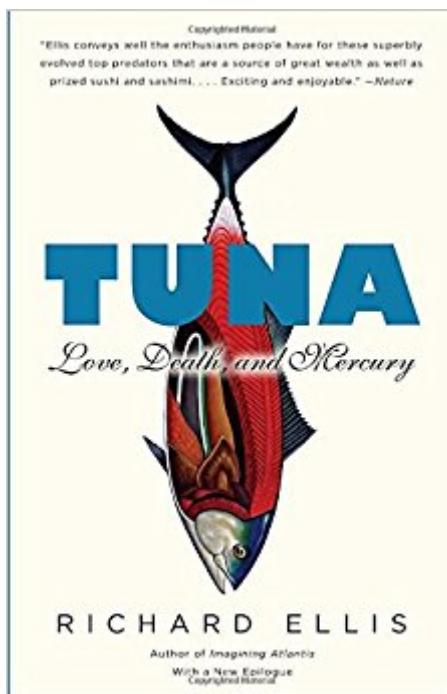


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# Tuna: Love, Death, And Mercury



## Synopsis

Famed marine researcher and illustrator Richard Ellis brings us a work of scientific achievement that will forever change the way we think about fish, fishing, and the dangers inherent in the seafood we eat. The bluefin tuna is one of the world's biggest, fastest, and most highly evolved marine animals, as well as one of its most popular delicacies. Now, however, it hovers on the brink of extinction. Here Ellis explains how a fish that was once able to thrive has become a commodity—and how the natural world and the global economy converge on our plates. With updated information on mercury levels in tuna, this is at once an astounding ode to one of nature's greatest marvels and a serious examination of a creature and world at risk.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Know Your Tuna Tuna is the most popular food fish in the world. It is eaten raw, cooked, in sandwiches, in salads, and in catfood. The total worldwide tuna harvest is four million tons. In the past, tuna fishermen in the eastern tropical Pacific set their nets around dolphins, which resulted in the deaths of tens of millions of dolphins. There are many kinds of tuna, but the most popular for the Japanese sashimi market is the bluefin, one of the largest of all fishes. The largest bluefin tuna ever caught weighed 1,496 pounds. The most expensive bluefin tuna was a 440-pounder that sold at the Tsukiji fishmarket in Tokyo for \$173,600. Almost all of the bluefin tuna caught by commercial fishermen goes to Japan. The Japanese import 800,000 tons of tuna every year. (That's right: eight hundred thousand tons.) At the Tsukiji fishmarket in Tokyo, an estimated 1,000 bluefin tunas

are auctioned off every day. Is there mercury in tuna? Yes. Is it at levels dangerous to humans? Not unless you eat tuna three meals a day. Many scientists consider the tuna the most highly-evolved fish in the world. Bluefin tunas, along with mako and great white sharks, are the only "warm-blooded" fishes; they can elevate their body temperature as much as 25 degrees above the water they swim in. This makes them particularly effective as predators. Bluefin tuna can swim 55 miles an hour. They can migrate across the Pacific and Atlantic Oceans, then turn around and do it again. MIT scientists built a robot tuna in an attempt to replicate the incredibly efficient swimming performance of the living fish. They failed. The bluefin tuna, and to a lesser extent, the yellowfin, are among the most sought-after of big-game fishes. Celebrated anglers like Zane Grey, Ernest Hemingway, and Phillip Wylie wrote ecstatically about their pursuit of giant tuna. Aquaculture ("fish farming") now accounts for 40% of the world's fish consumption. Tuna ranching now takes place in every country on and in the Mediterranean, and in Australia and Mexico as well. It is scheduled to begin in Hawaii and Alaska. Because of commercial overfishing, almost exclusively to feed the insatiable Japanese sashimi market, all populations of bluefin tuna are endangered. Overfishing in the Mediterranean has caused such a drop in the bluefin tuna population that the World Wildlife Fund has called for a complete halt to all tuna-fishing there. If we cannot learn to breed bluefin tuna in captivity, the great fish will become extinct, writing finis to commercial and recreational tuna fishing--and to the consumption of maguro sashimi in Japan. In March, 2008, an Australian company called "Clean Seas" succeeded in getting captive bluefin tuna to spawn. If they can raise them to market size (200-300 pounds), it may relieve the pressure on wild-caught fish.

--This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Ellis (The Book of Sharks) covers everything one could want to know about the biggest, fastest, warmest-blooded, warmest-bodied fish in the world, describing the various species of tuna and giving a thorough account of the history of recreational and commercial tuna fishing. The bluefin tuna--on the brink of extinction--receives the most attention, and Ellis contends that the Japanese fondness for tuna sashimi--and Japanese willingness to violate fishing restrictions--is largely to blame. Tuna farms, where bluefin are fattened, were once thought to be the answer, but Ellis argues that they are contributing to the problem as young tuna do not have time to breed and replenish the stock in the ocean; the fish fed to the bluefin are themselves being overfished; and waste from the pens causes pollution. Ellis presents an overload of information--too many facts and figures on weights, measurements and numbers of fish caught and sold--however, his impassioned message comes through clearly: someone must

figure out how to breed the bluefin in captivity, because as things stand now, it will not survive in the ocean. Photos not seen by PW. (July) Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

I must give the author credit as he certainly did his homework. This book is chock full of information on life history, history, fisheries management and just about anything you can think of related to tuna. It is a very thorough presentation of information with everything you did, and probably didn't want to know about tuna. At times the level of detail becomes excessive and distracting. The editor failed miserably. Much of the information is repeated, over and over, sometimes in the same chapter and often in several ensuing chapters. This made it more tedious to read as I got tired of seeing the same information three, four or more times. I also got bogged down in later chapters as the theme shifted from an objective presentation of information to biased environmentalist preaching. Would have been better just to present the facts - once - then let the reader decide for themselves where they stand on the issues. The fact that Ocean Watch has designated the western Atlantic Bluefin tuna fishery as sustainable and environmentally sound should be enough to discredit the author's assertions to the contrary.

A passionate polemic against eating fish, almost as if written by a vegan. But the author, an artist, tends to repeat facts of unknown providence as if they are true, and in...

Another ocean classic by Peters, this one on Tuna, mostly the Bluefin tuna. Contains history, biological, economics and environmental info. Many interesting factoids- one of the most interesting is not about Tuna at all- seems like most of the "whalemeat" sold in Japan is actually Dolphin! This is a great read that is hampered a bit by poor editing. The author states certain facts- over and over and over. Good editing would have caught this. There's also 3 drawings of various species of Bluefin Tunas- each labeled as a different species or subspecies. However, the drawings are the same in all three cases, except one is reversed left to right. However, it is informative, current, powerful and well written.

Great subject with very interesting parts/info but but extremely poorly edited, if edited at all, resulting in endless repeats and no clear 'storyline'. Could have been so much better if only....

My husband - a tuna fisherman - really likes this book!

Richard Ellis at his usual best!

BOOK REVIEW: *Tuna: Love, Death and Mercury* (also known as *Tuna, A Love Story*) by Richard Ellis (2008 Alfred Knopf, 334 pages). By Mark J. Palmer Associate Director International Marine Mammal Project Earth Island Institute Berkeley, CA

The bluefin tuna, a truly amazing fish, is threatened with extinction because we love it so much - as sushi, as a game fish, and as an economic engine. We once thought, not so long ago, that the world oceans were so large that fishing activity could not possibly endanger a species of wide-ranging fish like the bluefin. We were wrong. Richard Ellis has combined his talent as an artist of marine life with a book-writing career about all kinds of marine subjects. He has some excellent coffee-table books out with color reproductions of his paintings of whales, dolphins, and sharks, along with interesting text and observations. Two of my favorite marine animals, the great white shark and the giant squid, have been the subjects of two of his books (Great White Shark with Dr. John McCosker of the California Academy of Sciences in San Francisco, and The Search for the Giant Squid). Ellis also served for several years on the US delegation to the International Whaling Commission, helping push the moratorium on commercial whaling in the 1980's.

*Tuna: Love, Death and Mercury* focuses on the biology and history of the bluefin tuna, and Ellis investigates such things as past game fishing for bluefin (with some astonishing photographs of monster tuna caught by rod and reel), tuna fishing methods, and recent tuna "farms", which are not farms at all, but fattening operations for wild bluefin tuna and other species. The bulk of the book is dedicated to the decline of the bluefin in the Atlantic Ocean and probable extinction of this species, pointing out the links between bluefin fishing, the refusal of countries (in Europe and in North Africa) to reduce their catch in the face of scientific recommendations, and the consumers of Japan, especially, who buy most of the bluefin tuna that is for sale around the world, often at incredible prices. I recommend the book as a primer on tuna and for its writer, as Ellis is a very good writer. This book jumps around a bit more than some of his other works, but still keeps up interest throughout. He does describe other species of tuna, but mostly sticks to the bluefin story. It is not a scientific treatise, but he does do a good job of documenting most of his work. It has a very large bibliography on tuna, both books and articles. Hard to believe that one can write such a great book about a species of fish, but Ellis has done it!

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