



*Bluegill* (SS-242) was laid down on 17 December 1942 at Groton, Conn., by the Electric Boat Co.; launched on 8 August 1943; sponsored by Mrs. W. Sterling Cole; and commissioned at the Submarine Base, New London, Conn., on 11 November 1943, Lt. Comdr. Eric L. Barr, Jr., in command.

After shakedown training, *Bluegill* departed Balboa in the Canal Zone, on 22 February 1944 and set course for the southwestern Pacific and arrived at Milne Bay, New Guinea, on 22 March. On 1 April, the submarine put to sea from Milne Bay on her first war patrol. She conducted that patrol in the area between northern Halmahera and Sonsorol Island. *Bluegill* made her first enemy contact--three merchantmen--on 10 April but failed to gain a favorable attack position. On 27 April, the submarine--with the help of signals intelligence--sighted a Japanese destroyer lying to off Sonsorol Island. While *Bluegill* approached that target another, more interesting one crossed her path; and she launched six torpedoes at the 3,500-ton light cruiser *Yubari*. Two of her torpedoes struck home and sent that enemy warship to the bottom. At that point, the destroyer *Samidare* charged to the attack. *Bluegill* responded with four torpedoes from her stern tubes. All four missed, and the submarine went deep to protect herself. The next day, she encountered another Japanese destroyer escorting a large landing barge. After gaining favorable position on the target, *Bluegill* fired a spread of four torpedoes. Apparently, the "fish" ran under the quarry, and again the submarine dived and escaped.

The afternoon of 1 May found her on the prowl west of the Palaus where she contacted a Japanese convoy of three merchantmen and two escorts. *Bluegill* set up her ambush ahead of the convoy and, as the enemy ships passed, fired a spread of four torpedoes, two of which crashed into the side of the 8,812-ton freighter *Asosan Maru*. That evening, after escaping the Japanese counterattack, *Bluegill* surfaced and spied *Asosan Maru* still afloat though burning furiously. The next day, the deck gun administered the coup de grace.

On 10 May, the submarine put into Manus in the Admiralty Islands to get nine additional torpedoes from *Cero* (SS-225). The two warships departed Manus on the 11th, and *Bluegill* returned to her patrol area near Halmahera and Morotai. On the morning of 19 May, she allowed a Japanese destroyer to pass unmolested in the vain hope that larger game might follow. The day after, *Bluegill* sighted a single merchantman rounding a point on Halmahera in company with two escorts. Gaining a favorable firing position to shoreward, she loosed a four-torpedo spread from her stern tubes. Three of the four shattered the 1,856-ton cargo ship

*Miyaura Maru*. On the 22d, *Bluegill* encountered an enemy convoy that had already been worked over by *Ray* (SS-271); but two Japanese subchasers prevented her from adding to the toll by dropping a depth-charge barrage close aboard. While the submarine continued to maneuver for a favorable attack position later that day, an enemy plane forced her down by dropping aerial depth charges. With that emergency dive, *Bluegill* lost contact with the convoy. She left the patrol area on 28 May; stopped at Manus on 1 June; and arrived in Brisbane, Australia, on the 7th.

*Bluegill* embarked upon her second war patrol at the end of the month, stopped at Manus on 5 and 6 July, and got underway for the Davao Gulf off Mindanao in the Philippines. On the 20th, *Bluegill* made an unsuccessful attack on a Natori-class cruiser from an extreme range. Two days later, she sighted a ship of about 1,000 tons; but her spread of four torpedoes ran harmlessly beneath the target which responded with 11 depth charges. Off the entrance to Sarangani Bay on 1 August, the submarine encountered a freighter with three escorts. She attained a good firing position, but the escorts detected her and the target began radical maneuvers. With depth charges coming down around her, *Bluegill* prudently abandoned her quarry and made good her escape. Six days later, while off Maculi Point on Mindanao, the submarine spotted a freighter accompanied by two escorts, a decoy vessel and three aircraft overhead. *Bluegill* set up on the target, and two of the four torpedoes that she fired at the cargo ship struck home. *Bluegill* was forced deep by a barrage of 36 depth charges. She later learned that her target, the 4,642-ton *Sanju Maru* had gone to the bottom. On the 13th, she caught sight of a freighter escorted by two torpedo boats, two subchasers, and a decoy vessel. *Bluegill* launched a spread of four torpedoes that found two targets--the 300-ton Submarine Chaser No. 12 and the 1,931-ton freighter, *Kojun Maru*. At that point, she headed for Australia and, after a stop at Darwin, arrived in Fremantle on 24 August.

*Bluegill* departed Fremantle on 18 September and her third war patrol, which took her to the Sulu Sea, the Sibuyan Sea, and the South China Sea. On 6 October, she encountered an interisland steamer off Bondoc Point on southern Luzon and riddled the steamer with gunfire. Since the stubborn merchantman still remained afloat at the approach of darkness, the submarine was forced to expend a valuable torpedo to dispatch her. Six days later, she surfaced in the midst of three sea trucks off Tuma Point on northwestern Mindanao. Her guns soon scored hits on two of the three. However, the sea trucks had some heavy machine guns; when *Bluegill's* after 20-millimeter gun jammed, one of the sea trucks took advantage of the opportunity to spray the submarine, wounding several of her sailors and prompting *Bluegill* to break off the action and submerge.

Before dawn on 18 October, she contacted a 14-ship convoy off Manila but vainly sought for a favorable firing point from which to attack. After transmitting a contact report, she submerged in the hope of making a daylight attack from below. The convoy turned away from the submarine but then made a fortuitous turn toward *Bluegill*. In the ensuing combat, the submarine claimed to have sunk five ships, but a postwar survey of Japanese records credited her with only three: the 9,400-ton transport *Arabia Maru*, the 1,999-ton freighter *Chinzei Maru*, and the 8,000-ton passenger-cargo ship *Hakushika Maru*. From time to time throughout the

action, *Bluegill* had to dive to evade depth charges before resuming the attack.

On 20 October, the submarine expended her remaining torpedoes in an unsuccessful attack on two tankers escorted by a subchaser. On the 21st, she headed for Mios Woendi in the Schouten Islands off the northwestern coast of New Guinea. *Bluegill* arrived there on 27 October and began receiving torpedoes and fuel. She returned to sea to resume her patrol in the Sulu Sea. After 20 fruitless days, she departed station to return to her base. Off the Borneo coast on 17 November, the warship encountered a small transport escorted by three small destroyers. Upon being detected by the enemy, *Bluegill* dived deeply and began to clear the area. Before succeeding in her escape, the submarine suffered a pounding from 27 depth charges. She reached Fremantle on 25 November.

Repair of her battle damage kept *Bluegill* in port until she stood out of Fremantle on 19 December for her fourth war patrol. On Christmas night, the submarine tried to make a fast surface transit of Lombok Strait between the islands of Bali and Lombok just east of Java. However, an accurate bombardment by a Japanese shore battery forced her to make a hasty retreat. She soon joined a coordinated attack group--commonly termed a wolf pack--consisting of *Bream* (SS-243) and *Barbel* (SS-316) in addition to herself. The only event of note during the patrol occurred on 2 February when she took on board two Japanese prisoners--captured by another American submarine--for passage back to Fremantle which she reached on 7 February 1945.

*Bluegill* began her fifth war patrol on 12 March 1945 and transited Lombok Strait on the night of 18 and 19 March. Early on the 19th, she made an unsuccessful submerged torpedo attack on an auxiliary sailing vessel and the sea truck it was preparing to take in tow. Following fruitless searches along the coast of Borneo, *Bluegill* arrived off Indochina on 27 March. She submerged off Hon Doi to join *Blackfin* (SS-322) and *Blueback* (SS-326) in a picket line along the coast. Around 10:20 on the 28th, *Bluegill* heard a combination of pinging and depth charge explosions to the south--*Blackfin* at the attack--and began to edge quietly toward the fracas as the boats, in concert with Army Air Force planes, began the onslaught on Japanese convoy HI-88J as it moved up the coast of French Indochina.

Just before 11:00, *Bluegill* made contact with the 5,542-ton tanker *Honan Maru* (ex-British War *Sirdar*) escorted by four coast defense vessels and a destroyer. A little before 11:15, *Bluegill* fired three torpedoes at *Honan Maru*. Two of them struck home, but the auxiliary's master managed to ground her on the nearby shore to permit salvage. Meanwhile, *Bluegill* contended with a savage depth charge attack from the escorts. The next day, the submarine fired two more torpedoes at the stranded tanker. On 5 and 6 April, she attempted a commando raid to blow up bridges and trains. The Japanese detected the Australian commandos, and the attempt ended in failure. *Bluegill* returned to *Honan Maru* on 5 April and sent ashore a landing party that ascertained the identity of their erstwhile quarry and completed the destruction with demolition charges and incendiaries. She concluded the patrol at Subic Bay in the Philippines on 18 April.

*Bluegill* put to sea on her sixth and last war patrol to prowl an area to the southwest of Formosa. She sighted no enemy shipping and had to content herself with shelling and "capturing"

uninhabited Patras Island. After raising the American flag, the landing party destroyed an ammunition and fuel dump. The otherwise uneventful patrol ended at Pearl Harbor on 21 June. Later in the month, *Bluegill* headed for San Francisco where she arrived on 2 July and soon began an overhaul at the Bethlehem Steel shipyard. Thereafter, the submarine served the Pacific Fleet until decommissioned on 1 March 1946.

*Bluegill* remained in reserve at Mare Island until the spring of 1951. As part of the fleet build up that occurred in the period following the outbreak of hostilities in Korea the previous summer, she was recommissioned on 3 May 1951 and worked out of San Diego as a training ship until decommissioned again at the San Francisco Naval Shipyard on 7 July 1952. There, she was converted to an antisubmarine submarine. Re-designated SSK-242, the warship was recommissioned at San Francisco on 2 May 1953 and resumed duty out of San Diego. That assignment lasted until 2 November when she deployed to the western Pacific. *Bluegill* trained with units of the 7th Fleet and visited various Far Eastern ports before returning to San Diego on 15 May 1954. There, the submarine resumed operations along the west coast and continued such duty until near the end of 1955.

In December of that year, *Bluegill* moved to a new homeport, Pearl Harbor and, for almost nine years, alternated operations in the Hawaiian Islands with deployments to the western Pacific. During that time, on 15 August 1959, she was re-designated an attack submarine, SS-242. On 1 April 1964, while in overhaul at the Mare Island Naval Shipyard, *Bluegill* received word of another homeport change: back to San Diego. For the remainder of her career, she divided her time between training evolutions along the west coast and periodic cruises to the Far East. She received her last designation change on 1 April 1966 when she became an auxiliary submarine, AGSS-242.

*Bluegill* was decommissioned at San Diego on 28 June 1969, and her name was struck from the Navy list on that same day. In 1970, she was towed back to Pearl Harbor where she became a submarine rescue and salvage training platform. As of the beginning of 1984, she was still being so utilized.

*Bluegill* earned four battle stars for World War II service and three battle stars during the Vietnam conflict.

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