



Photo Courtesy of Chad MacFie

Gag Grouper

Mycteroperca microlepis

Range: The Gag Grouper is found in the western Atlantic, ranging from North Carolina south to the Yucatan Peninsula, including Bermuda, Cuba, and eastern Brazil. However, juveniles have been spotted as far north as Massachusetts. Adult members of this species inhabit rocky inland habitat as well as rocky and grassy habitat at depths of 500ft (152m).

Similar Species: The Gag Grouper is commonly mistaken for the Black Grouper (*Mycteroperca bonaci*). However, the two species may be distinguished from one another based on fin margin coloration. The caudal and anal fins of the Gag Grouper have white margins while the Black Grouper does not.



Black Grouper *Mycteroperca bonaci*

Identification: Typical of all groupers, the Gag Grouper is an oblong fish that exhibits a large mouth with a protruding lower jaw. Its body coloration is dependent on the age and sex of the fish. Juveniles and mature females are pale to brown-gray with dark blotches and oblong markings that give the fish a marbled appearance. Their fins exhibit a dark blue-black outer margin. Mature male Gag Groupers are pale to medium gray in color with a darker gray to black ventral surface. The fins of mature males have a dark blue-black margin with exception of the caudal and anal fin which exhibit a white margin. All individuals have the ability to display a camouflaged pattern with dark brown markings separated by white bars below the dorsal fin when inactive.

Note: The Gag Grouper has been listed as vulnerable by the