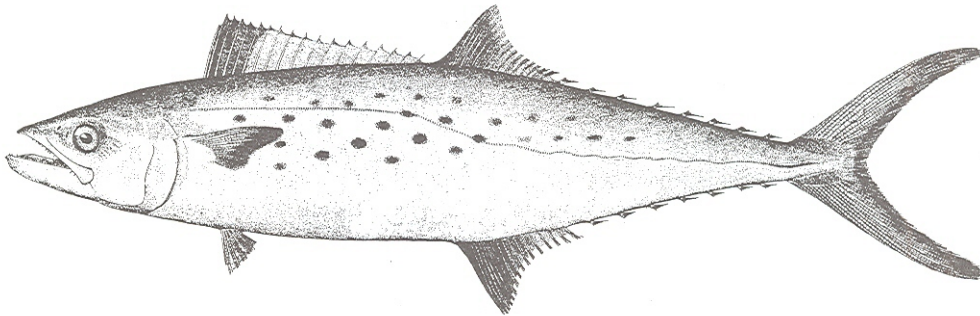


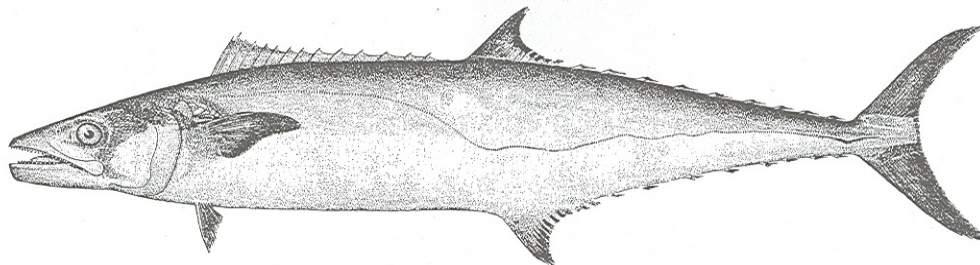
## Southern Mackerel Identification Guide

Over the past ten years both Spanish and King mackerel have become more common in recreational finfish catches in Massachusetts waters. Our Annual Saltwater Fishing Derby now lists both King and Spanish mackerel as eligible species and we are providing this identification guide to assist shops since Spanish and juvenile King mackerel are very similar in appearance.

Spanish mackerel (*Scomberomorus maculatus*) caught in Massachusetts waters generally run from 2 to 6 pounds although they are known to attain weights up to about 9 pounds. Spanish are liberally covered with randomly spaced round gold spots on the flanks both above and below the lateral line. The lateral line generally descends slowly below the second dorsal fin before ending at the base of the tail.



King mackerel (*Scomberomorus regalis*) caught in Massachusetts generally run larger than Spanish mackerel, from 5 to 8 pounds although they can grow to much larger sizes than Spanish mackerel, up to and exceeding 35 pounds. Most King mackerel caught here are juveniles and so have spots as well. However, the spots are bronze colored and fade quickly to grey upon death. The lateral line, also unlike the Spanish mackerel, descends sharply below the second dorsal fin and rises again slightly to end at the base of the tail.



Occasionally a Cero mackerel (*Scomberomorus cavalla*) is caught here as well. This species lateral line also descends slowly front to rear like the Spanish, but the Cero has a bronze line along its flanks running from the pectoral to the base of the tail and has ovoid or square spots arranged more or less in regular rows mostly below the lateral line. Currently the Cero mackerel is ineligible for the derby since it is very uncommon this far north.

