

# SOUTHERN BLUEFIN TUNA GUIDE



## FISH CARE - THE SCHOOL OF BEST PRACTICE

Southern bluefin tuna in the Eastern Bay of Plenty have rekindled anglers' interest in tuna fishing. For a number of years there were grave concerns for the species as the stock was assessed at less than 10% of the original unfished biomass. The stock is now rebuilding and this gradual resurgence is a welcome development. It also elevates the need to fish sustainably so this species can flourish in the future. Recording your catch helps monitor fishery performance. Use a catch sheet from a sport fishing club or go to [fishcatch.co.nz](https://fishcatch.co.nz)

## Offshore southern bluefin tuna fishing in winter can be challenging

### BE PREPARED

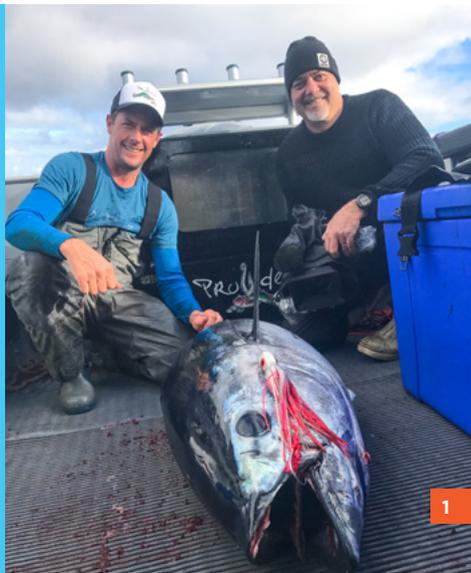
- Before you go fishing check your fishing and safety gear.
- This includes 2 forms of waterproof communication that will work in remote areas.
- If possible, pair up or be in communication with another vessel on offshore trips.
- Check the weather, forecasts can change. Have a plan if it gets rough.
- Take ice to keep your catch fresh.
- Fish with suitable tackle and line weight to ensure fish can be landed quickly.
- Minimise damage to the fish. Single J hooks are preferred on trolled lures. Straight circle hooks should be used when bait fishing.
- There is a daily bag limit of one bluefin tuna per person, we recommend a voluntary boat limit of one kept bluefin per day.

### HANDLING RETAINED FISH

- Bring the fish aboard carefully to avoid bruising.
- Immediately dispatch the fish by administering a spike to the brain, then bleed it by making a shallow cut 3cm behind the base of the pectoral fin on each side of the fish. If you are not intending to weigh the fish, measure the length and girth then remove the gills and organs and pack the body cavity with ice. Storage in an insulated fish bag or ice chest is best. Note an estimate of the fish's weight (kg) can be determined using the formula:  
 $Length\ (cm) \times girth\ (cm) \div 28922$ .
- If you are intending to weigh the fish for your club (Note gutted and gilled fish can still be weighed under IGFA and NZSFC rules), and it is not likely to be a record fish it is recommended you gut and gill the fish.
- Reduce wastage by learning how to fillet southern bluefin tuna effectively. There are YouTube clips online. Watch here [https://youtu.be/5L\\_1Oy2p48](https://youtu.be/5L_1Oy2p48)
- These are valuable fish from a stock that needs to rebuild, so respect each fish.
- Share your catch with the crew and only keep what fish you need.
- Record your catch on a catch sheet from a sport fishing club or at [fishcatch.co.nz](https://fishcatch.co.nz)

### HANDLING RELEASED FISH

- A South Australian satellite tagging project shows high survival rates of southern bluefin tuna released by recreational fishers.
- To minimise stress and damage it is best not to remove the fish from the water.
- Keep the boat moving forward when the fish is alongside.
- Estimate or measure the size of the fish, this may require two people.
- If you have gamefish tags, these should be placed high on the body (angled back) by the second dorsal fin.
- If the hook can be seen and accessed, remove it with pliers or a de-hooker.
- If the hook can't be reached cut the line close to the hook.



## RESPECT AND PROTECTION FOR OTHER CREATURES

- Don't discard plastic into the ocean.
- Learn how to avoid catching seabirds and don't feed them.
- Avoid feeding sharks and seals.

## SAFETY

- Invest in and use an EPIRB – it could save your life.
- Take extra fuel and store it carefully.
- Fish with other boats.
- Be prepared to help those around you.
- Don't dump fish frames or human waste near shore.
- Stay clear of fishers who are hooked up.
- Commercial fishing gear will be in the area. Commercial fishers can provide helpful information on where the fish are, so respect the need to work with them. Their lines are set east to west, 2 or 3 miles apart and 15 to 50 meters deep.
- Avoid fishing close to commercial gear, if you hook up it will most likely end badly.
- Join Coastguard and log a trip report when going fishing.
- Enjoy your day on the water and above all get home safely.



2

The recent run of southern bluefin tuna has rekindled angler's interest in this species. Photo credit: Mike Bhana

# fishcare.org.nz

If you don't use heads and frames, give them to someone who will relish them.

[www.freefishheads.co.nz](http://www.freefishheads.co.nz)

A website with local contacts who would love to collect fish heads and frames from those who want to give them away.






## THANKS TO OUR PARTNERS:

