

# SKIPJACK TUNA

- *Katsuwonus pelamis*



Masa Ushioda - SEAPICS

*SCHOOL DAYS: Short-lived, fast-breeding skipjack tuna is a common sight in Pacific Island waters.*

**Also known as:** Aku, Atu, Atun, Bonite, Bonite á ventre rayé, Bonito, Banjo, Cachurreta, Faolua, Ga'oga Gaiado, Lesser Tunny, Listado, Merma, Mushroom, Nzirru, Palamatu, Stripe Bellied Bonito, Striped Bellied Tunny, Tunna, Victor Fish.

**Hatchlings:** A skipjack tuna hatchling of 3 millimetres will feed on plankton and then small fish, crustaceans and molluscs to grow to 40cm in its first year.

Skipjack tuna are fast and racy tuna - reaching sexual maturity in its first year, they will breed rapidly, one female tuna

creating 80,000 to 2 million eggs per year until they die at about 5 years old (maximum age is 8-12 years). Skipjack tuna heavy weights are around 20 kilos with most significantly smaller.

**School days:** Where schools of skipjack tuna go varies widely and is thought to depend on ocean currents and temperatures with schools most enjoying water temperatures above 25 °C (68° F).

Countries between Latitude 10°N and 10°S are particularly rich in skipjack tuna schools. They like to travel with floating

objects or large marine mammals and often school according to size – so that tuna swimming together have the same speed for travelling and feeding.

All the large predators such as sharks and billfish commonly prey on skipjack tuna.

**Reel life:** Skipjack tuna can be caught on lines or in nets. They are commonly caught by Pacific Island pole-and-line fleets, Japanese pole-and-line fleets and domestic fleets in Indonesia and Philippines using a variety of methods.

**PASSPORT**  
**SKIPJACK TUNA**



**PACIFIC ISLAND COUNTRIES WHERE SKIPJACK SCHOOLS ARE:**



*REEL LIFE: Skipjack tuna are mostly caught in large purse seine nets by non-Pacific Island countries.*

Small but locally important artisanal fisheries for skipjack and other tuna (using mainly trolling and traditional methods) occur in many of the Pacific Islands. Some Pacific Islands are looking at reviving pole and line fishing to meet local and niche markets.

By far the most common way for skipjack tuna to be caught is in large purse seine nets by distant water fishing nation fleets from Japan, Korea, Taiwan and the USA in the Western and Central Pacific Ocean. Philippines and Indonesia made up to 20–25% of the

total skipjack tuna catch in recent years. Stocks of skipjack tuna are considered abundant making up 70% of the total tuna catch in the Pacific Ocean. During the 1990s, annual catches from this region were about 500,000–800,000 tonnes before increasing sharply to approach 1,000,000 tonnes in 2004–2006.

**Out of water:** High quality sashimi skipjack tuna has deep red coloured flesh that becomes lighter when cooked. It has a stronger taste than other tunas and a short shelf life. It

must be consumed 6 days after landing or the red flesh will quickly turn brown and soft.

Most skipjack tuna is canned in Thailand, Vietnam and Philippines. Pacific Island countries of Samoa, PNG and Solomon Islands have also active canneries. Skipjack is also sold fresh and frozen.

In Japan, skipjack tuna is known as *katsuo*, and is commonly smoked and dried to make *katsuobushi* the central ingredient in making *dashi* (fish stock).