

Tuna near extinction in Mediterranean

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The World Wildlife Fund says bluefin tuna in the eastern Atlantic Ocean and the Mediterranean is nearing extinction.

"This is past the alarm stage," Simon Cripps, director of the global marine program at the World Wildlife Fund, told The New York Times. "We are seeing a complete collapse of the tuna population. It could disappear and never come back."

The Washington, D.C.-based, organization is demanding the European Union impose an immediate halt to all bluefin tuna fishing.

The WWF said an independent study it commissioned showed fishing fleets from the European Union, Libya and Turkey are far exceeding their fishing quotas and then deliberately underreporting their catches.

But with tuna selling for as much as \$15 a pound in Tokyo, commercial fishermen from France, Italy and Spain routinely use sonar and airplane spotters to fish the last breeding refuges in the eastern Mediterranean and Libyan waters, the WWF said.

A ship owned by the environmental group Greenpeace spent a week recently trailing French, Italian and Spanish tuna boats in the Mediterranean trying to catch the trawlers engaged in illegal fishing, The Times reported. But Greenpeace said the boats were unable to find a single tuna to catch.

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