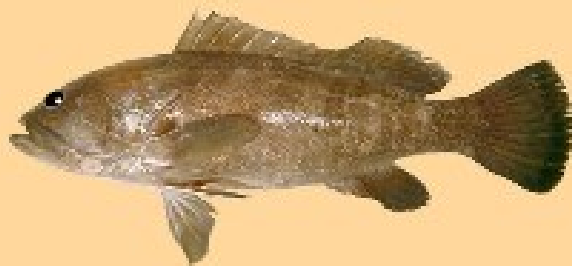
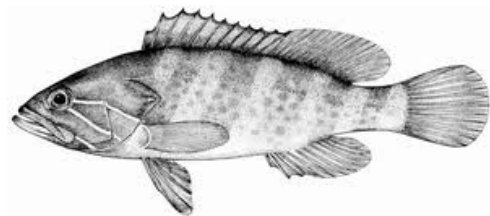


Mérou blanc (Serranidae)



Mérou blanc-Thiof du Sénégal
(Serranidae)



Species and distribution

The white grouper *Epinephelus aeneus*, better known in Senegal under the name of "thiof", is the most widely used of the grouper species in consumption. It is also the most popular for the traditional local dish: "ceebu jën", literally "rice with fish". Used fresh and smoked, thiof is very popular on the West African market in general, in particular, Senegal.

Of the Perciformes order, the thiof belongs to the Serranidae family. It can measure up to 120 cm in total length and weigh up to 25 kg.

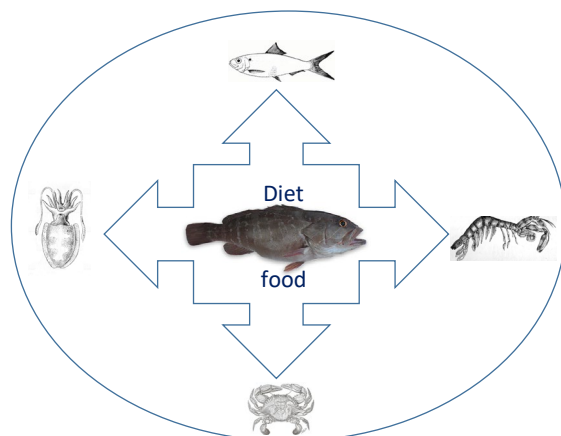
The species occurs throughout the southern Mediterranean and along the west coast of Africa, from Gibraltar (Spain) to the south coast of Angola.

It performs seasonal migrations of the coast of Senegal, influenced by seasonal upwelling of Senegal and Mauritania.



Habitats and food

A demersal marine species, thiof adults live in rocky, muddy and sandy bottoms at depths of 20 to 200 m. As for the juveniles, they are caught in lagoons or coastal estuaries.



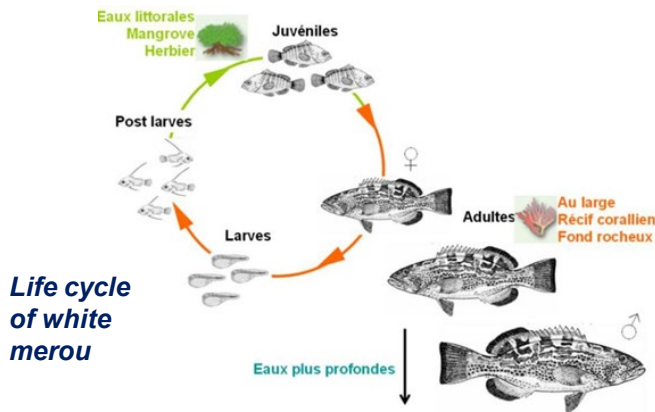


Reproduction et cycle de vie

Thiof is a voracious predator that feeds on fish (58%), stomatopods (21%), crabs (10%) and cephalopods (10%).

E. aeneus, like most grouper species, is a protogynous hermaphrodite. Most females change sex at around 9 kg, but smaller males (3 to 5 kg) are sometimes encountered.

The absolute potential fertility of the species varies from 789,436 ova in a 44 cm SL 2.2 kg fish to 12,589,242 ova in an 87 cm SL 12.6 kg fish. In Senegal, the size of the first maturity is 49 cm in females and 55 cm in males.



Management measures and options

Epinephelus aeneus is considered to be overexploited in most Atlantic areas. The species is also on the red list of the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN).

Increase the size of the first catch to 50 cm LT; Gradually reduce the catch by 30 to 50% compared to that of 2018;

Establishing a biological rest for thiof during the reproductive peak period could be very useful for the renewal of the thiof stock;

Prohibit the types of fishing used especially in rocks and reefs, which are the main sites of aggregation of spawners for spawning;

Ban the use of small mesh nets in nursery areas (mangroves and seagrass) of the species, *E. aeneus*.



Fishing methods

In Senegal, the thiof is mainly targeted by artisanal fishing. Line and gillnet techniques are the most used. Industrial fishing traps it in much smaller proportions.

A sharp decrease in thiof catches is noted in Senegal because of the incessant increase in the fishing effort since 1971. Indeed, the catches of the species in Senegal went from nearly 4000 t in 1987 to around 800 t in 2015. Also, the majority of captures are made up of juveniles. Only 0.03% of the individuals caught reach the optimal sustainable catch size which is 96 cm TL.