



skipjack herring

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Common Name	skipjack herring
Genus & Species	<i>Alosa chrysochloris</i>
Family	Clupeidae (herrings and shads)
Order	Clupeiformes (herrings, shads, anchovies, sardines)
Class	Actinopterygii (ray-finned fishes)

Diagnosis: Skipjack herring are characterized by a gray to intense dark blue dorsal area with dark streaks along scale rows. There is a dull, dark spot present behind upper operculum. Dark pigment on lower jaw is restricted to tip. Scales in lateral series are 36-50, dorsal fin rays are 16-21, and anal fin rays are 18-21. Gill rakers on lower limb of first arch are 18-24. This species has tongue teeth in 2-4 rows. Maximum length is 53cm.



Ecology: Skipjack herring are able to complete their entire life cycle in freshwater. Spawning occurs in the spring, with adults often making long, upstream migrations. Females produce between 100,000 and 300,000 eggs annually. Maturity occurs after 2 or 3 years of growth. Juveniles feed on zooplankton, insect larvae, and small fishes. The proportion of fishes in the diet increases with size. Young reach total lengths of 75-150mm during their first year, and sexual maturity is at about 30cm.

Habitat & Distribution: Skipjack herring range is Red River drainage (Hudson Bay Basin) and Mississippi River basin from Central Minnesota south to Gulf of Mexico, and from Southwest Pennsylvania west to eastern South Dakota, Nebraska, Kansas, Oklahoma and Texas; Gulf Slope drainages from Apalachicola River, Florida, to Colorado River, Texas. Extirpated from upper Mississippi River following construction of dams. This species prefers open water of clear to moderately turbid, medium to large rivers and large reservoirs. Skipjacks are a schooling species usually in current over sand and gravel.

Status: Skipjack herring have been collected in Lake Michigan, but it has not yet been determined if the species is established in the basin. From the years 1989-1993, three separate collections were made by Wisconsin commercial fisherman. A specimen was collected by USACE personnel in the fall of 2009 immediately downstream of the Aquatic Nuisance Species Barrier in the Chicago Sanitary and Ship Canal.

USGS Fact Sheet: <http://nas.er.usgs.gov/queries/factsheet.aspx?SpeciesID=489>