

The Mysterious Pompano Dolphin

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The pompano dolphin, *Corypheana equiselis*, is largely a mysterious fish to science and US fishermen alike. Very little is known about their life history. It has been largely overlooked by fisheries science. No information is available on its growth rate or life span. They are known to be significantly smaller, seldom reaching nine pounds. The pompano's body coloration tends to be more silver and blue but can exhibit a somewhat muted green/yellow color pattern. It is considered to be more of an open ocean species than its larger cousin, the common dolphinfish. Pompano have been shown to be common in the waters around Bermuda. Fishermen in the Florida Straits have documented pompano dolphin occurring in the same school with common dolphinfish and even in mixed schools of common dolphin and blackfin tuna.


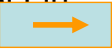


The species' role within commercial and recreational fisheries is mainly based on reports from fishermen and not on any hard scientific data. The species appears to be more abundant in the Florida Straits than anywhere else in US territorial waters. It has been documented as occurring off the North Carolina coast but has not been documented off South Carolina or Georgia. Recreational anglers in the Gulf of Mexico report pompano dolphin as being an important part of the US dolphin fishery in the Gulf. However, no scientific data is available to substantiate this claim.

Anglers who catch what they think is a pompano dolphin are asked to take a digital photograph of the fish, a broad side view clearly showing the dorsal and anal fin extended. Send the photo to the Dolphin Study at CSSLLC@bellsouth.net. By doing this, anglers can help science in documenting the occurrence of the species.

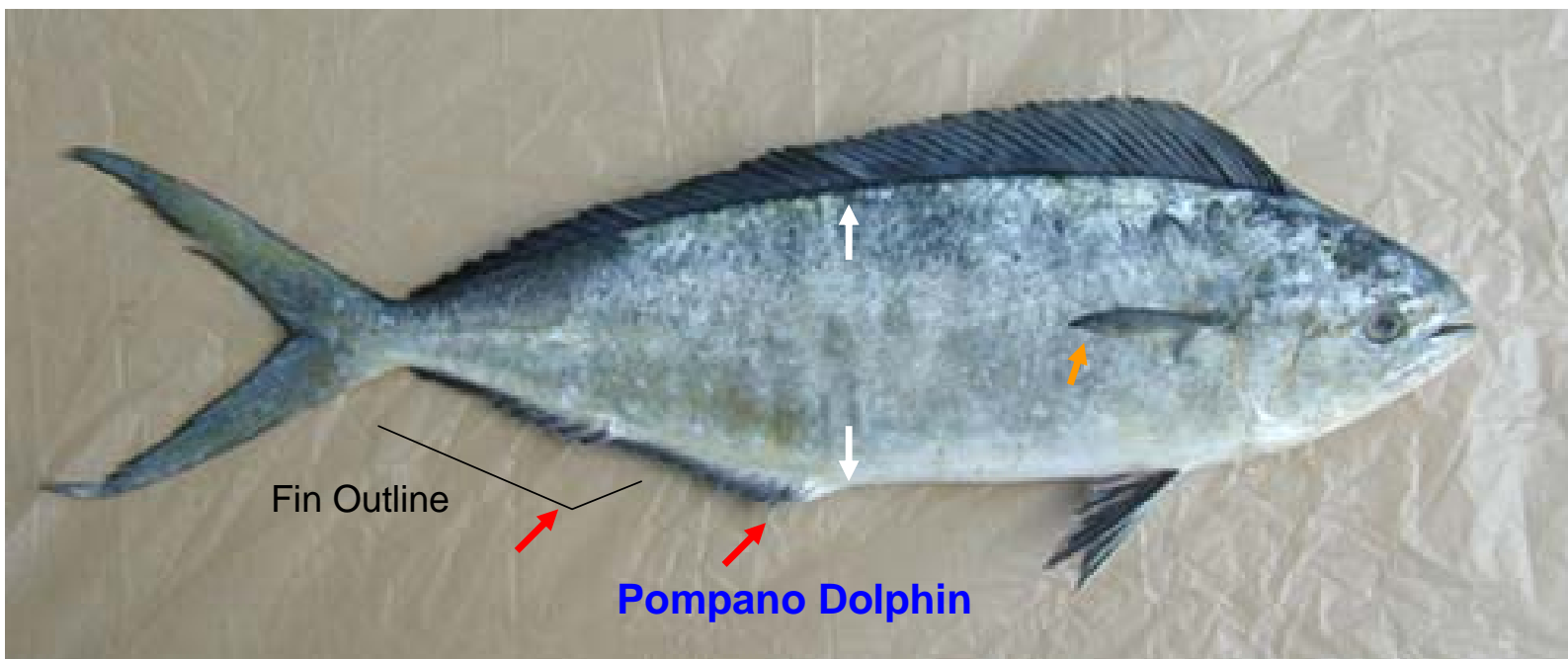
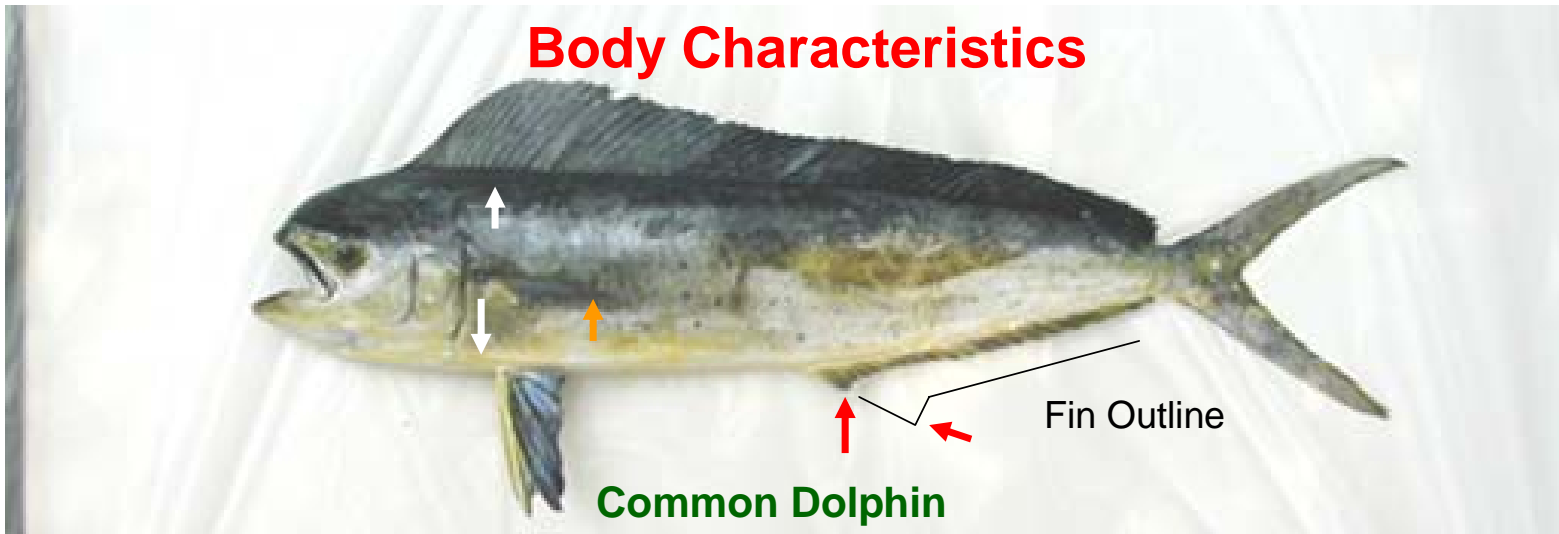
Dolphin of the Western North Atlantic

- Two species are known to occur in US waters, the common dolphin and the pompano dolphin.
- The pompano is small seldom reaching 30 inches in fork length and nine pounds in weight while the common dolphin can reach lengths in excess of 60 inches and weights of 80 pounds.
- Both species are known to occur in the same school.
- Pompano dolphin are more oceanic in occurrence and are thought to be more common in the Gulf of Mexico and in South Florida than along the rest of the US east coast.
- It is not known what percent of the annual US dolphin harvest is pompano dolphin.
- Little information is available on pompano dolphin in US Territorial waters.

Dolphin Identification

Characteristic (reference Arrow) See Next Two Pages	Common Dolphin <i>(Corypheana hippurus)</i>	Pompano Dolphin <i>(Corypheana equiselis)</i>
Rays in Dorsal Fin – supporting elements of fin	55 to 65 Rays	48 to 55 Rays
Greatest Body Depth 	Occurs just behind the head	Occurs at mid-body, in front of anal fin
Pectoral Fin 	Long – More than half of head length	Short – Less than half of head length
Anal Fin Shape 	First rays longer than rest forming a pointed lobe	All rays same length, no longer lobe present
Tongue Tooth Patch 	Small and oval in shape	Large and rectangular in shape

Body Characteristics



Female pompano dolphin collected 2004 off Cudjoe Key, Florida by Rob Harris.

Tongue Tooth Patch



Pompano Dolphin



Common Dolphin

Pompano Dolphin Caught off Bimini, Bahamas. Photo provided by Richard DeLizza.



Large Bull Pompano Dolphin caught off Beaufort, North Carolina.



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