

BIGEYE TUNA

- *Thunnus obesus*



Masa Ushioda - SEAPICS

SCHOOL DAYS: Bigeye tuna are sociable fish – swimming in mixed schools with other types of tuna and other fish.

Also known as: Aáhi O'opa, Aáhi Tatumu, Ahi po'onui, Ahi, Albacora-ôlho-grande, Asi asi, Atum Patudo, Atún de Ojo Grande, Bachi, Darumeji, Drama, Grossaugenthun, Mebachi, Mebuto, Patudo, Thon aux Grands Yeux, Thon obèse, Thon ventru, Toghu, Sangir.

Hatchlings: A bigeye tuna hatchling will feed on plankton and then small fish, krill, squid and crustaceans. They are late bloomers reaching sexual maturity at 3 to 4 years old, but live long lives – until 8-14 years.

Bigeye tuna can be as long as 200 cm and weigh more than 100 kilos. Bigeye tuna spawn in warm waters of 17°C-22°C (62.6°F-71°F).

School days: Bigeye tuna range in waters from 13°C-29°C (54.4°F-84.2°F). Pacific Island countries hosting bigeye tuna include all the islands in the tropics (Latitudes of 10°N to 20°S).

Bigeye tuna tagged in locations journey up to 4,000 nautical miles over periods of one to several years, (but most fish

are caught much closer to where they are first caught and tagged).

Bigeye tuna are deep swimmers – sometimes diving down 500 metres below the surface. To accomplish these feats, they are more tolerant than skipjack and yellowfin to water with lesser oxygen concentration but still must come up closer to the surface to keep warm when hunting. Bigeye tuna are sociable fish, swimming in mixed schools with other types of tuna and fish.

PASSPORT
BIGEYE TUNA



PACIFIC ISLAND COUNTRIES WHERE BIGEYE SCHOOLS ARE:



Masao Ushioda - SEAPICS

OUT OF WATER: A premier sushi fish, bigeye tuna often ends up in Tokyo's fish market

Like yellowfin tuna, smaller bigeye tuna may be eaten by larger fish whereas the main predator for adult bigeye tuna are sharks and toothed whales.

Reel life: Longline fishing vessels from both Asia and Pacific Islands fish for adult bigeye tuna which get the highest prices on sashimi market (apart from bluefin tuna which is generally not found in Pacific Island waters but in colder waters more north and south).

From 1980 to 1995, the longline catch of bigeye tuna in the Western and Central Pacific Ocean varied between about 40,000 and 65,000 tonnes, then reaching a peak of 84,000 tonnes in 2004 before

dropping to 71,000 tonnes in 2007. There remains considerable uncertainty regarding the accuracy of the purse-seine catch and reported catches may significantly under-estimate actual catch levels.

A small purse seine fishery also operates in the coastal waters off Japan with an annual bigeye tuna catch of approximately 1,000 tonnes (plus a similar level taken by the coastal Japanese pole-and-line fishery).

High catches are also presumed to be taken in the domestic fisheries of Philippines and Indonesia using a variety of fishing gear. The total catch for both

countries combined are estimated to have exceeded 30,000 tonnes in recent years.

Out of water: Bigeye tuna's fatty but firm reddish-pinkish flesh keeps its colour longer than yellowfin tuna which makes it popular for high end sashimi. Longline-caught bigeye tuna rarely develop the "burnt" flesh problems often found in yellowfin tuna.

The vast majority of bigeye tuna is sold fresh and frozen. Bigeye tuna flesh turns light gray after cooking and this colour is less appealing for canning, although in Latin America juvenile bigeye tuna are used for canning. The biggest consumers of bigeye tuna are Japan and US.



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