ELOPIDAE  

**Megalops atlanticus** Valenciennes

**Spawning:** Gulf of Mexico and Yucatan Channel in spring and summer, but locations not well known.  

**Eggs**  — Undescribed.  

**Larvae**  — Leptocephalus-like with forked caudal fin, triangular head, and ribbon-like body.  
- Gut long, about 75% TL.  
- Flexion occurs at 10–11 mm SL.  
- Air bladder conspicuous after flexion.  
- Teeth prominent in early larvae (lost at metamorphosis).  
- Note relative positions of dorsal and anal fins.  
- Period of larval growth followed by shrinkage and thickening of body during metamorphosis, and then resumption of growth up to juvenile stage.  
- Fin formation: caudal fin rays form at flexion; dorsal and anal fin rays form at about 16 mm (before metamorphosis) and are complete at 17–20 mm (after metamorphosis); pectoral and pelvic fin rays develop later.  
- Maximum size before metamorphosis is about 29 mm SL.  
- Pigmentation: dorsal edge of gut, anal base, and over eye; pigment scatters with growth.

**Meristic features**  

| Myomeres: | 54–57 |  
| Vert: | 33–34+22 |  
| D: | 13–16 |  
| A: | 22–25 |  
| C: | 7+10+9+6–7 |

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ELOPIDAE  

**Elops saurus** Linnaeus

**Spawning:** Location unknown; season prolonged.  

**Eggs**  — Undescribed.  

**Larvae**  — Leptocephalus-like with forked caudal fin, triangular head, and ribbon-like body.  
- Gut long, 80–90% TL.  
- Flexion occurs at 10–15 mm SL.  
- Note relative positions of dorsal and anal fins.  
- Period of larval growth followed by shrinkage and thickening of body during metamorphosis, and then resumption of growth up to juvenile stage.  
- Dorsal and anal counts usually complete at about 25 mm (after metamorphosis).  
- Maximum size before metamorphosis is about 43 mm.  
- Pigmentation: dorsal edge of gut, mid-lateral body, and anal base; dorsal air bladder pigmented after metamorphosis.

**Meristic features**  

| Myomeres: | (72)78–80(82) |  
| Vert: | 55–56+24 |  
| D: | 25–29 |  
| A: | 16–19 |  
| C: | 9–11+10+9+7–8 |

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**Megalops atlanticus**

**Megalops atlanticus** (cont'd)  

**ELOPIDAE**

C  
11.7 mm SL

D  
18.0 mm SL

E  
17.1 mm SL

F  
22.8 mm SL

G  
16.9 mm SL

H  
13.8 mm SL

I  
16.0 mm SL

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**Elops saurus**

J  
5.3 mm SL

K  
11.2 mm SL

L  
22.4 mm SL

M  
43.3 mm SL

N  
21.5 mm SL

O  
24.7 mm SL

F (eastern Atlantic specimen)
ALBULIDAE

Albula vulpes (Linnaeus)

Spawning: Location unknown; season prolonged.

Eggs — Undescribed.

Larvae — Leptocephalus-like, with forked caudal fin and small head.
— Gut very long (subequal to SL).
— Period of larval growth, followed by shrinkage and thickening of body, and then resumption of growth up to juvenile stage.
— Teeth obvious in smaller larvae (lost at metamorphosis).
— Flexion occurs before 17 mm SL.
— Fin formation: dorsal and anal fins begin to form at about 30 mm and counts are complete at about 64 mm; caudal rays complete at about 43 mm; pelvic very late forming at about 65 mm.
— Fin migration: dorsal moves from myomere 55 to 29; anal moves from myomere 66 to 57.
— Note relative positions of dorsal and anal fins.
— Maximum size before metamorphosis about 64 mm.
— Pigmentation: pigment restricted to dorsal edge of gut up to metamorphosis; after metamorphosis, spots are added to caudal base, some caudal rays, and a patch over the eye.

Best Characters for Separating Fork-tailed Leptocephalus-like Larvae

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Character</th>
<th>Megalops atlanticus</th>
<th>Elops saurus</th>
<th>Albula vulpes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Myomeres</td>
<td>54–57</td>
<td>72–82</td>
<td>65–72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maximum larval size</td>
<td>28 mm</td>
<td>43 mm</td>
<td>64 mm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dorsal and anal fins</td>
<td>Opposite</td>
<td>Barely overlap</td>
<td>Separate</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Albula vulpes

Air bladder inconspicuous at about myomere 30.

Head becomes less leptocephalus-like

Dorsal and anal fins move anteriorly

Head becomes proportionately larger