

YZC Animal of the Month, January 2013

Atlantic Halibut

Hippoglossus hippoglossus



left eye on the left side of the skull, the right eye on the right side of the skull, and living in a

In the upper gallery of the museum you can find a wonderful display of different types of fish, from the slightly spooky-looking jawless lampreys and hagfish, to sharks, skates and rays with skeletons made of cartilage, to just some of the many thousands of different types of fish with a skeleton made of bone. This month's Animal of the Month is one such fish: the Atlantic Halibut.

You can see from the Atlantic Halibut skeleton on display that it is a flatfish. It is lying flat on its side on the ocean floor. Take a close look at the skull and you can see that the 'upper' side of the skull is its right side, but both eyes are found here. Weird! What is weirder still is that this fish starts out with the

more normal way – that is, not on its side on the ocean floor. As the fish grows and develops, it comes to lie on its side and the left eye migrates round to lie on the right side of the skull. If the skeleton had its skin on you would be able to see that the upper surface of this fish is brown-grey in colour, disguising it against the ocean floor. Adults tend to feed on other fish. Cod, haddock, skate, and even some seabirds have been found in halibut stomachs!

The Atlantic Halibut is the largest of all the flatfish. The skeleton in the museum belonged to a pretty big fish, but this one is quite puny for a halibut. The largest halibuts can measure as much as 3m in length and weigh up to 300kg!