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Tuna Champions onboard as stewards of recovering SBT fishery

Once heavily depleted, Southern Bluefin Tuna (SBT) stocks have been rated as recovering in the recently released [2018 Status of Australian Fish Stock](#) (SAFS) reports.

While the path to recovery is slow, the good news for recreational fishers is that they can contribute by being a [Tuna Champion](#), and reduce unnecessary SBT mortality and wastage by learning and using the best fishing and handling practices for this iconic species.

The Tuna Champions program is an initiative of the Australian Recreational Fishing Foundation (ARFF) in collaboration with IMAS and is funded by the Australian Government through the Fisheries Research and Development Corporation (FRDC).

ARFF Chairman, Brett Cleary said the Tuna Champion program focuses on being prepared to catch the athletic SBT, and knowing how to catch, handle, keep, prepare or release it so no fish is wasted.

"It's the small moves that make a difference, like having the right gear and making sure it's in good condition before you head out, and taking enough ice on your boat to chill down the fish you plan to keep," he said.

IMAS researcher Dr Sean Tracey said Tuna Champions was built around understanding the perspective of the recreational fisher.

"It's about making sure they have the best information, based on the research, to fish responsibly and to respect the animal – whether it's to catch a feed, or to enjoy the experience with friends and release the fish in a way that gives it the best chance of surviving," he said.

Dr Tracey said SBT are endothermic fish, which means they can generate their own internal heat.

"This helps them survive on their epic migratory journeys across the southern hemisphere, where water temperatures can fluctuate from moderate to icy cold.

"But this heat-generating ability also has implications for the quality of meat fishers harvest from the fish."

Mr Cleary is an experienced game fisher and says immediately dispatching, bleeding and gutting an SBT and getting it straight into a good ice slurry to cool it down is the best way to get good quality meat from the fish.

“If you leave your SBT flapping around on the deck after you’ve caught it, it will heat up and reduce the quality of the meat.

“If you process the fish immediately it’s not only delicious, it means you won’t waste the fish,” he said.

Dr Tracey said everyone can be a Tuna Champion.

“It’s simply knowing and using the best fishing practices for SBT – and encouraging your mates to do the same,” Dr Tracey said.

For more information:

- Contact Dr Sean Tracey (IMAS) 0438 012 786, sean.tracey@utas.edu.au, or Brett Cleary (ARFF) 0418 121 317, brett@bayhire.com.au
- Visit tunachampions.com.au, or our [Facebook](#) or [Instagram](#) pages

Media contact: Andrew Rhodes (03) 6226 6683, email: ajrhodes@utas.edu.au

Information released by:

Communications and Media Office
University of Tasmania
+61 3 6226 2124
Media.Office@utas.edu.au
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