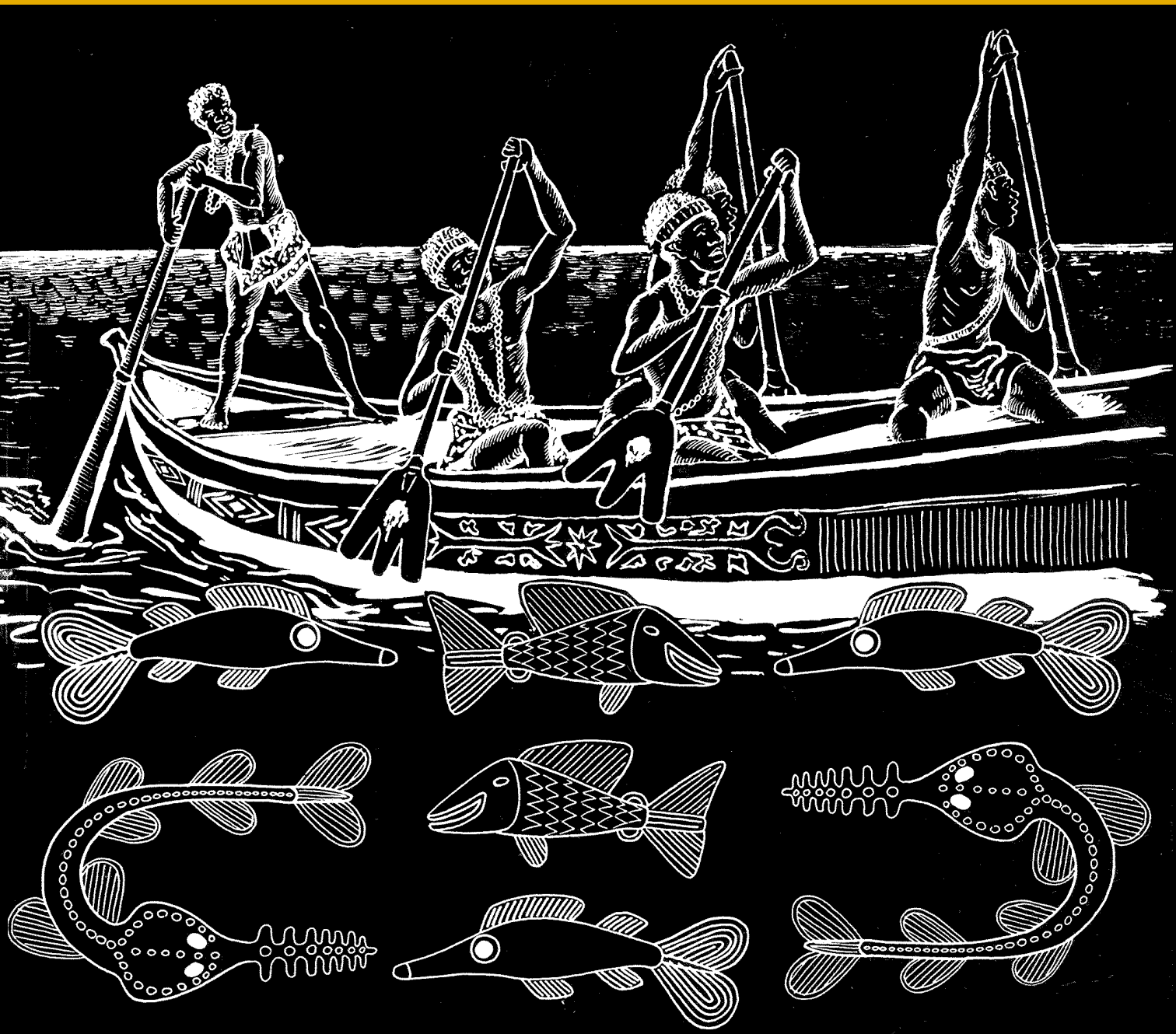




FAO SPECIES IDENTIFICATION SHEETS FOR FISHERY PURPOSES

FAO REGIONAL OFFICE FOR AFRICA - RAFR

FIELD GUIDE TO THE COMMERCIAL MARINE RESOURCES OF THE GULF OF GUINEA



FOOD AND AGRICULTURE ORGANIZATION OF THE UNITED NATIONS

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FIELD GUIDE TO THE COMMERCIAL MARINE RESOURCES OF THE GULF OF GUINEA

by

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FOREWORD

Despite the long tradition of fisheries in the Gulf of Guinea, the identification of species entering the coastal marine landings in this area still poses considerable problems, in particular to statistical/biological data collectors and to operators in the fish marketing sector. In fact, the large variety of species landed, coupled with technical difficulties in their identification, make it practically impossible to estimate the actual fishing effort exercised on most individual species. Correct identification of species on landing places is hampered by the lack of training in this field and by the unavailability of up-to-date documentation designed to guide the non-specialized fishery worker in this complex task. Furthermore, even in cases of correct identifications, the names applied to a species often lead to misinterpretations and confusions, because of the persistence of obsolete scientific nomenclature, the availability of several local names for each species, and the application of the same name to many species.

Having in mind the necessity of upgrading the quality of raw data by species used in the various sectors of fisheries, and to standardize species nomenclature throughout the Gulf of Guinea, the FAO Regional Office for Africa (RAFR) decided to promote and support the preparation and diffusion of this field guide, which is intended to be widely distributed among institutions and individual fishery workers operating in this area. It is the 8th field guide published within the FAO Species Identification Sheet series.

The production of this document was possible thanks to the initiative and personal dedication of Dr. W.Q.-B. West, Senior Regional Fisheries Officer, RAFR. It is based on Dr. W. Schneider's compilation of the information presently available on the species fished in the Gulf of Guinea (mainly from the FAO Species Identification Sheets for Fishery Purposes for the E.C. Atlantic), his personal field experience on board the research vessel DR F. NANSEN off West Africa, and the contributions of a large number of fishery institutions and individual workers in the countries concerned, who provided useful first-hand information on their respective working areas.

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Accra

PREPARATION OF DOCUMENT

The present field guide has been prepared at FAO headquarters (FIRM) with the support of the FAO Regional Office for Africa (RAFR).

In order to obtain first-hand information on all species believed to be of interest to fisheries in the Gulf of Guinea, an illustrated questionnaire was sent to fisheries institutions in the countries concerned. The new information on size, fishing gear, habitat and species distribution retrieved from the completed questionnaires were incorporated into the final document.

This guide is designed as a practical tool for all fisheries workers in the Gulf of Guinea, particularly those who are confronted with the daily task of collecting fisheries statistics and other data by species on landing places and in fish markets. It includes those marine and brackish-water species of bony fishes, sharks, batoid fishes, lobsters, shrimps, crabs, bivalves, gastropods, cephalopods and sea turtles considered as regular components of landings in this area.

Correct identification of species entering the catches is of significant importance for the improvement of the quality of statistical data utilized by the Fisheries Divisions and other relevant institutions in the countries concerned, in order to facilitate an adequate planning of fisheries development and management of the living marine and brackish-water resources. Because of the great species diversity characteristic of this area, the considerable difficulties in separating similar species, and in establishing meaningful species groupings, and the unavailability of proper taxonomic literature, it is essential to provide national fishery workers with practical and reliable guidance in this field. Our leading idea was to achieve a compact and easily manageable booklet that would be at the reach of fishery workers at all levels. Consequently, the guide had to be based largely on illustrations, while the text was kept as succinct as possible. This obviously implies certain limitations of the guide as a means of scientific identification of all species. It is therefore strongly recommended, in case of doubt, to consult the regional set of FAO Species Identification Sheets for the Eastern Central Atlantic, which is more comprehensive in species coverage and gives a much more detailed account of the diagnostic characters of each species.

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The author wishes to extend his gratitude to the following persons who provided valuable information on size, distribution and habitat of species caught in the Gulf of Guinea and the fishing gear commonly used: T. Ajayi (Lagos), K. Amegavie (Lomé), A.D. Apanpa (Lagos), F.X. Bard (Abidjan), J. Konan (Abidjan), J.B.A. Kothias (Abidjan), G. Mensah (Cotonou), J.C. Njock (Yaoundé), D.W. Ofosi-Adu (Tema), E. Ossinga (Accra), B. Satia (Libreville) and J. Tobor (Lagos).

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Special thanks are due to W.Q.-B. West (RAFR, Accra) whose dedication, energy and constant support made this field guide possible.

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Summary

This field guide includes the marine and brackish-water species of bony fishes, sharks, batoid fishes, lobsters, shrimps, crabs, cephalopods, bivalves, gastropods and sea turtles of present or potential interest to the fisheries of the countries bordering the Gulf of Guinea. Each major resources group is introduced by a general section on technical terms, followed by an annotated and illustrated list of the more important species which includes FAO names, size, fishing gear and habitat. To facilitate the identification, the chapters "Bony fishes", "Sharks" and "Batted fishes" are preceded by an illustrated guide to the different families.

A composite index of scientific and vernacular family and species names is also provided.

