



Summer Flounder

Paralichthys dentatus

Appearance

- Summer flounder have flat bodies.
- They are white below and some shade of brown, gray, or drab above.
- They're nicknamed "chameleons of the sea" because they're able to change their coloring to blend in with the texture and color of the bottom where they live.
- They also have spots on their back and can be distinguished because at least five of these dark

spots are arranged in an "X" pattern.

- Summer flounder is a left-eyed flatfish (both eyes are on the left side of its body when viewed from above with the dorsal fin facing up). When larvae develop into juveniles, their right eye moves across the top of the head to the left side.

Biology

- Summer flounder grow fast and have a relatively short life, about 12 to 14 years.
- Males grow to more than 2 feet in length and females grow up to 3 feet.
- They are able to reproduce when they reach age 2 or 3.
- Summer flounder spawn in the fall and early winter when they migrate offshore.
- They spawn several times throughout the spawning season.
- Spawning peaks in October and November when water temperatures change, and autumn plankton is most productive. The combination of these elements improves the chance of survival for larval summer flounder.
- Depending on their size, females have between 460,000 and more than 4 million eggs. They release the eggs into the water column and the eggs hatch in waters of the continental shelf.
- Newly hatched larvae move with the currents toward coastal areas, where they develop into juveniles.
- Summer flounder eat a mixed diet of fish and invertebrates throughout their life.
- Larval and post-larval flounder feed on zooplankton (tiny floating animals) and small crustaceans.
- Juveniles eat crustaceans and fish.
- Adults are opportunistic feeders, eating whatever food is convenient at the time, and feed mostly on fish and crustaceans.
- Summer flounder lay on the ocean floor concealed, partly by sand and partly by their coloration, and wait for their prey to swim by. When suitable prey appears, flounder ambush them.
- Larval and juvenile summer flounder are preyed upon until they grow large enough to fend for themselves. Predators include spiny dogfish, monkfish, cod, hakes, sea raven, longhorn sculpin, and fourspot flounder. Large sharks, rays, and monkfish prey on adult summer flounder.

Where They Live

- Summer flounder are found in the Atlantic Ocean from Nova Scotia to the east coast of Florida.
- In U.S. waters, summer flounder are most common in the mid-Atlantic region from Cape Cod, Massachusetts, to Cape Fear, North Carolina.