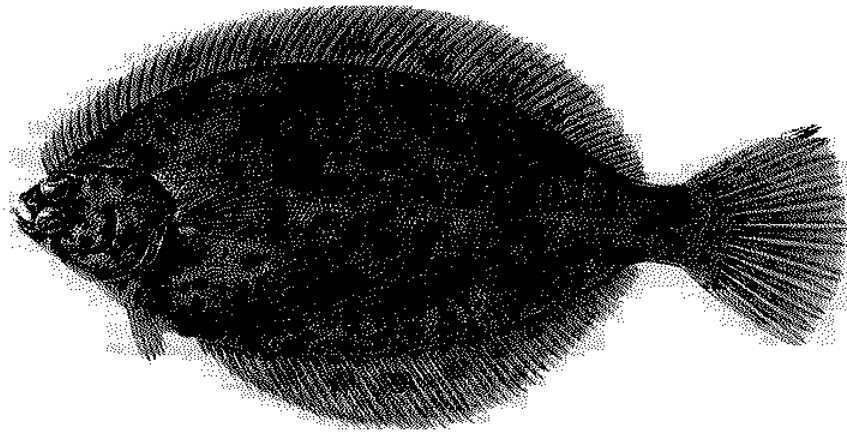


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# Winter Flounder



*(Drawing courtesy National Museum of Natural History, Smithsonian Institute.  
Illustrated by Charles B. Hudson, 1896)*

# Fish Profile

## The Facts

This is another popular flatfish in the recreational fishery, and its abundance makes it an excellent species to jump-start the fishing season (or the career of a beginner). These fish have both eyes on one side of the head and are bottom dwelling; winter flounder is "right-handed" (i.e., both eyes are positioned on the right side of the body). Although coloration will vary depending on the substrate, they are easily distinguished from their cousin by the nearly straight lateral line and toothless mouth. They change color to match the substrate, and they will often bury themselves when they are on soft substrate and wait to prey on invertebrates for food. Local names used include "blueback", "blackback" and "flounder"; "sea flounder" is the name used to distinguish larger fish from the smaller bay fish.

## Migration

This species occurs coastally from Labrador to Georgia and they are usually associated with shallow bays or estuaries possessing a sandy or silty bottom. They are not generally found below depths of 180 ft and they form small local groups that display limited seasonal migration. There is a distinct movement from deeper water towards shallow water during the fall and an offshore movement in the spring. Both males and females reach sexual maturity by age 3 and they are believed to live up to about 12 years.



### New York Sea Grant Extension Program

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# Winter Flounder

## Related Fish Profile Sheets

- Bluefish
- Scup
- Striped Bass
- Summer Flounder
- Tautog
- Weakfish
- Winter Flounder

## Fishing Season

Unlike its popular cousin, flounders have two fishing seasons, a spring and a winter run. The spring run is usually the better of the two, and it lasts from February through May; fish is active again in late September with good catches between October and December. 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 prefer inshore waters especially bays, harbors, estuaries, river mouths and tidal creeks, but anglers must become familiar with the locality and develop an understanding of the tidal patterns. The best places to fish for flounder are in areas where the tide changes, as well as in running currents. Party boat fishing is also a very good choice for catching these fish. Flounders put up a decent fight when hooked, and they fight harder than a fluke of comparable size. It is rare when they manage to either break a line or toss a hook, and light tackle rig provides the most enjoyment for catching this species. Many anglers use 10-15 lbs test monofilament line on a medium action-spinning rod, although heavier equipment is necessary in areas with strong current, with a sinker to keep the bait on the bottom. Different types of bait are used during the season, with blue mussels being deployed early in season and bloodworms and sandworms being the preferred bait as fish become more active.

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

Visit our website at [www.seagrantsunysb.edu/Fishery/ResourceCenter.htm](http://www.seagrantsunysb.edu/Fishery/ResourceCenter.htm) for additional information.



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