Step-by-Step Guide to Donate a Carcass

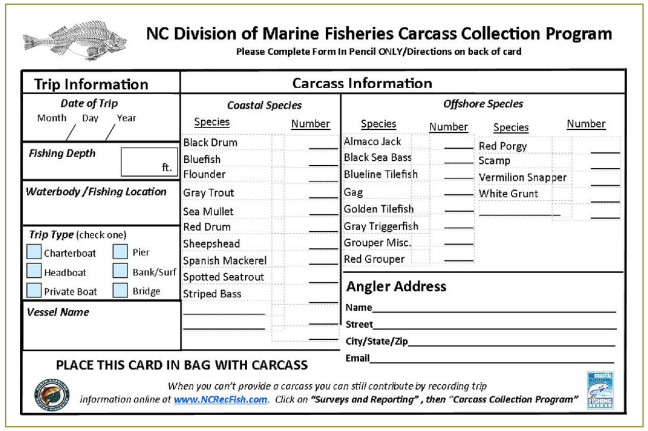
The Carcass Collection Program is a statewide effort funded by proceeds from sales of the N.C. Coastal Recreational Fishing License. Carcasses donated by recreational fisherman are a critical source of data for the N.C. Division of Marine Fisheries. The division has placed freezers at designated sites across coastal areas to allow anglers to donate fileted fish carcasses. From fish that are donated to the program, biologists can collect length, age, and sex data that can be used in stock assessments to better manage the fisheries resources of the state. As the program continues to expand, there will be additional collection sites available to anglers. For a complete list of current locations or for additional program details, please visit http://portal.ncdenr.org/web/mf/carcass-collection or scan the QR code with a smart phone.

Carcass should be left with guts, head and tail intact

Step 1. Once back to the dock, fillet your fish. If you are part of a charter or headboat party please let your fish cleaner know you'd like to donate your carcass.

Step 2. Keep the head and tail intact and, if possible, leave the guts in the fish. This is important to the biologist collecting data.

Step 3. While your catch is still fresh, take the carcass to the nearest donation location. For a list of the current locations, refer to the website at: http://portal.ncdenr.org/web/mf/carcass-collection).



NC Division of Marine Fisheries Carcass Collection Program

Please Complete Form In Pencil ONLY/Directions on back of card

Trip Information	Carcass Information	
Date of Trip (Month / Day / Year)	Coastal Species: Species / Number	Offshore Species: Species / Number / Species / Number
Fishing Depth ____ ft.	Black Drum ____	Almaco Jack ____ / Red Porgy ____
Waterbody /Fishing Location	Bluefish ____	Black Sea Bass ____ / Scamp ____
Trip Type (check one): Charterboat, Headboat, Private Boat, Pier, Bank/Surf, Bridge	Flounder ____	Blueline Tilefish ____ / Vermilion Snapper ____
	Gray Trout ____	Gag ____ / White Grunt ____
	Sea Mullet ____	Golden Tilefish ____
	Red Drum ____	Gray Triggerfish ____
	Sheepshead ____	Grouper Misc. ____
	Spanish Mackerel ____	Red Grouper ____
	Spotted Seatrout ____	
	Striped Bass ____	
Vessel Name		

Angler Address

Name ____

Street ____

City/State/Zip ____

Email ____

PLACE THIS CARD IN BAG WITH CARCASS

When you can't provide a carcass you can still contribute by recording trip information online at www.NCRecFish.com. Click on "Surveys and Reporting", then "Carcass Collection Program"

Step 4. Use a pencil to fill out the provided carcass card in full. Please include as much information about your trip and number of species harvested as possible.

Step 5. Place the fish carcass or carcasses AND the completed catch card into the plastic bags provided. If more than one bag is needed, please include a catch card in each bag.

Step 6. Tie the bag closed, and place your closed bag in the collection freezer. All supplies will be inside of the freezer.

Freezers will contain all carcass donation supplies

Some Reminders

Make sure that you and everyone in your party who is fishing have or are covered by a valid North Carolina Coastal Recreational Fishing License and practices ethical angling.

Check for changes to regulations before your trip. Current size and bag limits can be found on our website at: http://portal.ncdenr.org/web/mf/recreational-fishing-size-and-bag-limits.

Anglers seeking citations through the N.C. Saltwater Fishing Tournament are still required to have their catch certified at a weigh station.