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CNMI Fish Fact Sheets



Ronnie Cherise Camacho
Summer Intern
Division of Fish and Wildlife
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Bullethead Parrotfish (*Chlorurus sordidus*)

Chamorro: Palakse', Låggua

Carolinian: Yáár

Description: Palakse' are colorful (green, blue, yellow, red, orange, and pink). They have a rounded snout with beak-like teeth. In the initial phase, they vary in coloration. The smaller ones may be dark brown to light gray with or without the light area at the base of the tail. The larger ones may have a series of irregular rows of small light spots. In the terminal phase, the fish may also have a large tan area on the side or base of the tail.

Size: Common length is 5.9 inches (15 cm); maximum length is 15.7 inches (40.0cm).

Diet: Benthic algae (turf algae and calcareous algae), corals, snails, and zooplankton.

Habitat: Inhabits tropical seas that are rich in coral and open pavement areas of shallow reef flats, lagoons, seaward reefs, and drop-offs. Juveniles are found in coral rubble areas of reef flats and lagoons. The Bullethead Parrotfish can be found at a depth of 3 to 50 meters. They range from a region of 30°N to 33°S, 30°E to 130°W. They are distributed from the Red Sea south to Natal, South Africa and east to the Hawaiian, Line, and Ducie islands, north to the Ryukyu Islands, south to Perth, New South Wales, Lord Howe Island, and Rapa Island.

Caught by: Spear. Night fishing using a spear is easier when catching palakse' but they would be small in size. When day fishing, it is harder to catch them but they come in big sizes. When the tide is low, they are easy to catch because they are hiding.

A few facts: The Bullethead Parrotfish is one of the most widespread parrotfishes. They travel and feed in groups and mix with other algae-eating fishes. The coral that they eat is excreted into sand, and over a ton of sand can be excreted every year. Palakse' are born female but as they reach maturity, some change to male. At night, the palakse' tucks into a hole and covers itself with a clear mucus that hides its scent from predators. Juveniles and individuals in the initial phase form large groups that travel great distances between feeding and sleeping grounds. Palakse' behave differently in different habitats and they are benthopelagic. The maximum recorded age is 15 years in Australia. In the Pacific region, the maximum reported age is 8 to 10 years. In Hawaii, the Bullethead Parrotfish is heavily fished.



Initial Phase



Terminal Phase

Bluespine Unicornfish (*Naso unicornis*)

Chamorro: Tátaga, Guåsa'

Carolinian: Igh-Falafal

Description: Adult tátaga has a horn on its forehead but not extending past the front of the mouth. The horn is a bump when the fish is young. They have an olive to grayish color and are yellowish at the belly. The base of the tail is blue with two pairs of sharp spines. When they are young, the tail is emarginated. The dorsal and anal fins are yellowish with blue narrow stripes.

Size: Common length is 19.7 inches (50.0cm); maximum length is 27.6 inches (70.0 cm).

Diet: Feeds on coarse leafy brown algae like the *Sargassum*.

Habitat: Tropical waters with temperatures ranging from 26°C (78.8°F) to 29°C (84.2°F). They live in shallow reef slopes, lagoons, channels, moats, and seaward reefs with a strong surge. Juveniles are found in shallow protected bays and harbors. Tátaga can be found at a depth of 1 to 80 meters and range from a region of 35°N to 33°S. They are distributed from the Red Sea and East Africa to the Hawaiian, Marquesas, and Tuamoto islands, north to southern Japan, and south to Lord Howe and Rapa islands.

Caught by: Spear, cast net, rod, or hook and line. The best way to catch tataga' is in the morning because that's when they go out to feed. Some fishermen prefer to catch them at night because they would have finished digesting the seaweed. When using rod, seaweed is the best bait.

A few facts: Tátaga are benthopelagic. They can be found singly, in pairs, or in groups. Some large adults are found singly at the edge of a reef. They are active during the day and constantly on the move. They are shy and friendly. When stressed, they will sulk and hide. Pair-spawning has been observed.



Blackspot Emperor (*Lethrinus harak*)

Chamorro: Mafute'

Carolinian: Weyaw

Description: The upper body of the mafute' is olive green, the lower body is pale. They often have a large dark yellow-edged elliptical blotch. The pectoral, pelvic, dorsal, and anal fins are white to pinkish. The tail is orange or reddish. The vertical fins are sometimes spotted or striped. They have thick fleshy lips. Sometimes they have light blue dots bordering the rim of the eyelid and around the nostril. The mouth is slightly protracted. The inner base of pectorals is densely covered with scales. The scales on its back sometimes have a white center.

Size: Common length is 11.8 inches (30.0 cm); maximum length is 19.7 inches (50.0 cm).

Diet: Small fish, mollusks, echinoderms, crustaceans, and polychaetes.

Habitat: Tropical waters with shallow sandy areas with seagrass or scattered corals, mangroves, lagoons, and channels. Mafute' are often found at a depth of 0.5 to 20 meters. They range from a region of 32°N to 22°S. They are distributed from the Red Sea and East Africa to Samoa, north to southern Japan, and south to northeastern Australia.

Caught by: Spear, shore seines, handline, rod. When using hook and line or rod, squid or octopus is the best bait to use.

A few facts: Mafute' is a market fish but the meat spoils fast. They are non-migratory fish and are found in small groups or singly. It is reported that they spawn throughout the year during the first five days of lunar months in Palau. Mafute' can rapidly change color. The max reported age was 15 years.



Orangespine Unicornfish (*Naso lituratus*)

Chamorro: Hangan

Carolinian: Bwuláálay

Description: The color of the body is grayish brown. A yellow line runs from the back of the mouth to the eye. The base of the tail is orange with two pairs of sharp spines. They have orange lips and a black snout. Light yellow above the eyes. The dorsal fin is white and black beneath with a pale blue line at the base. The anal fin is mainly orange with a narrow black and blue line. The pelvic fins are dark brown. Adult males have trailing filaments on the top and bottom of the tail. The tail has a yellow line on the edge.

Size: 12 inches to a maximum length of 18.1 inches (46.0 cm).

Diet: Leafy brown algae like *Sargassum* and *Dictyota*.

Habitat: Tropical climates with temperatures of 24°C (75.2°F) to 26°C (78.8°F). They live in areas of rock, coral, or rubble of seaward reefs and lagoons. Juveniles are usually found in shallow rocky reefs. Hangan are found at a depth up to 90 meters, but usually 5 to 30 meters. They range from a region of 35°N to 30°S, 96°E to 127°W. They are distributed throughout Honshu, Japan south to the Great Barrier Reef and New Caledonia and east to the Hawaii, French Polynesia, and Pitcairn.

Caught by: Spear, gill net, or surround net. It is best to catch hangon in the morning.

A few facts: Hangan are benthopelagic. Adults usually swim in small or large groups and sleep among corals. Juveniles are sometimes in small groups and mix with other surgeonfish of the same size. Hangan are territorial and aggressive towards other surgeonfish and its own kind. They have the ability to change colors and are sometimes poisonous. Pair-spawning has been observed. The egg and larvae are pelagic.



Bigeye Scad (*Selar crumenophthalmus*)

Chamorro: Atulai

Carolinian: Peti

Description: The body is elongated and compressed. Atulai have large eyes. Color is metallic blue to bluish green on the back and side. The belly is white. A yellow stripe is sometimes present. The operculum has a black spot.

Size: Juveniles reach a length of 5.1 inches (13 cm); maximum length is 11.8 inches (30.0 cm).

Diet: Small shrimp, benthic invertebrates, and forams when inshore; zooplankton and fish larvae when offshore.

Habitat: Subtropical climate with tropical seas. They can be found inshore or in shallow waters. They are found at a depth of up to 170 meters but usually 2 to 10 meters. They range from a region of 47°N to 24°S, 180°E to 180°W. They are distributed in the Indo-Pacific region from East Africa to Rapa, north to southern Japan and the Hawaii, south to New Caledonia. In the Eastern Pacific region, they are distributed from Mexico to Peru, including the Galapagos Islands. In the Western Atlantic region, they are distributed from Nova Scotia, Canada and Bermuda through the Gulf of Mexico and the Caribbean to São Paulo, Brazil. In the Eastern Atlantic region, they are distributed from Cape Verde to southern Angola.

Caught by: Hook and line, rod, grapple, or nets. It is best to catch them at night using a rod and glow-in-the-dark bait. It's best to use grapple in the day time but it can be dangerous. Juveniles are caught with a light tackle.

A few facts: Atulai are marketed fish that are dried or salted. They are pelagic fish that prefer clear oceanic water around islands to coastal waters. They are occasionally found in turbid waters. They are nocturnal. They are always in schools of hundreds or thousands. The best time to fish for them is August to November. On moonless nights, they are attracted to light. The eggs and larvae are pelagic.



Bluefin Trevally (*Caranx melampygus*)

Chamorro: I'e' (young), Tarakitu (adult)

Carolinian: Langú

Description: The head and top half of the body is silvery blue and when it reaches 6.3 inches (16 cm), it is covered with small blue and black spots. The dorsal, anal, and tail fins are a deep electric blue. The tail fin is forked. The pectoral fins are yellow. The median fins are electric blue and the breast is fully scaled. The fins of juveniles or the young are pale to dusky with yellow pectorals and dark fins.

Size: Common length is 23.6 inches (60.0 cm); maximum length is 46.1 inches (117 cm). Common weight is 23.8 pounds (10.8 kg); maximum recorded weight was 95.9 pounds (43.5 kg).

Diet: Feeds on other fishes, cephalopods (octopus and squid), and crustaceans (crabs, shrimps, and lobsters)

Habitat: Tarakitu live around coral reefs with a tropical climate. They are usually found at depths up to 190 meters. Juveniles are found in shallow sandy inshore waters at depths of around 2 meters. When they are inshore, they are found in bays, harbors, coral and rocky reefs, lagoons, sand flats, and seagrass meadows. Bluefin Trevallies can also be found in rivers. They range from a region of 30°N to 35°S. They are distributed in the Indo-Pacific region from Red Sea and East Africa to Ducie Islands, north to the Ryukyu Islands, south to New Caledonia. In the Eastern Central Pacific region, they are distributed from Mexico to Panama.

Caught by: Spear, rod, or net. Usually caught in the day because that is when they are most active. Rod is the best way to catch them and the bait used is fake fish, squid, octopus, but mostly i'e'.

A few facts: Tarakitu are reef associated pelagic fish. They are marketed fish that are sold fresh, dried, or salted. They are fast swimmers and are usually seen in small schools, although they can be found singly. The tarakitu can be toxic when it reaches a length of more than 19.7 inches (50 cm). They reach sexual maturity at 11.8 to 15.7 inches (30 to 40 cm) around 2 years of age. They can reproduce up to 8 times a year and release up to 6 million eggs. About 700 pounds of tarakitu are fished every year in Hawaii. During the day, they patrol the reefs they live in.



Yellowtail Kalikali (*Pristipomoides auricilla*)

Chamorro: Buninas

Carolinian: Falaghal-Maróóbw

Description: Color is purplish or brownish violet. The sides are covered with yellow spots or faint yellow V-shaped bands. The dorsal fin and upper part of the tail fin is yellow to yellowish-brownish. Dorsal and anal fins don't have scales. Their last soft rays extend in short filaments. The pectoral fins are long, reaching the anus.

Size: Common length is 9.8 inches (25.0 cm); maximum length is 17.7 inches (45.0 cm).

Diet: Feeds on fish and large plankton.

Habitat: They live near deep underwater cliffs and waters with rocky bottom. They are found in deep water with a depth of 90 to 360 meters but are usually found at 181 to 270 meters. They range from a region of 35°N to 25°S, 89°E to 150°W. They are distributed in the Indo-Pacific region from Reunion to Hawaii and Rapa, north to Japan, south to Australia and New Caledonia.

Caught by: Bottomfishing.

A few facts: Kalikali is a marketed fish. They are deep water fishes.



Mahi Mahi (*Coryphaena hippurus*)

Chamorro: Batague

Carolinian: Sopór

Description: The back and sides are covered with metallic blues and greens. The lower body is white and yellow. Iridescent blue-green spots are scattered. The dorsal fin is a deep blue. The tail, anal, and pelvic fins are yellow. The tail fin is deeply forked. Males have a bony crest on the front of the head. Females have a rounded head. A single dorsal fin extends from above the eye almost to tail. A concave anal fin extends from the anus almost to tail. The color is striking with golden hues on the side. Small Mahi Mahi have vertical bars on the sides of their body. Mahi Mahi fade to yellow-gray when they are dead.

Size: Common length is 39.4 inches (100.0 cm); maximum length is 82.7 inches (210.0 cm). Mahi Mahi usually reaches a weight of 33.1 pounds (15 kg). The maximum published weight is 88.2 pounds (40.0 kg).

Diet: Feeds mostly on flying fish, mackerel, and zooplankton but also eats crustaceans, squid, octopus, and crabs.

Habitat: Subtropical climate with a temperature of 21°C (69.8°F) to 30°C (86°F). They are found in tropical seas with open waters and near the coast. They are found as deep as 85 meters, but usually at 0 to 10 meters. They range at an area of 47°N to 38°S, 180°E to 180°W.

Caught by: Nets, trolling, and long line with lures like squid. When trolling, 30 to 50-pound gear is more suitable.

A few facts: Mahi Mahi is an important game fish. They are marketed frozen or fresh and are highly valued. They have excellent eyesight and can reach speeds of about 50 miles per hour. They grow extremely fast and are abundant from February to April. Mahi Mahi are highly migratory and travel in schools. They reach sexual maturity at 4 to 5 months. Each female produces up to several hundred thousand eggs and spawns in the open sea. The eggs and larvae are pelagic. The maximum reported age is 4 years but usually less than two years.



Skipjack Tuna (*Katsuwonus pelamis*)

Chamorro: Bunita

Carolinian: Arangaap

Description: The body does not have scales except for the corselet and lateral line. The back is purplish blue, and the lower sides and belly are silver with 4 to 6 dark bands. The Skipjack has two dorsal fins. Behind the second dorsal fin, there are 7 to 9 finlets. Behind the anal fin is 7 to 8 finlets. The pectoral fins are short.

Size: Common length is 31.5 inches (80.0 cm); maximum length is 43.3 inches (110 cm). Juveniles are less than 5.9 inches (15 cm). Size at first maturity is 15.7 inches (40 cm) to 21.7 inches (55 cm) at 1.5 years of age. Common weight is 17.6 pounds (8 kg) to 22.0 pounds (10 kg). Maximum weight is 71.7 pounds (32.5 kg) to 76.1 pounds (34.5 kg).

Diet: Small fishes (mackerel), cephalopods (squid), crustaceans, and mollusks. They sometimes eat their own kind.

Habitat: Offshore waters and tropical seas with temperatures of 15°C (59°F) to 32°C (89.6°F). They can be found as deep as 260 meters. They range at an area of 63°N to 47°S, 180°E to 180°W.

Caught by: Trolling using fish, squid, plugs, spoons, feathers, or strip bait.

A few facts: Skipjack Tunas are marketed fish that are frozen, canned, dried, salted, or smoked. They are migratory. They grow rapidly and live for only a few years. It is the world's 2nd most important fish with an annual catch of six million tons. They school in surface waters with birds, sharks, whales, and drifting objects. They are fast-swimming and can show characteristics like jumping, feeding, and foaming. Skipjack Tunas spawn throughout the year in the tropics. The eggs are released in several portions. Eggs and larvae are pelagic. The maximum reported age was 12 years. Skipjacks stay near the surface at night. They usually feed in the early morning to late afternoon. They usually live 8 to 12 years. They have mercury contamination so pregnant women are advised not to eat much.



Blue Marlin (*Makaira mazara*)

Chamorro: Båtto'

Carolinian: Taghalaar

Description: The Blue Marlin has a long, bony spear. Its back is dark blue, and its belly is pale silver. It has two dorsal fins. The first dorsal fin is blue-black with dark spots. It is short in the front, taller in the middle, then shorter again in the back. The other fins are dark brown with tinges of dark blue. The body is elongated and not very compressed. Pectoral fins are falcate and flexible. Body is densely covered with small embedded scales with one or two sharp points and has bluish stripes.

Size: Common length is 137.8 inches (350cm); maximum length is 196.9 inches (500 cm).

Diet: Fish, crustaceans, mackerel, and cephalopods (squids).

Habitat: Subtropical or tropical climate with a temperature around 21°C (69.8°F). Found in offshore waters with a depth of 200 meters, but usually found at a depth of 37 to 100 meters. They are not usually seen next to land unless there is a deep drop off. They range at an area of 44°N to 40°S, 30°E to 74°W.

Caught by: Trolling with lures or live bait, like squid.

A few facts: Blue marlin is the world's largest species of billfish. The meat has good quality, and they are marketed frozen and prepared for sashimi and sausages in Japan. They grow rapidly and are considered the finest sport fish. They are aggressive, and they jump, dive, and pull hard. They are highly migratory. They are most abundant during the summer months. The maximum reported age was 28 years. They form small schools, but the larger ones travel alone. They migrate between spawning and different feeding areas.



Sources

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Anthony R. Mendiola

Eric "Fala" Cabrera