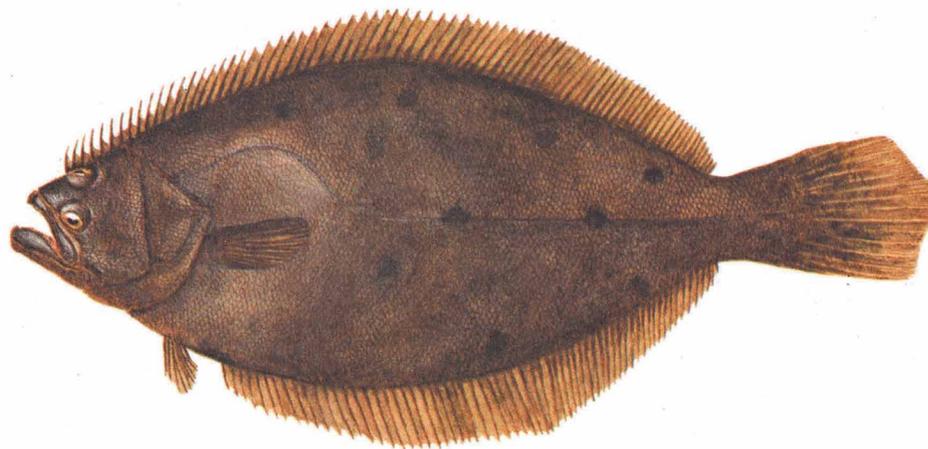


Summer Flounder



Paralichthys dentatus

(Drawing reprinted with permission from *Saltwater Fishes of America* by A.J. McClane (ed.).
Illustrated by Frances Watkins & Richard E. Younger, 1974)

The Facts

Summer flounder is the largest flatfish in the area, which makes it very popular in New York State's marine district. Flatfishes have both eyes on one side of their head, and are bottom-dwelling. Summer flounders are "left-handed"; this means that when you hold the fish with its dorsal fin up and the tail is pointing towards you, the pigmented side will be on the left. The lateral line resembles a question mark, because of the deep arch over the pectoral fin. They can change color to match the substrate and they are aggressive predators that feed by sight. They partially bury themselves in sand, and wait to feed on unsuspecting prey that ventures too close. They can also be active hunters, attacking schools of eels and spearings. Larval fish are symmetrical, resembling any other fish. However, they soon undergo a remarkable transformation where the right eye moves to the other side of the body. This fish is referred to locally as "fluke", and "doormat" is the name reserved for fish over 8 lb.

Migration

They occur from the Gulf of Maine to Florida on the eastern coast. They move offshore during the winter and early spring, and return to inshore waters during the summer months when they are caught by recreational fishers. Summer flounder first appear in April and catches reach a peak by August; they occupy grass beds and wharf pilings where there is greater protection. During the summer months, small and medium-sized adults move into the sandy and muddy bottoms of bays and harbors. Larger fish tend to favor deeper water (50 to 60 ft). Both males and females mature between ages 2 to 3.



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Summer Flounder

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- › Bluefish
- › Porgy
- › Striped Bass
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- › Weakfish
- › Winter Flounder

Fishing Season

Fish start to appear during the last week of April when fishing is restricted to a few areas; the fishing season really starts to pick up in May with peak action in August. Availability continues until October (or as late as November) when the waters begin to cool. The best fishing for summer flounder is in the inshore ocean and bays via open and charter boats, as well as by drift fishing from a rented boat. Pier fishing is less productive but offers good sport and challenges the angler's skill. Conservation measures are being implemented for this fish and you should contact New York State Department of Environmental Conservation or call 1-800-REGS-DEC for update information on fishing regulations.

Angling

These fish can be caught on the edges of deep water where the currents are in motion, and in inlets and rips over shoals. They can be found in shallow water (5-15 ft) early in the season, but they move to the edges of the deep (25-40 ft) by August. The key to successful fluke fishing is simplicity — use light to medium tackle and rigging. Generally, a 5 1/2 to 7 ft rod and matching conventional or spinning reel filled with 15 to 20 lb test line is sufficient. Hooks are usually tied to the main line about 10 inches from the sinker. The preferred bait for fluke includes live killies, fresh (or frozen) spearings, and strips of squid. Most anglers prefer to use a combination of bait (e.g., killies and squid-strip) on the same hook. Other productive lures include small bucktails, plastic worms and plastic shrimps (these are often combined with squid-strip). Anglers should use a net or scoop to land fish since fluke have an uncanny ability to slip off the hook when lifted aboard a boat unaided.

Contact your local bait & tackle store for advice about fishing with artificial lures.

Visit our website at www.seagrant.sunysb.edu/Fishery/ResourceCenter.htm for additional information.



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This information sheet was prepared by the Fishery Resource Center to address the needs in angling and charter boat communities.