

Southeast Asian Fisheries Development Center

Aquaculture Department

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Aqua Farm News

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Identifying sea bass fry

Aquaculture Department, Southeast Asian Fisheries Development Center

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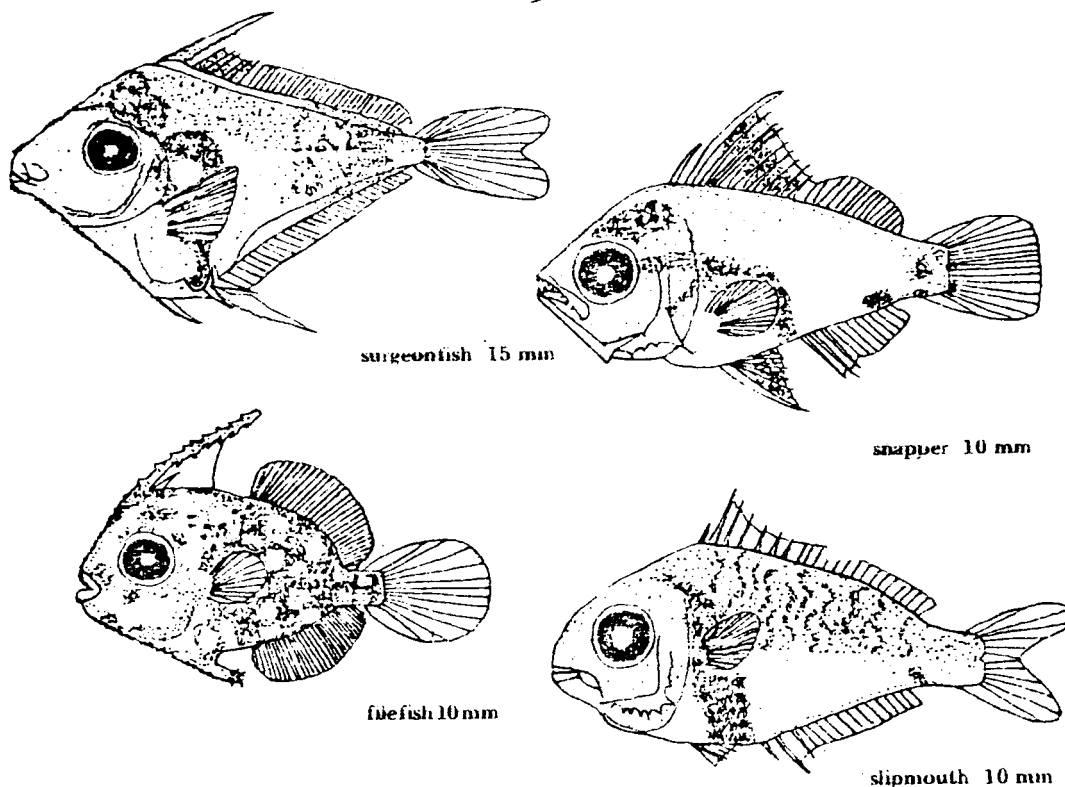


Fig. 2. Fry of other fish species that may be confused with siganid fry.

Source: Same as AFN-VI-2-1

AFN-VI-2-2

IDENTIFYING SEA BASS FRY

Sea bass fry (Fig. 1) are likewise of a wider size range as siganid fry. Wild fry may be as small as 5 mm and as large as 10-20 cm. The sea bass fry collected in milkfish fry gear in Iloilo are 5-8 mm in total length, probably 2-3 weeks old from hatching. In Thailand, where sea bass is cultured in floating cages and 1 kg. fish are harvested for the market, juveniles 10-20 cm long are used for stocking. Wild sea bass fry and juveniles are not abundant and most of the present supply comes from hatcheries. Hatcheries in Thailand and at SEAFDEC AQD produce sea bass fry that are 1-2 cm long between 1 to 2 months of age.

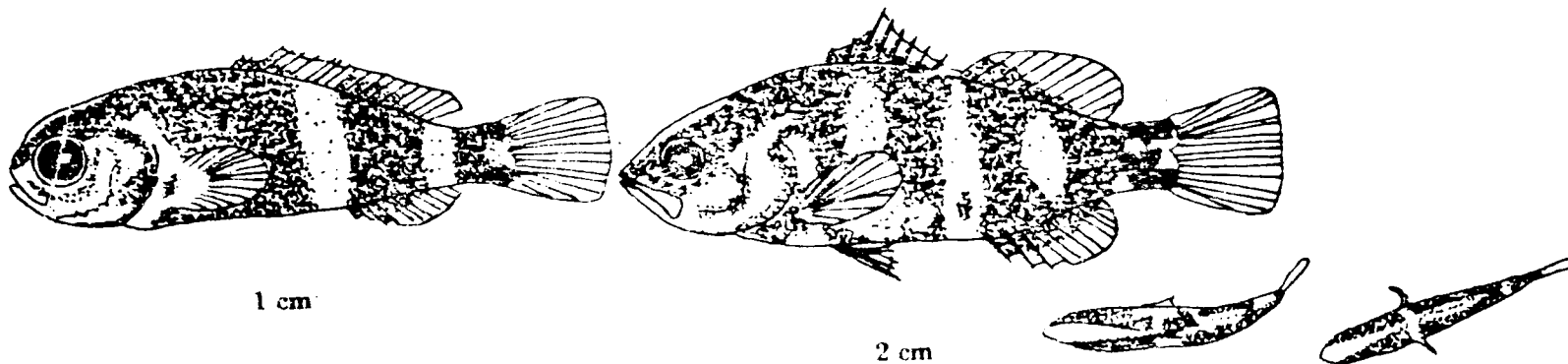


Fig. 1. Sea bass fry of different stages, showing dorsal head stripe.

dorsal view

Very young sea bass fry less than 1 cm in length appear black. Those about 1 cm and larger are dark brown with three roughly vertical white bands on the body, and a white longitudinal stripe on the head between the mouth and the dorsal fin, the "dorsal head stripe" (Fig. 1). The juveniles larger than 5 cm are light brown or blush-black with silvery abdomens and a concave head profile, as in the adult fish.

Sea bass fry may be confused with the juveniles of snappers (*Lujanus* spp., particularly *L. argentimaculatus*), tiger perch (*Therapon* spp.), scate (*Scatophagus argus*), tripletail (*Lobotes surinamensis*), damselfish (*Abudefduf vaigiensis*), mullets, and groupers (Fig. 2). Sea bass fry may be distinguished from all these other species by its dorsal head stripe. *L. argentimaculatus* has 5-6 vertical white stripes on the body while sea bass has only three when young (up to 2-3 cm) and none later. Tiger perch fry have a black blotch on the first dorsal fin; slightly older ones have black stripes running in a curve from behind the head to the tail. Scat fry are black, almost discoidal in body outline and have a bony head armor; slightly older ones are brown with small black spots. Tripletail and damselfish juveniles also have stripes on the body, but both are deeper bodied than sea bass. Mullet fry are dark-colored with a silver sheen, with two short dorsal fins placed far apart. They are abundant in shore waters, occurring in schools of mixed species, mostly small and slow-growing. Grouper fry have rarely been collected from shore waters. They have a single continuous dorsal fin while sea bass fry have two dorsal fins placed close together. Younger grouper fry may have elongate second dorsal spine and pelvic spine as in snappers.

These species may occur all together in the same fry ground. Snappers, scats, mullets, and groupers are highly valued food fish and have been or should also be collected for culture.

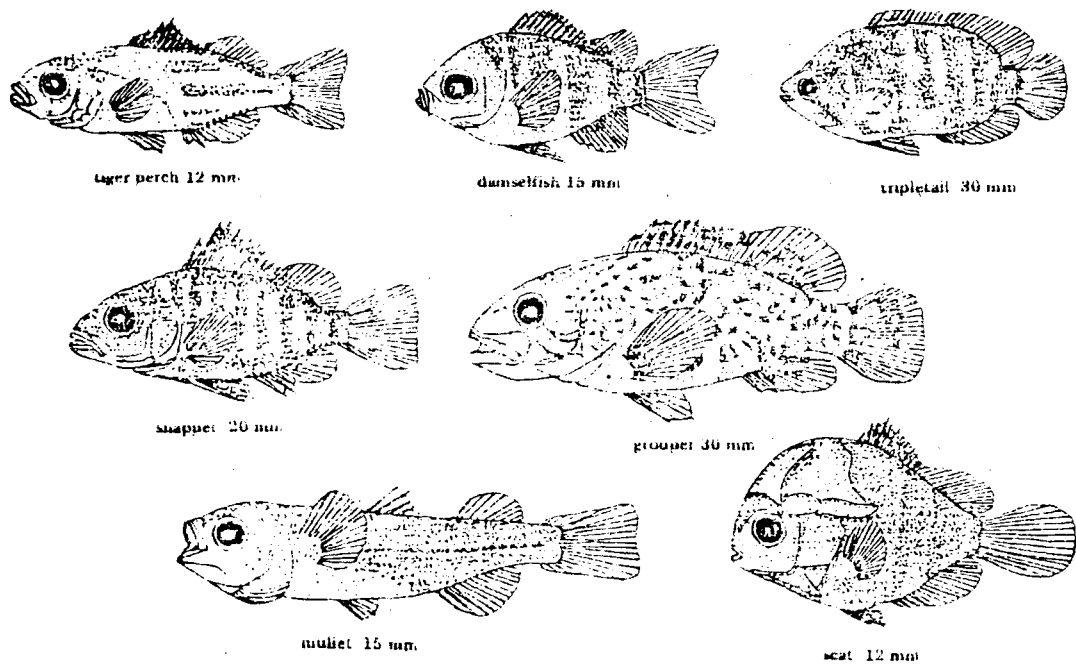


Fig. 2. Fry of other fish species that may be confused with sea bass fry.