

Fish in the Naruto Strait: Japanese Spanish Mackerel

Japanese Spanish mackerel (*Scomberomorus niphonius*)

In Naruto, the appearance of the Japanese Spanish mackerel, called *sawara* in Japanese, heralds the arrival of spring. Every year when winter ends, these long, thin fish swim northward from the Kii Channel, passing through the Naruto Strait before spawning in the Harima-Nada region of the Seto Inland Sea. As summer turns to fall, they travel through the strait once again, migrating back to the Pacific Ocean in order to escape the cold.

The Japanese Spanish mackerel may reach 115 centimeters in total length; specimens weighing in at 12 kilograms have been recorded. The female of the species grows larger than the male. It has a large mouth and a jaw lined with sharp teeth; several rows of blackish spots extend the full length of the fish's body, which is blue-gray on the dorsal area and silvery white on the underside. Naruto's fishermen catch the Japanese Spanish mackerel by angling and gill nets when it passes through in spring, and it is commonly grilled or eaten raw as sashimi.