



**Kingfishes (Whitings), *Menticirrhus* spp.**

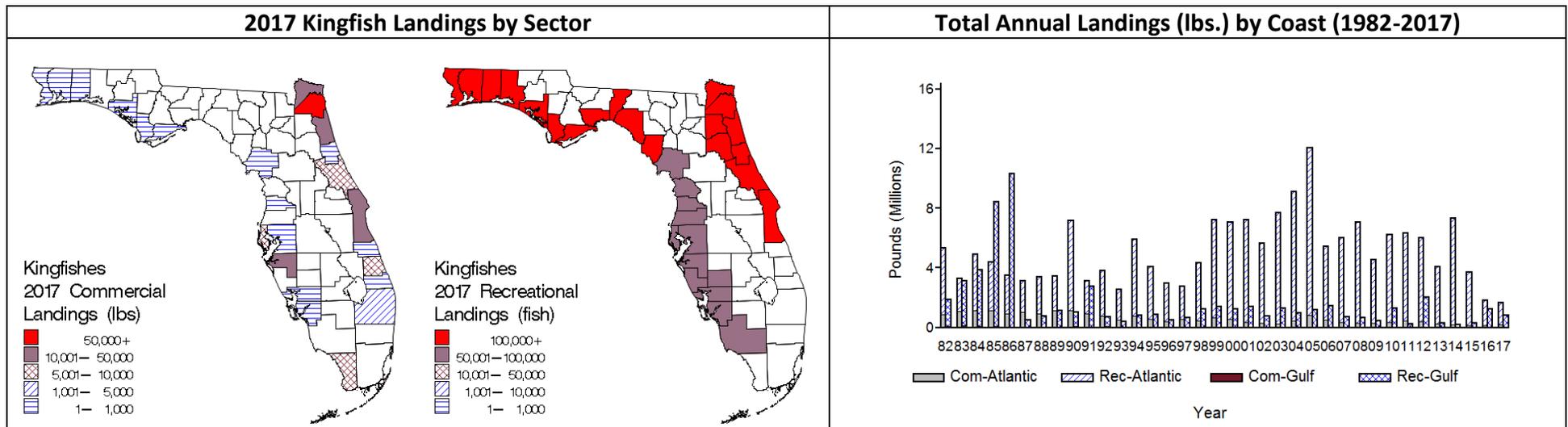
**Gulf Kingfish, *Menticirrhus littoralis* (Holbrook, 1855)**



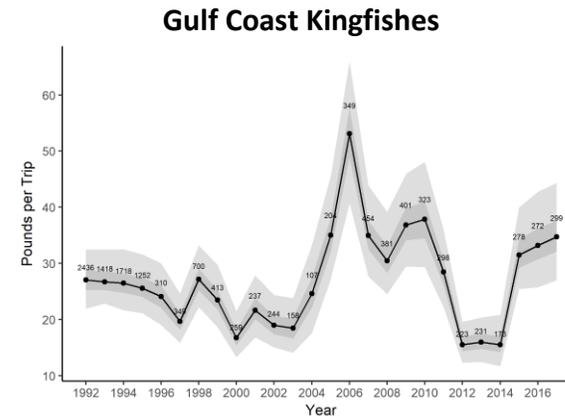
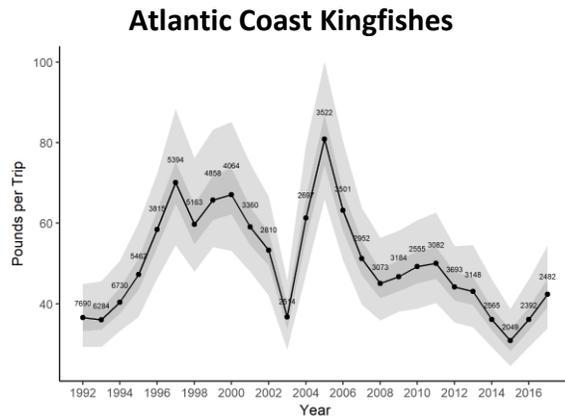
**Southern Kingfish, *Menticirrhus americanus* (Linnaeus, 1758)**

**Life History**

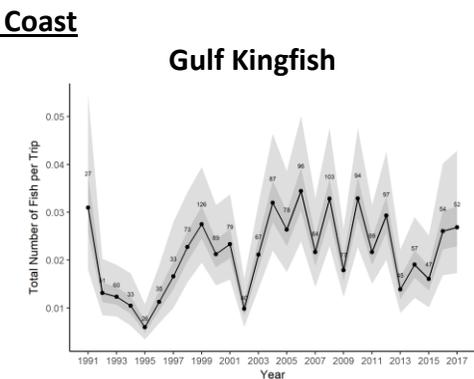
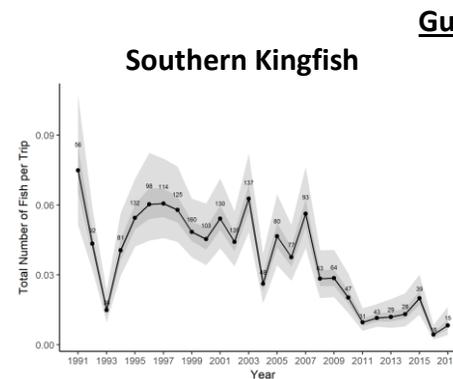
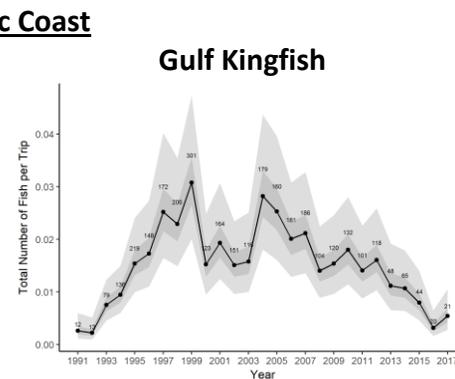
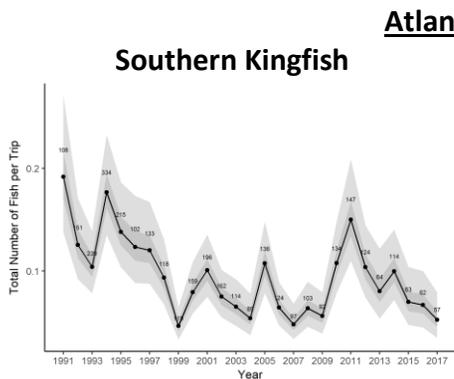
Three species of whittings are present in Florida: Southern Kingfish, *Menticirrhus americanus*; Northern Kingfish, *M. saxatilis*; and Gulf Kingfish, *M. littoralis*. The Southern Kingfish, followed by Gulf Kingfish, are the two most common Kingfishes landed in Florida. Southern Kingfish are demersal and occur over a wide variety of mud and sand substrates. Adults and juveniles prefer the sand bottoms of ocean beaches and the mouths of large coastal bays (Bearden 1963). In a survey of U.S. south Atlantic nearshore waters, Smith and Wenner (1985) found that 90% of the Southern Kingfish that they collected were age 2 or younger. The largest fish collected was 16 inches total length (TL); the oldest fish was age 6. Most Southern Kingfish mature at age 1, when males and females reach an average of 5.4 inches–7.9 inches TL (Smith and Wenner 1985; Armstrong and Muller 1996). Spawning occurs from April through August. Southern Kingfish are reported to be voracious bottom feeders that eat a variety of organisms. Juvenile Kingfish feed on copepods, bivalve siphons, mysids, amphipods, polychaetes, and cumaceans (Music and Pafford 1984). Larger fish fed on various crabs, isopods, fishes, amphipods, and polychaetes (Bearden 1963; McMichael 1981). McMichael and Ross (1987) found that northern Kingfish in the northern Gulf of Mexico fed on isopods, crabs, fishes, polychaetes, amphipods, mysids, and cumaceans. Similarly, Gulf Kingfish fed on bivalve siphons, cumaceans, mysids, copepods, amphipods, and polychaetes (McMichael and Ross 1987).



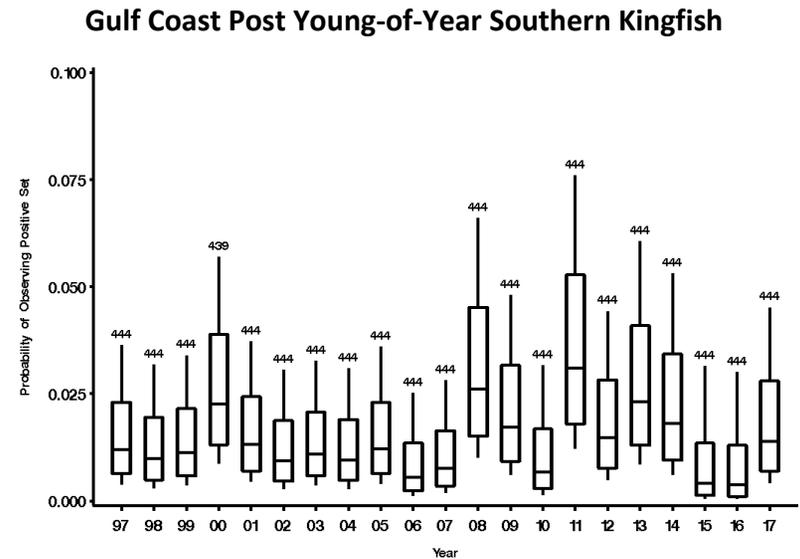
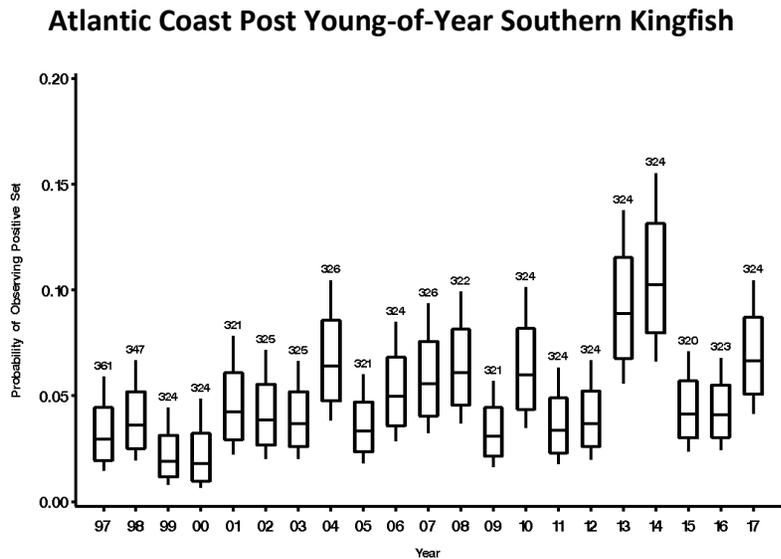
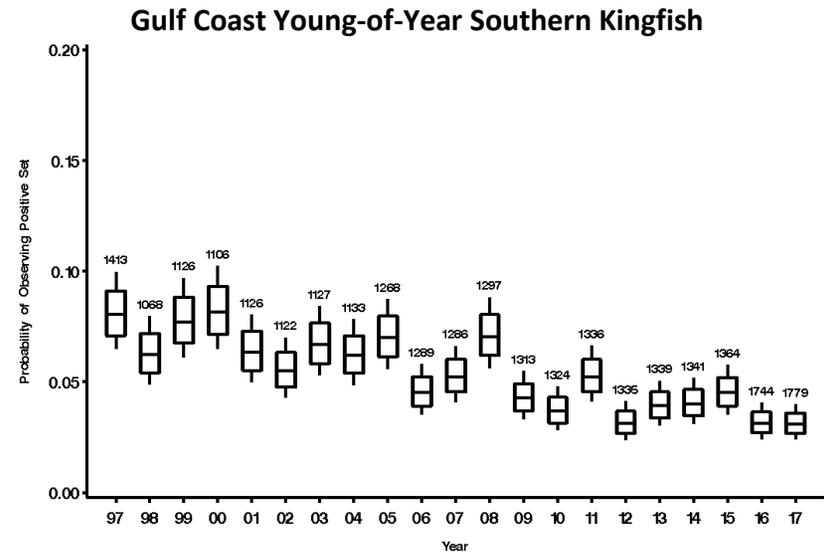
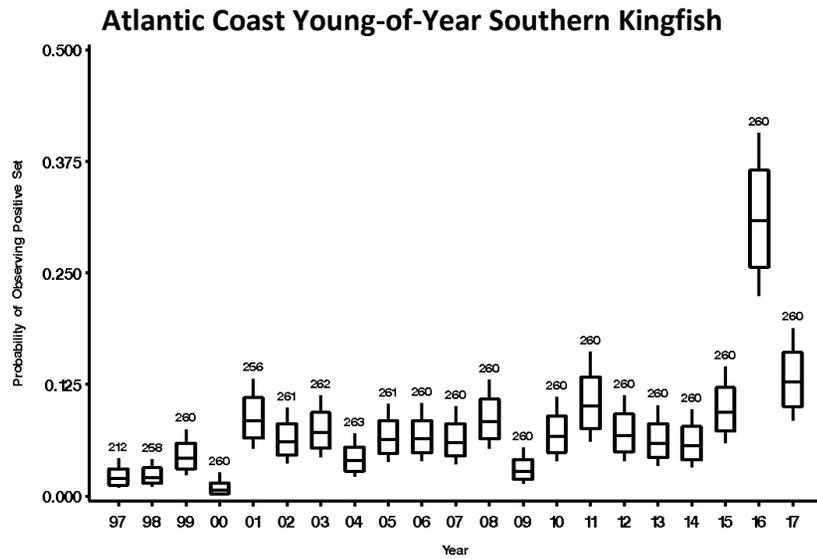
Fishers landed 2,480,469 pounds in 2017 which were 54% lower than the previous 5-year average (2012-2016). Coastwide, 67% of these were from the Atlantic and 33% were from the Atlantic. Recreational landings constituted 91% of the total landings.



**Standardized Commercial Catch Rates:** Atlantic coast commercial catch rates were dome-shaped through 2003, sharply increased through 2005, then decreased in trend again through 2017. Gulf coast commercial landings rates declined slightly through 2003, increased markedly through 2006, decreased in trend through 2014, then increased again through 2017. Dark grey figure lines represent first and third quartiles while the light grey lines represent the 2.5% – 97.5% quantiles.

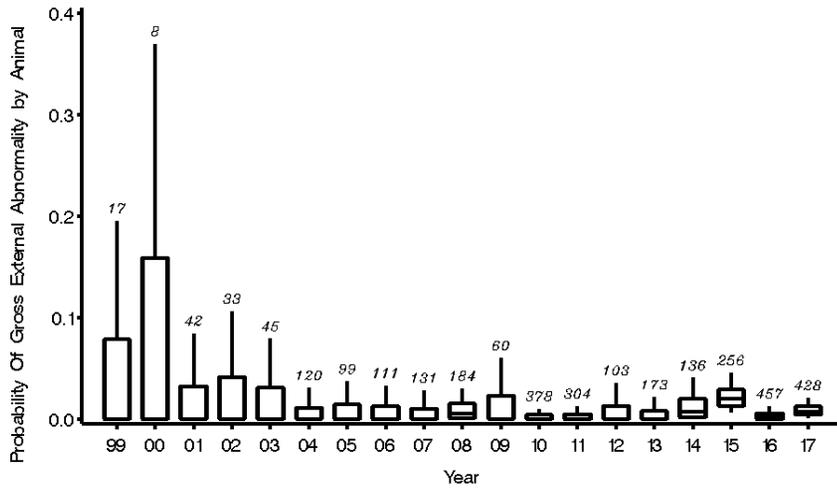


**Standardized Recreational Total Catch Rates:** On the Atlantic coast, total recreational catch rates for Southern Kingfish have variably decreased through 1999 and have fluctuated through 2017. Gulf Kingfish catch rates increased through 1999, dropped for a few years, returned to prior rates only to decrease in trend through 2017. On the Gulf coast, Southern Kingfish catch rates have been variably decreasing since 1998 and Gulf Kingfish catch rates have fluctuated widely since 1999. Dark grey figure lines represent first and third quartiles while the light grey lines represent the 2.5% – 97.5% quantiles.

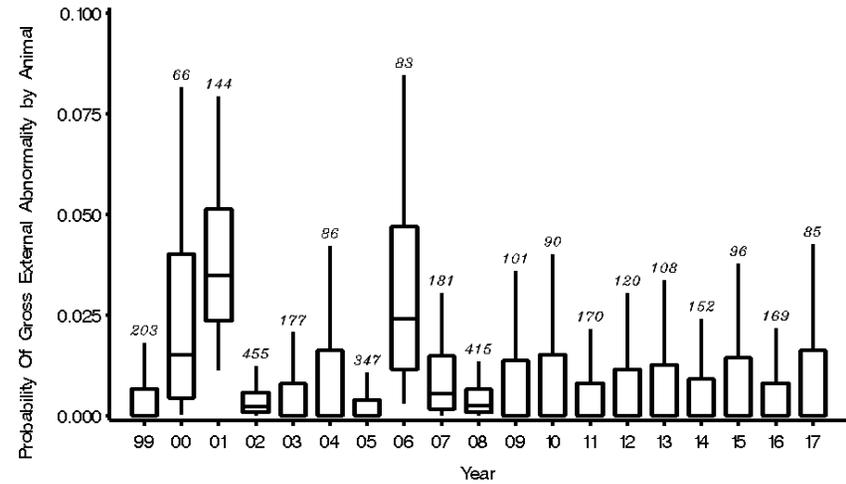


**Fishery-Independent Monitoring:** Atlantic coast indices of abundance for young-of-the-year (YOY) Southern Kingfish show no discernible trend over time but do indicate a very strong year classes in 2016 and low abundances in 2000 and 2009. Young-of-year indices on the Gulf coast show a slow and variable decline through 2017. Abundances of post-YOY Southern Kingfish on the Atlantic coast varied through 2012, increased in 2013-2014, then returned to former levels. On the Gulf coast, post-YOY abundances varied without trend with higher abundances in 2008 and 2011.

**Atlantic Coast Proportion to Total Collected**

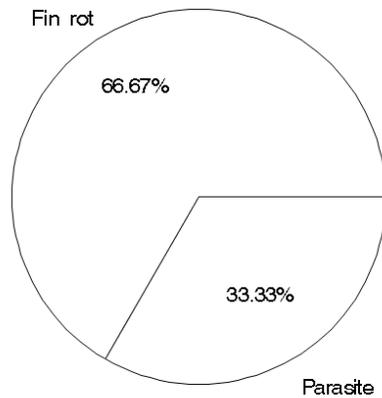


**Gulf Coast Proportion to Total Collected**



**Atlantic Coast Percentage of Abnormality Types**

Percentage of gross external abnormalities



**Gulf Coast Percentage of Abnormality Types**

No Data Available

**Fish Health:** Occurrences of gross external abnormalities among Southern Kingfish from the Atlantic coast were low and variable throughout the time series with a slight increase in 2017. Observed abnormalities in 2017 were largely from fin rot followed by parasites. On the Gulf coast, incidences of gross external abnormalities among Southern Kingfish increased in 2000-2001 and 2006.

### **Stock Status**

**Current Condition:** unknown

**Management History:** In Florida, Kingfishes are termed “unregulated” recreational species but which still carry a two fish or 100 pounds per person per day (whichever is more) regulation established by Florida Statute. There has been no formal stock assessment for any of the three species of Kingfish in Florida.