

THE FECUNDITY OF SKIPJACK TUNA (*KATSUWONUS PELAMIS*) FROM THE WESTERN INDIAN OCEAN.

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ABSTRACT

*From 281 females with fork lengths ranging from 43 to 73 cm and ripe ovaries, the batch fecundity of skipjack tuna (*Katsuwonus pelamis*) from the western part of the Indian Ocean has been studied. Gilson's fluid, used as a preservative and dissociative agent for oocytes, has a strong and fast action (5 days) on the shrinkage of these oocytes. Counts made with a Dollfus box on sub-samples of dissociated oocytes show that, within a single sexual maturity period (February), the fecundity of skipjack tuna is the same whatever the geographic area: (Mozambique Channel and South of Seychelles Islands). On the other hand, although sexual activity is noted for skipjack tuna throughout the year, individual fecundity changes with the season within a single area. This individual batch fecundity changes from 80000 eggs for a 44-cm female caught along the northwestern coast of Madagascar to 1.25 million eggs for a large female (75 cm) caught around the Seychelles Islands. The corresponding relative batch fecundity varies from 40 to 130 eggs/g body weight. For this species, 4 successive spawnings per year have been estimated.*

