



*Bigeye tuna*

### ***Longline fishing in the British Indian Ocean Territory***

Line caught fish come to market in better physical condition than fish caught in nets. The demand for high quality upmarket fish such as tuna, to be eaten in expensive restaurants, increases the value of line caught fish, and so in the 1980s this way of fishing became hugely popular with commercial as well as sports fishermen.

A long line is usually made of monofilament and is buoyed with styrofoam floats and can be over 100km long (London to Oxford is about 80km). Every 30m or so there is a secondary snood line attached which goes to a suitable depth to catch the target fish. Once set, the longlines remain in the water 12-24 hours before being hauled in.

24 longline vessels were licensed by the British Indian Ocean Territory (BIOT) Administration in 2005/6 and they caught 916 tonnes of fish made up of 48% Bigeye tuna, 34% Yellowfin and 18% other species. Tuna longline vessels target only mature adult fish and they represent a low volume high value fishery. The latest assessments indicate Bigeye tuna is being exploited at around its maximum sustainable level. Tuna catch of all species in BIOT waters is about 5% of the Indian Ocean total catch.

Typical by-catch of tuna long line vessels in BIOT includes other finfish species and some shark species. The problems observed elsewhere in other fisheries for tuna and tuna-like species of by-catch of seabirds, turtles and marine mammals do not occur in the BIOT tuna longline fishery. In particular Albatrosses do not frequent BIOT waters, and to the credit of the Administration, shark fishing is banned in the BIOT Fisheries Conservation and Management Zone.

The management of BIOT fisheries is undertaken by Marine Resources Assessment Group Ltd (MRAG) on behalf of the BIOT Administration.

*For more information visit the Indian Ocean Tuna Commission website at [www.iotc.org](http://www.iotc.org).*



**The Chagos Conservation Trust** is a charity (Registered in the UK No. 1031561) established in 1992 whose aims are to promote conservation, scientific and historical research and to advance **education** concerning the archipelago. The Trust is a non political association.

*The Trust would like to hear from all those interested in conserving the Chagos archipelago.*

***The annual membership subscription costs only £20/\$40, or £100/\$200 for six years.***

If you would like more information on the publications or membership, please contact the Secretary ([simonhughes@hughes-mccormack.co.uk](mailto:simonhughes@hughes-mccormack.co.uk)) or visit the web site [www.chagos-trust.org](http://www.chagos-trust.org).