

## **Butterflies of the Sea: Flying Fish**

**By Josh Anthony**

The flying fish is, or *Exocoetidae*, as its name suggests, a fish that has the ability to fly. Flying fish are shaped a bit like torpedos, and have large pectoral fins. In addition, they have unevenly forked tails, with the upper fork longer than the lower fork. Out of the many subspecies of flying fish, many have large pelvic fins. These double sets of wings make them look almost like huge butterflies.

Their torpedo-like shape helps them to gain speed while underwater, and the fins act as wings once the fish is out of the water.

In order to fly, first the fish must gain an underwater speed of about 37 miles (60 kilometers) per hour. While still underwater, it begins flapping its "wings" and angles its body slightly upward. After breaking the surface, the fish can fly as high as 4 feet (1.2 meters). After reaching a comfortable height, the fish begins to glide. It can continue doing so for about 655 feet (200 meters). As it slowly descends back toward the water, the fish can flap again and travel for a further distance. Using this method, flying fish are capable of extending their flights for about 1,312 feet (400 meters).

As you may imagine, underwater pursuers may lose interest after chasing a fish for 400 meters. The predators of the flying fish include mackerel, swordfish, tuna, marlin, and other larger fish.

Flying fish eat a wide variety of food, including plankton.

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Information from <http://animals.nationalgeographic.com/animals/fish/flying-fish/>