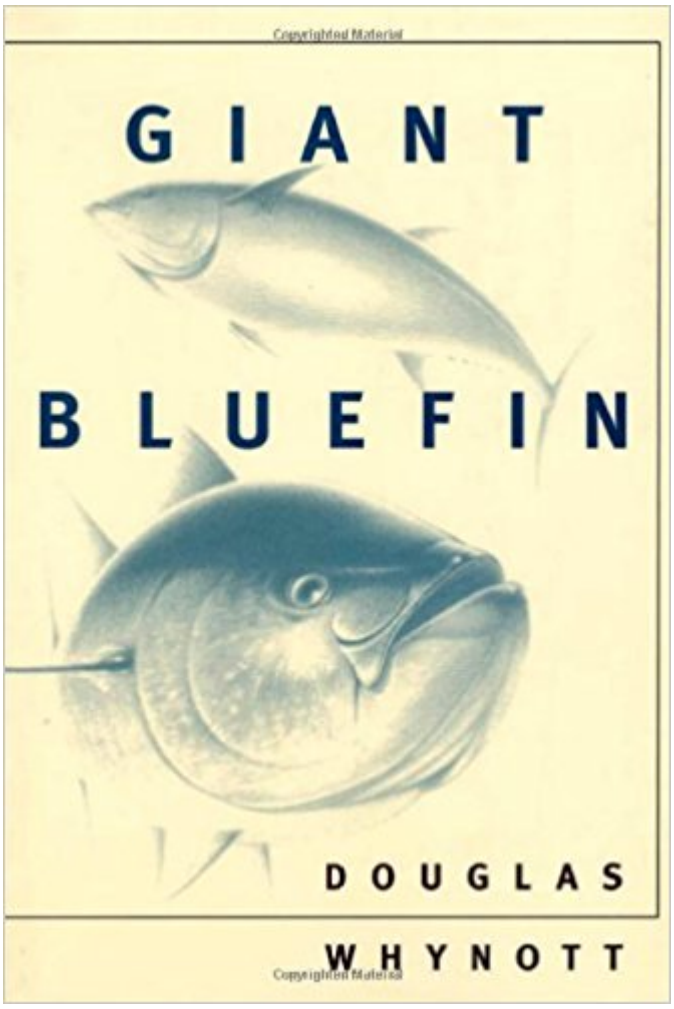
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Giant Bluefin



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Synopsis

Telling the story of one fisherman’s passionate hunt for an elusive and valuable prey--the bluefin tuna--a look at the modern fisherman and his world reveals competition and camaraderie, and pressures of the conservationist movement to limit the harvest.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

The world’s largest finfish, the bluefin tuna can grow to 10 feet and weigh 1500 pounds. It is a favorite with the Japanese, and a single fish has brought $42,000 (a piece of sushi in a Tokyo restaurant can cost $75). Whynott (Following the Bloom) takes us through two seasons of bluefin harpoon fishing off the New England coast from Cape Cod to Maine. He introduces Bob Sampson of Barnstable, whose family has lived and fished on Cape Cod since colonial times. Many bluefin fishermen, Sampson included, use spotter planes; Whynott goes out with one pilot. He observes the catch by Sampson’s and other boats and details the route from dockside to the Tokyo fish market. In 1992, environmental groups attempted to limit the catch; fishermen argued that population stocks were plentiful. Whynott has written a fascinating story of the bluefin and the Cape Cod fishermen. Copyright 1995 Reed Business Information, Inc.

Bluefin tuna, highly prized by the Japanese for sushi and sashimi, are caught by harpoon by New England fishers in the Gulf of Maine. The boats work in tandem with pilots flying overhead, who spot the presence and position of schools of fish. Whynott (English, Mount Holyoke Coll.) spent time with

fishers and pilots working out of Cape Cod to become familiar with all aspects of the bluefin tuna fishery, including tuna physiology, marketing economics, and the efforts of conservation interests to limit the catch. Although it may appeal only to a limited audience, this is a beautifully written account full of human interest about the lives of the spotter pilots and several members of a fishing family. Appropriate for specialized collections and for public libraries in fishing communities.Judith B. Barnett, Pell Marine Science Lib., Univ. of Rhode Island, KingstonCopyright 1995 Reed Business Information, Inc.

An interesting look at today’s bluffing fishery. A mixture of science and the characters who make up the fishing industry, as well as the market forces that drive it.

excellent reading with verisimilitude, held my interest throughout and made me want even more to get out there and partake in the goodness.

Awesome Book!!

I didnt even buy this.

INFORMATIVE

I thoroughly enjoyed this book and found it surprisingly engrossing. It introduced me to a whole other world, the world of commercial fishing, one I knew little about, a world filled with rivalries, friendships, a long history, a world I think most Americans don’t appreciate. Though focusing primarily on the harpoon fishery of the giant bluefin tuna or "jumbo bluefin" (known by the scientific name of _Thunnus thynnus_) of New England waters, the author Douglas Whynott discusses fishermen who use other methods (such as trolling or using a purse seine) as well as problems that the fishing industry and that individual fishermen face in general as well as some topics in marine biology. The giant bluefin fishery is a lucrative market, with individual fish often worth $40 or more a pound (when fat after having feed all season on local prey fish), some fish bringing in at market prices as high as $50,000 per fish (though often much lower than that). The highest prices are obtained in Japan, where red tuna meat (maguro) is highly prized. Individual fish are packed in ice and air-lifted over to Japan, each specimen analyzed there at market in a method not unlike a raw diamond is regarded by professional jewelers so that the best cuts could be made, all so Japanese

restaurant goers can pay upwards of $75 for a single serving of raw fish. Whynott relates how the bluefin tuna fishery has come a long way; the bluefin was once called the "horse mackerel" and worth a mere five cents a pound, generally being served as cat food. In fact in the early 20th century they were even thought to be poisonous and were primarily caught so that the fish could be boiled to produce lamp oil. Fishermen who specialized in bluefin have often had to get other jobs when the fishing season was over, whether fishing for cod or other fish, shrimping, harvesting mussels, or even working non-fishing jobs, something that has been slowly changing as the market for bluefin has become more lucrative though not still quite prevalent. The fish obtained for the sushi market are provided by the harpoon fishery of New England, an industry that while using spotter planes to locate schools, sophisticated devices to measure water temperature, and a knowledge of esoteric regulations in international committees and national organizations that govern quota size for each season's catches (regulations that are often the subject of intense debate, a topic well-covered in the book), Japanese market preferences (to properly grade fish often takes year of experience, as each fish taken to market is graded on freshness, color, fat, and shape), and even currency fluctuations (as upward or downward exchange rates of the yen versus the dollar can mean large differences in prices received), still relies on a single man hand-throwing a bronze-headed harpoon at a fast moving fish (albeit a harpoon rigged so that a powerful 800-volt electric shock can be delivered to the animal). No other method will do, as purse seining damages the fish and no other method can reliable catch the giant bluefins that the Japanese so highly prize. The harpooners operate from boats that are often called "stick boats," constructed with long pulpits built off the bow and out over the water, the pulpit sometimes more than 25 feet in length (designed so that they could be cranked up while in harbor), a stand at the end of which is where the fishermen hurls his 12 foot harpoon. What made this book so interesting in part was the portrayal of individual fishermen, the author following their trials and tribulations over several seasons. Whynott focused mainly on two fishermen - Bob Sampson, captain of the _Scratcher_ and his son Brad Sampson - and a spotter pilot, Fred Brooks or "Brooksie," going out with them in all manner of weather, relating their hopes and aspirations and the many problems that they have faced. It was not hard not to root for them after a while. The tuna themselves are of course well-covered in the book, a fish species that arrives every year to the Gulf of Maine to fatten on the locally abundant schools of mackerel, sand eels, and herring, a rich feeding ground that attracts all manner of marine life including several species of sharks, whales, and porpoises, throughout the summer increasing their body weight by more than 7.5 percent per month. The bluefin is a fascinating animal, the largest of the finfish (up to ten feet in length and a thousand pounds in weight), among the fastest (which can swim in 50 mile

an hour bursts, able to beat their tail fins at frequencies of thirty cycles per second, providing 90 percent of their locomotive power), and one of the most migratory of all animals (with some tagged individuals known to have made 8,000 mile round trips feeding and spawning forays through the Atlantic). Bluefins have a very sophisticated physiology, having large blood volumes and the highest proportion of oxygen among fishes, concentrations of hemoglobin as high as that of humans, their gill surface area the highest of any fish species, producing what is the metabolically active of all fish species; an animal that is "warm-blooded" or endothermic, able to maintain body temperatures of between 77 and 80 degrees Fahrenheit while swimming in waters between 45 and 86 degrees from Brazil to the Gulf of Mexico and the Mediterranean to Norway. The bluefin is truly one of the ocean’s top predators, essentially a tropical fish that has evolved to take advantage of underutilized food resources in subpolar waters. An absolutely excellent book, one I would highly recommend.

If you’re looking for another "The Perfect Storm" or "Hungry Ocean" don’t bother with this book. This book was written for the fisherman in mind - especially the Giant Bluefin harpoon fisherman. It gives a true insight of the highly fraternal and elite tuna fishing community in New England. Whynott gives the reader a real life picture of a handfull of local legends in the tuna fishing industry. In a race to fill the Government quotas, these blue water hunters ply the Atlantic for the elusive and lucrative fish that often weighs more than 800 pounds. An exciting page turner for the fisherman already familiar with Giant Bluefin Tuna fishing.

I have bought this book for several of my friends. Whynott gets it right, this fishery. This is a kind of source book for it, and a history of the people who do it. The review below by the smartass reviewer (what’s this see-me stuff anyway?) says that "A Perfect Storm" is a better book, and it is in a way. That’s a great adventure book, but in my estimation, you’ll learn more about fish and fishermen, and the people in this whacky fishery, by reading Giant Bluefin. It’s one of the best books I’ve read about fishing.

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