

BIGMOUTH SLEEPER

Gobiomorus dormitor

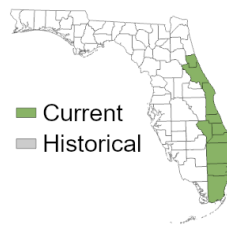
Order: Perciformes

Family: Eleotridae

FNAI Ranks: G4/S2S3

U.S. Status: none

FL Status: none



Description: This species has a cylindrical, fusiform (narrowing at both ends) body shape, reaching lengths of approximately 31.7 cm (12.5 in.) in Florida. There are two dorsal fins, a rounded caudal fin, and ventral fins that are not fused. The color pattern is speckled with varying shades of browns and olives, forming irregular dark bands or blotches; juveniles typically have a broad, dark lateral line. The head is flattened and wide, with a projecting lower jaw that and a jaw hinge extends back to the level of the eye. The teeth are small, slender, and flexible.

Similar Species: The bigmouth sleeper (*Gobiomorus dormitor*) co-occurs with two other members of the sleeper family: the largescale spinycheek sleeper (*Eleotris ambylopsi*) and fat sleeper (*Dormitator maculatus*). *G. dormitor* reaches a size of ca. 31.7 cm in Florida and has an elongate, cylindrical body with a projecting lower jaw. *E. ambylopsi* only reaches a size of ca. 8 cm and can be differentiated by a distinct, pale-colored dorsal stripe that extends from the snout to the base of the caudal fin. *D. maculatus* reaches a size of ca. 14 cm, and can be differentiated by a lack of a projecting lower jaw, more laterally-compressed body, barred pattern, and blue-black blotch above the pectoral fin. The inshore lizardfish (*Synodus foetens*) occurs in brackish or saltwater, has a more pointed snout, only one dorsal fin, and a jaw hinge that extends past the eye.

Habitat: This species is typically found in flowing fresh water over open sand along undercut banks or in heavy vegetation or around rock or wood structures; juveniles have been found in fresh to brackish water (0.0-13.0 ppt) on the downstream side of salinity barriers, at water temperatures of 10.5-29.5 C (Gilmore 1992). It can also be found in canals and artificial ponds within the range.

Seasonal Occurrence: Present year-round.

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Florida Distribution: This species is known from Matanzas River (Flagler County), Sebastian Creek (Indian River, Brevard counties), St. Lucie River (St. Lucie, Martin counties), Lake Okeechobee (Okeechobee County), Loxahatchee River (Palm Beach County), Biscayne Bay tributaries (Dade, Broward counties), and canals throughout the range.

Range-wide Distribution: Range-wide distribution encompasses eastern Florida, southern Texas, south along the eastern coastline of Mexico, throughout Central America, east along northern North America to Suriname, and most of the Caribbean islands.

Conservation Status: This species is amphidromous and requires access to freshwater and brackish habitats. Dams or other water control structures may negatively impact occurrences of this species by limiting access to necessary habitat and altering natural salinity levels.

Protection and Management: Maintain adequate water quality and natural characteristics of habitat (e.g., natural vegetative cover, natural salinity levels and hydrology).

References: Gilmore 1992, Lee et al.1980, and Robins et al. 1986.



Two Bigmouth sleeper collected from southern Florida. © Zachary Randall, Florida Museum of Natural History