FSO

"Gateway to Decisions"

Making decisions that affect thousands of individuals, families and businesses is serious business. Collecting data that support those decisions is FSO's business. With thousands of vessels and dealers from Maine to North Carolina, the responsibility is far reaching and highly challenging. Assembling and analyzing these data is the cornerstone of fisheries management.

That's FSO.

In the Field and *In the Office* helping **NOAA** and industry steer a steady course.

For more information visit our website:

www.nero.noaa.gov/fso

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Fisheries Statistics Office

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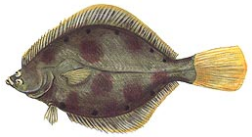
Yellowtail Flounder



Sampling Program

NOAA field staff, Katie Almeida, measuring yellowtail flounder to determine growth patterns

"Gateway to Decisions"

BIOLOGICAL SAMPLING PROGRAM

"Gateway to Decisons"

The **Fisheries Statistics Office** (FSO) is a key component of **NOAA Fisheries** in the Northeast. One of the office's primary functions is to collect fishery data and biological samples. These data are essential to the fishery management process.

Both in the field and in the office, FSO works to provide our customers, other NOAA fisheries groups, fishing industry, and other constituents with accurate, reliable and timely data. **FSO** operates 11 field offices covering states from Maine to Virginia. Each office is staffed with knowledgeable personnel who serve as the agency's front line to the fishing industry.

Under the direction of John Witzig, Ph.D., FSO's central office is located in the NOAA Regional Office in Gloucester, Massachusetts.

For more information visit our website:

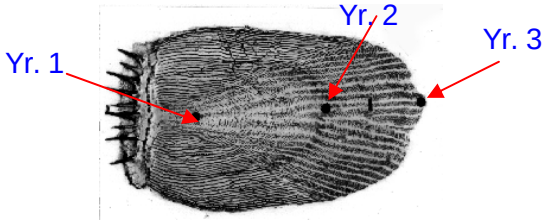
www.nero.noaa.gov/fso

Yellowtail Flounder

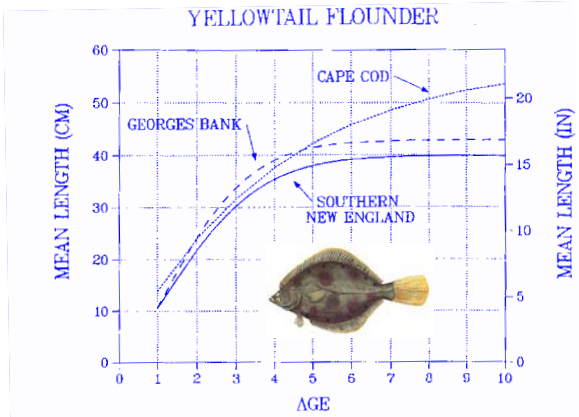
NOAA field staff, Katie Almeida, displays a yellowtail that she just measured. Measuring marine fish helps scientists determine age and growth patterns

What We Do and How: The mission of the sampling program is to obtain raw data essential to understanding the ages and the size distributions of individual stocks of marine fish. Field work provides the biological foundation for many fisheries assessments. Biological data, which is collected in the field, are used in models designed to guide management decisions and future research.

The ages of yellowtail and many other marine fishes are determined by measuring and extracting *scales* from the skin. Scales contain growth rings which are counted much the same as counting rings on a tree stump. Each ring usually represents one year.



Above is a scale impression from a 30 cm, age 3 female yellowtail flounder collected in the spring from Southern New England.



Age and Growth: The growth rate to age 2 is the same for both sexes, but thereafter females grow faster and live longer than males. Growth rates also differ by geographical area, with fish from Georges Bank generally growing more rapidly than those from other areas. Both males and females become sexually mature at age 2 or 3. Spawning occurs during spring and summer, with peak activity in May. This specie is a medium-size flatfish. Males average 16 inches and females 18 inches. The largest specimen take was a 22 inch female caught off Cape Cod.

Yellowtail Flounder

Age	Southern New England Length (in)	Georges Bank Length (in)	Cape Cod Length (in)
1	3.3	3.3	5.5
2	9.3	10.3	9.4
3	12.4	13.7	12.4
4	14.0	15.4	14.8
5	14.8	16.1	16.6
6	15.3	16.5	18.0
7	15.5	16.7	19.1
8	15.6	16.9	20.0
9	15.7	16.9	20.6
10	15.7	16.9	21.1