



Australian Government

Australian Customs Service

Australian Fisheries Management Authority



HEARD ISLAND AND MCDONALD ISLANDS AND AUSTRALIA'S PATAGONIAN TOOTHFISH FISHERY

HEARD ISLAND AND MCDONALD ISLANDS

Heard Island and McDonald Islands (HIMI) are external territories of Australia located in the Southern Indian Ocean about 4000 kilometres south-west of Perth, Western Australia. Heard Island is smaller than Canberra and 80 per cent is covered by ice up to 150 metres thick.

The average maximum temperature is three degrees and it snows for 70 per cent of the year and is cloudy three days out of four. Wind gusts of 210km/h and waves of 17 metres have been recorded.

Even less hospitable, McDonald Island some 40 kilometres away has been landed on just twice, ever. Together they represent the least disturbed sub-Antarctic environment on Earth.

HIMI and their territorial waters are a Wilderness Reserve and World Heritage listed. France's Kerguelen Island is the nearest land mass and its EEZ abuts HIMI's.

The Heard Island and McDonald Islands (HIMI) Marine Reserve was declared by the Australian Government on 16 October 2002 to protect the conservation values of the region.

The HIMI Marine Reserve is believed to be the world's largest fully protected marine reserve, covering an area of 6.5 million hectares, including the World Heritage listed islands and territorial sea, and additional marine areas extending in parts to the exclusive economic zone (EEZ) boundary. The HIMI EEZ itself occupies approximately 42 million hectares.

Waters surrounding HIMI are a marine reserve closed to fishing within 12 nautical miles. From this limit to 200 nautical miles is the Australian

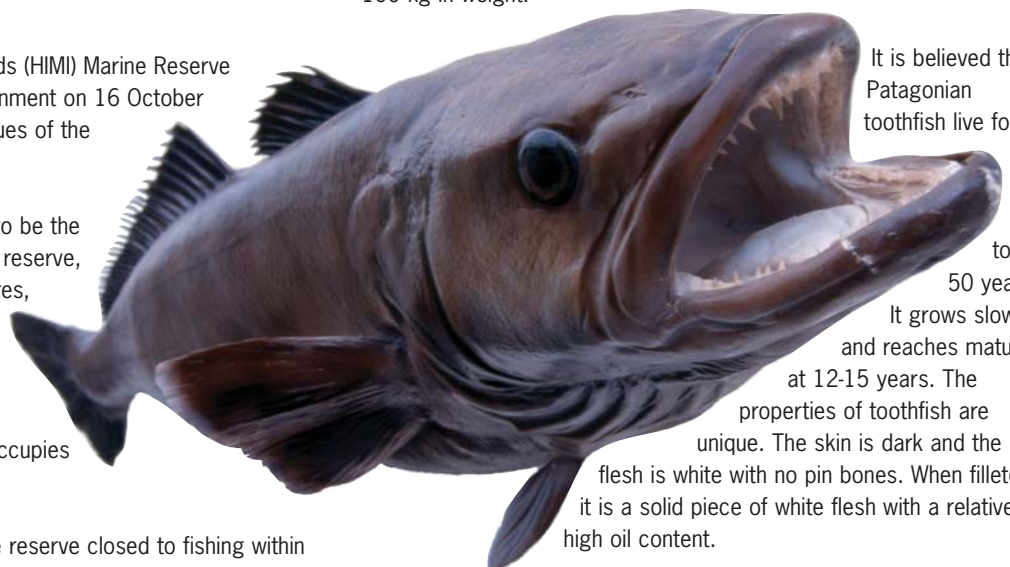
Fishing Zone (AFZ) which is managed by the Australian Fisheries Management Authority (AFMA).

HIMI falls within the area covered by the international Convention on the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources (CCAMLR). Australia is one of 24 signatories to the Convention. It is charged with ensuring the conservation and rational use of Antarctic Marine Living resources.

THE PATAGONIAN TOOTHFISH

The Patagonian toothfish (*Dissostichus eleginoides*) is a member of the 'Antarctic Cod' family found only in Antarctic and sub-Antarctic waters. Commonly known in the US as 'Chilean Sea Bass'.

It is a demersal (found at or near the sea floor) species found at depths up to 2500 metres, and is one of few Antarctic species to grow to a large size, reaching up to 2.2 metres in length and up to 100 kg in weight.



It is believed that Patagonian toothfish live for

up to

50 years.

It grows slowly and reaches maturity

at 12-15 years. The

properties of toothfish are

unique. The skin is dark and the flesh is white with no pin bones. When filleted, it is a solid piece of white flesh with a relatively high oil content.

A VALUABLE RESOURCE

There are only three authorised boats legally catching Patagonian toothfish in the HIMI fishery. These operate under strict environmental controls and their catch is limited by a Total Allowable Catch (TAC).

Illegal operators fish in the region, targeting the valuable Patagonian toothfish which can sell for up to A\$15/kg wholesale and up to A\$45/kg retail.

The worldwide TAC for Patagonian toothfish and Antarctic toothfish (*Dissostichus mawsoni*) in 2003/04 was 13 706 tonnes. In processed form, this has a market value of more than A\$100 million. The primary consumers are the US, Japan, European Union and Canada.

In 2003, the majority of toothfish taken by legal Australian operators in the HIMI fishery was exported to the United States.

ILLEGAL, UNREPORTED AND UNREGULATED (IUU) FISHING

IUU fishing for toothfish has become a serious problem in the Southern Ocean.

Illegal longliners were first noticed in 1995/96 in the South Georgia area and rapidly spread eastwards to the Indian Ocean islands once counter measures began at South Georgia.

Established, healthy fisheries for Patagonian toothfish still exist at HIMI and South Georgia.

Stocks of toothfish around Crozet Island (France) and Prince Edward and Marion Islands (Republic of South Africa) are considered to have been heavily exploited by IUU fishers. Substantial reductions of these stocks occurred between 1996 and 1998.

Stocks on other banks in high seas areas of CCAMLR are known to be heavily depleted.

The IUU catch was estimated to be close to five times the legal catch in CCAMLR waters in the 1996/97 season. While lower now, the global IUU catch is still estimated to be about 50 per cent of the legal catch.

LEGAL AUSTRALIAN OPERATORS

The fisheries within the Australian Fishing Zone at HIMI and Macquarie Island are rigorously managed by AFMA in accordance with CCAMLR principles.

Catch rates for the three vessels operating legally in the areas are determined by research undertaken by the Australian Antarctic Division and CSIRO in conjunction with the fishing companies, including annual surveys to estimate the abundance of young fish entering the fishery.

The TAC for Patagonian toothfish in the HIMI fishery has been around 3000 tonnes per annum. Illegal fishing threatens the sustainability and future of the legal fishery.

Toothfish photo courtesy Austral Fisheries Pty Ltd
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