

KINGFISHES

(06/09 ARCHIVE - NCDMF)

Stock Status - *Unknown* – A stock assessment was attempted in the 2007 N.C. Kingfishes Fishery Management Plan. Due to data limitations in time series and geographical coverage, the stock assessment was not accepted. Commercial landings were 47% above their 10-year average and the highest since 1997. The majority of the landings (71%) were from ocean sink nets. Recreational fishery landings in 2007 were 22% above their 10-year average. The Pamlico Sound juvenile abundance index was 28% above the 10-year average.

Average Commercial Landings and Value 1999-2008 – 608,351 lbs/ \$581,804

2008 Commercial Landings and Value – 920,763 lbs/ \$814,785

Average Recreational Landings 1999-2008 – 343,887 lbs, **2008** – 391,255 lbs

Average Number of Award Citations (1.5 lbs.) 1999-2008 – 259, **2008** - 390

Status of Fishery Management Plan (FMP) – The recently completed (2007) North Carolina FMP is available on DMF web site. Two different stock assessments were modeled to determine sustainable harvest levels, but reviewers rejected the stock assessments due to deficiencies in the data. A major deficiency cited by all reviewers was the lack of migration (mixing) data to determine the movement of kingfishes along the North Carolina coast as well as the Atlantic coast.

Data and Research Needs - studies to determine distribution, stock structure and composition of the three kingfish species found in North Carolina along with habitat utilization, migration studies (tagging), maturity (ongoing) and fecundity studies, age and growth studies (ongoing), validation of a juvenile abundance index, and a stock assessment. A stock assessment for the recently completed FMP was not included due to insufficient biological data for kingfishes.

Current Regulations - none **Harvest Season** - year round

Size and Age at Maturity – 7-9 inches total length (TL)/1 year

Historical and Current Maximum Age – 8 years

Juvenile Abundance Index – **1999-2008** – Pamlico Sound Survey – 3.5, **2008** – 6.2

Habits and Habitats - Kingfishes are also known as sea mullet, Virginia mullet, whiting and roundhead and include three species in North Carolina; southern, northern, and gulf. The southern kingfish is the most abundant of the three species and prefers mud or sand-mud bottom types like the northern kingfish. Gulf kingfish prefer the sandy bottoms of the surf zone. Kingfishes move from estuarine and nearshore ocean waters to deeper offshore waters as water temperature cools. Spawning takes place in the ocean from April to October.

For more information, see [DMF Species Leads page](#).