

THE FLATS FISHERY IN THE BAHAMAS



Cultural and Historic Importance

The Bahamas is home to one of the world's largest flats fisheries. People from around the world come to fish for bonefish in The Bahamas. The bonefish is even found on our ten-cent coin.

Historically, the family islands relied on bonefish as a staple protein in the Bahamian diet. Today, with steady food imports, we don't have to rely on this species for food, making the bonefish fishery mainly catch-and-release. Legislation surrounding bonefish states that Bahamians are allowed to catch bonefish using hook and line for personal consumption, while the use of nets is prohibited, and there is no commercial market.

The Bahamian flats fishery generates millions annually through tourism, including bonefish guides and lodges. By supporting sustainable practices and conservation initiatives, we can ensure that this vital industry continues to thrive, benefiting both the environment and the people who depend on it.



Ecological Importance

Annual Revenue: The bonefish industry alone generates over \$169 million annually, contributing substantially to the national economy.

Job Creation: Thousands of Bahamians are employed as fishing guides, lodge staff, and in related tourism services, particularly in the Out Islands where the fishery supports nearly 50% of local economies.

Tourism Boost: Anglers from around the world visit The Bahamas, spending on accommodations, guided tours, equipment, and local businesses.



How the Money Flows Through the Economy

The economic impact of the flats fishery extends far beyond the water:

Local Communities: Income from the flats fishery supports families and small island businesses, especially in the family islands, which rely heavily on sustainable eco-tourism activities.

Tourism: Revenue from anglers helps sustain lodges, restaurants, and transportation services, creating a trickle-down effect in our economy. Over 8,000 Bahamians directly benefit from jobs associated with the fishery.

Ecosystem Services: Healthy flats ecosystems, supported by mangroves and seagrass beds, are essential for sustaining bonefish populations and the broader marine environment. Healthy habitats support healthy fisheries so that future generations can continue to rely on this livelihood. These same habitats also support other economically important fisheries, like lobster, grouper, and snapper.

