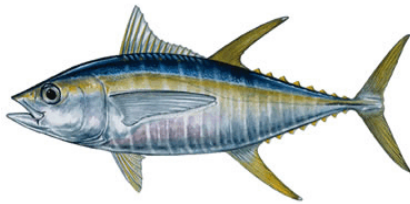


Skipjack



Yellowfin



Dorado

The fish aggregation device or FAD

Tuna are known to congregate below floating objects and even under larger fish. A fish aggregation device or FAD is a floating object consisting of a wooden frame with trailing tendrils of mesh hanging from it below which many types of fish gather. Many FADs are equipped with the latest fish detecting equipment and scientific measuring instruments to measure water temperature, pressure inclines and other conditions which attract fish. Satellite telecommunication devices can be fitted to transmit the data to waiting fishing boats, each of which may be in communication with dozens of FADs.

When fish are detected, the fishing boat, perhaps a 100m super-seiner, surrounds the FAD with a purse-seine net 1,800m in circumference and 240m deep. Around FADs the catch often includes mixed shoals of juvenile yellowfin and bigeye tuna together with skipjack, but in the British Indian Ocean Territory (BIOT) it is made up principally of skipjack and a by-catch that may include dorado, silky shark, rainbow runner, wahoo and striped marlin. When seine fishing for free shoaling fish, not using a FAD, the catch is predominately larger more mature yellowfin tuna and there is very little by-catch. In BIOT in 2005/6, 54 licensed purse-seine vessels caught 13,865 tonnes of tuna, of which free shoaling yellowfin consisted of 78% of the total catch.

Since the inception of the 200 mile BIOT Fisheries Conservation and Management Zone (FCMZ) in 1991 the Marine Resources Assessment Group (MRAG) has been responsible to the BIOT Administration for the sustainable management of the fisheries within this zone. MRAG manages and operates a monitoring, control and surveillance programme using the BIOT patrol vessel *Pacific Marlin* and provides observers on the fishing vessels. In 2005/6 BIOT observers spent 10 observer days in the BIOT FCMZ on three of the licensed purse-seiners.

The Indian Ocean tuna spend up to two months (usually January and December) in the BIOT FCMZ. During the rest of the year the fishing fleets move around the Western Indian Ocean following the fish stocks. During this time the conservation of the tuna is the responsibility of the appropriate coastal states coordinated through the Indian Ocean Tuna Commission.

For more information visit www.mrag.co.uk and www.iotc.org.

The Chagos Conservation Trust is a charity (Registered in the UK No. 1031561) established in 1992 whose aims are to promote conservation scientific and historical research and to advance **education** concerning the archipelago. The Trust is a non political association.

If you would like information on membership, please contact the Secretary (simonhughes@hughes-mccormack.co.uk) or visit the web site www.chagosconservationtrust.org.