

SIZE:

Maximum length: 32 cm; common to 24 cm.

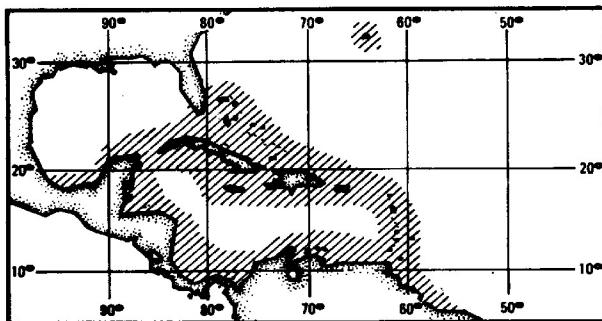
GEOGRAPHICAL DISTRIBUTION AND BEHAVIOUR:

South Florida and Bermuda to all of the Caribbean.

Common in beds of turtle grass (*Thalassia*) and manatee grass (*Cymodocea*) and on sand flats at water depths from 1 to 30 m. Feeds mainly on algae and sea grasses. Females lay sandy strands of egg-masses containing about 300 000 eggs per strand; takes about 3 years to reach maturity. Sexes are separate.

PRESENT FISHING GROUNDS:

Caught throughout its range, especially in the Bahamas and the Lesser Antilles.



CATCHES, MAIN FISHING GEAR AND PRINCIPAL FORMS OF UTILIZATION:

Statistics are reported in metric tons of meat only for the Bahamas (1975: 291 t); Honduras (1975: 960 t); Grenada (1975: 100 t), Turks and Caicos (1975: 650 t), Union Id., Grenadines (1970: 20 t). In Mexico the catch is reported with other conchs (*Busycon*, *MeLongena*) (1975: 2 832 t).

Mainly taken by hand. In the Bahamas, they are brought to the surface on to small boats by means of a 25-foot pole bearing two metal tines. Elsewhere, fishermen dive or wade for them. Live conchs in the shell are brought to shore and later cleaned. The foot and body are sold raw or dried in local markets. Haiti imports dried meat from the Turks and Caicos Islands.

The meat is consumed in a variety of ways; raw, marinated, minced or chopped to make soups and fried cakes, or boiled with rice. Pink pearls and the shell are favourite tourist curios. Cameos are carved from thick specimens, and lamps and bracelets made from thinner shells. In some areas the foot is used as bait for fishes.