



# 10 most common recreationally caught flatfish off Oregon

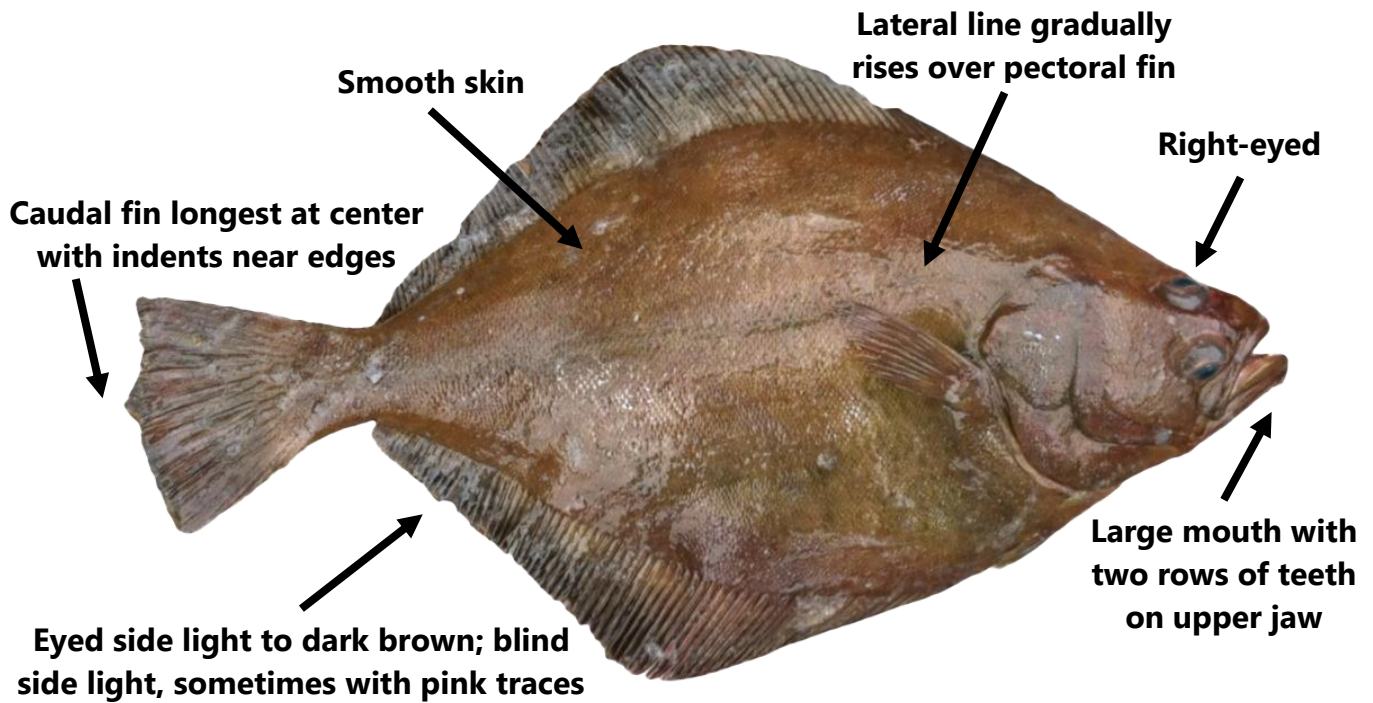
There are a variety of flatfish species that can be found off the Oregon coast. Flounders, soles, sanddabs, California halibut, and turbot are all included in the flatfish category and provide anglers ample opportunity to fish for smaller flatfish with herring jigs close to shore or larger flatfish that can be found in deeper waters and occasionally in bays and estuaries.

We want to share your flatfish photos! [Submit your flatfish catch photos](#) and you may see them featured on the website.

Pacific halibut, skates, and rays are NOT included within the flatfish category. Pacific halibut have their own regulations and bag limits (see [Pacific halibut sport regulations](#)) while skates and rays fall into the [general marine species list](#), that includes rockfish, cabezon, and others marine species.

For more information on the flatfish fishery regulations, check out the [sport bottomfish regulations](#).

## PETRALE SOLE



## Features

Petrals have flattened, oval bodies with both eyes on the right side of the body (right-eyed). They are light to dark brown on the eye side and light on the blind side, sometimes with pink traces. They have large mouths with two rows of small, arrow-shaped teeth on their upper jaw and one row of teeth on the lower jaw. Here is a [link](#) with more identification specifics.

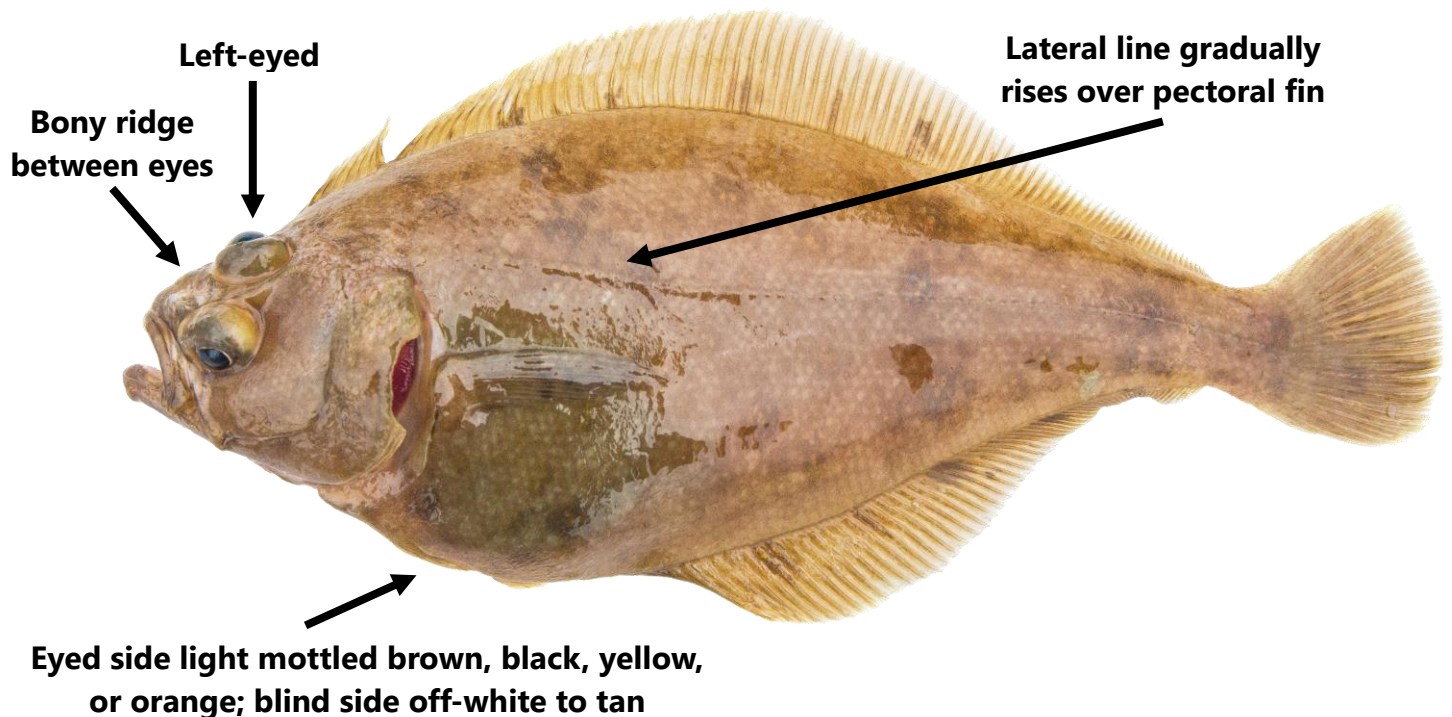
## Habitat

They are commonly found on mud or sand bottoms from 10 to 300 fathoms deep but are most abundant in 55 to 85 fathoms. These fish are often caught in the same area as Pacific halibut and can be found from Alaska to Baja California.

## Technique and Taste

Petrals and other flatfish are best targeted by fishing with smaller hooks (less than 2/0) tipped with bait such as clam necks, sand shrimp, or chunks of herring or anchovy on a sandy or gravel bottom. They have a sweet, delicate, and nutty flavor and are an excellent source of low-fat protein and calcium.

## PACIFIC SANDDAB



## Features

Pacific sanddabs have both eyes on the left side of the body (left-eyed). The eyed side is a dull light brown, mottled with brown or black, and sometimes yellow or orange. The blind-side is off-

white to tan. They have an oval shaped body with large scales and a slightly rounded caudal fin. They can grow to be 16-inches long and up to 2 pounds, though most weigh less than 1/3 pound. Here is a [link](#) with more identification specifics.

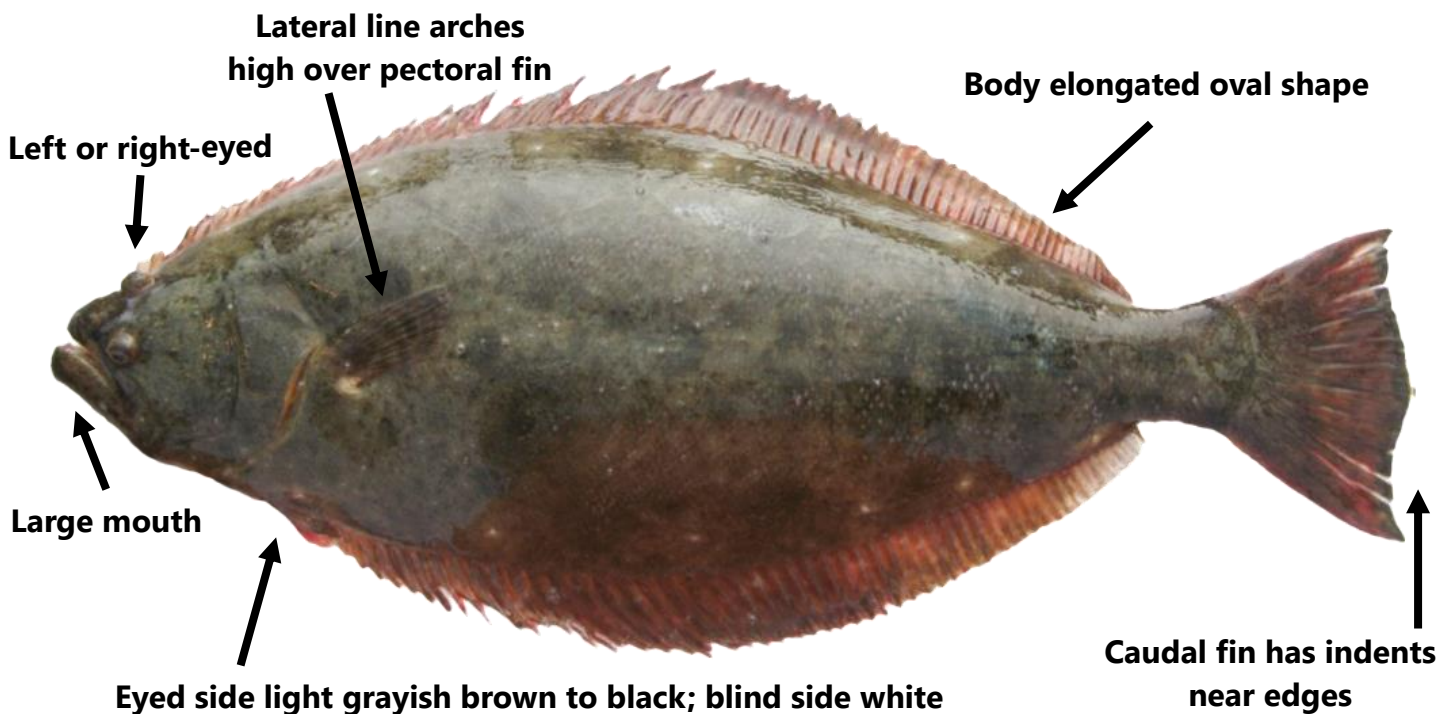
## Habitat

As you probably guessed, sanddabs like to hang out on sandy bottoms. They are most abundant at depths of 20 to 50 fathoms and are common in shallow coastal waters from British Columbia to California.

## Technique and Taste

Sanddabs are notorious for going after just about anything that crosses their paths. Make sure your bait is smelly since they hunt by scent. Dead baitfish or plastic grubs near the bottom work great when sanddab fishing. These fish are caught in the same area as Pacific halibut and therefore commonly used as bait. Anglers will often prefer to use a herring jig setup when targeting sanddabs. This gear type allows anglers to use more hooks on a single line, though the hook size must not exceed a 3/8-inch hook gap. Excellent food fish, sanddabs taste mild and sweet and are low in fat with a savory skin.

## CALIFORNIA HALIBUT



## Features

California halibut are usually grayish brown to black on the eyed side and white underneath. They can alter their coloration to blend in with the ocean floor so variations in blotchiness are

common. Compared to the diamond shaped and right-eyed Pacific halibut, California halibut can be either left-eyed or right-eyed (60 percent are left-eyed) and have an elongated oval shaped body. California halibut also have larger mouths with the lower jaw extending to the rear (or beyond) of the lower eye. They can reach up to 5 feet in length and weigh 72 pounds.

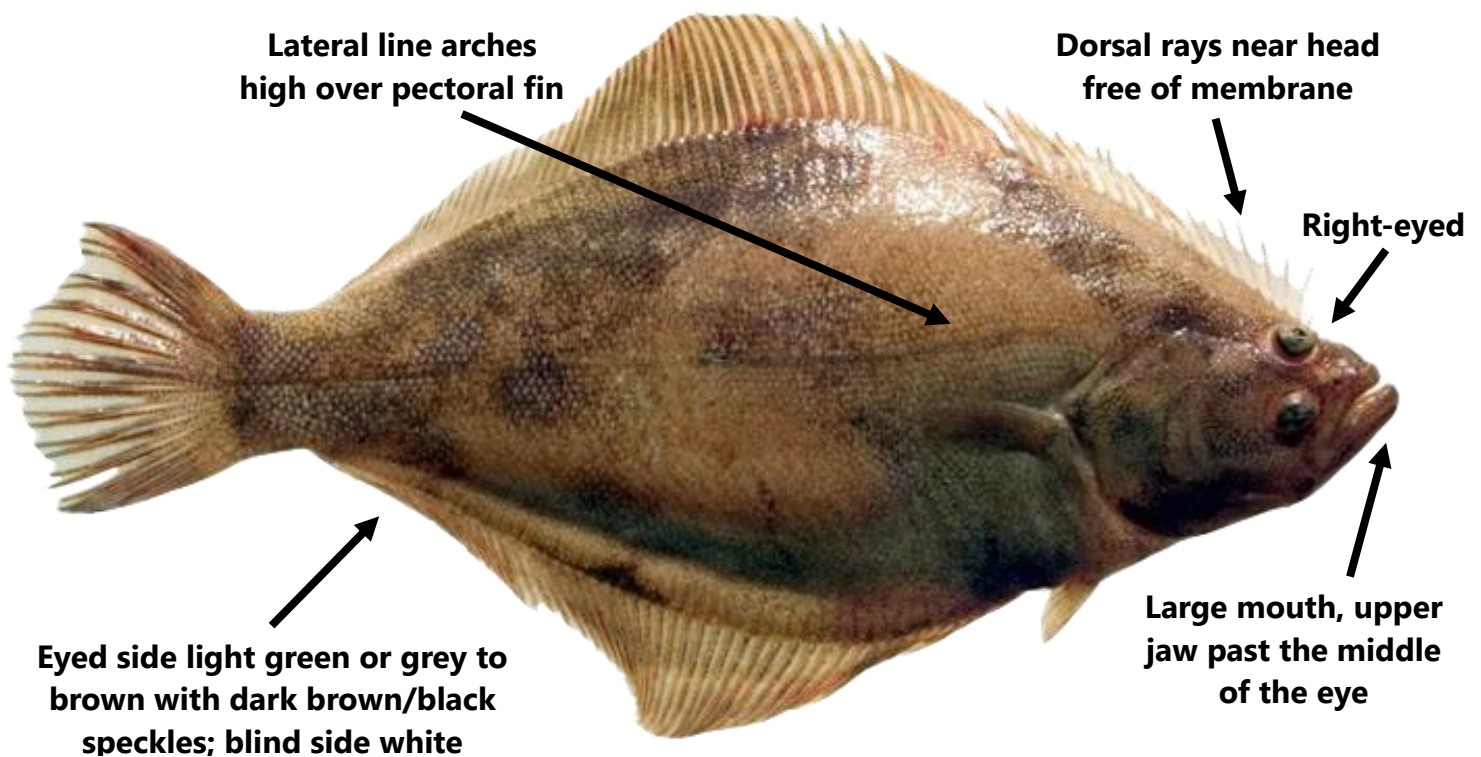
## Habitat

California halibut spend most of their time buried in sandy bottoms of the ocean floor but will gladly chase after schools of anchovy. In Oregon, California halibut are rarely seen north of Coos Bay. They are found between the shore and 100 fathoms, but most common at depths less than 30 fathoms.

## Technique and Taste

Using live baitfish and squid near the bottom is the way to go. A technique called bounce-balling is another way to get this fish's attention. Try using 25 to 30 pound class conventional gear, rods with a light tip, and a 40 to 50 pound leader with a 3/0 hook. California halibut have a mild, sweet flavor with large, white flakes and a firm, tender texture thanks to their rich oil content.

## SAND SOLE



## Features

The sand sole has both eyes on the right side with an oval body shape. The eyed side is light green or grey to brown with dark brown to black speckles. The blind side is white (as is common with flatfish). Both the dorsal and anal fins often have dull yellow on the edges and the caudal fin is rounded. A distinguishing characteristic of this species is that the dorsal fin rays closest to the head are elongate and mostly free of membrane. Here is a [link](#) with more identification specifics.

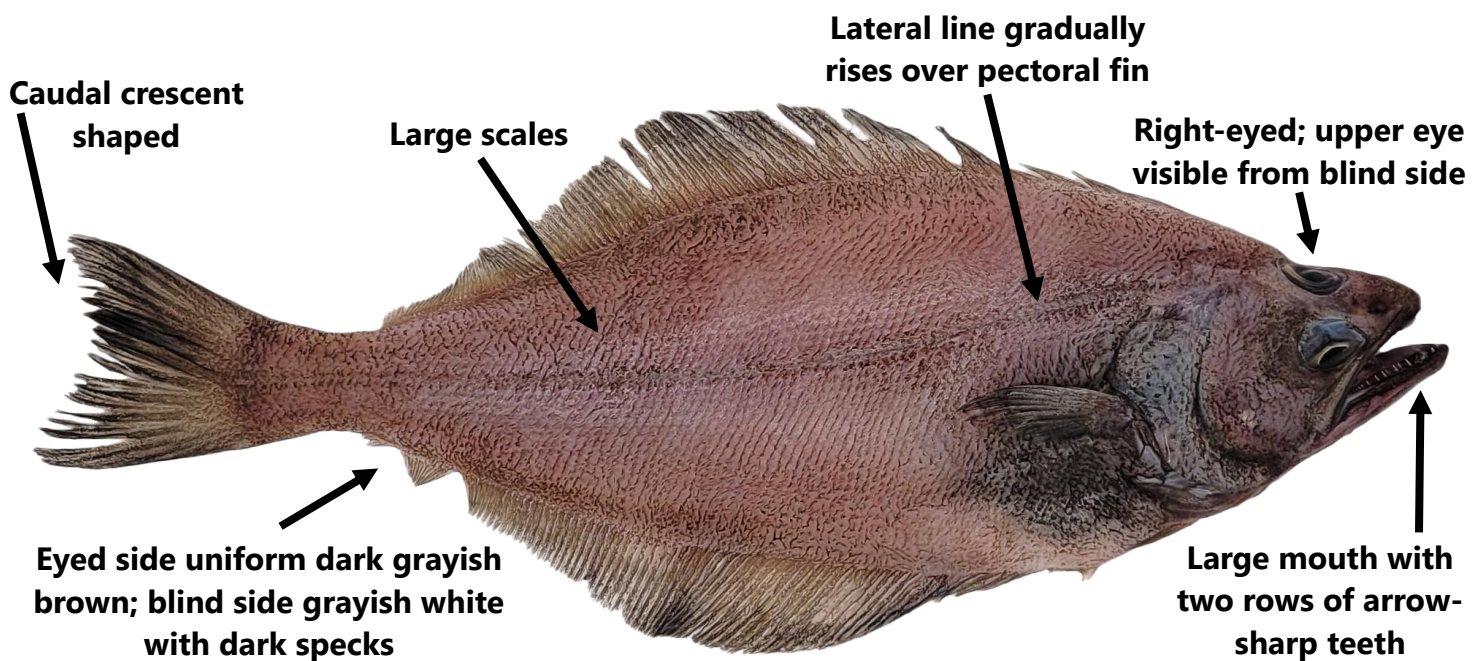
## Habitat

Adult sand soles are commonly found on mud or sand bottoms between 5 and 100 fathoms deep, in waters from the Aleutian Islands to Southern California. They are a shallow water species usually found in areas that are less than 40 fathoms and are often caught from shore.

## Technique and Taste

Soles and other flatfish are best targeted by fishing with smaller hooks (less than 2/0) tipped with bait such as clam necks, sand shrimp, or chunks of herring or anchovy on a sandy or gravel bottom. Sand sole has a mild, delicate taste and flakey texture.

## ARROWTOOTH FLOUNDER



## Features

The arrowtooth flounder is a right-eyed flatfish with an elongated diamond shaped body. The eyed side is a uniform dark grayish brown, and the blind side is grayish white with dark specks. Its mouth is very large with two rows of arrow-sharp teeth on the upper jaw. The jaw extends to or beyond the

rear of the lower eye. A male can grow up to 2 feet while a female can reach 2 ¾ feet with a maximum weight of 17 pounds. Here is a [link](#) with more identification specifics.

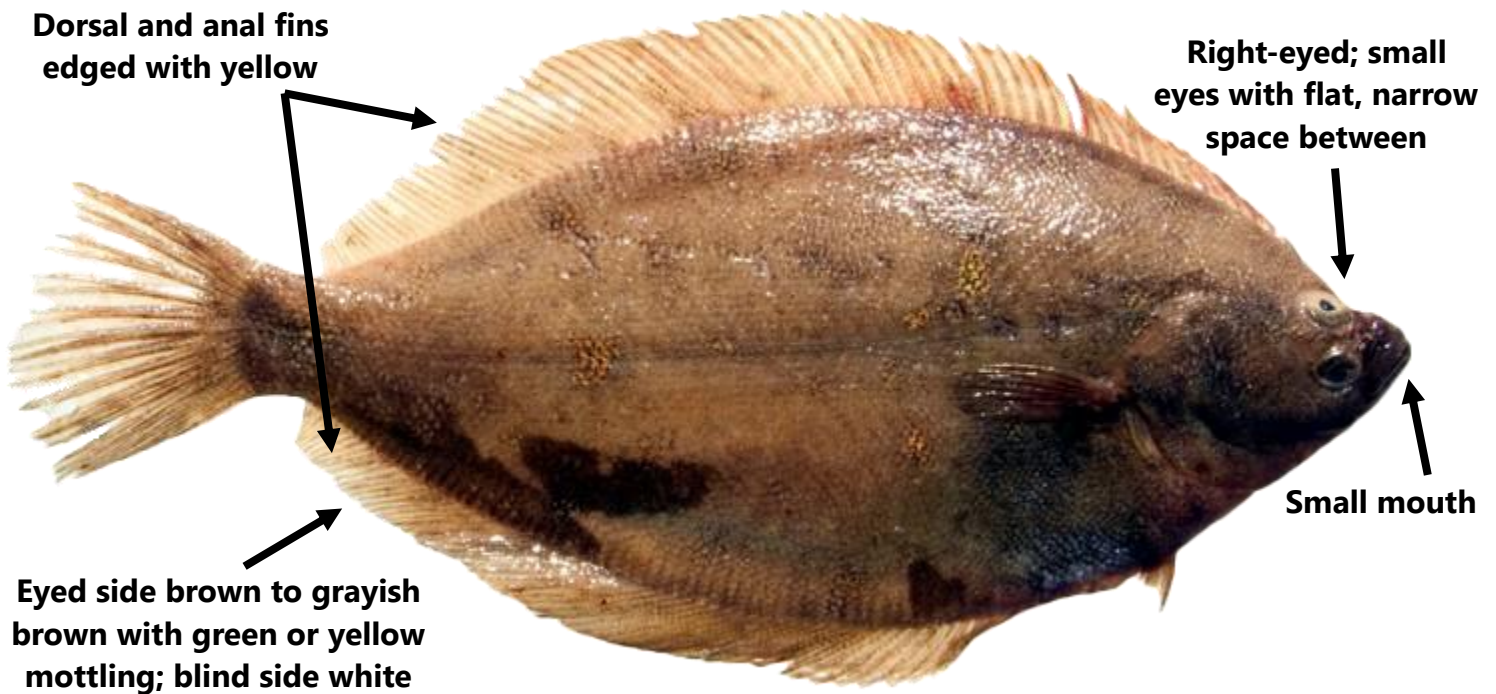
## Habitat

Arrowtooth flounder are found on soft bottoms between 10 to 400 fathoms but are most often encountered between 150 to 250 fathoms. They commonly inhabit the offshore areas of Alaska through Oregon but can be found as far south as Southern California.

## Technique and Taste

Arrowtooth prefer to eat shrimp and krill, making them the ideal bait. If targeting larger arrowtooth, use 6/0 or 7/0 hooks. Work the bait in slow twitching movements while keeping it close to the bottom. Arrowtooth are tasty but tend to turn pulpy when cooked. Arrowtooth oatmeal anyone?

## BUTTER SOLE



## Features

Butter soles are right-eyed flatfish with small eyes and a small mouth. The eyed side is brown to grayish brown with green or yellow mottling, and the fins have bright yellow edges. The blind side is white and clearly shows the lateral line with a low arch over the pectoral fin. Butter sole have an oval shaped body that can grow up to 22 inches but average around 8 inches. Here is a [link](#) with more identification specifics.

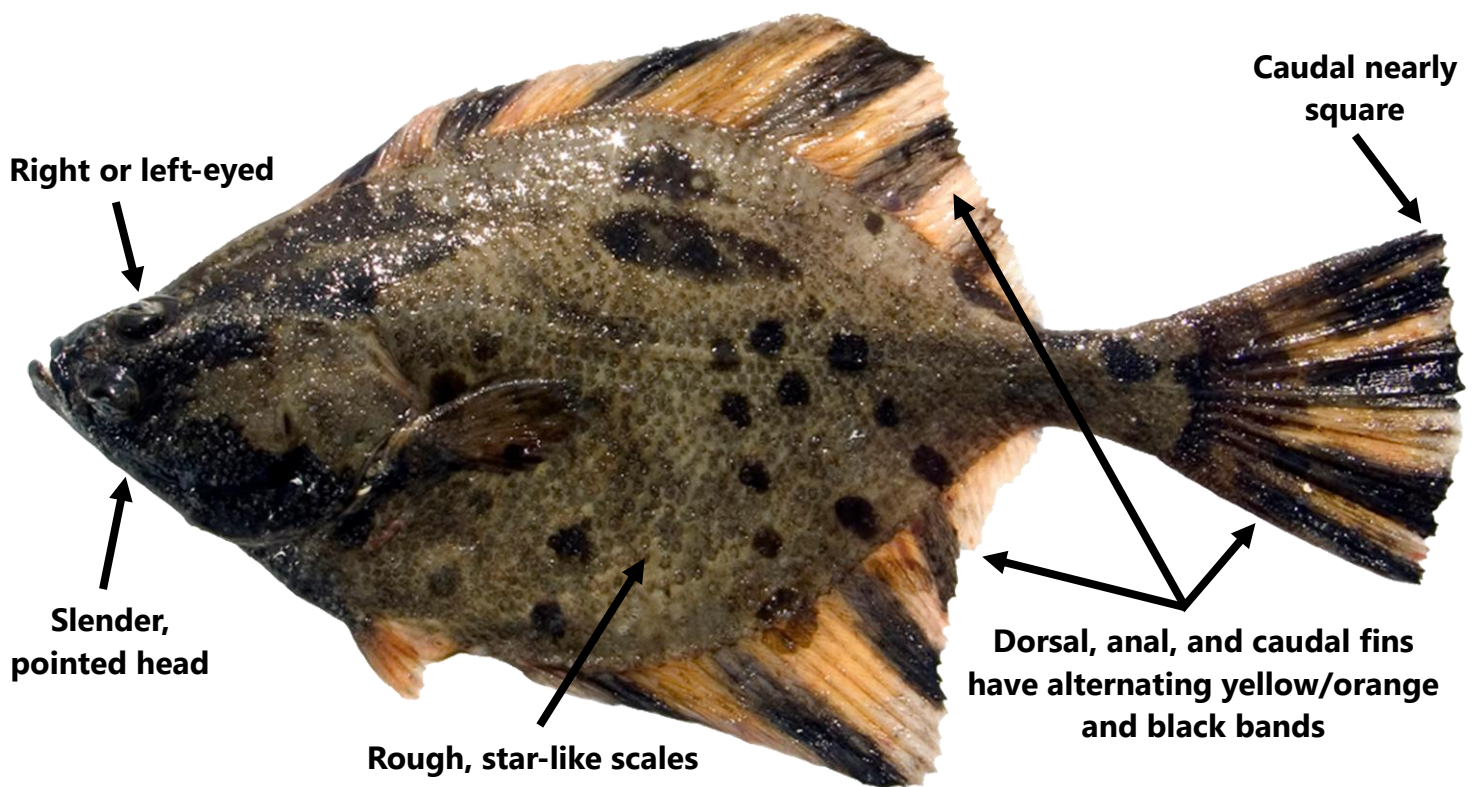
## Habitat

Butter soles are typically found on muddy or silty bottoms anywhere from 0 to 232 fathoms but are most common in depths less than 50 fathoms. They range from the Southern Bering Sea to Southern California.

## Technique and Taste

Butter sole can be found in shallow waters, so consider fly fishing from a beach. For this method use light tackles and ¼ ounce jigs. If fishing from a boat, the best method is typically to drift fish since they aren't too quick to bite on lures. If you're wanting to test out a new method, check out the Sabiki rig which is like herring jigs and works well for flatfish in shallow waters. Butter sole may be small, but they have an excellent flavor.

## STARRY FLOUNDER



## Features

Starry flounders belong to the right-eyed flounder family, but they can also be left-eyed. They are dark on the eyed side with very rough star-like scales (hence the name) and alternating yellow/orange and black bands in the dorsal, anal, and tail fins. Here is a [link](#) with more identification specifics.

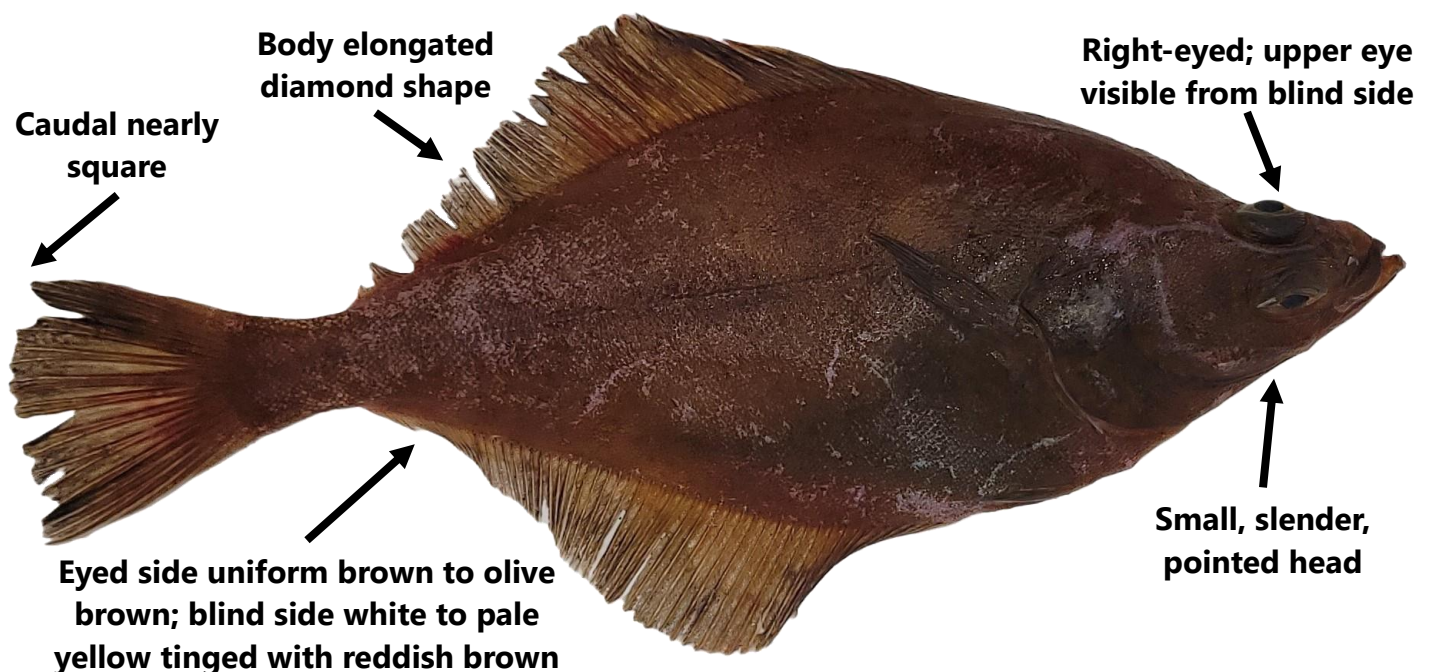
## Habitat

Starry flounders tend to stay near the bottom, looking for food above. They are found in areas on mud, sand, or gravel from 0 to 205 fathoms but are most often nearshore and shallower than 80 fathoms. They can even be found in the bay and up rivers from time to time. They range from the Sea of Japan to the Bearing Sea, then down along our coastline as far south as Los Angeles, California.

## Technique and Taste

These flatfish can be caught while drifting a small jig or bait (such as shrimp, marine worm, or mussel) on a #2 hook with a 2 ounce sinker rigged on a 10 to 15 pound line over a sandy or muddy bottom. Processing the fish can be difficult not only due to their rough skin but also the need to deep skin through a dark fat layer that is common underneath. It has a slightly firm and flakey texture with a mild taste but can have a shellfish flavor.

## ENGLISH SOLE



## Features

English soles are right-eyed flatfish with a uniform brown to olive brown eyed side. The blind side is white to pale yellow and tinged with reddish brown. They have a small, pointed head with a small, asymmetric mouth. The upper eye is visible from the blind side. The scales on the front half are smooth, whereas the back half scales are rough. Here is a [link](#) with more identification specifics.



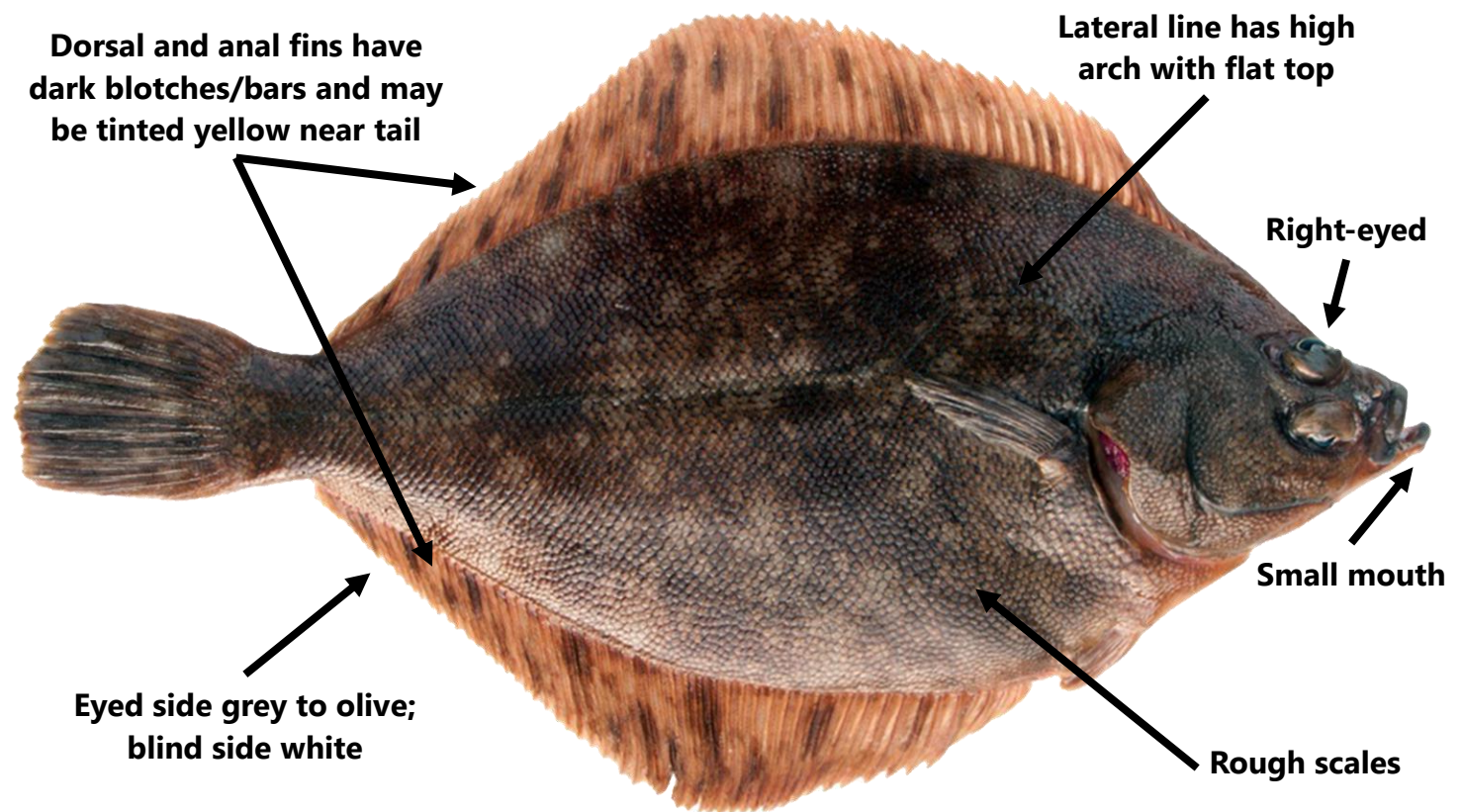
## Habitat

English sole can be found on sandy bottoms between 0 to 300 fathoms. Good quality sole can typically be found between 15 to 80 fathoms. Young sole can be found in intertidal zones. They range from the Bering Sea to Baja California.

## Technique and Taste

To catch an English sole, you'll need to use a fixed weight to anchor your bait to the sandy bottom. Worms, shrimp, prawns, or pieces of fish work great as bait. If fishing from a beach or pier, lightweight tackle works well; if fishing from a boat, heavier gear is recommended. Jigs are the best type of lure for English sole, but most anglers recommend a black lugworm with a size 4 to 6 hook. English sole has a mild taste with a slight shellfish flavor and are moist and delicate with fine flakes.

## ROCK SOLE



## Features

Rock soles are right-eyed flatfish. The eyed side is grey to olive in color with rough scales. The underside is white with glossy highlights corresponding to muscle bands. The dorsal and anal fins have dark blotches/bars, and the fins may be tinted yellow near the tail. The lateral line has a high arch with a flat top. They can grow up to 2 feet long and weigh 6 pounds but normally weigh 1 to 1 ½ pounds. Here is a [link](#) with more identification specifics.

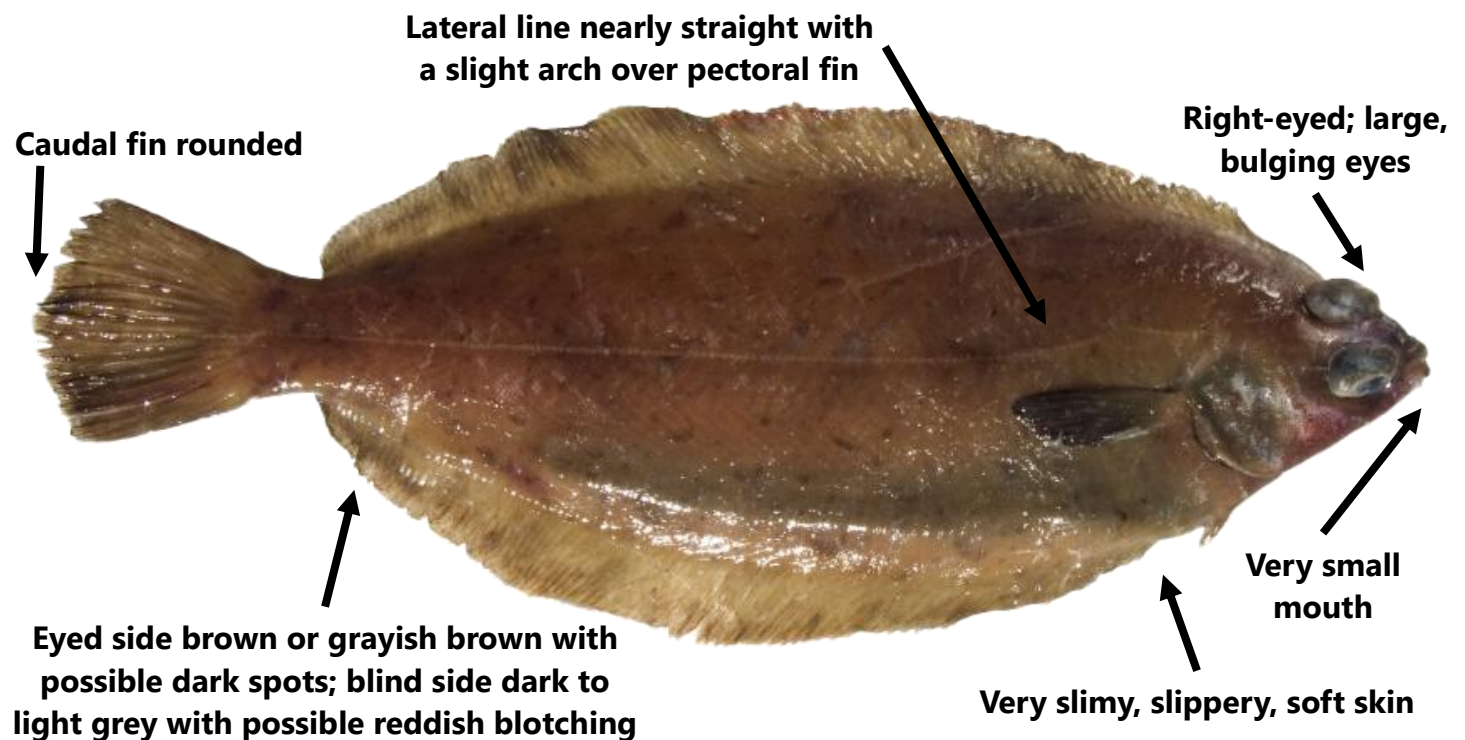
## Habitat

Rock soles are typically found on rocky, pebbly, or sandy bottoms anywhere from 0 to 200 fathoms but are most common at 20 to 40 fathoms. They range from the Bering Strait south to Southern California.

## Technique and Taste

Soles and other flatfish are best targeted by fishing with smaller hooks (less than 2/0) tipped with bait such as prawns, sand shrimp, or chunks of herring or anchovy on a sandy or rocky bottom. They are often caught from shore because they are more abundant in areas that are less than 40 fathoms. The fish move to deeper depths as they grow larger but stay close to the continental shelf. They have a mild-sweet flavor with small, tender flakes.

## DOVER SOLE



## Features

The Dover sole is a right-eyed flatfish with a slender, elongated body. It has a very small mouth with its jaw ending below the front of the lower eye. The eyed side is brown or grayish brown and may have dark spots present. The blind side is dark to light grey with possible reddish blotching. The fins are dusky with dark edges, and the caudal fin is rounded. The lateral line is nearly straight with a slight arch over the pectoral fin. They can grow up to 30 inches and weigh 10 pounds, however the average size is 15 inches and 1 pound. Here is a [link](#) with more identification specifics.

## Habitat

Dover soles are commonly found on mud or sand bottoms from 5 to 750 fathoms. High-quality Dover is caught between 40 and 300 fathoms. They can be found in the Pacific Ocean from the Bering Sea and eastern Aleutian Islands to Baja California.

## Technique and Taste

Dover soles have very small mouths so small hooks and small baits are important when targeting these flatfish. Hooks of size 2 to 6 work best while using a rod with 2 to 3 hooks. Anglers should aim to have baits that will remain on the seabed and avoid long snoods that may lift from the bottom. A multiple drilled bullet around 3 inches from the hook should help to keep the lure nailed to the seabed. Sliced anchovies or worms work as effective bait. Dover soles are nocturnal feeders but can still be caught during the day. Thin fillets have a sweet but mild flavor and a dense, firm texture, perfect for sole meunière or fried fish tacos.