

North Carolina State Salt Water Fish, Channel Bass ^[1]

State Salt Water Fish of North Carolina: Channel Bass

by Steven Case and T. Mike Childs, 2013; Kelly Agan, 2015

NC Government & Heritage Library.

See also: [North Carolina State Symbols and Official Adoptions main page](#) ^[2]



"Red Drum." Image from U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

^[3]The General Assembly of 1971 designated the Channel Bass (Red Drum) as the official State Salt Water Fish. (*Session Laws*, 1971, c. 274).

Selection as the State Salt Water Fish

The bill was sponsored by Rep. Howard Penton, D-New Hanover County, and Rep. George Rountree, R-New Hanover County. A newspaper article at the time pointed out the Channel Bass has black spots on its tail, evoking North Carolina's "[tar heel](#)" ^[4] nickname.

About the Channel Bass

Channel Bass (*Sciaenops ocellatus*) are usually found in large numbers along the Tar Heel coastal waters, and have been found to weigh up to 75 pounds--although most large ones average between 30 and 40 pounds.

Channel Bass are found in coastal and estuarine waters from Massachusetts to Key West, Florida, and along the coast of Texas in the Gulf of Mexico. In North Carolina, the fish have historically been important for both commercial and recreational fishing. And North Carolina has been known for producing trophy-sized fish

Beginning in the 1980s and through the 1990s, populations of the fish in North Carolina were in serious decline from over-fishing of young and juvenile fish, prohibiting the growth of larger adult specimens. In 1998 the North Carolina Marine Fisheries Commission instituted quantity and catch size regulations to protect the Red Drum.

North Carolina Session Laws

Session Laws, 1971, c. 274:

H. B. 655 CHAPTER 274

AN ACT DESIGNATING THE CHANNEL BASS (RED DRUM) AS THE OFFICIAL STATE SALT WATER FISH.

The General Assembly of North Carolina do enact:

Section 1. Chapter 145 of the General Statutes is hereby amended by adding a new section at the end thereof, to be designated as G.S. 145-6, and to read as follows:

"§ 145-6. *Official State salt water fish.*—The Channel Bass (Red Drum) is hereby adopted as the official State salt water fish of the State of North Carolina."

Sec. 2. This act shall become effective upon ratification.

In the General Assembly read three times and ratified, this the 30th day of April, 1971.

Additional resources:

Buskill, Deandra. "Discover Fishes: Sciaenops Ocellatus." Florida Museum, May 11, 2017.
<https://www.floridamuseum.ufl.edu/discover-fish/species-profiles/sciaeno...> [5].

Graff, Frank. "Reviving Red Drum." UNC-TV. <https://www.pbsnc.org/blogs/science/> [6].

Holt, Greg. "Swansboro Drum Beat - Summer reds' numbers are best in years, according to Swansboro guide." July 01, 2013. North Carolina Sportsman. <https://www.carolinasportsman.com/content/swansboro-drum-beat-summer-red...> [7].

NC Department of Environmental Quality, Division of Marine Fisheries. "N.C. Recreational Coastal Waters Guide for Sports Fishermen." <https://deq.nc.gov/about/divisions/marine-fisheries/rules-proclamations-...> [8].

NC Department of Environmental Quality, Division of Marine Fisheries. "Red Drum." <https://deq.nc.gov/about/divisions/marine-fisheries/public-information-a...> [9].

Smith, Chris. "Sciaenops Ocellatus (Drum)." Animal Diversity Web. Accessed December 3, 2021.
https://animaldiversity.org/accounts/Sciaenops_ocellatus/ [10].

References:

Associated Press. "Channel Bass is Honored." *Burlington Daily Times-News*. 2A. April 30, 1971.

Burgess, Christine C. and Alan J. Bianchi. "An Economic Profile Analysis of the Commercial Fishing Industry of North Carolina Including Profiles for State-Managed Species." NC Division of Marine Fisheries. 2004.

"Coast Line." *The Robesonian*. 4B. May 16, 1971.

Image credit:

"Red Drum." Image from U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. <http://www.fws.gov/warmsprings/bearsbluff/species/reddrum.html>

[3]

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