



Atlantic Porkfish

Kingdom: Animalia
 Phylum: Chordata
 Subphylum: Vertebrata
 Class: Osteichthyes
 Order: Perciformes
 Family: Haemulidae (Pomadasyidae)
 Genus: *Anisotremus*
 Species: *virginicus*



Photo courtesy of Janet Wisneski

Habitat

- **In the Wild:** The porkfish is found in the western Atlantic from Bermuda and Florida to Brazil, including the Gulf of Mexico and Caribbean. They are located at depths of 10-60 feet in tropical and sub-tropical coastal marine waters.
- **Exhibit Location:** USS Antiquities (Marine Aquarium)

Characteristics

- Length: 6–10 inches, Weight: 4 ounces (maximum 2.1 pounds)
- The adult porkfish has a silver to light yellow tapered body with yellow stripes along its entire length. The fins and forehead are solid yellow. Two black bars run along the head, one through the eye and the other along the edge of the gill plate. The caudal (tail) fin is centrally forked.
- The juvenile porkfish exhibits a white body with a yellow snout, forehead, and forward portion of the dorsal (back) fin. Two black stripes run the length of the body. A black spot is found at the base of the caudal fin.
- **Lifespan: In the Wild** Unknown; **In Captivity** Unknown

Behaviors

- Porkfish are primarily nocturnal predators and travel in large schools.
- Porkfish, like all grunts, produce grunt-like sounds by rubbing their teeth together. These sounds seem to be particularly associated with situations of duress.
- **Enrichments at the Zoo:** various vegetables, mirror, mussels

Reproduction

- Atlantic porkfish are egg-layers.
- There is very little known about the spawning and larval development of the porkfish.
- The larvae are similar in appearance to other sparids. Sparids are spiny-finned food fishes of warm waters having well-developed teeth. The porkfish larvae have a distinctive caudal fin spot. The second dorsal and anal (underside) fins are the first of the fins to begin development, a common pattern among perciformes.

Diet

- **In the Wild:** annelids, mollusks, crustaceans, echinoderms
- Juvenile porkfish symbiotically feed on parasites found on other fish species
- **At the Zoo:** squid, smelt, vitamin gel

Conservation Status

- **IUCN status:** not listed; **CITES Appendix:** not listed
- Both reef and mangrove environments are areas that have (globally) been exposed to various

environmental pressures. Degradation or collapse of local and/or global systems could have a serious impact on porkfish populations. Accordingly, habitat-wide management systems - such as are exhibited with the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary - are more likely to provide positive, long-term sustainability (as concerns porkfish and associated marine species populations) versus impacted systems devoid of any consistent resource management plan.

- Predators: snappers, groupers, sharks and other large fish-eaters

Did You Know?/Fun Facts

- Porkfish are the eleventh most commonly sighted species within the waters adjacent to the Florida Keys.
- The genus name, *Anisotremus*, is derived from the Greek "anisos" meaning unequal and "trema" meaning hole.
- The porkfish is also known as the "paragrate grunt."
- The porkfish is the only grunt occurring in the Atlantic Ocean. It is closely related to the burrito grunt (*Anisotremus interruptus*) from the Pacific Ocean. This pair is referred to as germinate species. It is believed that these two species were separated millions of years ago by the Isthmus of Panama.

Sources:

- Bester, C. Porkfish. Retrieved June 10, 2007, from Florida Museum of Natural History Ichthyology Department Web site: <http://www.flmnh.ufl.edu/fish/gallery/descript/porkfish/porkfish.html>
- Busch Entertainment Corporation, Atlantic porkfish. Retrieved June 10, 2007, from SeaWorld/Busch Gardens ANIMALS Web site: <http://www.seaworld.org/animal%2Dinfo/animal%2Dbytes/animalia/eumetazoa/coelomates/deuterostomes/chordata/craniata/osteichthyes/perciformes/atlantic%2Dporkfish.htm>