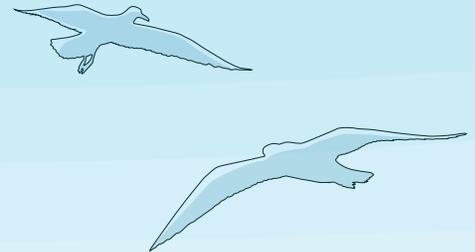


# Little Fish Are a Big Deal to Florida

Preserve the 'Fishing Capital of the World' by conserving forage fish

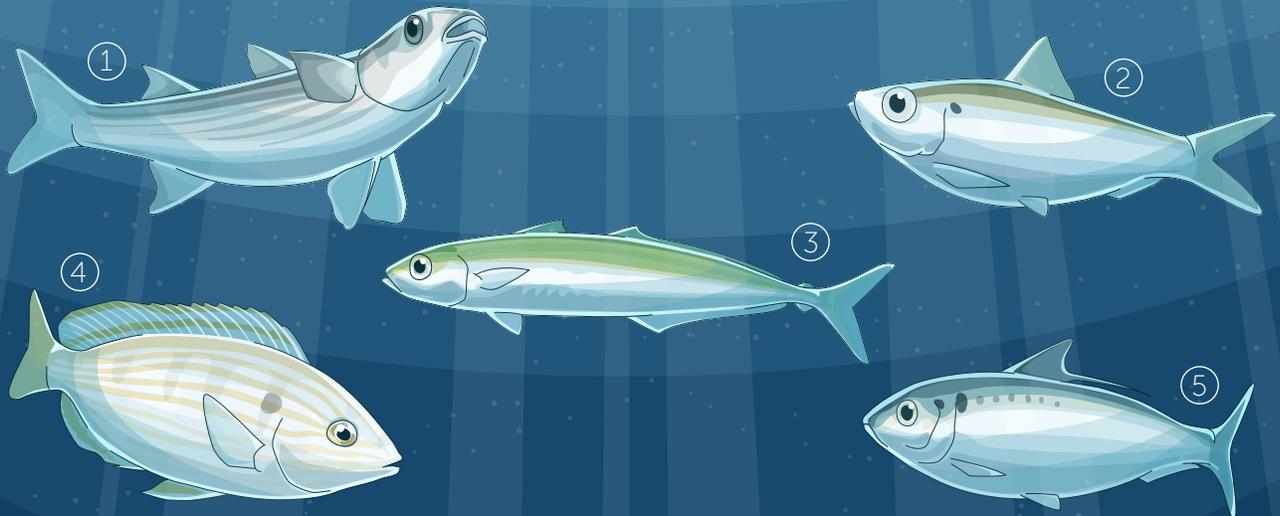
## What are forage fish?

Forage fish hold Florida's marine food webs together. These small schooling fish feed on microscopic plants and animals and in turn serve as a critical food source for fish and wildlife. They make up about **20 percent of the commercial catch off Florida's shores.**



## Some of Florida's native forage fish species include:

1. Striped mullet
2. Scaled sardine (pilchard)
3. Round scad (cigar minnow)
4. Pinfish
5. Atlantic thread herring



Source: Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, 2013 Annual Landings Summary, [http://myfwc.com/media/2641821/sumstate\\_13.pdf](http://myfwc.com/media/2641821/sumstate_13.pdf)



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## Why are forage fish important?

Forage species are food for the saltwater fish and coastal birds and animals that draw tourists and support recreational activities that generate more than **\$12.3 billion and 109,835 jobs annually**. Forage species also support traditional commercial fishing that provides tens of millions of pounds of fresh seafood. Failing to protect forage fish could hurt revenue, jobs, and wildlife, ultimately threatening Florida's legacy as the "Fishing Capital of the World."



Annually, saltwater recreational fishing and wildlife watching that depend on forage fish contribute to Florida's economy

**\$12.3** | **109,835**  
billion | jobs

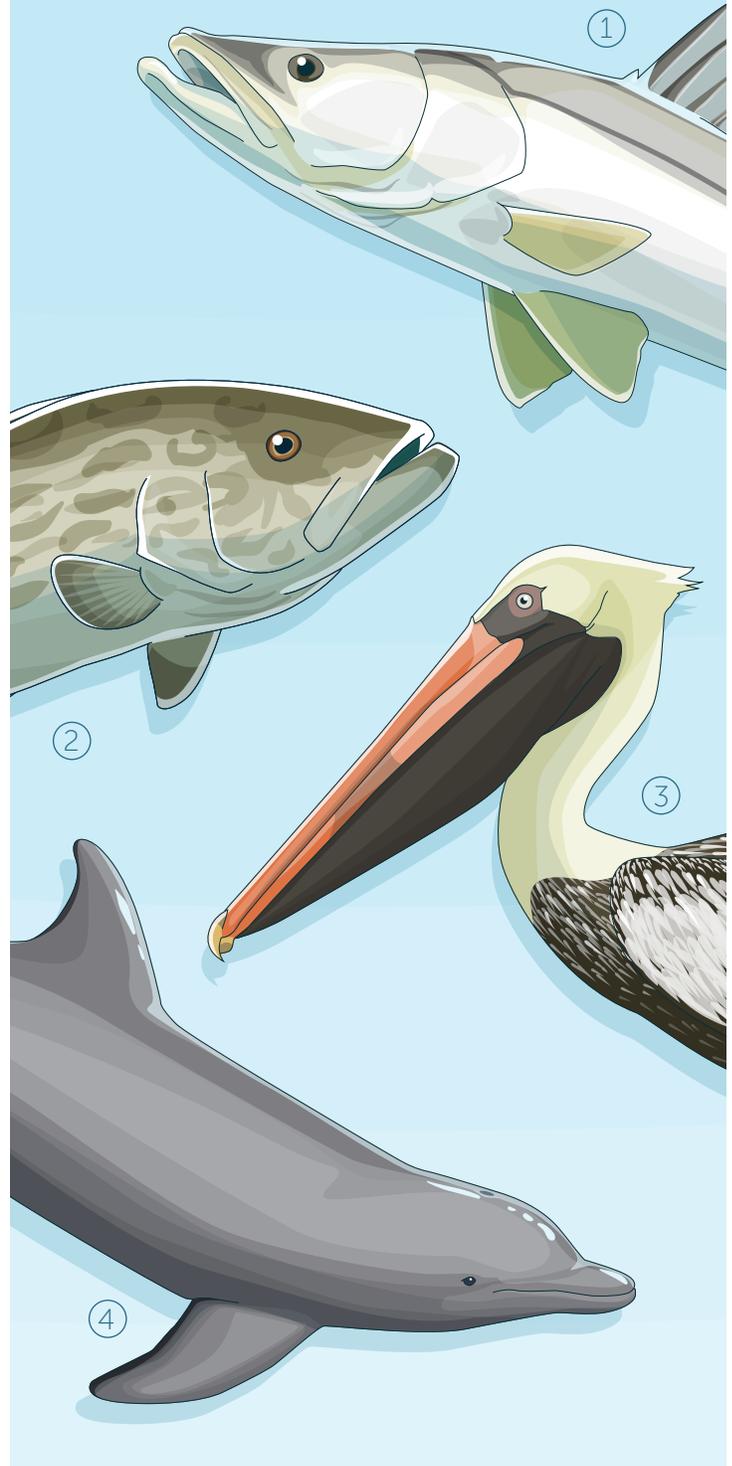
Source: Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (2013), Economics of Fish and Wildlife Recreation, Seafood Industry and Boating, <http://www.myfwc.com/media/2615606/EconomicsOfFishAndWildlifeRec2013.pdf>

## Why do forage fish need greater protection?

Worldwide demand is surging for forage fish: They are used in products such as feed, cosmetics, and fertilizer, and their eggs are a delicacy. They are vulnerable to the pollution and climate change that affect the ocean and habitats. Yet Florida has few rules directly capping their catch, and those in effect do not protect their role in ocean ecosystems.

Florida wildlife that depends on forage fish includes larger fish, seabirds, and marine mammals.

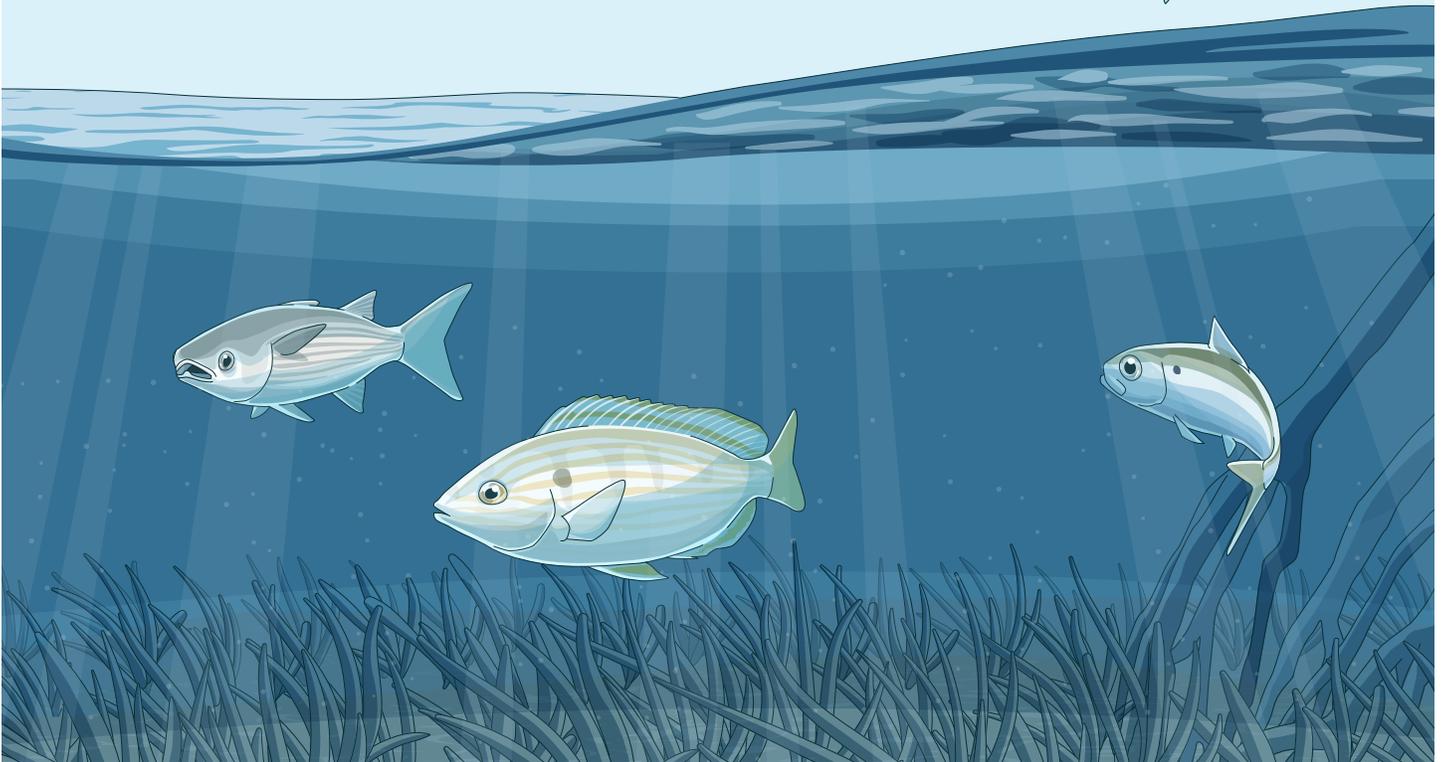
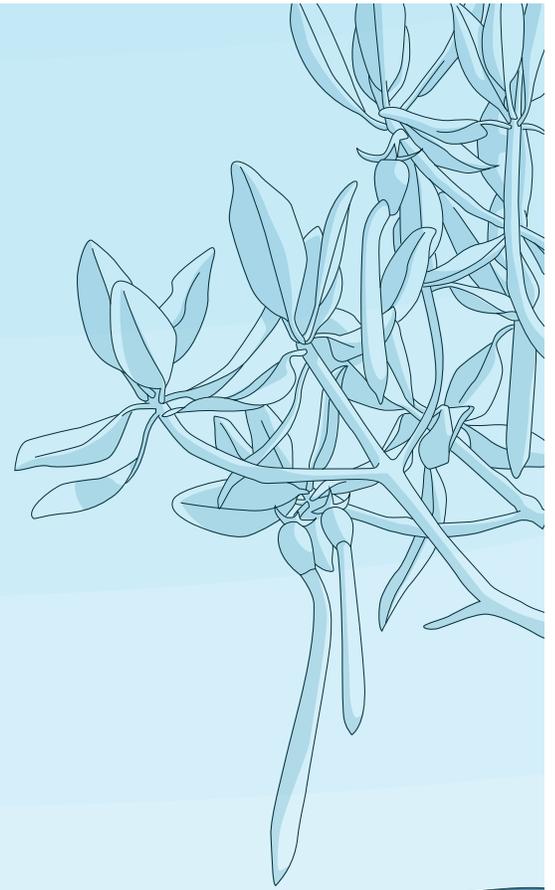
1. Snook
2. Grouper
3. Brown pelican
4. Bottlenose dolphin



# What can be done to protect forage fish?

The Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission can:

1. Ensure sufficient abundance, variety, and sizes of forage species to meet the food needs of predators and explicitly account for them when setting forage fishing rules.
2. Require essential scientific data about forage species to guide expansion of existing forage fishing operations and development of new industries that target these species.
3. Protect forage fish habitats—such as mangroves, sea grasses, estuaries, rivers, and bays—including their water quantity and quality.



**Learn more about protecting forage fish at:**  
[pewtrusts.org/protecttheprey](https://pewtrusts.org/protecttheprey) and [floridaforagefish.org](https://floridaforagefish.org)



**Contact:** Tom Wheatley, manager, U.S. oceans, Southeast  
**Email:** [twheatley@pewtrusts.org](mailto:twheatley@pewtrusts.org)  
**Phone:** 813-933-2048  
**Website:** [pewtrusts.org](http://pewtrusts.org)



**Contact:** Jason Schratwieser, conservation director  
**Email:** [jschratwieser@igfa.org](mailto:jschratwieser@igfa.org)  
**Phone:** 954-924-4320  
**Website:** [igfa.org](http://igfa.org)



**Contact:** Manley Fuller, executive director  
**Email:** [wildfed@gmail.com](mailto:wildfed@gmail.com)  
**Phone:** 850-656-7113  
**Website:** [fwfonline.org](http://fwfonline.org)