

BILL ANALYSIS

Senate Research Center
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Administration
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AUTHOR'S / SPONSOR'S STATEMENT OF INTENT

The lands and waters of Texas are home to a diverse range of animals, and a select number of these species have been recognized as official state symbols as a result of their significance to our history and culture.

A particularly rich natural environment is found along the Texas Gulf Coast, and of the many distinctive plants and wildlife found in that region, the red drum (*Sciaenops ocellatus*) is particularly deserving of recognition. Also known as the redfish and the bull red, this majestic saltwater fish spends the first three years of its life in bays along the coast before heading into the open waters of the Gulf of Mexico. It also demonstrates the hardiness and adaptability so often found in the Lone Star State, swimming up rivers on occasion and also taking up residence in certain inland reservoirs.

Perhaps the most distinctive characteristic of the fish is its Texas-sized stature. At three years of age, the typical red drum is two-and-a-half feet long and will grow larger over the course of its long life. The biggest red drum caught in Texas waters was 54.25 inches long and weighed nearly 60 pounds.

The fish's size, along with its power, speed, and delicious flavor, has made it one of the most popular game species in Texas waters. Whether wading through the shallows, casting with fly rods, or trying their luck in pier or surf fishing, anglers of all types prize the red drum as a catch. As a result, the fish plays an important role in boosting recreational tourism.

In decades past, redfish also helped drive the state's commercial fishing industry and at times made up as much as 35 percent of its landings. Overfishing and illegal netting took a toll, however, and by the early 1980s the drum population had dropped to dangerously low levels throughout the Gulf of Mexico. Fortunately, state officials responded to the situation by enacting legislation and adopting wise management and enforcement measures, including the development of a revolutionary hatchery. Today, numbers have rebounded to the point where the state has one of the best red drum fisheries in the nation.

An environmental success story as well as an awe-inspiring and much-sought-after resident of the Gulf Coast waters, the red drum is a celebrated member of our natural world, and it is indeed a fitting symbol of the Lone Star State.

RESOLVED

That the 82nd Legislature of the State of Texas hereby designate the red drum as the official State Saltwater Fish of Texas.