

GREY MULLET, MUGIL CEPHALUS LINNAEUS

The grey mullet is the most warm-tolerant species and best adapted to lower salinity in the near shore lakes, in comparison to the other mullets. It can also live for a long time in fresh waters.

The grey mullet spawns from the end of May to the middle of August. Its fecundity ranges from 2 to 16 million eggs. The young mullets enter the embayments and river mouths where they may remain up to attainment of sexual maturity. The adults feed primarily in the Sea of Azov, but large numbers occur also in the near shore lakes of the remaining countries. In Turkey, mullet catches in lakes represent around 45-65% of the total mullet catches. In Bulgaria the catch of this species in the Black Sea and lakes represents 42.2% of the total mullet catches.

The rate of growth in length and weight of the grey mullet from the Crimean-Caucasian stock was explored using von Bertalanffy's equations. The parameter values found are as follows:

L _{oo} = 69.5	W _{oo} = 3539.4
k = 0.0881	k = 0.0985
t _o = -0.9218	t _o = -0.8153
	n = 2.9415
	a = 0.0163

The growth rate of the grey mullet from the Crimean-Caucasian stock, as well as that of the golden mullet, differ significantly from that of the corresponding species from the western stock. According to Alexandrova (1967) the 1+ year old grey mullet attains an average length of 33.47 cm and weights of 388.0 g, and the golden mullet - 17.56 cm and 50 g respectively in the Bulgarian near shore lakes. From Ukrainian data, the grey mullet attains an equivalent length and weight at 6-7 and 5-6 years of age respectively. These differences in relation to the golden mullet are quite smaller. The main reason for the differences may be ageing interpretations that lead to different results on population parameters such as age of sexual maturity, natural mortality rate, etc.

According to YugNIRO data, the grey mullet is not found in great quantities off the coast of the former USSR and is not subject to a specialised fishery. As was pointed out for the near shore lakes of Turkey the grey mullet makes up more than 50% of the total mullet catches. Bearing this in mind we may suppose that at present the grey mullet biomass in the Black Sea does not exceed 5 000-10 000 tonnes.