

SPEARFISH



Worldwide there are four described species of spearfish

- Longbill spearfish (*Tetrapturus pfluegeri*)
- Shortbill spearfish (*Tetrapturus angustirostris*)
- Mediterranean spearfish (*Tetrapturus belone*)
- Roundscale spearfish (*Tetrapturus georgii*)



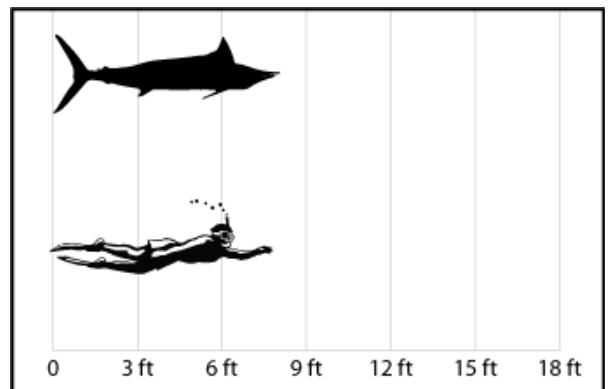
Shortbill spearfish. Photo by New South Wales Dept. of Primary Industries.



Longbill spearfish. © Diane Rome Peebles.

Predator Power

While hunting for prey from surface waters, spearfish can remain hidden as a result of counter-shading. Their white undersides allow them to blend into the light streaming down from the sun. When viewed from above, the spearfish's deep blue dorsal side disappears against the dark sea bottom, protecting it from sharks and other predators.



Billfish Basics

Diet: pelagic fish and squid

Size: Up to 8 feet (2.5 m) and 130 pounds (58 kg)

Lifespan: Up to 5 years

Range and Habitat:

Spearfish are not especially common anywhere in their range and are considered the rarest of billfish species. Longbill and roundscale spearfish are found in the Atlantic Ocean, while the Mediterranean spearfish is primarily restricted to its namesake sea. Shortbill spearfish are found primarily in the Indian and Pacific Oceans.

Spearfish Resembling White Marlin Discovered in Western Atlantic

In 2007, scientists from the Guy Harvey Research Institute at Nova Southeastern University and the National Marine Fisheries Service's Southeast Fisheries Science Center announced that the roundscale spearfish, *Tetrapturus georgii*, had been discovered in the western Atlantic. Only a few specimens of roundscale spearfish were previously documented, and those were captured in the Mediterranean and eastern Atlantic. Virtually indistinguishable from the severely depleted white marlin that also frequents the western Atlantic, this finding has significant implications for the status of white marlin as recent stocks assessments may have been overestimated.

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