



Atlantic Bluefin Tuna Picture



Sushi

The Atlantic bluefin tuna is one of the largest and fastest fish in the ocean, capable of reaching over 13 feet and 2,000 pounds and swimming at high speeds across the Atlantic.

- Found throughout the North Atlantic Ocean
- Highly migratory (travels thousands of miles)
- Considered one of the most economically valuable fish (especially for sushi markets)

There are two main stocks (populations):

- Eastern stock (Mediterranean Sea spawning)
- Western stock (Gulf of Mexico spawning)

Catch Methods

- Bluefin tuna are caught using several commercial and recreational fishing methods:
 1. Longline Fishing
 - a. Long lines with hundreds to thousands of baited hooks
 - b. Can catch tuna at various depths
 - c. Risk of bycatch (other species like sharks or turtles)
 2. Purse Seine Nets
 - a. Large nets that encircle entire schools of fish
 - b. Common in the eastern Atlantic and Mediterranean
 - c. Often used for tuna “ranching” (capturing fish alive and fattening them in pens)
 3. Rod-and-Reel / Harpoon (more selective)
 - a. Used especially in the U.S.
 - b. Targets individual fish
 - c. Lower environmental impact and bycatch
 - d. Allows release of unintended species

Stock Size/Population

- Key estimates:
 - Eastern stock: ~5 million spawning adults
 - Western stock: ~200,000 spawning adults
- Historically:
 - Populations dropped significantly due to overfishing

- Western stock fell to about 17% of 1950 levels, eastern to 33%
- Today:
 - Some recovery has occurred due to strict quotas and management
 - Exact population size is still uncertain, especially for the western stock

Sustainability — Is It Sustainable?

- Short answer: Partially sustainable—but depends on location and management

Why it was NOT sustainable:

- Heavy overfishing driven by global demand (especially sushi markets)
- Illegal and unreported fishing
- Slow growth and late maturity make recovery difficult

Current situation:

- Managed by the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT)
- Strict catch quotas (TACs) and regulations are now in place
- U.S. fisheries are considered sustainably managed with limited harvest

Sustainability status:

- Western Atlantic: improving, tightly regulated
- Eastern Atlantic: larger population, but historically heavily exploited

Overall: recovering but still vulnerable

Other Links to Visit for More Information:

[Western Atlantic Bluefin Tuna | NOAA Fisheries](#)

[ICCAT·CICTA·CICAA](#)

[Atlantic bluefin tuna Tuna seafood recommendation | Seafood Watch](#)