



Finding tuna the easy way (Image: Seawifs)

Tuna in peril as catches reach triple the limit

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TIMES are tough for tuna. The guidance of scientists that advise groups that manage tuna stocks is falling on deaf ears.

The International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas meets this week in Brazil to set catch limits. ICCAT's scientific advisers have told it that [stocks of the giant bluefin tuna are plummeting towards collapse](#). Catches in 2008 were at three times the ICCAT limit, which is itself more than what its scientific advisers consider sustainable ([see "Tigers of the sea"](#)). "It's like the year before the collapse of the northern cod," says Dan Pauly at the University of British Columbia, Canada. In 1992 the Newfoundland cod fishery [collapsed](#). It never recovered.

Giant bluefin tuna stocks are plummeting, like the year before the collapse of the northern cod. As stocks fall in the Atlantic, the tuna fishing fleets are targeting the Indian Ocean. So far, stocks of several tuna species there appear in good shape, with the exception of the yellowfin. According to the scientists advising the Indian Ocean Tuna Commission (IOTC), stocks of yellowfin are being overfished. The panel of scientists will meet later this month to discuss the available data, but it may prove futile: the IOTC's member nations rejected the panel's recommended catch limits in April. And in September, India launched [a new ocean-observing satellite](#). It will be used to spot plankton blooms, which attract small fish and, in turn, tuna - [so the fishing boats will know where to go](#).