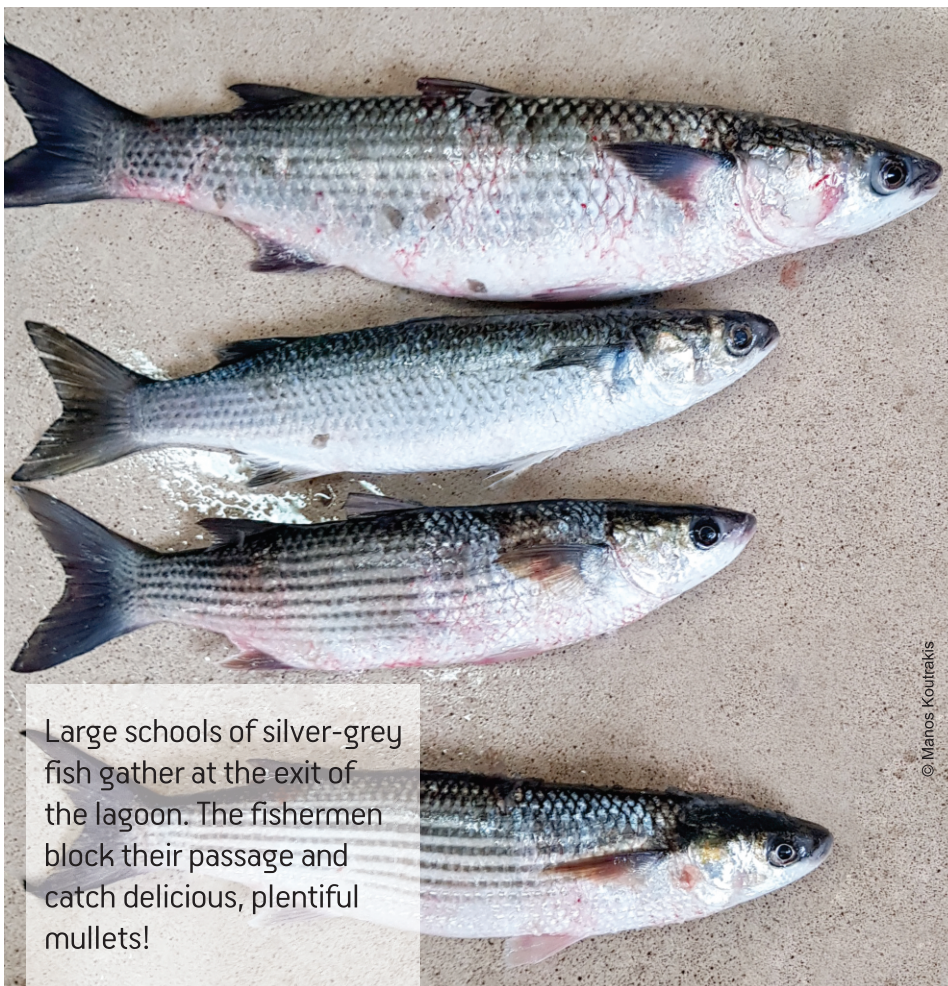


Most grey mullet species are euryaline fish that can adapt to waters of varying salinity. They move from the sea to lagoons and river estuaries at various stages in their lives.

Six species of mullets are found in Greece and five of them, as part of their life cycle, enter the lagoons as juvenile fish. There they find plenty of food and grow, protected from predators. Few years later, in the fall, driven by the instinct of reproduction, they begin their journey back to the sea where they lay their eggs. Young mullets start the cycle of migration, growth and reproduction all over again.



Large schools of silver-grey fish gather at the exit of the lagoon. The fishermen block their passage and catch delicious, plentiful mullets!

© Manos Koutrekis

The grey mullets are important fish in the culture of the Mediterranean countries and Greece. Elements of their physiology and biology aroused the curiosity or admiration of people in antiquity and that is why the ancient Greek and Latin literature contain a wealth of information about them, some fiction and some real. We find representations of mullets on fish plates and mosaics.

The grey mullets of the region of Avdera and Porto Lagos were already famous in antiquity and their fame still remains alive.



Lykourinos and avgotaracho

Lykourinos is the salted smoked mullet. Today, it is an exquisite delicacy of the region of Vistonis Lagoon, but it has its origin in Ainos of Eastern Thrace.

Avgotaracho, the salted and waxed gonads of the bafa (female grey mullet), is the most renowned grey mullet product (elsewhere known as bottarga). Although today the avgotaracho of Messolongi dominates the market, in the past, it was also produced by the fishermen of Vistonis Lagoon. A rare and exquisite product, it competes in quality with similar products of Italy and Japan.



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The fish of many names

- *Mugil cephalus*: *kefalos* or *niaki*. In some areas the female is called *bafa* and the male *steiradi*, while the young fish are called *kephalopoula* or *niakopoula*.
- *Chelon labrosus*: *chilonari* or *mavraki* in Northern Greece, *velanissa* or *platarida* in Messolonghi.
- *Liza ramada*: *tzimbrida* or *herani* in Northern Greece, *lagiada* in Chalkida, *mavraki* or *lafkinos* elsewhere.
- *Liza aurata*: *myxinari*, *myxinos* or *xiphaki*.
- *Liza saliens*: *psomoni* in Northern Greece, *gastros* elsewhere.
- *Oedalechilus labeo*: *grenzos* (does not enter lagoons).

In antiquity mullets also had many names: *adonis*, *bacchus*, *voreus*, *gomfarion*, *dakyleus*, *kestreus*, *kestrinos*, *kefalos*, *kefalinos*, *lefiskos*, *myxon* or *myxinos*, *nestis*, *pereas*, *plota*, *chellon*, *feraios*.



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<https://blogs.crikey.com.au/northern/2013/05/23/fish-of-the-week-flathead-mullet-mugil-cephalus/>

The blind grey mullets

Aristotle, in his work *History of Animals* (602 a3), states that the grey mullets (*Mugil cephalus*) captured in winter were blind; some fishermen believe so even today. The eyes of the grey mullet are surrounded by a fatty membrane. In the winter, this tissue which completely covers the eye, freezes and takes on a milky white color, giving the impression that the fish is blind.



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