

SOUTHERN BLUEFIN TUNA GUIDE



FISH CARE - THE SCHOOL OF BEST PRACTICE

The 2017 run of Southern Bluefin Tuna in the Eastern Bay of Plenty has 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 slowly rebuilding and this small resurgence is a welcome development for everyone. It also elevates the need to look after the fishery by fishing sustainably, to enable this species to flourish in the future.

Offshore Southern Bluefin Tuna fishing in winter can be challenging

BE PREPARED

Fishing gear, boats, and safety gear need to be maintained so they work when you need them most.

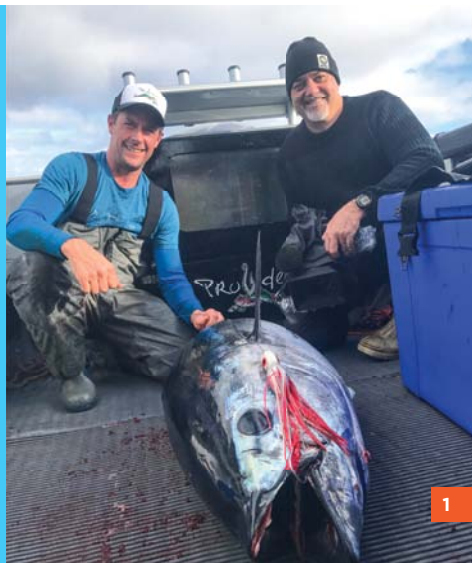
- Before you go fishing check your fishing and safety gear.
- This includes 2 forms of water proof communication that will work in remote areas.
- If possible, pair up or be in communication with another vessel on offshore trips.
- Check the weather, forecasts can change, and have a plan if it gets rough.
- Take ice, tuna that are not released need to be kept on ice at all times.
- Fish with suitable tackle and line weight to ensure fish can be landed, the quicker the better.
- The type of hook you use can minimise damage to the fish. Single J hooks are preferred on trolled lures. Straight circle hooks should be used when bait fishing.
- Most Bay of Plenty sport fishing clubs support a voluntary limit of one kept bluefin per boat, 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 the fish by making a shallow cut 60 mm behind the pectoral fins on both sides. The fish may lose a little weight but the quality of the meat will be much better.
- 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.
- Reduce wastage by learning how to fillet Southern Bluefin Tuna effectively. There are YouTube clips for this. Here's one example 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 you need.

HANDLING RELEASED FISH

- A South Australian satellite tagging project shows high survival rates of 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.
- 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.

SAFETY

- Invest in an EPIRB – it could save you life.
- Take extra fuel and store it carefully.
- Fish with other boats.
- Be prepared to help those around you.
- Consider joining Coastguard and logging a trip report when going fishing.
- Enjoy your day on the water and above all get home safely.



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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

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:

