

## *Syacium micrurum* (Channel Flounder)

Family: Paralichthyidae (Large-tooth Flounders)

Order: Pleuronectiformes (Flatfish)

Class: Actinopterygii (Ray-finned Fish)



**Fig. 2.** Channel flounder, *Syacium micrurum*.

[<http://www.fishbase.se/>, downloaded 20 October 2016]

**TRAITS.** *Syacium micrurum*, commonly known as the channel flounder, is a marine fish. Its body is oval-shaped and elongated and can attain lengths typically around 20cm, to a maximum of about 30cm (IUCN, 2016). Their anal fin has 64-74 rays whereas their dorsal fin has 82-92 rays. This species is left-eyed, meaning that both eyes are found on the left side of the fish (Fig. 1). The channel flounder's ocular side (side with both eyes) has multiple colours with various shades ranging from tan to brown. This makes it easy for them to camouflage on the ocean bottom. The blind side is white with smooth scales as compared to their ocular side where the scales are rough. This species is sexually dimorphic, with females attaining larger sizes than males (Murakami, 1992).

**DISTRIBUTION.** *Syacium micrurum* is widely distributed throughout the western Atlantic and Caribbean Sea where tropical waters are found. It can be found ranging from Florida throughout a large number of Caribbean countries and South America. Some countries include Bahamas, Barbados, Trinidad and Tobago and Venezuela. It is also found along the coast of tropical Africa in the eastern Atlantic (Fig. 2).

**HABITAT AND ECOLOGY.** Found on soft bottoms, including sandy sea floors, with the ocular side facing up towards the surface. The ocular side has large, rough scales with multiple shades of tan and brown, making it easy for these fish to camouflage and ambush their prey. Typical of other sand flounders, they are able to partially or entirely burrow into the soft sand or mud on the ocean floor, waiting to ambush their prey. Although they are mainly found on the bottom, they are capable of rising above to capture prey. Its diet consists largely of a wide variety of Crustacea and Polychaeta, and they also feed on small fish (Marques, 2009).

**REPRODUCTION.** The channel flounder larvae are generally symmetrical and elongated as typical of other fish. These larvae then adopt a more rounded shape with spines above their heads which serve as protection. These protective spines also occur along the gills and fins. The planktonic larva stage disperses from the hatching grounds. Over time one eye shifts to the other side of the head (the ocular side); one side is then said to be blind. Eventually their swim bladder is lost and they sink back to the bottom with their ocular side facing the ocean surface.

**APPLIED BIOLOGY.** Flatfish have a high concentration of oils within the liver (Wikipedia, 2002). The flesh of this species has an unpleasant taste, different from other flatfish. Usually, this flounder is taken as bycatch by shrimp trawl fisheries, and where caught in abundance, it may be utilized in the pet food industry. It is listed as of Least Concern on the IUCN Red List and so is not endangered (IUCN, 2016).

#### REFERENCES

- IUCN. (2016). The IUCN Red List of Threatened Species. <http://www.iucnredlist.org/details/15622604/0>.
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- Munroe. (2002). The living marine resources of the Western Central Atlantic.
- Murakami, T. A. (1992). Review of the genus *Syacium* (Paralichthyidae) with the description of a new species from Ecuador and Colombia, 61-95.
- Wikipedia. (2002). <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Flatfish>.

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**Fig. 2.** Channel flounder geographic distribution.

[<http://fishbase.org/summary/Syacium-micrurum.html>, downloaded 26 October 2016]

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