



SHINER PERCH (*Cymatogaster aggregata*)



Shiner Perch, like other members of this family, are deep-bodied, meaning they are bigger from back to belly than they are side to side. They are silvery in color and males have dark edges on their scales. Shiner Perch have three vertical bars on their body. They can form schools that number in the thousands, but can also be found as solitary individuals.

OVERVIEW

- **Oregon Conservation Strategy Species**
- **Size:** Up to about 8 inches long
- **Weight:** Up to about 2 ounces
- **Lifespan:** Up to at least 6 years
- **Key Strategy Habitats:** Nearshore, Estuaries
- **Similar Species:** Other members of the family Embiotocidae, which are typically known as perch, surfperch, or seaperch. Strategy Species in this family include Pile Perch, Striped Perch, and Redtail Surfperch.

RANGE AND DISTRIBUTION

In Oregon: Shiner Perch can be found throughout the state's marine waters and in estuaries.

Everywhere Else: Shiner Perch range extends from southeast Alaska to northern Baja.

FUN FACTS

Favorite Food: Small things either in the water column or on the bottom. These include worms, copepods, amphipods, isopods, algae, mussels, clams, and larval fishes.

- Shiner Perch are members of the family Embiotocidae, that have internal fertilization and give birth to live young.
- Shiner Perch have elaborate mating behavior.
- The scales on male Shiner Perch darken during mating season and can become almost completely black.
- Female Shiner Perch live longer and grow larger than males.

LIFE HISTORY AND ECOLOGY

Shiner Perch, like other members of their Family, have internal fertilization during mating and embryos that develop inside females that are then born live. Females give birth to up to 30 young between April and August. Mating takes place shortly after females give birth. Shiner Perch move to shallow protected waters including in estuaries to give birth and mate. They have elaborate mating behavior that both males and females actively engage in. They court in large groups of similar sized fish. Females store sperm for up to 6 months and eggs are fertilized in December. Despite the fact that males aggressively



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drive off other males when courting a female, females mate with multiple males during the season and the young in each brood usually have more than one father. In fact, researchers found that there were up to 8 different fathers for the fish in a single brood and all but one of the 27 broods of pregnant females they examined during a study of fish collected in California had more than one father. Shiner Perch mature quickly. Both males and females become mature shortly after birth by their second or third month. Females grow larger and live longer than males. They can live up to 6 years. Larger females have bigger broods than smaller females.

Shiner Perch can form schools that number in the thousands. They can have a large impact on local populations of their prey species, especially when they concentrate in protected waters during breeding season.

Known predators of Shiner Perch include rays, sharks, rockfish, lingcod, sculpin, cormorants, seals, and sea lions. Humans also prey on Shiner Perch. Their bones have been found in Native American midden sites in Oregon and California. They are frequently caught by recreational anglers along the west coast who may eat them or use them for bait.

DIET AND FORAGING

Shiner Perch forage both in the water column and on the bottom. Things they eat include worms, copepods, amphipods, isopods, algae, mussels, clams, brittle stars, and larval fishes.

HABITAT CHARACTERISTICS

Shiner Perch live in marine and estuarine waters. They generally live around some sort of structure like rocks, piers, pilings, jetties, kelp beds, and eel grass, but are also sometimes found over sand. They are most common from the intertidal zone out to about 300 feet, but have been reported in depths of 1,000 feet.

CONSERVATION AND MANAGEMENT

Threats: Shiner Perch often reproduce in estuaries where development can negatively affect their habitat. They may be susceptible to overfishing, but this is not thought to currently be a problem.

Conservation and management: Shiner Perch are not a target species of commercial fisheries. They are commonly caught by recreational anglers. This species is not under federal management. The west coast states manage recreational fisheries for this species.

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