# All About Wolffish

## What you need to know...



#### **Protectors of Ecosystems**

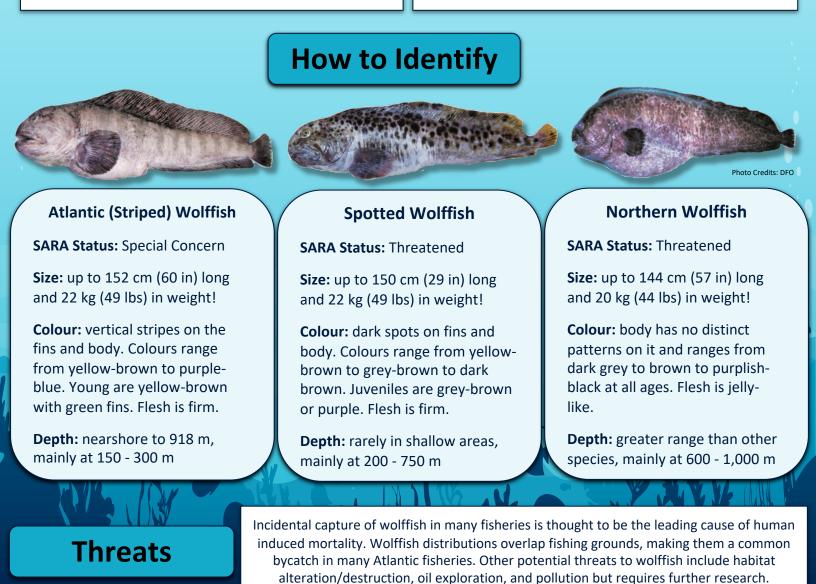
While wolffish may look intimidating, they are actually shy and docile and hunt prey such as sea urchins and shellfish when not hiding away in their dens. Wolffish also play an important role as protectors of kelp beds – a sheltered marine habitat for eggs and young of many species of fish.

"Urchin Barrens" occur when sea urchins overfeed on kelp beds. Wolffish protect these areas by eating sea urchins, keeping the population low enough so that the ecosystem can thrive.

#### **Species at Risk**

Within Newfoundland and Labrador waters, there are three species of wolffish that are listed under Canada's *Species at Risk Act (SARA)*: Atlantic (Striped), Spotted, and Northern.

Often called catfish, abundances for all three wolffish species have been declining in the past 20 years in eastern Canada due to accidental capture by fisheries targeting other species. You can help protect wolffish by carefully releasing them back into the ocean if accidentally caught when fishing.



## **Wolffish Handling and Release Guide**

## **SAFETY FIRST!**

If Wolffish are caught, it is important to handle them with caution and that they are released safely and quickly. Wolffish have large, powerful jaws with teeth for crushing shellfish. Care must be taken to ensure that serious injury from bites does not occur.

### **Recommendations for Safe Release**

#### Bringing the fish onboard

- If wolffish is caught on a hook, assess the potential for releasing the fish before it comes onboard the boat. Determine if hook can be safely removed.
- Do not drop the fish on hard surfaces or hit if off the side of the vessel to release it.

#### Removing gear and releasing

- > When handling, hold a wolffish firmly at the base of the head, avoid touching the gills.
- If the hook is visible in the mouth (not swallowed) a de-hooking tool can be used. A pair of needle-nosed pliers with long handles can be used if no de-hooking tool is present.
- > Do not use any sharp objects to remove the wolffish from the hook (gaff, knife, etc.)
- Use a dip net to handle the wolffish if it is large or you do not want to handle it directly. Dip nets can also restrict movement and aid in hook removal.
- > Release the wolffish and return it to the water as quickly as possible.

#### Upload your wolffish sighting to the APP:

Information on your sightings will contribute to research and recovery efforts!

Download the Survey123 App from the Google Play or APP Store and scan the QR code ->
OR through your web browser using this link: https://arcg.is/1CHnjP

Got any photos? You can upload them too!



# Canad





