

COMMONWEALTH OF THE NORTHERN MARIANAS ISLANDS (CNMI)

In a 2014 survey in the CNMI, non-commercial fishermen reported that nearly 37 percent of their catch is consumed at home, 52 percent is given away, and 7 percent is directed to community/cultural events. The remaining 4 percent is either caught and released or is exchanged for goods and services. Nearly 45 percent of non-commercial fishing trips targeted pelagic fish, whereas 24 percent of trips were for bottomfish, and approximately 31 percent were for reef fish, coastal pelagics or other species. When considering the role of fishing in household food security, 92 percent of non-commercial fishermen consider their pelagic catch to be an important source of food for their family, relative to 96 percent and 100 percent for bottomfish and reef fish, respectively.¹²

2015 Popular Non-Commercial Species of the Commonwealth of the Northern Marianas Islands¹³

| Common and Local Names | TOTAL CATCH (LBS) | CAUGHT INSHORE ¹⁰ | CAUGHT OFFSHORE ¹¹ |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------|------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Skipjack tuna (Bunita, Bonito, Katsu) | 19,000 | 0% | 100% |
| Mahimahi (Dorado) | 6,000 | 0% | 100% |
| Scribbled rabbitfish (Mañâhak/Menahac ha'tang = juveniles, Sesyon/Sesjun= adults) | 2,000 | 100% | 0% |
| Parrotfishes (Palakse', Lâggua, Igan-wosch), family Scaridae | 2,000 | 100% | 0% |
| Orange-striped emperor (Mafuti/Mafute', Uluul) | 2,000 | 98% | 2% |
| Goatfishes (various species), family Mullidae | 2,000 | 100% | 0% |
| Yellowfin tuna (Arangaap, Hangaraap) | 1,000 | 0% | 100% |
| Orangespine unicornfish (Hangon) | 1,000 | 98% | 2% |
| Bluespine unicornfish (Tâtaga, Guâsa) | 1,000 | 100% | 0% |
| Silver biddies (Guâguas, Mojarra), family Gerridae | 1,000 | 100% | 0% |

Skipjack Tuna

Katsuwonus pelamis,
Bunita, *Bonito*, *Katsu*

SPECIES
SPOTLIGHT



Skipjack tuna, or *bunita*, are highly sought in the CNMI and are prized as an important subsistence resource. This highly migratory species inhabits tropical and subtropical oceans around the world and appears in large schools as they feed and reproduce. Like other tropical tunas, they grow fast, measuring up to nearly 4 feet and weighing more than 70 pounds.

From the 1920s through the 1950s, Saipan's commercial small boat fleet dominated the local *bunita* fishery. The fleet played an important role within the timeline of *bunita* fishing in the CNMI, and may have influenced present-day local preferences towards targeting *bunita*. While much of the *bunita* catch in the CNMI remains commercial, a good portion is kept for personal consumption and shared with friends and family. Recreational and non-commercial anglers fish for *bunita* with troll, rod-and-reel, and handline gear, and sometimes by free-diving with spear guns. According to the 2014 stock assessment, the Western and Central Pacific stock of skipjack tuna is not overfished and is not subject to overfishing.

¹² Source: Pacific Islands Fisheries Science Center 2014

¹³ Source: CNMI Department of Lands & Natural Resources, Division of Fish & Wildlife, WPacFIN

