

## **GEHR Watershed Minute #29**

### **Flounder: (227 words)**

Flounder or Fluke are flatfish that live in ocean waters along the east coast of the United States and Canada, and the Pacific Ocean. The name "flounder" refers to several distinct species, including summer flounder and winter flounder in South Jersey.

While flounders have both eyes situated on one side of the head, they are not born this way. At first they look like typical baby fish, but eventually one eye migrates to the other side of the body so that both eyes are situated on the upward-facing side of its body. This allows the flounder to lie on one side on the ocean floor with both eyes looking up.

Flounder sizes typically vary from five to fifteen inches, though they sometimes grow as large as three feet in length. Flounder are ambush predators and their feeding ground is the soft mud of the sea bottom, near bridge piles, docks, and other bottom structures. Their diet consists mainly of fish spawn, crabs, lobsters, crayfish, shrimp, krill, barnacles, marine worms and small fish.

Flounder are highly prized sport fish well known for their mild flavor and boneless filets. Due to the historic overfishing of flounder, state and federal agencies must regulate minimum keeper sizes, maximum number of keepers, and seasonal fishing limits to try to maintain a sustainable population level of flounder in the ocean and bays.