

FACT SHEET

SKIPJACK TUNA

Katsuwonus pelamis

Family: Scombridae

Other common names: Oceanic bonito, Penstreep-tuna

Description

A torpedo-shaped body that is almost round in cross-section. Has a dark blue back, a silvery-white belly and 4-10 characteristic distinct, black horizontal stripes along the lower flanks of the body.

Distribution

Distributed in tropical and subtropical waters of the Pacific, Indian and Atlantic Oceans. Found all around the South African coast, but most common from Algoa Bay to Maputo.

Habitat

Normally live in oceanic waters where the surface temperature is between 20-30°C, corresponding to the mixed layer of tropical oceans which can extend to depths of 200 m depending on area. Skipjack are often associated with convergences, boundaries between cold and warm water masses, outcrops and other hydrographic discontinuities. They generally form large schools, often in association with other tunas of similar size. Skipjack is normally the predominant species found under fish aggregation devices (FADs).

Feeding

They are opportunistic predators and their diet varies in time and space. The predominant items in their diet are small baitfish, cephalopods and crustaceans.

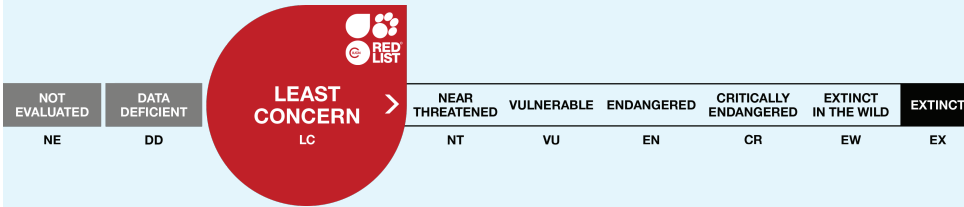
Movement

A highly migratory species with evidence of rapid, large scale movements in the Indian Ocean. Their movements are influenced by environmental conditions and by their tendency to group around floating objects.

Reproduction They mature at about 37-44 cm and 51-52 cm fork length in the Indian and Atlantic Oceans respectively, equivalent to an age of under 2 years. They spawn opportunistically throughout the year in vast areas of the ocean, when favourable conditions prevail (surface temperatures greater than 24°C).


Age and growth They can reach a maximum size of 110 cm fork length and a weight of 35.5 kg. They have been aged up to 7 years.

Current status Skipjack stocks are considered to be underexploited in both the Indian and Atlantic Oceans. The increased use of FADs and the extension of fishing areas has increased the catchability of this species. They have been evaluated as Least Concern on the IUCN Red List (2011).
 South African Sustainable Seafood Initiative (SASSI) List: Variable depending on area caught but generally Green if line or pole caught, Orange if caught by purse-seine, Red if caught by gillnets.




NOT EVALUATED (NE) DATA DEFICIENT (DD) **LEAST CONCERN (LC)** NEAR THREATENED (NT) VULNERABLE (VU) ENDANGERED (EN) CRITICALLY ENDANGERED (CR) EXTINCT IN THE WILD (EW) EXTINCT (EX)

Line or pole caught



Caught by purse-seine



Capture In South African waters skipjack tuna are not specifically targeted by either pelagic longline vessels or tuna pole vessels but are kept as bycatch. Elsewhere in the Indian and Atlantic Oceans they are targetted by purse-seine vessels, often under drifting FADs. They comprise only a small percentage of recreational ski-boat catches in KwaZulu-Natal.

Current recreational fishing regulations
Daily bag limit: 10 per person per day
Minimum size limit: None
Closed Season: None
Other regulations: None
Marine protected areas (MPAs): Probably little benefit derived from MPAs due to the highly migratory nature of this species.

Reference Information from the ORI Fish App. www.saambr.org.za



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