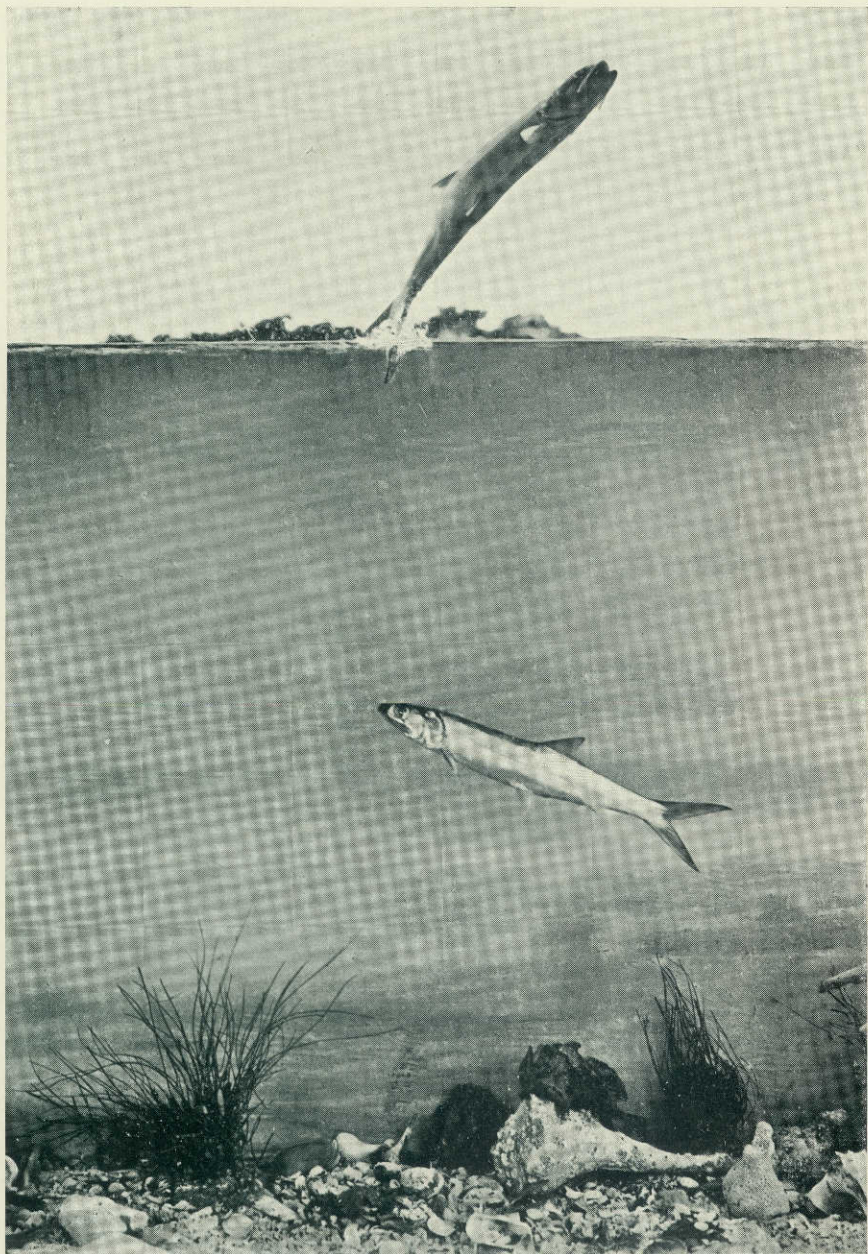


CHAPTER X

Bony Fish, Jack Fish, Jewfish,
Squeateague and Bass



A FAT TOAD FISH SQUATTED AT THE BOTTOM WATCHING THE SLIM BONY FISH AS THEY LEAP.

CHAPTER X

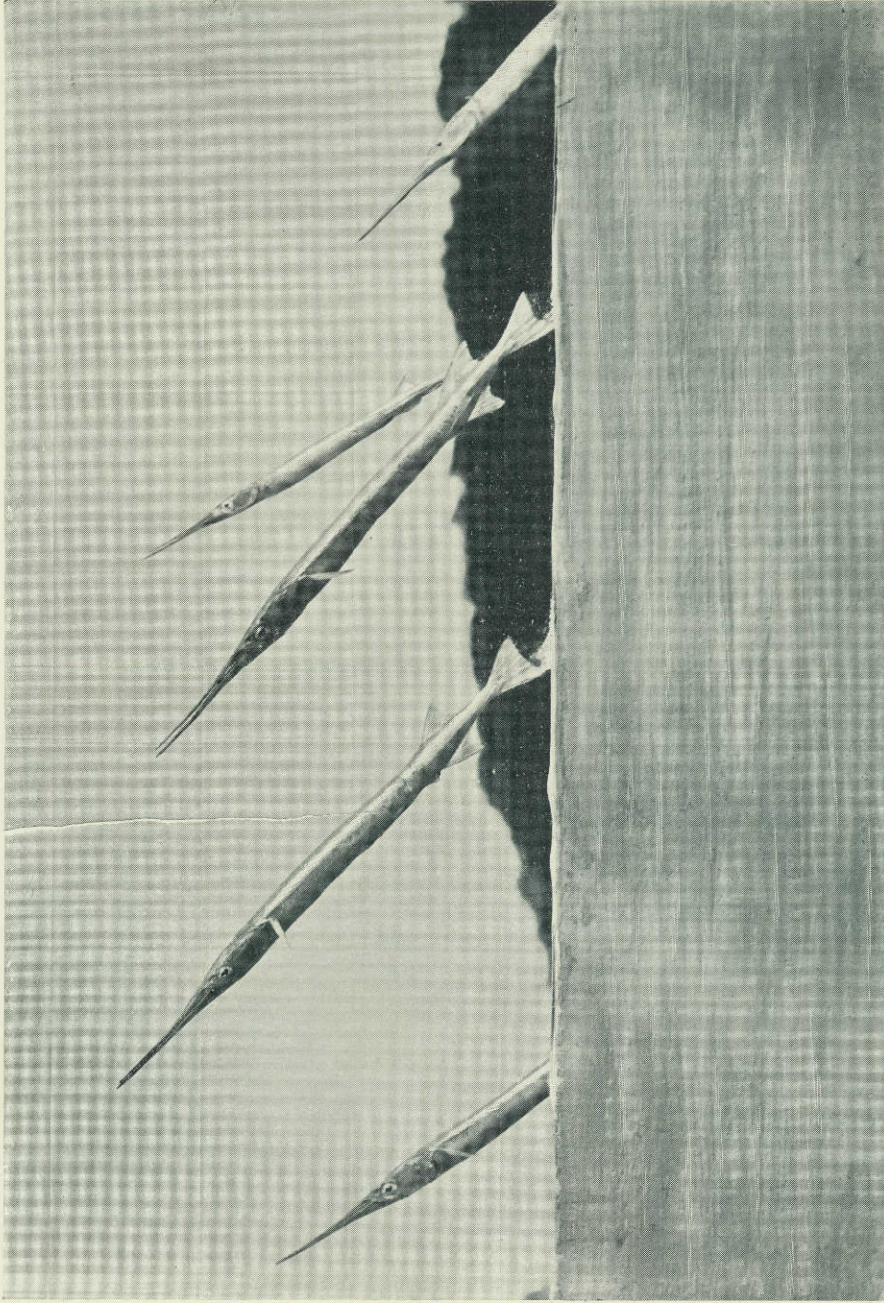
BONY FISH, JACK GARFISH, JEW FISH, SQUEATEAGUE
AND BASS

BONY FISH (*Elops saurus*) AND TOAD FISH (*Antennarius
marmoratus*)

THIS active and graceful fish, a near relative of the tarpon, which perhaps derives its name from its leanness, rises freely to the fly under favourable conditions, and its wild jumps make lively sport. Its several popular names are puzzling—there is a tendency on the other side to eccentric naming of fish—and no fish is considered genteel without at least three or four to choose from.

Giant Fish of Florida

Under the two bony fish in the photograph will be seen, on a shell, one of the remarkable toad fish clinging to its support and lying in ambush for unwary small fry. This particular specimen, of which I give an enlarged presentment, seems a very primitive creature, with its handlike fins and tiny eyes and general absence of vitality, yet it is admirably equipped for satisfying its own greed and escaping that of its enemies. It is all but invisible clinging to the shell against a deceptive background of weeds, and its gaping mouth is striped black and white inside in an attractive manner that proves the doom of many fish endowed with a fatal curiosity. This particular individual, indeed, had actually swallowed a young snapper of exactly its own weight and half an inch longer than itself! I relate this merely as it came under my own notice, for I took the one from the other, but I hardly expect to be believed.



THE GAR, OR NEEDLE FISH. THEY LEAP ASTONISHING DISTANCES IN THE AIR ESPECIALLY WHEN PURSUED BY A KING FISH.



A MARMORATUS LYING MOTIONLESS.



A CARANX HIPPOS, ONE OF THE MOST BEAUTIFULLY COLOURED FISH OF THE PASS.

Giant Fish of Florida

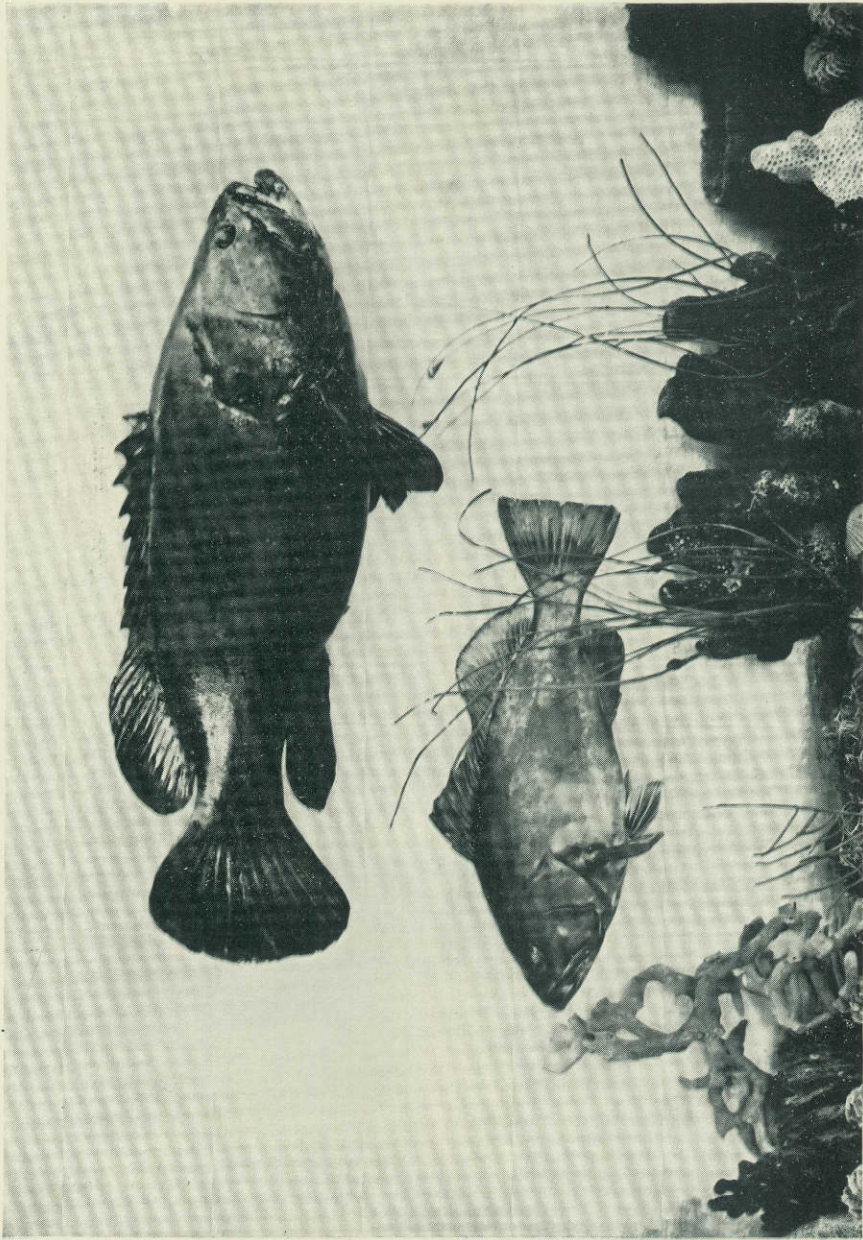
THE CAVALLY OR "JACK" (*Caranx hippos*)

The scad, or horse-mackerel, are familiar in most seas ; even on the British coasts we have them. In warm latitudes, however, they are beautiful as well as bold, and the combination of burnished silver and metallic blues and yellows on the favourite "jack" of Florida waters make him a very handsome fish. Like all the horse-mackerel, he is capable of wonderful bursts of speed, and takes all manner of baits, particularly those not intended for him. He is not much fished for purposely, but may be regarded as one of the miscellany that one time or another come to the basket of the sea-fisherman at Boca Grand. There is no doubt that if fished for with the fly to which he will rise, so strong a fighter would show very fine sport.

Giant Fish of Florida

THE GARFISH (*Belone spec.*)

The flying fish is by no means common, though probably existent on that coast, but it has a relative in the garfish; and, though this does not commonly do much flying, it can on occasion, as when pursued by a swift and powerful enemy, throw itself clean out of the water with much energy, and can propel itself for thirty yards in the air by occasionally tipping the water with its tail. In this case the garfish are alarmed by a kingfish that is really after a skipjack. A good deal of prejudice exists against this fish at home, on account of its green bones (I take this to be the same species that swims in British waters), but it is first-rate eating. Garfish may be found, as a rule, close in amid the surf, where they hunt for small, thin-shelled sandhoppers, about the size of French beans. One of these on a small hook is, in fact, the best bait if any one wishes to angle specially for garfish, but the long bill and the presence inside it of innumerable needle-like teeth do not make the work of extracting the hook particularly pleasant.



THE MIGHTY PERCH AND HIS DEEP WATER COMPANION THE RED GROUPEE.

Giant Fish of Florida

JEWFISH (*Promicrops guttatus*) AND RED GROUPEL (*Epinephelus morio*)

Of the jewfish enough has already been said. The lower figure in the photograph is a red grouper, a large deep-water fish with a good deal of pale red on the head and throat, and a more vivid red inside the mouth. It is a vigorous fighter when hooked on deep rocky ground, and makes an excellent table fish, but it is not so common as the black grouper.

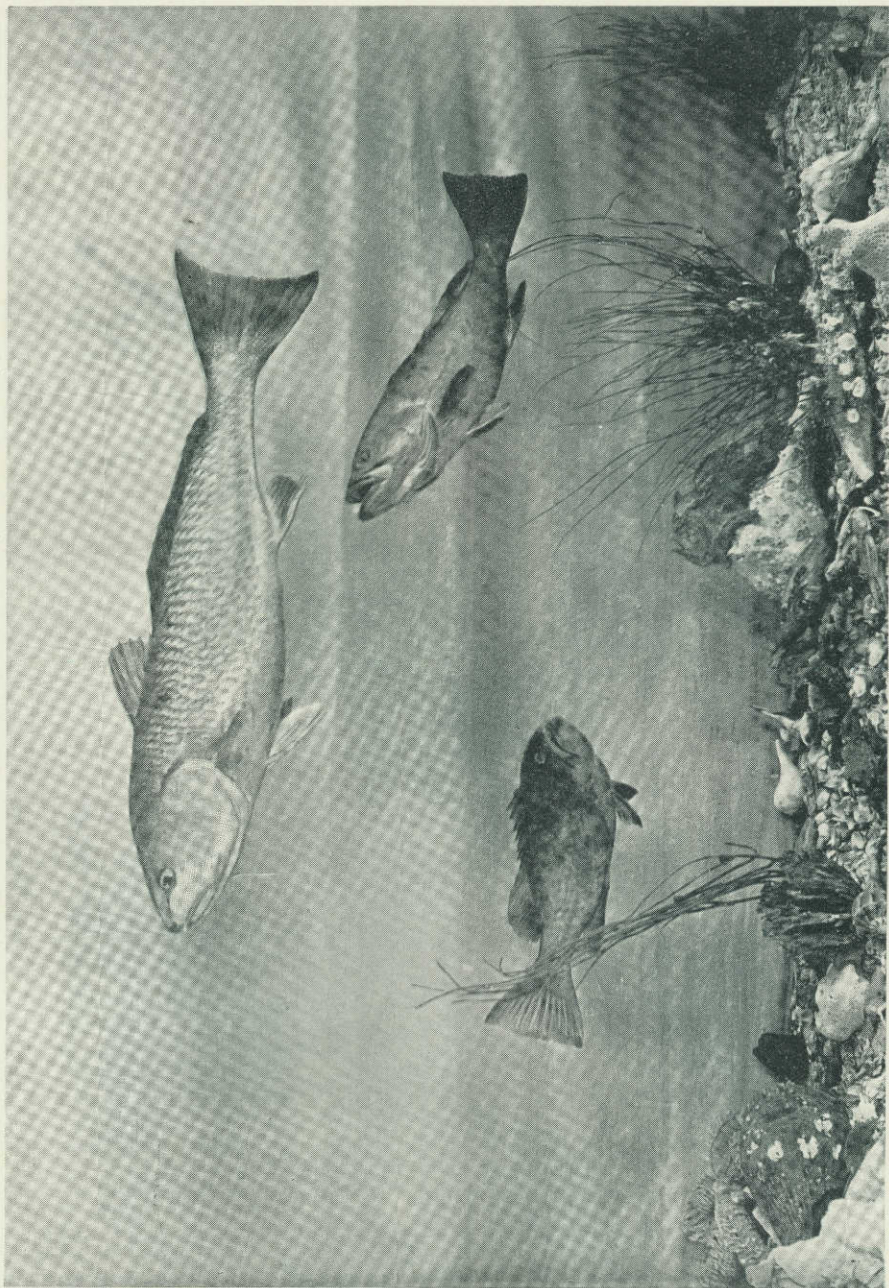
Giant Fish of Florida

THE SPOTTED SQUEATEAGUE OR "SEA TROUT" (*Cynoscion nebulosus*) AND GROUND SPEARING (*Scirus myops*)

The subjects of this photograph are not salmonoid fish out of drawing, as might at first sight appear, but fish, miscalled "trout," of Gulf waters that give fine sport when hooked. As if in vindication of its spots and name, this "trout" will often take a grilse fly when on the feed. It is a strong fighter and jumps continually. It is usually taken spinning with reel or artificial bait. Found on the sandy grounds, it is in some favour as a food fish. Many visitors fail to take with them a light fly rod ; hence these very sporting fish are done to death on a kind of miniature tarpon rod in a hand-over-hand fashion, whereas they would otherwise afford nearly as much sport as a four-pound lake trout. On the sea bed, beneath the squeateagues, will be seen a ground spearing.



A GREAT PIECE OF SNAKE-LIKE CONCH SPAWN CURLED UPWARDS WHERE THE SEA TROUT BASKED.



CHANNEL BASS—A HARD FIGHTER, EASILY MISTAKEN AT FIRST FOR A TARPON.
BLACK GROUPEE, BY NATURE MUCH LIKE THE RED GROUPEE, BUT MORE ABUNDANT.

Giant Fish of Florida

CHANNEL BASS (*Sciænops ocellatus*) AND BLACK GROUPEL (*Garrupa nigrata*)

The channel bass, or red drum, is a bronze fish that runs up to 40 or 50 lb. weight, and gives good sport on a rod in the surf. So many of the smaller sporting fish are caught in the surf on the Florida coast, that I have often wondered whether this is a merely local habit, due to their dread of the sharks outside, or whether indeed sea-fishermen at home neglect the more productive surf, in their haste to fish the extreme end of a long pier or the deeper waters attainable in boats.

The black grouper is a great trouble to the tarpon fisher, for on some days it seizes bait after bait, and at once darts into some convenient crevice in the coral. The puzzled angler strikes again and again, and each time finds himself hitched into the rock, which often entails the loss of all his tackle with many feet of line. Only the old hand knows the real source of the trouble and promptly changes his ground, but as those fish are more or less numerous all through the pass, the real secret of avoiding them is to fish a few feet higher.

