

SHAKIRAH THE SOLE

Hi ...I am Shakirah the Sole

I belong to the family of fish known as **flatfish** because I am **flat and thin**.

We don't swim upright like most fish but are adapted to **lie flat on the seabed**.



As a tiny larval fish, my eyes are on **either side of my head**, like normal fish.



8 days old

There are many different types of flatfish found in South Africa's waters.



But as I grow **one eye moves over** to the right side of my body.



13 days old



17 days old

www.fisheggs-and-larvae.saiab.ac.za

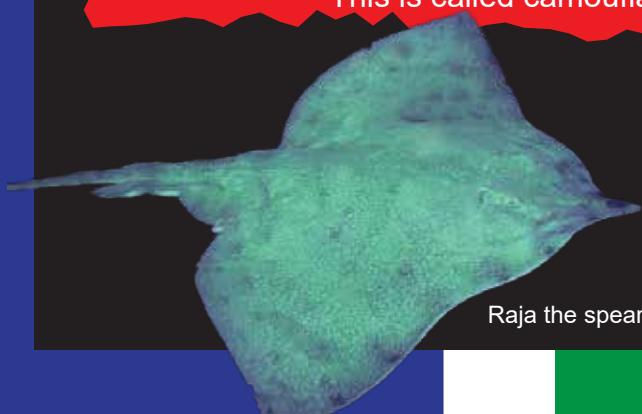
Now that I'm fully grown, both my eyes are **on the right side of my head**.

My eyes can **look in different directions at once**, like a **chameleon**.



I can change my colour and can bury myself into the sand, so that just my eyes pop out. I blend into my surroundings so no-one can spot me!

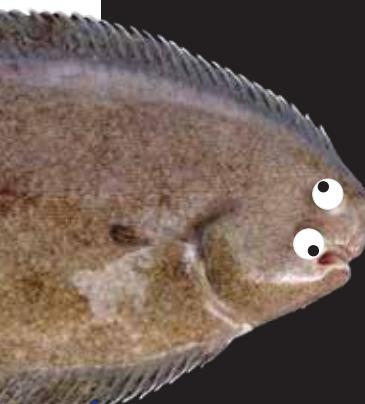
This is called camouflage.



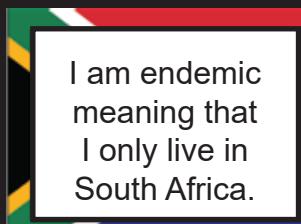
Raja the spearnose skate

I spend my days hiding from predators like **Raja the spearnose skate**, rays, sharks and even dolphins.





I live at the very tip of the great African continent on the **Agulhas Bank**, a triangle shaped underwater plain that was once on land but **now lies down to 200m deep under the sea**.



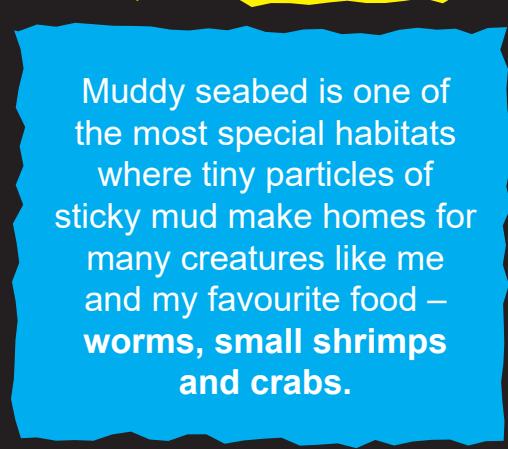
I am endemic meaning that I only live in South Africa.



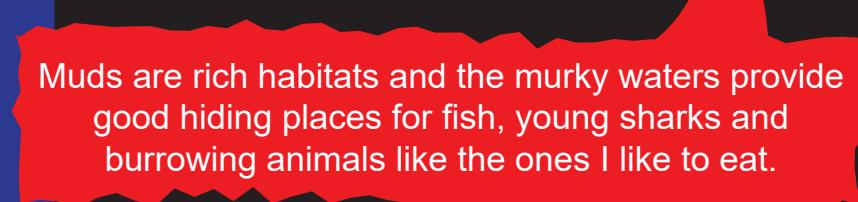
The **Agulhas Bank MPA** and **Agulhas Mud MPA** provide protection for us.



Mud is my favourite!



Muddy seabed is one of the most special habitats where tiny particles of sticky mud make homes for many creatures like me and my favourite food – **worms, small shrimps and crabs**.



Muds are rich habitats and the murky waters provide good hiding places for fish, young sharks and burrowing animals like the ones I like to eat.



Muddy habitats are made by **rivers** that have carved their way to sea **carrying the mud and fresh water** that is so important for our muddy ecosystems.



To look after the muddy ecosystems where we live it is important to make sure that enough fresh water reaches the sea.



Many people think fresh water flowing into the sea is wasted but this is not true.



We need the fine muddy sediment and nutrients and fresh water that rivers deliver to the sea.

You can help us by:
using water responsibly,
saving water and
by helping to keep our
connected land, rivers
and sea free of
pollution.



Photo: Wikimedia



We also need some **safe spaces** to live and breed without trawl fishing like the **Agulhas Bank Marine Protected Areas** which are closed to trawling.



Bottom trawl X



Our species provides **food and jobs** for **many people** so please look after us and the connected ecosystems that we depend on.

QUESTIONS

1. Name three animals that sole like to eat.

2. Name three animals that like to eat sole.
(You might be one of them)!

3. What do you call the ability to hide
by blending into your environment?

More information on South Africa's MPAs

www.mzanza.org

www.marineprotectedareas.org.za

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Helping people to care for our ocean