

Cornwall's mysterious bluefin tuna dissected

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The giant fish was dissected in front of an audience of local marine stakeholders.

Researchers from the University of Exeter's Penryn Campus have completed their post-mortem of a Bluefin tuna that washed up unexpectedly on Cornwall's Kingsand Beach last July.

The giant fish, measuring 2.4m long and weighing 140kg, was dissected at the University's Environment and Sustainability Institute (ESI) in front of an audience of local marine stakeholders.

Dr Lucy Hawkes, from the University's Centre for Ecology and Conservation, described the [tuna](#) as "the Ferrari of the ocean." She was particularly impressed with the fish's retractable dorsal fin and characteristic yellow finlets, which facilitate speedy manoeuvring through the water. She said, "The huge dorsal fin folds away completely

into the back of the tuna".

Dr Matthew Witt, a lecturer based at the ESI, said that the experts were not immediately able to establish the animal's cause of death. However, the autopsy team collected samples that will allow colleagues to perform toxicology and heavy metal analyses, investigate the tuna's geographic origins, and estimate the animal's age.

The fish was found in July 2014 by five friends—Sarah Little, Laura Pickervance, Hannah Ford, Shauna Creamer, and Charlotte Chambers—who stumbled across the animal while kayaking. They reported the sighting to the Cornwall Wildlife Trust, who helped arrange for the tuna to be transported to the Penryn Campus.

Had the Bluefin been caught by a fishery with a quota for this species, it could have been worth nearly £26,000—or approximately £185 per kg. Instead, its untimely death provided a priceless opportunity for dissection attendees to learn more about the anatomy of an animal that is rarely observed in Cornwall.

Provided by University of Exeter

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