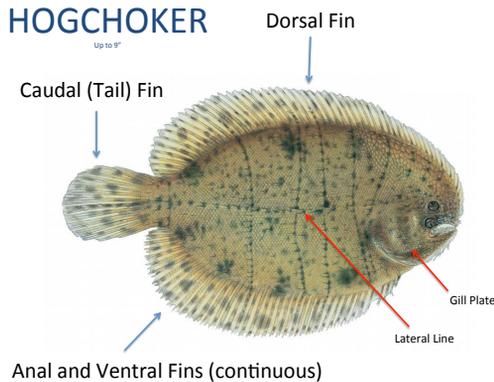




The Unusual Hogchoker

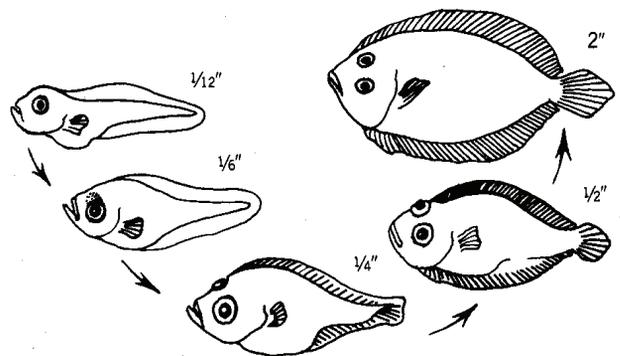


The hogchoker (*Trinectes maculatus*) is a flatfish that lives on the bottom of the Chesapeake Bay. Hogchokers are closely related to other flatfish like flounder, but they are much smaller and only grow to be 8" long. The hogchoker can be found in all the Bay's tidal rivers and it can live in areas with very low salinity levels or full salt water near the Atlantic Ocean.

Hogchokers have an unusual appearance. They have pancake-like bodies, and both of their eyes are located together on one side of the face. This allows a hogchoker to lay on the bottom and look up for predators. As larvae, the hogchoker swims upright just like any other fish. As it gets larger, one eye slowly migrates over the top of its head to join with the eye on the other side of its body! (see image below).

Adult Hogchokers spawn from May until September in brackish inshore waters. The brown, spotted pattern on their bodies allow hogchokers to blend in perfectly with the muddy bottom of a waterway, and there may be thousands of them in shallow waters that you cannot see because of their camouflage.

The hogchoker earned its name many years ago when farmers fed these little flatfish to their pigs. Unfortunately, hogchokers have rough scales and they can stick to the side of a flat surface like a suction cup. Sometimes this led to a hog choking to death on a flatfish that became lodged in its throat. The nickname that resulted has remained to the present day. Even if they are not good food for pigs, hogchokers are a unique and interesting resident of the Chesapeake Bay.



Like all flatfish, the hogchoker has a "wandering eye" that migrates over the top of its head to join the eye on the other side of its body.



The Unusual Hogchoker

NAME: _____ DATE: _____

COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

DIRECTIONS: Read the text on the previous page, then answer the following questions in complete sentences. Write your answers on the lines provided.

1. Where can hogchokers be found in the Chesapeake Bay?

2. How large can an adult hogchoker get?

3. What is unusual about the hogchoker's eyes?

4. Where and when does a hogchoker spawn?

5. How is the hogchoker specially adapted to blend in with the Bay bottom?

6. How did the hogchoker get its unusual name?
