

Researchers capture first-ever footage of larval bonefish: Endangered game fish in Florida likely spawned in Cuba

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What appears to be a ghostly creature moving through space is actually the first-ever video footage of a larval bonefish. The video can be viewed below.

The video was captured by Louis Penrod, one of a team of Florida Tech students and researchers led by Dr. Jon Shenker on a trip to the Isle of Youth, Cuba, this summer.

This [video](#) shows the leptocephalus ("slender head") larval stage of a 50- or 60-days-old bonefish drifting in the ocean. The researchers will determine the exact age of this and other "leptos" caught in Cuba by reading the daily growth rings on their otoliths, or ear bones – a painstaking process that will take months to complete.

The big question Shenker and his team are working to answer is where bonefish in the Florida Keys come from. Shenker says these elusive and endangered game fish may well be spawned in Cuba, or even further up in the prevailing ocean currents in the Caribbean, before ending up in Florida. The fish's migration path highlights the need for conservation of the fish not only in Florida waters but the entire region where they spawn and grow into adulthood, Shenker says.

Shenker recently told *Fly Life* magazine, "This data will be a great help in the analysis of genetics and connectivity, particularly in understanding

the role of Cuban bonefish populations in the Florida Keys fishery." Shenker works closely with the Bonefish and Tarpon Trust, a non-profit game fish conservation organization that seeks to understand and address the causes of game fish decline in certain areas.

Provided by Florida Institute of Technology

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