



Species Fact Sheets

Thyrsites atun (Euphrasen, 1791)



Thyrsites atun: [\(click for more\)](#)

Synonyms

- *Scomber dentatus* Bloch and Schneider, 1801
- *Thyrsites chilensis* Cuvier in Cuv. and Val., 1832
- *Thyrsites altivelis* Richardson, 1839
- *Scomber splendens* Richardson, 1842

FAO Names

En - Snoek, Fr - Escolier, Sp - Sierra.

3Alpha Code: SNK Taxonomic Code: 1750500101

Scientific Name with Original Description

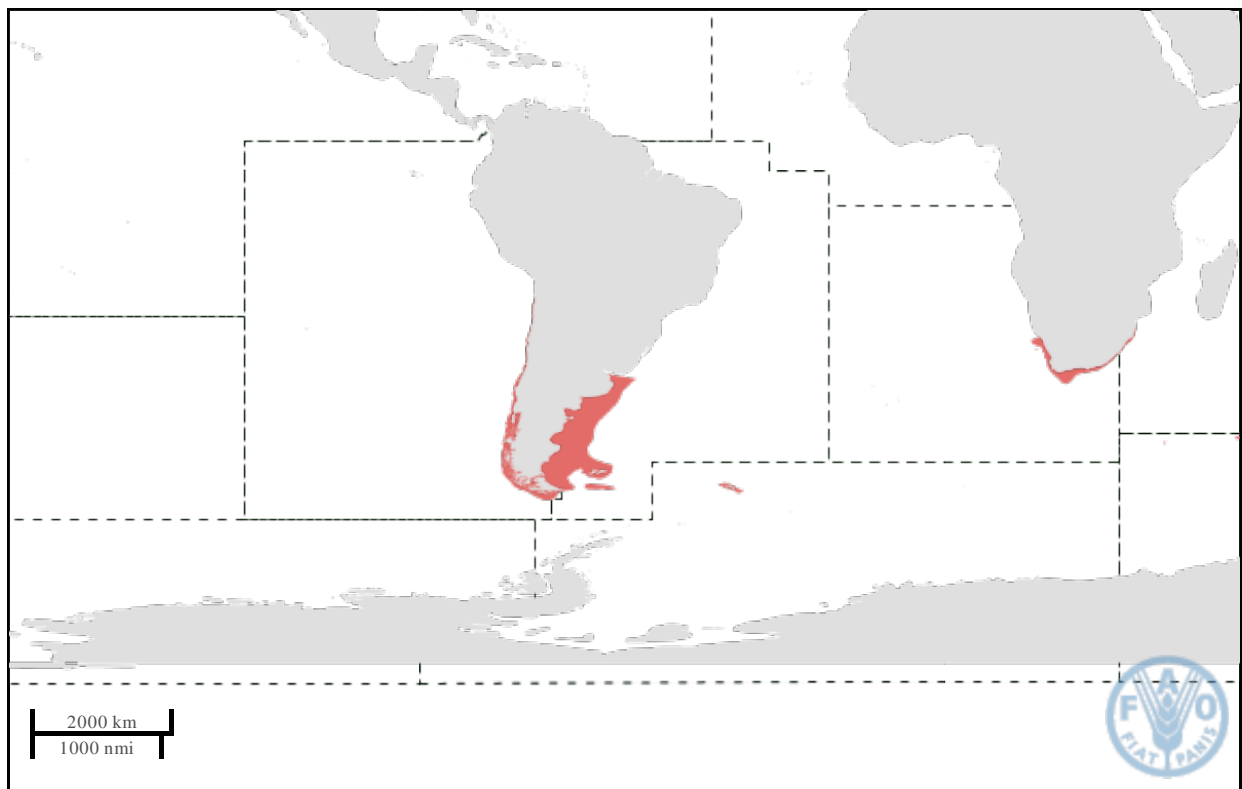
Scomber atun Euphrasen, 1791:315 (Cape of Good Hope, South Africa).

Diagnostic Features

fieldmarks: Second dorsal fin as large as anal fin, both followed by 6 or 7 finlets. Pelvic fins small, but well developed. Lateral line single, running close to upper contour of body, below most of first dorsal-fin base.

Body fairly elongate and considerably compressed; its depth 7.5 to 9.2 times in standard length. Head length 3.8 to 4.2 times in standard length; two well separated nostrils, posterior nostril slit-like; mouth large, posterior end of upper jaw reaches to anterior margin of eye, lower jaw projects anterior to upper jaw; no dermal processes on tips of both jaws; several large fangs in anterior part of upper jaw; 2 minute teeth on vomer; fine uniserial teeth on palatines. Gill rakers on first arch short and spinescent, one raker at angle slightly larger than others. First dorsal fin high, and its base long, with XIX to XXI spines, second dorsal fin also high with 11 to 13 soft rays followed by 5 to 7 finlets; anal fin slightly smaller than second dorsal fin, with 1 spine and 10 to 12 soft rays followed by 5 to 7 finlets; pectoral fins slightly longer than snout, with 13 to 15 soft rays; pelvic fins small but well developed, with 1 spine and 5 soft rays. A single lateral line, running close to upper contour of body below most of first dorsal-fin base, then abruptly curving below. Vertebrae total 35, including 21 precaudal and 14 caudal. Colour: Body dark blue, slightly paler on belly; first dorsal-fin membrane black.

Geographical Distribution



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Distributed in the coastal regions from 35° to 55°S latitude, penetrating north only in the waters of cold streams: Chile, southern Peru, Argentina, Uruguay, Tierra del Fuego, Tristan da Cunha, South Africa, Islands of St. Paul and Amsterdam, Tasmania, New Zealand, southern coast of Australia.

Habitat and Biology

Neritic benthopelagic species, mostly inhabiting continental shelves or around islands. Preferred temperature range believed to be 13° to 18°C. Feeds on pelagic crustaceans (*Euphausia*, *Nyctiphanes* etc.), cephalopods, and fishes such as anchovies, sardines, herrings, carangids, and mugilids (Blackburn, 1957).

Spawning occurs from late winter through autumn at Mernoo Bank, off the northwestern coast of the South Island and Chatham Island, New Zealand. Nursery grounds are located in the Hauraki Gulf, Tasman Bay and the Counterbury Bight, New Zealand. Schooling may occur either close to the sea bottom or midwater, and sometimes even at surface at night. Growth in the first 3 years is fast, reaching 29 cm fork length after the first year, 58 cm after the third years, and 90 cm after the tenth year (Hatanaka, 1990).

Size

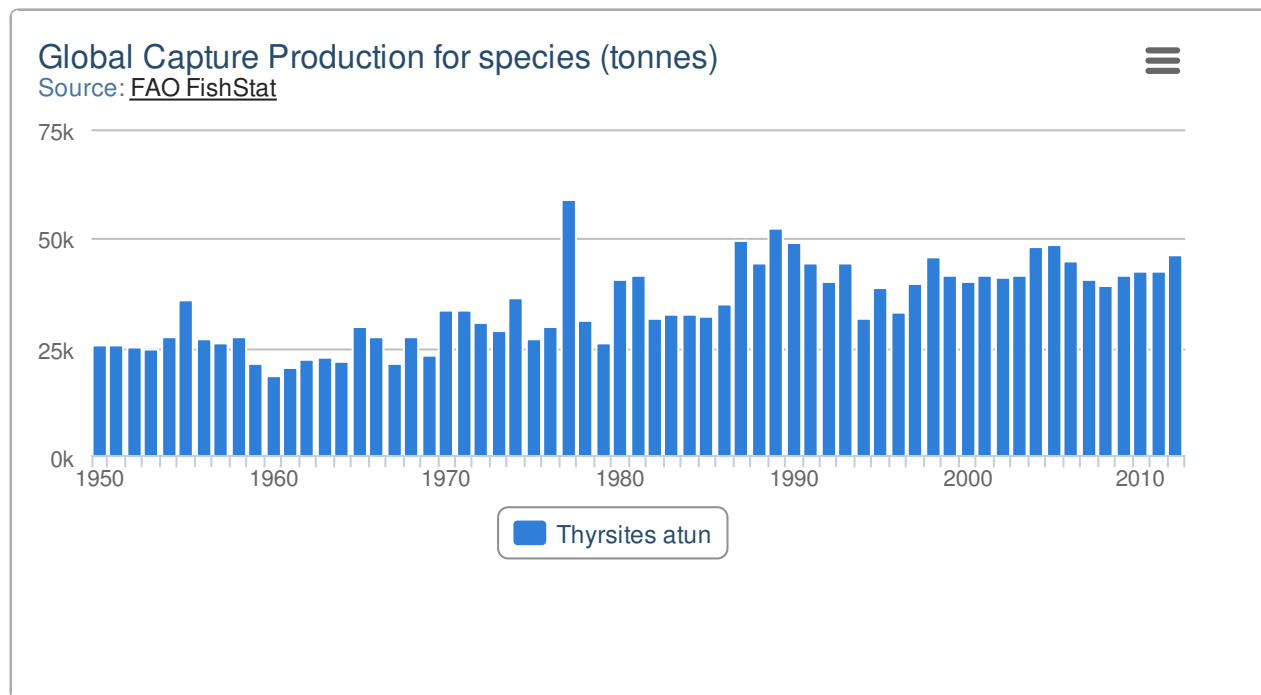
Maximum 150 cm standard length and more than 6 kg weight, common from 50 to 100 cm.

Interest to Fisheries

Mostly caught by **trolling lines** and **handlines**, and sometimes by **trawls** in Australia, New Zealand, Chile, Argentina and South Africa. The fishing grounds in New Zealand are located around the South Island, especially off Stewart Island, Canterbury Bight and the northwest coast. The total world catch varied considerably from 1974 to 1990, from lowest catch in 1974 of 24 497 t to 101 548 t in 1983. The main fishing

areas are off southwestern Africa (FAO Fishing Area 47) and around New Zealand (FAO Fishing Area 81). More than 90% of the 25 000 t to 35 000 t catches reported off South Africa and Namibia are taken by South Africa and Russia. The total catch by New Zealand, Japan and to a lesser extent Australia varies from 20 000 t to 30 000 t in the FAO Fishing Area 81 (FAO, 1992).

Good for fish and chips or smoking. In Japan, made for fillet or fish cake. The total catch reported for this species to FAO for 1999 was 41 472 t. The countries with the largest catches were New Zealand (20 642 t) and South Africa (11 188 t).



Local Names

ARGENTINA : Pez sierra , Barracuda .

CHILE : Sierra , Sierra comun .

JAPAN : Ooshibikamasu .

RUSSIA : Snek .

SOUTH AFRICA : Snoek .

Source of Information

FAO species catalogue. Vol. 15. Snake mackerels and cutlassfishes of the world (Families Gempylidae and Trichiuridae). An annotated and illustrated catalogue of the snakemackerels, snoeks, escolars, gemfishes, sackfishes, domine, oilfish, cutlassfishes, scabbardfishes, hairtails, and frostfishes known to date. Nakamura, I. & N. V. Parin 1993.. FAO Fisheries Synopsis. No. 125, Vol. 15. 136 p., 200 figs.

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