

# TUNAXXL

*Medienberichte*

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TunaXXL's youngest skipper, 19-year-old Capt Garth Meade, with the 1025lb bluefin he found for his client off Canso in Nova Scotia, Canada.

## Canada's giant bluefin season 2010

**BEFORE** modern commercial fishing techniques and an insatiable demand for premium sashimi devastated the Atlantic's enormous bluefin tuna, they were abundant in the Canadian province of Nova Scotia. Throughout the pioneering 'golden era' of this sport, the great anglers regarded these tuna as one of the ultimate challenges. Sadly, due to the demise of tuna stocks over recent decades, few had been seen or caught in these waters – but perhaps that is changing.

In 2008, Thomas Schmidt established the charter business TunaXXL ([www.tunaxxl.com](http://www.tunaxxl.com)) to enable anglers to fish the waters off Canso, Nova Scotia for the biggest tuna in the world. Canso is the farthest easterly fishing point on the mainland of Nova Scotia. There, like everywhere that Atlantic bluefin are found, the International Commission for Conservation of Atlantic Bluefin Tuna (ICCAT) and the Department of Fisheries and

Oceans (DFO) monitors strict quotas intended to regulate the total catch of bluefin. Working within these quotas, charter operators have only a tiny season in which their clients can retain their catch. Once an area's quota has been reached (by professional and charter combined) there are no more bluefin allowed to be killed that year.

The skippers of TunaXXL say that over the past two years they have seen encouraging signs of a shift back to 'the good old days', when even Franklin Roosevelt and Al Capone fished the Canadian waters. While the level of fishing from some bluefin ports result in an annual harvest season lasting less than 48 hours, the smaller fishing fleet operating out of Canso often enjoys a longer season. During their less than one-month season in Sept/Oct 2009, TunaXXL's anglers caught 87 bluefin, including a 791lb tuna, the biggest caught that year.

During the season in late 2010, tuna between 250-300lb were common and fishing with circle-hooks made it possible to release them unharmed. There were also much larger fish caught. Steve Collins from England landed a 970lb tuna on his first charter day. He spent four and a half hours in the fighting chair to land this giant. Afterwards, another 11 fish followed, weighing up to 870lb.

On the morning of October 20, Roman Ahke from Germany hooked a giant bluefin on stand-up tackle. After a six-hour struggle, he landed a 975lb monster. However, the big fish didn't stop there! TunaXXL's youngest skipper, 19-year-old Capt Garth Meade, caught his client a bluefin weighing 1025lb. The biggest recreationally-caught bluefin for Canso's 2010 season weighed 1110lb. Perhaps it's time to book a trip to Canada for September 2011. ■

## South Australia's Coffin Bay comes alive

**THE** spring of 2010 saw some of the biggest yellowtail kingfish in Australia (if not the world) caught by South Australian anglers in Coffin Bay. Kingfish of 30kg have rarely rated a mention this season, as specimens of over 40kg continue to hammer livebaits in unbelievably shallow water. Most of the fishing takes place in depths of under four metres, so it's not hard to imagine how much line these powerful giants can pull off on their first run!

The biggest

contention for the IGFA All Tackle world record had it not been released unweighed. The area has produced plenty of kingfish in the 1600-1650mm size range, most of which were tagged and released by dedicated sportfishers. In very few locations worldwide could you hope to find kingfish of this calibre – let alone

in water only a couple of metres deep!

Well-known SA fishing writer Shane Mensforth boated his personal best kingie in mid-

October. The fish took a live garfish on 24kg tackle and kept Shane busy for close to half an hour before eventually being led to the net. This giant measured right on 1700mm and was estimated at 40 to 45kg. Like the others caught by Shane and his son Brett, it was quickly released in good shape. ■



Shane Mensforth gently hoists his 1700mm kingfish for a quick photo prior to release.



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### POSSESSED

By Ken Fraser – World Record Holder for Bluefin Tuna  
Published by Ken Fraser, Bridgetown, Nova Scotia, Canada. 243pp.

It took just 45 minutes to land, but for 31 years the IGFA All Tackle World Record bluefin tuna has stood as a beacon to aspiring record-breakers. Ken Fraser documents the catch and his life chasing his beloved bluefin in the book *Possessed*.

REVIEWED BY: JOHN MCINTYRE

The author was born, educated and has worked for most of his life in the eastern provinces of Canada, bordering the Atlantic Ocean and the Gulf of St Lawrence, Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island (PEI). He has worked as a welding contractor, sports-store operator, general-store owner, and as a commercial lobster, white fish and tuna fisherman based at North Lake, PEI. This very interesting book recounts the fishing for giant bluefin tuna during the years from 1967 until 1986 from North Lake, usually described as 'The Tuna Capital of the World'. Additional information about the fishery in subsequent years up until 2007 is described, a period of lean catches, generally attributed to overfishing.

Ken Fraser started tuna fishing from friends' vessels and had a hand in boating numerous big fish during his early years, in particular with Glen Gibson, who caught the first tuna of over 1000lb. Gibson's 1065lb (484kg) bluefin was caught off Aulds Cove, Nova Scotia in November 1970 and set a new IGFA All Tackle World Record for bluefin tuna.

By then, the 'tuna bug' had well and truly bitten, and Ken Fraser outfitted his first boats to pursue these mighty fish. The most suitable vessels for the fishery were the Cape Island design, used extensively for the lobster fishery, due to their huge work area with a comparatively

small shelter cabin. Most were fitted with a large petrol engine, but later refined versions had powerful diesels installed. His most successful boat was the *Ashtar 11*, a 40ft Cape Island design, purchased in 1971 and extensively reworked to his requirements.

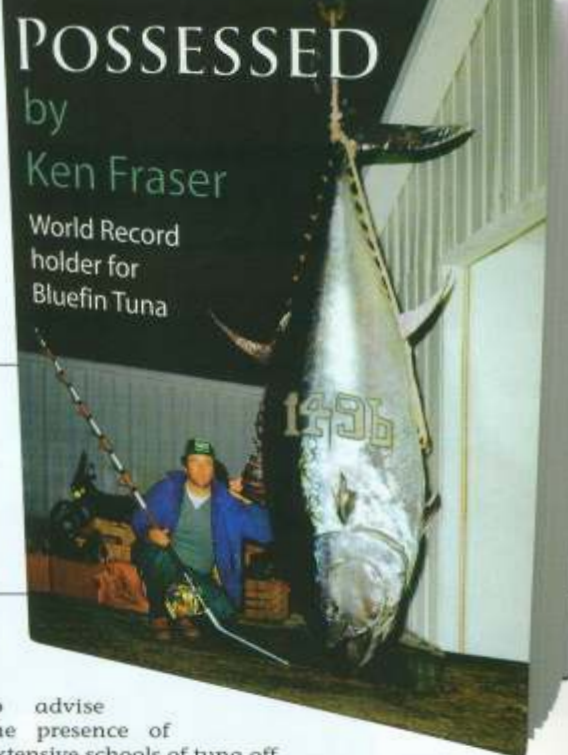
Fishing for giant bluefin is a taxing sport, and heavy tackle is required to control and eventually subdue these muscle-bound torpedoes. Conditions at sea in the east coast region can be boisterous, if not downright rough, and running a charter vessel for season after season can extract a toll on people and vessels. The introduction of quotas for tuna by the Canadian Fisheries authorities also created another dimension and increased the strain on the participants. Unfortunately, these regulations were required to conserve stocks from overfishing caused, in the main, by unregulated techniques, including harpooning and longline sets. The North Lake charter operators prided themselves on their strict adherence to IGFA rules and many were understandably aggrieved at some of the activities around them. All these matters are well-documented by the author and offer a cautionary tale for other fisheries.

Ken Fraser's capture of the current 1496 lb (679kg) All Tackle World Record occurred on October 26, 1979. It was the result of a poor spell of fishing at North Lake, PEI, and a chance phone call from a colleague

to advise the presence of extensive schools of tuna off Aulds Cove, Nova Scotia. His friend Eric Samson operated the *Lady and Misty* from Cape Breton, and Ken Fraser joined Samson and another friend, Kyte Gillis, for several days fishing. Gillis fought a sizeable fish for some time until the hook pulled. While cruising back up to restart their drift, a huge fish grabbed a bait in the boat's wake. Ken jumped into the chair as the tuna raced off with 600 yards of line. The angler had to work hard to retrieve line, but the fight was over in the surprisingly short time of 45 minutes. No-one aboard dreamt that the tuna was as heavy as the scales revealed, until it was raised on to the wharf, many hours later. Thirty-one years on, this bluefin tuna is still the IGFA All Tackle World Record, and is still one of the greatest gamefish ever caught on rod and reel!

There is so much more fascinating information in this book, and indeed in Ken Fraser's and his colleagues careers, that *BlueWater* is preparing a longer article from the book and from discussions with Ken, who now lives in semi-retirement running his tourist resort and campground at Bridgetown, Nova Scotia.

Autographed copies of *Possessed* are still available for \$36.75 Canadian, plus delivery, direct from the author. To order yours and confirm total price, including postage, email Ken Fraser at: [info@kenfraser.ca](mailto:info@kenfraser.ca).



"This tuna is one of the greatest gamefish ever caught on rod and reel!"