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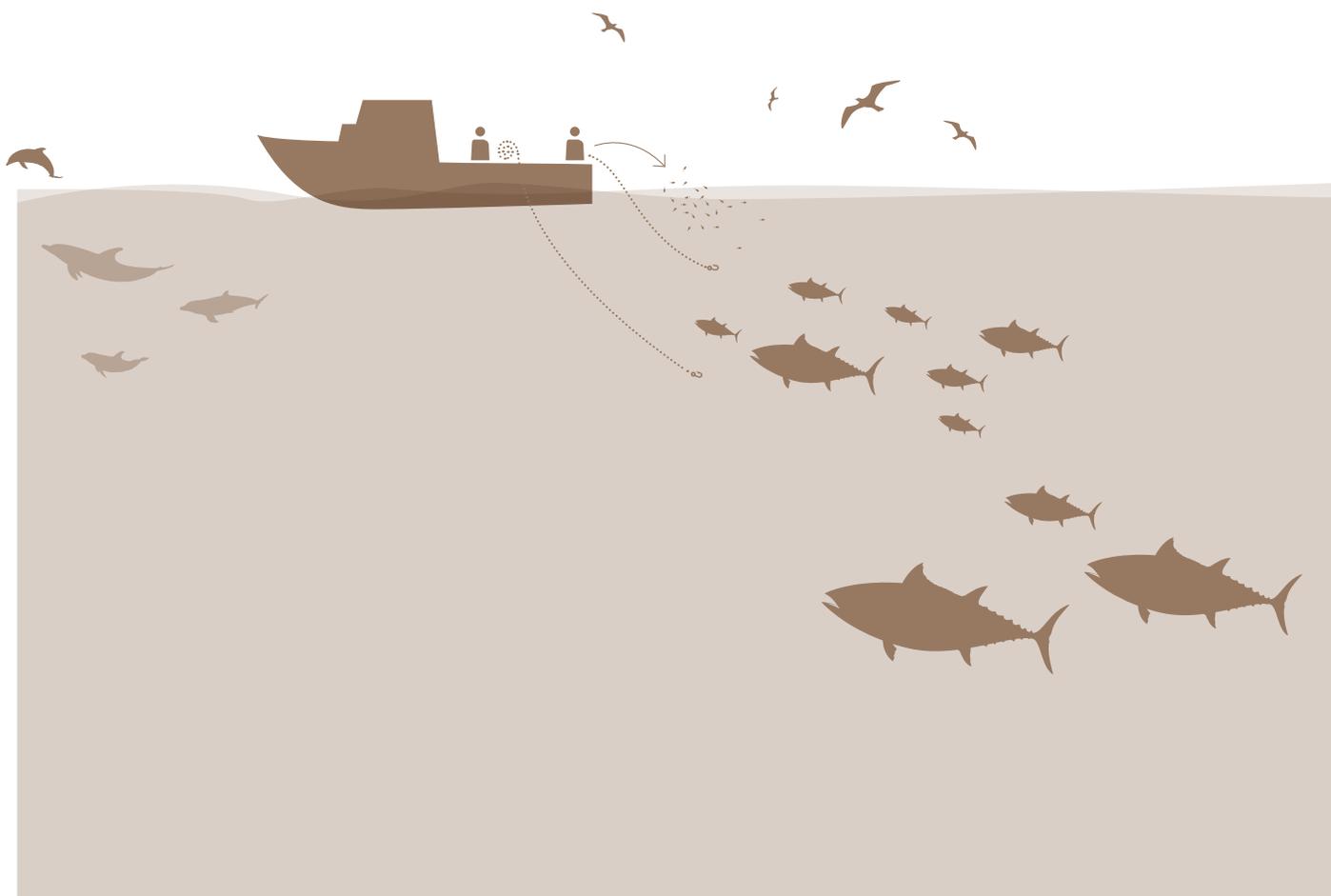
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ARTESMAR[®]

The Art of Selective Fishing

Yellowfin Tuna

Thunnus albacares
Single-Hook | Handline
Maldives



The Art of Selective Fishing

Maldivian fishermen have mastered the art of selectively catching adult yellowfin tuna as they pass through the waters of the Maldivian archipelago on their migration routes in the Indian Ocean. Tuna fishing is traditionally done from locally manufactured wooden boats (“masdhonis”). A crew of 10–12 fishermen venture out for 2–4 days to fish in the waters outside the atolls of this coral island state. Fishing for large tuna starts by targeting small pelagics that are then used to catch larger bait fish, such as horse mackerel. It takes the experienced eyes of fishermen to look out for hunting yellowfin tuna, which are often associated with dolphins and birds. Using small live fish to create a feeding frenzy at the surface, fishermen attract large tuna from deeper zones to move towards the surface. The single-hooks are baited with live fish and pulled through the surface water using a handline monofilament. Working in a team, the fishermen deploy 4–5 hooks at the same time, carefully preventing any entanglement of the lines under the boat. Hooked large tuna are slowly pulled towards the boat by using a special technique that involves several fishermen to bring the tuna to the surface. The Maldivian yellowfin tuna fishery is highly selective, catching more than 98% adult yellowfin tuna at an average landing size of 40 kg. With this performance, the Maldivian yellowfin tuna fishery that uses single-hook handlines is among the most selective tuna fisheries worldwide. The total catch of this traditional small-scale fishery represents less than 4% of the total catch of yellowfin tuna in the Indian Ocean.

About the Project

The Maldivian handline yellowfin tuna fishery has existed for centuries; however, local fishermen have further developed and optimized this traditional fishery over the past decade as an alternative to the pole and line skipjack tuna fishery. Today, the handline yellowfin tuna fishery is an important component of the Maldivian fishing sector, contributing to export earnings and livelihood for many island communities. The Artesmar® program engages with community-based coastal fisheries in the mid-region of the Maldivian archipelago, stretching over an area of 30,000 km² and encompassing over 40 different islands. The initiative directly works with 800–1000 fishermen and includes 80–100 fishing vessels, which land tuna for processing and export on Hulumale island. The program focuses on various aspects of the tuna fishery supply and value chain, improving practices on fishing vessels, at landing sites and in processing facilities. The improvement of catch documentation, monitoring of landings and the implementation of traceability schemes are important aspects of the fishery improvement, which necessitate active cooperation with local authorities to support the implementation of tuna fishery management plans by means of co-management.



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