



## **FOUR-SPINED STICKLEBACK**

*Apeltes quadracus*

### **Description:**

- ◆ 3 to 4 free spines before the dorsal fin; 1 spine attached to soft dorsal fin
- ◆ olive brown to black with dark mottling
- ◆ silver flattened bellies
- ◆ scale-less fish
- ◆ pelvic fins directly below pectoral fins
- ◆ breeding males have red pelvic fins

### **Size:**

- ◆ up to 2.5 inches

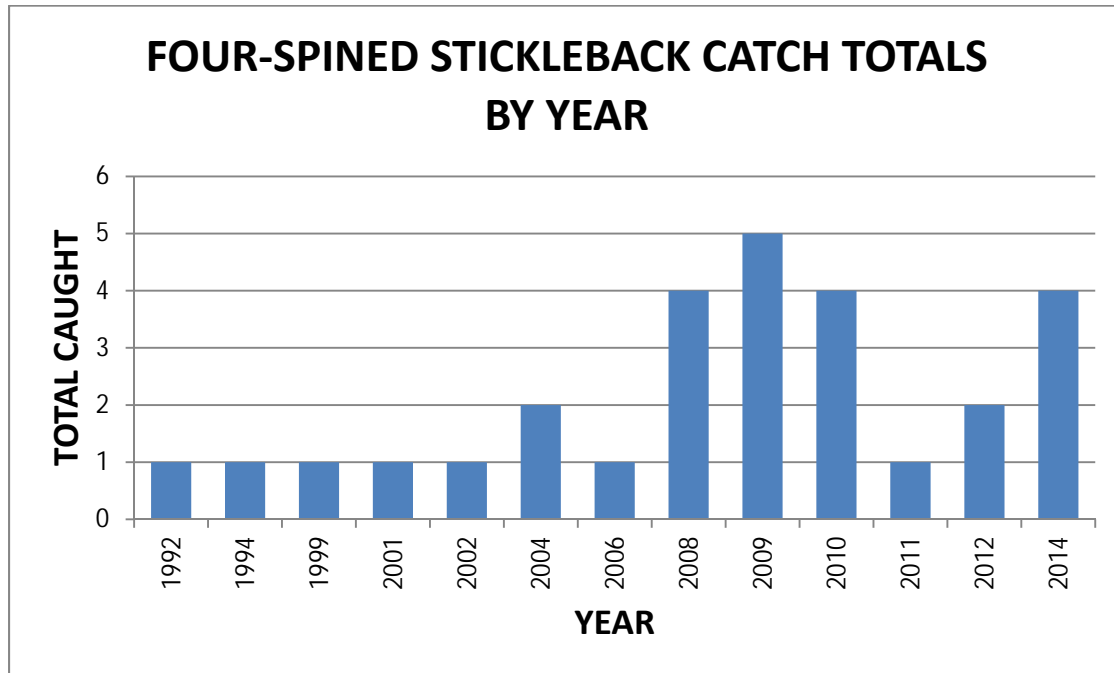
### **Range:**

- ◆ Gulf of St. Lawrence to North Carolina

### **Facts:**

- ◆ prefer salt marshes, tidal creeks, eelgrass beds and near shore areas
- ◆ rarely ventures into fresh water
- ◆ spawns late April through late July, depending on the area
- ◆ male builds cone shaped nest with collected weeds, grasses and leaves, which are cemented together with mucous threads from male's mouth
- ◆ attracted female lays eggs in the nest
- ◆ male fertilizes and guards the eggs during the 6 day incubation period

- ◇ males protect fry until they can survive on their own
- ◇ majority of males die after spawning season, surviving males return to sea with females
- ◇ feed on copepods and small planktonic crustaceans



\*four-spined sticklebacks were only caught during the years shown

NJ Department of Environmental Protection  
Division of Fish and Wildlife  
Bureau of Marine Fisheries  
[www.NJFishandWildlife.com](http://www.NJFishandWildlife.com)