



DEEP SEA ANGLERFISH

There are more than 200 species of *anglerfish*. Most anglerfish around the world live in the dark depths of the Atlantic and Antarctic oceans. They can survive up to a mile below the surface, although some live in shallow waters, too. They are usually dark gray to dark brown in color, and they have very large mouths filled with sharp teeth. Most anglerfish are less than a foot long, but some can be up to 3.3 feet (1 meter) in length.

We are looking at a particular type – the “**DEEP SEA ANGLERFISH**” – which lives deep down in the dark parts of the ocean. The photo is of a female. She has a thin fin-like structure on top of her head. It is just above her mouth and she uses it like a little fishing pole. It glows like a light-bulb because it has special bacteria inside of it. One reason she uses this “luminescent lure” is to attract prey (food for her to eat). Other organisms are drawn to the light. When they get close enough – chomp! The angler fish snags dinner! That is how this fish got its name: angler, which is another name for a fisherman. It is really the front spine of the dorsal fin.

Another reason for this lure is so the female can identify herself to other anglerfish, particularly the male. The males do not have this special lure. They rely on the female to catch the food. They are much smaller than the females. To survive, they attach themselves to the female by biting her – and then hanging on for the rest of their lives!

This fish lives deep down in the ocean where it is dark. This can even be as deep 1000 to 3,000 meters. (How far down is that? 1000 meters is about 10 football fields long – or roughly a little more than one-half of a mile.) At this depth there is no sunlight. It is black like the middle of the night!

So, at these depths, some living things can create their own light – such as this anglerfish. Can you think of another animal that can create its own light? Maybe you have seen a little bug light up on summer nights? Some people call it a lightning-bug, others call it a firefly. They create their own light, just like the anglerfish.