

Uku

Aprion virescens, grey snapper, green jobfish



Uku is caught year-round, but is most plentiful in summer, opposite of the winter peak for opakapaka and onaga. Like other popular Hawai'i snappers, such as opakapaka and onaga, uku has clear, firm, pink flesh that is delicately flavored.

Uku serves an important role in Hawai'i's bottomfish fishery. During years when Hawai'i's Deep 7 bottomfish fishery closed after it reached its annual catch limit (2007-2010), many fishermen relied on uku to sustain their commercial operations. This was especially true during slow yellowfin tuna years, which typically peak from May through August. Since then, uku has increased in prominence in restaurants and homes.

Stock Status

NOT OVERFISHED

(population size not too low)
nor experiencing overfishing
(sustainable harvest rate)
in the main Hawaiian
Islands (MHI).¹

Life History

HABITAT: wide-ranging, semi-pelagic snapper that inhabits reef slopes, seamounts and banks from shallow waters down to 1,200 feet.

SIZE: up to 40 inches and 30 pounds.

AGE: oldest known is 32 years old.

SEXUAL MATURITY: 4 years or 17 inches.

SPAWNING: May through October with a peak in June.

DIET: fish, shrimp, crabs, cephalopods such as octopus and plankton.

POPULATION: experiences spikes in population (Figure 1).



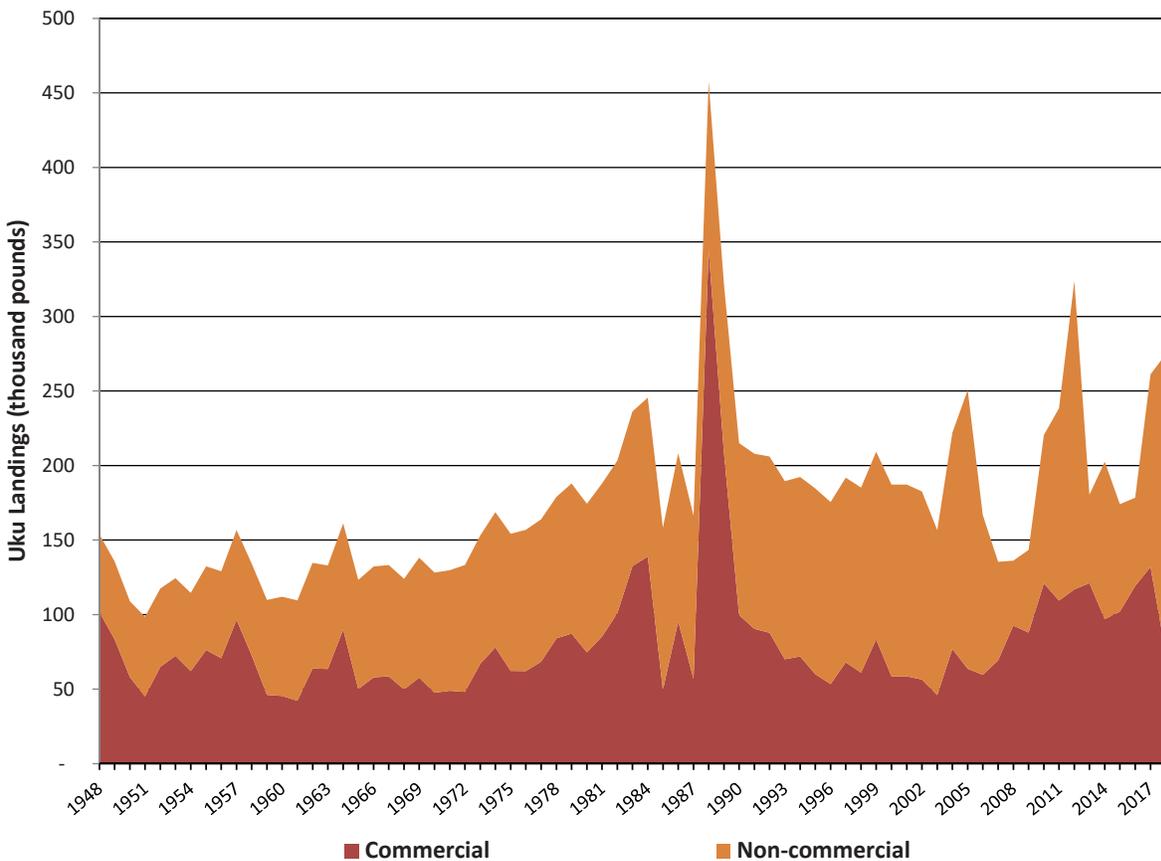


FIGURE 1: Uku catch history in Hawaiian archipelago by sector from 1948 to 2018.²
The commercial sector includes deep-sea and inshore handline, trolling and other gear.

Fishery and Market Value

- Commonly fished using both light and heavy handline and troll gear by kayakers and boaters. Other methods include shorecasting and spearfishing.
- Sold on average at local markets for \$3.90-\$5.30 per pound.¹
- When properly iced, uku has a long shelf life, comparable to opakapaka.

Management Measures

- Managed as a bottomfish management unit species under the Hawai'i Fishery Ecosystem Plan.
- Commercial annual catch limit (ACL) is 127,205 pounds for the 2019-2021 fishing years.
- Prohibited gears include bottom trawls, bottom set gillnets, poisons, explosives and intoxicating substances.
- Minimum size requirements for commercial sale and spearfishing: 1 pound.

Fishery Issues

- Improving the MHI uku stock assessment.
- Lack of adequate non-commercial fishing data.
- Refining ACLs.

¹ National Marine Fisheries Service 2020 draft uku stock assessment.

² WPRFMC, 2019. 2018 Annual Stock Assessment and Fishery Evaluation Report for the Hawaii Archipelago Fishery Ecosystem Plan. Sabater, M., Ishizaki, A., Remington, T., Spalding, S. (Eds.) Western Pacific Regional Fishery Management Council. Honolulu, Hawaii 96813 USA.



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