

Could domestication save the bluefin from extinction?

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COULD the [tiger of the sea](#) be domesticated - and thereby saved? Plans to farm [endangered Mediterranean bluefin tuna](#) moved a step closer this week, following the successful rearing in captivity of the smaller but closely related species, the Atlantic bonito.

Fernando de la Gándara and colleagues at the [Spanish Oceanographic Institute](#) in Murcia announced that for the first time they had reared bonito from egg to sexually mature adult - a cycle that takes a year. Now they hope to apply many of the methods to raising bluefin. "We're developing lots of techniques in the bonito that we can use in bluefin larval breeding and handling," says de la Gándara, who is part of the European Union's ["Selfdott" project to farm bluefin](#).

So far, the project has succeeded in keeping bluefin larvae alive for more than two months. But with a breeding cycle of four years, from the larval stage through to spawning, domesticating the bluefin will take a while. "We need at least another four years to close the life cycle of the bluefin," de la Gándara says.

The aim of the Selfdott project is to relieve pressure on the wild stocks of Mediterranean bluefin, which have [declined by 50 per cent since the 1970s](#). Domestication could be the fish's only hope. At the March meeting on trade in endangered species in Doha, Qatar, [proposals to ban bluefin trade were defeated](#).