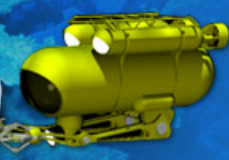


Sea and Sky Presents

# The Sea



Exploring The Splendors of the Sea  
and the Wonders of the Universe

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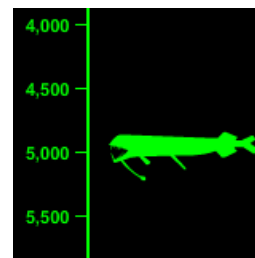
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## CREATURES OF THE DEEP SEA



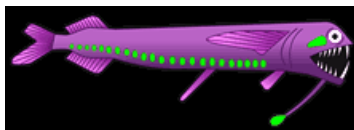
### Deep Sea Dragonfish

Other Names: Scaleless Dragonfish  
 Scientific: *Grammatostomias flagellibarba*  
 Size Range: 4 - 6 inches  
 Habitat: Tropical ocean regions  
 Depth Range: Down to 5,000 feet



### Deep Sea Dragonfish (*Grammatostomias flagellibarba*)

The **deep sea dragonfish**, sometimes known as the scaleless dragonfish, is a ferocious predator that inhabits the deep oceans of the world. Known scientifically as *Grammatostomias flagellibarba*, it has extremely large teeth compared to its body size. In spite of its gruesome appearance, it is a small fish, measuring only about 6 inches (about 15 centimeters) in length. There are several different species of dragonfish. All are very similar in appearance.



The deep sea dragonfish is one of the many species of deep sea fish that can produce its own light through a chemical process known as **bioluminescence**. The light is produced by a special organ known as a photophore. It is believed that the fish can use these flashing lights in the dark waters to attract prey and even to signal potential mates. The dragonfish has a large head and mouth equipped with many sharp, fang-like teeth. It also has a long protrusion known as a barbel attached to its chin. This barbel is tipped with a light-producing photophore. The dragonfish also has photophores along the sides of its body. These light organs may be used to signal other dragonfish during mating. They may also serve to attract and disorient prey fishes from deep below.

The dragonfish can use its light-producing barbel like a fishing lure. By flashing it on and off and waving it back and forth, it is thought that the dragonfish can attract the attention of its potential meal. Once an unsuspecting fish gets too close, it is snapped up in the dragonfish's powerful jaws. The large teeth of the dragonfish help it to grab its prey as it hunts in the dark waters of the deep sea. It will feed on small fish and crustaceans as well as anything else it can find. Since many of their prey also produce light themselves, the dragonfish has evolved special method of remaining hidden from predators after its meal. The walls of its stomach are black to keep the lights concealed while its meal is digested.

Because they live in extremely deep waters, very little is known about the mating habits of the

### Deep Sea Creature Database

- [Atlantic Hagfish](#)
- [Coelacanth](#)
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- [Deep Sea Anglerfish](#)
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Closeup of a dragonfish showing its light-producing barbel (Image courtesy of [Danté Fenolio](#))

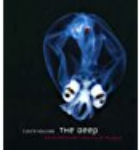
dragonfish. It is believed that they are external spawners, meaning that the female releases eggs into the water to be fertilized by the male. The eggs then float to the surface where they remain until hatching. Once the eggs hatch, the tiny larvae are left to fend for themselves until they can reach maturity. Once mature, they return to the deep ocean to spend the rest of their lives. Not much is known about the life span of the dragonfish.

The deep sea dragonfish lives in deep ocean waters at depths of up to 5,000 feet (1,500 meters). Although dragonfish species are found in most oceans the world, the deep sea dragonfish is limited mainly to the North and Western Atlantic Ocean and the Gulf of Mexico.



Dragonfish closeup showing light-producing photophore below its eye (Image courtesy of [Danté Fenolio](#))

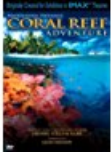
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