



## Feel the Beat!

*Fishinar 10/29/2013, Jonathan Lavan – Instructor*

### The top 12 Drums and Croakers of the Caribbean

Drums/Croakers 101 - The common name of these fish is derived from their ability to vibrate muscles surrounding their swim bladders to produce a low-pitched resonant sound. Reef-dwelling drums, especially juveniles, have unusually elongated foredorsal fins, making them quite striking. All are similarly patterned in white and black but are easily distinguished with attention to detail. Only one croaker species resides on the reef.

**All photos courtesy ReefNet, Inc. [www.reefnet.ca](http://www.reefnet.ca)**

**Spotted Drum**- 6 to 9 in., max 11 in. Rear dorsal and tail fins black with white spots. Juvenile: black spot on nose. Occasional South Florida, Bahamas, Caribbean and Gulf of Mexico.



**Jackknife Fish** – 5 to 8 in., max 9 in. Fins white with no spots. Single black band runs from top of dorsal fin to and along midline to tip of tail. Juvenile: vertical black dash on nose. Generally found deeper than Spotted Drum or High-hat. Occasional Florida, Bahamas; uncommon to rare Caribbean also southwestern Gulf of Mexico, north to South Carolina, Bermuda and south to Brazil.



**High-hat** – 5 to 8 in., max 9 in. Black and white horizontally striped body (think “Horizontal High-hat”). Older juveniles have band between eyes. Common Florida; occasional to uncommon Bahamas, Caribbean; also northwestern Gulf of Mexico and Brazil.



**Cubbyu** – 5 to 8 in., max 10 in. Dark brownish gray to black. Thin, indistinct body stripes. Juveniles have relatively short dorsal fin compared to other juveniles of genus. Oval shape (“U”) on nose. Common Florida, also Gulf of Mexico, north to North Carolina and Bermuda. Not reported Bahamas, Caribbean.



**Reef Croaker**– 4 to 7.5 in., max 1 ft. Black spot at base of pectoral fin. Pale reddish brown to gray , silvery cast. Large eyes and somewhat elongated body. Occasional South Florida, uncommon eastern Caribbean; rare to absent balance of Caribbean also south to Brazil. Not reported Bahamas.



**Striped Croaker**- 4-6 in. max 8 in. Silvery in color. Brownish spots on scale rows form body stripes which are diagonal above midline and below foredorsal fin but horizontal over remainder of body. Occasional east-central Florida, Caribbean; also Gulf of Campeche and south to Guyana. Not reported balance of Florida or Bahamas.



**Black Drum**- 1 to 3 ft., max 5.5 ft. Deep, heavy body. Long, dangling chin barbells (about 12). Can have broad dark bars. Occasional Florida and Central American coastlines to southeastern Caribbean; also Gulf of Mexico, north to Nova Scotia and south to Brazil. Not reported Bahamas or balance of Caribbean.



**Spot**- to 14 in. Distinct black spot behind upper gill cover. Upper body with 11 to 15 oblique, brownish bars. Mouth smaller and more horizontal and tail more forked than similar Atlantic Croaker. Occasional to uncommon Florida to Veracruz; also Gulf of Mexico and north to Massachusetts.



**Atlantic Croaker**- to 20 in. Dark blotch at pectoral fin base. Dorsal fins with dusky spots along base. Brownish spots on sides form numerous oblique, broken bars. Spines at corner of gill cover. Occasional Florida to Campeche Bay, also Gulf of Mexico and north to Massachusetts.



**Blackbar Drum**- to 13 in. One dark brown bar through eyes. A second broad bar merges with a horizontal stripe that extends to tail fin margin. Occasional Florida, Gulf of Mexico, western Caribbean; north to North Carolina and south to Brazil.



**Red Drum** – to 5 ft. At least one black ocellated spot at upper tail-fin base. Colors varies. Iridescent coppery, brassy, to gray dorsally to silvery below. Common Florida, Gulf of Mexico from Florida to northern Mexico and north to Massachusetts.



**Sand Drum** – to 14 in. Silvery gray dorsally and on sides, silvery below. Upper sides with 8-9 dark to faint bars. Fins dusky. Small barbell on chin. Occasional Florida, western Gulf of Mexico, Greater and Lesser Antilles and northern South America to Brazil; north to Virginia.



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