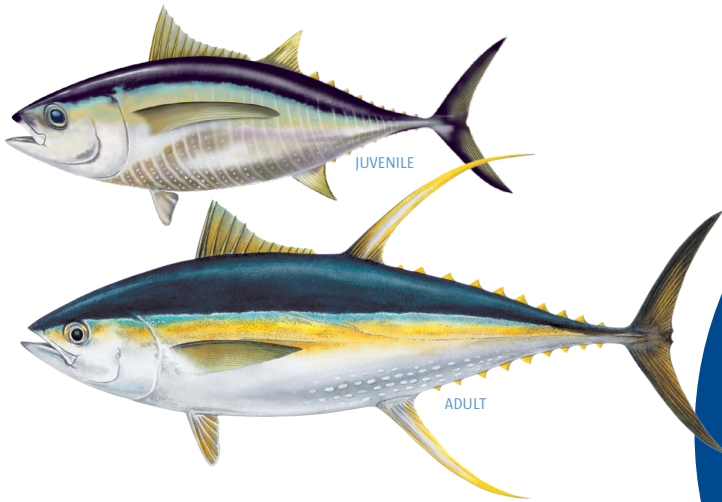


# Yellowfin Tuna

*Thunnus albacares*, 'ahi, shibi



Yellowfin tuna is one of two common tuna species in Hawai'i known as 'ahi (the other is bigeye tuna).

Yellowfin and bigeye tuna can be difficult to distinguish when young, but yellowfin have a slimmer body shape and shorter, rounder pectoral fins. This fish can be served cooked or raw and is commonly used in poke (raw fish dish). Small 'ahi are more prevalent in farmers markets and roadside vendors across the Hawaiian Islands since a smaller 'ahi is more affordable.

## Stock Status

Western and Central Pacific Ocean stock, which includes most of the Hawai'i longline catch and all of the small-boat catch, is not overfished (population size not too low) nor experiencing overfishing (sustainable harvest rate).<sup>4,5</sup>

Eastern Pacific Ocean (adjacent to the Hawaiian Archipelago exclusive economic zone) stock is estimated to be experiencing harvest rates slightly above sustainable thresholds, as of 2018.<sup>2</sup>

However a new draft stock assessment indicates that the yellowfin tuna stock is not overfished nor experiencing overfishing in 2020.<sup>3</sup>

## Life History

**HABITAT:** commonly found in warm (between 64 and 88 °F), clear tropical and subtropical oceans around the world.

**SIZE:** up to 6 feet and 400 pounds with a typical life span of 6-7 years.

**SEXUAL MATURITY:** 2.5 years (58 pounds or 44 inches).

**SPAWNING IN HAWAI'I:** April to October, reach peak spawning from June to August and are capable of expelling millions of eggs on a near-nightly basis.

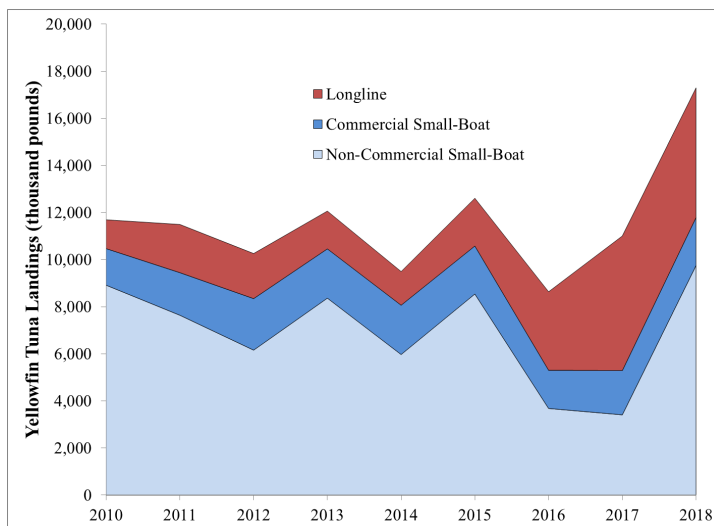
**DIET:** fish, squid and crustaceans.

**KNOWN PREDATORS:** *Larvae and juveniles* - fish, seabirds, dolphins and other animals. *Adults* - marine mammals, billfish and sharks.

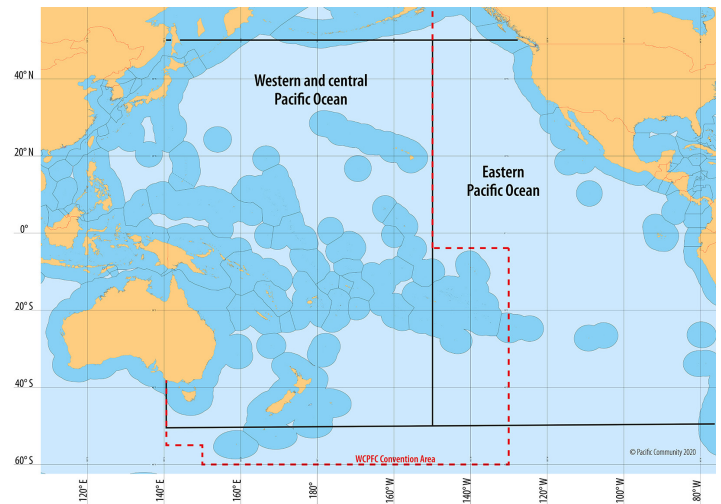


## Fishery and Market Value

- Commonly targeted by Hawai'i longline, commercial and non-commercial small-boat fleets. Catch comes primarily from the non-commercial small-boat fleet (Figure 1).
- Juveniles (locally called shibis) are commonly caught around fish aggregating devices (buoys anchored in deep water) or near productive ledges and banks.
- The larger fish, or 'ahi, (over 100 pounds) are usually caught in deep open ocean waters.
- Sold on average at local markets for \$3.00-\$8.00 per pound.<sup>1</sup>



**FIGURE 1:** Commercial and non-commercial catch history of yellowfin tuna from the Hawai'i fleet from 2010 to 2018.<sup>5</sup>



## Management Measures

- Managed as a pelagic management unit species under the Pelagic Fishery Ecosystem Plan.
- State of Hawai'i's minimum size requirement for commercial sale: 3 pounds.

## Fishery Issues

International Fishery Organizations are expected to work on a new stock assessment for the Western and Central Pacific and Eastern Pacific Ocean stocks in 2020. Management measures based on this stock assessment may be developed. This could affect the Hawai'i small-boat fishery if it leads to an internationally managed quota in the Western and Central Pacific.

<sup>1</sup>Hawkins, 2016. Importance of Small Ahi on Hawaii Island, Maui, and Kauai. Western Pacific Regional Fishery Management Council. Honolulu, Hawaii 96813 USA.

<sup>2</sup>Minte-Vera, C.V., Maunder, M.N., and Aires-de-Silva, A., 2018. Status of Yellowfin Tuna in the Eastern Pacific Ocean in 2017 and Outlook for the Future. Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission. La Jolla, California 92037 USA.

<sup>3</sup>Minte-Vera, C., Maunder, M.N., Xu, H., Valero, J.L., Lennert-Cody, C.E., Aires-da-Silva, A., 2020. Yellowfin tuna in the Eastern Pacific Ocean, 2019: Benchmark Assessment. Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission. La Jolla, California 92037 USA. (in progress)

<sup>4</sup>Trembley-Boyer, L., McKechnie, S., Pilling, G., Hampton, J., 2017. Stock assessment of Yellowfin tuna in the western and central Pacific Ocean. Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission. Rarotonga, Cook Islands.

<sup>5</sup>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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