



BLUEFIN BOYCOTT: FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

What are bluefin tuna?

Bluefin tuna are remarkable, ocean-going fish that grow up to 10 feet long and can weigh 1,200 pounds. Unlike almost all fish, bluefin are warm-blooded and able to regulate their body temperature, which helps during their epic journeys across the Atlantic. Bluefin tuna are top ocean predators and sometimes hunt cooperatively, much like wolves. With streamlined bodies and retractable fins, bluefin can bolt through the water at speeds of 50 miles per hour and can cross oceans in the course of only a few weeks.



What's the problem?

Prized as a high-value dish at sushi restaurants, bluefin are being pushed toward extinction by decades of overfishing. The International Union for Conservation of Nature lists two species of bluefin, the Atlantic and the southern, as critically endangered on its "Red List" of imperiled species. The Pacific bluefin tuna is not yet listed, but overfishing is now occurring. Sadly, bluefin remains on the menu in some restaurants. The sushi market keeps prices for tuna high and encourages illegal and unreported fishing.

The Atlantic bluefin's plight was made much worse in spring 2010 when BP's oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico fouled prime spawning ground. Scientists estimate the spill killed 20 percent of juvenile tuna in the area. The western Atlantic stock of bluefin has dropped by more than 80 percent since 1970. The eastern Atlantic stock dropped by 74 percent between 1957 and 2007.

What's being done to help this fish?

Since international regulators have failed to enact quotas that pull bluefin off the path toward extinction, the Center for Biological Diversity has called on consumers, chefs and restaurant owners to boycott bluefin tuna.

As a consumer, how do I know if it's bluefin tuna?

1. If it's labeled "bluefin," then it's bluefin.
2. If it's very expensive (more than \$10 a serving at a sushi restaurant or \$40 a pound at a market), then it's likely bluefin. See this article for more information: http://www.terraily.com/reports/Tuna_if_its_affordable_its_not_bluefin_999.html.
3. Ask the server, manager, chef or restaurant owner. You have a right to know exactly what you're eating.

Although bluefin is sometimes referred to as “fatty tuna,” “toro” or “maguro,” these names don’t always apply. The Hawaiian name “ahi” usually doesn’t refer to bluefin tuna, but bigeye or yellowfin. Other tuna can look red or pink, too. It’s frustrating, but hopefully with this boycott, restaurants will become more conscious of what they’re serving and how they label it. See this study for more information:

<http://www.plosone.org/article/info%3Adoi%2F10.1371%2Fjournal.pone.0007866>

Are there any types of tuna that are good to eat?

Although the bluefin tuna is one of the most imperiled fish in the sea, other types of marine life also face threats, and reducing fishing pressures can benefit many species. While the Center doesn’t endorse any specific types of seafood, we encourage consumers to consider alternatives to bluefin tuna and stay informed about sustainable eating choices.

These are tough economic times. Instead of boycotting restaurants, why not educate and enlist?

Our campaign is soliciting chefs and restaurant owners to sign the pledge along with consumers. (The restaurant pledge is available at www.bluefinboycott.org.) We welcome our supporters to get firsthand knowledge of restaurants that are serving bluefin and approach them with the pledge, the fact sheet and the Bluefin Boycott logo to post in the restaurant’s windows.

Bluefin is an expensive luxury product, so there will be economic implications of stopping its sale. But fishing a species to extinction has economic implications as well. From 2000 to 2009, gross revenues in the U.S. commercial bluefin tuna fishery declined by 64 percent from 19.1 million to 6.9 million. View this pdf for more information:

http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/sfa/hms/Tuna/2010/Supplemental_EA_042110.pdf.

What science shows that bluefin tuna are in danger of extinction?

Our scientific petition to list the Atlantic bluefin tuna as endangered or threatened is here: http://www.biologicaldiversity.org/species/fish/Atlantic_bluefin_tuna/pdfs/BluefinTunaPetition-5-24-2010.pdf. It explains, in 40 pages, the science that shows Atlantic bluefin tuna are at risk of extinction because of severe overfishing, inadequate regulatory mechanisms, and habitat degradation from the oil spill and climate change.

The International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) is the world’s foremost international authority on the status of threatened species. The IUCN “Red List” classification system is widely regarded as the most authoritative list of globally threatened species. The IUCN classifies the western Atlantic bluefin tuna population (<http://www.iucnredlist.org/apps/redlist/details/21864/0>) and the southern bluefin tuna (<http://www.iucnredlist.org/apps/redlist/details/21858/0>) as critically endangered, with an extremely high risk of extinction in the wild in the immediate future. IUCN classifies eastern Atlantic bluefin tuna (<http://www.iucnredlist.org/apps/redlist/details/21865/0>) as endangered, meaning that it faces a very high risk of extinction in the wild in the near future. The IUCN hasn’t evaluated the Pacific bluefin; the National Marine Fisheries Service has said that overfishing is occurring but the population is not yet overfished.

How will joining this boycott benefit the species?

Our mission is to reduce consumer demand for imperiled bluefin tuna. Overfishing, including rampant illegal fishing, is the number-one cause of the severe decline of the bluefin tuna. Because regulators have been unable to curb fishing to the extent necessary to sustain a healthy population, this boycott is an effort to save the species from the bottom up.

Japan is by far the primary consumer of bluefin tuna. Nevertheless, in 2009, the United States imported \$12.5 million worth of bluefin tuna (<http://www.st.nmfs.noaa.gov/st1/trade/index.html>). Sushi Samba, in Las Vegas, took bluefin tuna off its menu prior to our boycott and estimates that it served one tuna a week (<http://www.8newsnow.com/story/13247082/i-team-sushi-restaurant-pulls-bluefin-tuna-from-the-menu>). Each restaurant that pledges not to serve bluefin makes a difference.

How can we do more than just sign a pledge?

Signing a pledge is just the first step, and an easy click for most people. Next, you can do more:

1. Tell your friends and share the Bluefin Brigade Facebook page (<http://www.facebook.com/pages/Bluefin-Tuna-Boycott-Join-the-Bluefin-Brigade/107330386001726>).
2. Visit restaurants and ask them to join the boycott and pledge not to serve bluefin tuna. Share your restaurant experiences online at the Bluefin Brigade Facebook page, consumer review sites or the restaurant's own website.
3. Participate in events posted at bluefinboycott.org and on the Bluefin Brigade Facebook page.
4. Use the "Take-action Toolbox" (<http://www.biologicaldiversity.org/action/toolbox/index.html>) on the Center's website so you can write letters to your local newspaper and tell wildlife managers to protect bluefin.
5. Join the Center's other campaigns today to save wildlife, protect wild places, improve our climate and preserve clean air and water. Visit www.biologicaldiversity.org.

Can you provide a list of restaurants, distributors, stores and other places that sell bluefin tuna?

For a variety of legal and logistical reasons, we won't be publishing a list of sushi restaurants or bluefin tuna vendors other than those mentioned in our press release (and we'll report back if those venues take the pledge).

This is a grassroots campaign that relies on you and others like you around the country. We encourage consumers to do research and get firsthand knowledge of other restaurants serving bluefin. Feel free to comment about your experience on the Bluefin Brigade Facebook page (<http://www.facebook.com/pages/Bluefin-Tuna-Boycott-Join-the-Bluefin-Brigade/107330386001726>).

Do you have a flier that concisely spells out why restaurants should stop selling bluefin tuna and why they will be boycotted if they do?

Yes. The link to the downloadable pdf is here:

http://www.biologicaldiversity.org/species/fish/Atlantic_bluefin_tuna/bluefin_boycott/pdfs/Bluefin_One-pagerLetterhead.pdf.