

Atlantic Tropical tuna Tagging Programme

ICCAT/AOTTP NEWSLETTER

A quarterly newsletter published by the ICCAT Secretariat

No. 4



Crew of pole and line vessel, *Katsushio Maru 8*, catching tuna for AOTTP off southern Brazil in February 2018.

Overview: The AOTTP Programme (<http://www.iccat.int/AOTTP/en/>) is collecting tag-recapture data from Atlantic Ocean tropical tuna fisheries to improve their management.



AOTTP tagger onboard the *Estrela Dalva* releasing a tagged tuna off Cabo Frio, Brazil in January 2018.



Levana leaving Port of Abidjan on AOTTP tagging trip March 2018. Note live-bait container and powerful outboard.

Tagging at sea: AOTTP is currently tagging tuna actively in the SW Atlantic off Brazil, in the Gulf of Guinea south of Côte d'Ivoire, and will begin very soon around the island of Saint Helena in the SE Atlantic.

Since we last reported in January a further 3,000 tuna have now been tagged and released in the Atlantic Ocean by AOTTP, taking the overall total to 67,500.



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Tag recovery: Six-hundred additional tags have been found since January so the total now is just over 12,100. This represents an overall tag Recovery Rate of 18%.

AOTTP is also estimating Tag Reporting Rates (an important parameter in population assessment from tagging data) by 'tag-seeding'. The objective of this activity is to assess the efficacy of AOTTP awareness-raising activities in all geographic areas in which tagging is being conducted. A target Reporting Rate of 80% has been set. To do 'tag-seeding', scientific observers, captains and crews of fishing vessels surreptitiously insert 'false' tags into fish that have been caught, at all points along the value chain. The recovery of these 'false' tags allows Reporting Rates to be estimated for the project. So far 421 fish have been tagged with false tags throughout the tropical Atlantic, and 249 tags have been recovered, indicating a preliminary Reporting Rates for BET, SKJ, and YFT are 73%, 56%, and 59% respectively. Therefore, AOTTP will continue, and enhance, their awareness raising activities until the end of the project.



AOTTP tag-recovery boat, *Hero*, used by recovery officers in the Port of Abidjan to visit fishing vessels, obtain tags, get metadata, take biological samples, pay rewards, buy chemically marked fish, and raise awareness.



AOTTP awareness-raising is a continuous effort. Here a megaphone is being used in the port of Abidjan in February to publicise the project.



Visit to AOTTP Tag Recovery Office in the Port of Abidjan in January 2018. Abidjan is the most important port in the world for landings of tropical tunas. Many AOTTP tags are found here, and a full time staff of six persons is needed to keep up with the workload.



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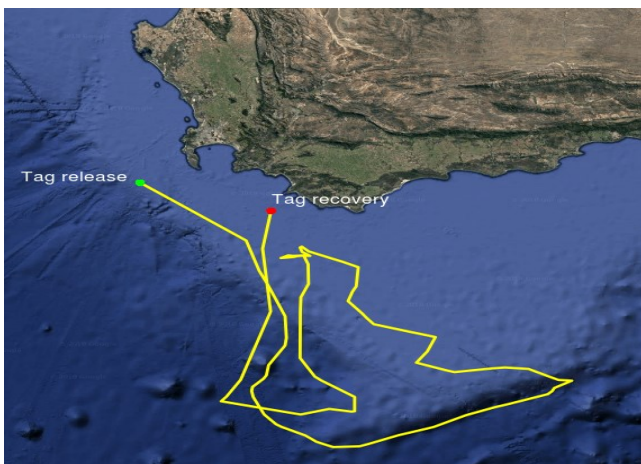
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Capacity building: In 2018 AOTTP has organised two workshops. The first, in January, was kindly hosted by our colleagues from Le Centre Recherches Océanologiques d' Abidjan (Côte d'Ivoire). Two internationally recognised experts (Daniel Gaertner and Lisa Ailloud) in tuna growth and mortality were invited to guide participants through some preliminary estimates using the AOTTP tag-recapture data from conventional tags. Participants will present the results of these analyses during the upcoming ICCAT bigeye tuna data preparatory meeting. In early April another workshop was held at the ICCAT Secretariat (Madrid, Spain) to learn how to calculate geographic positions from the electronic tags deployed by AOTTP using specialised algorithms developed by Tim Lam (from the Large Pelagic Research Center) who also taught at the workshop. These electronic tags cannot record geographic positions when attached to a fish, hence the path taken by each tagged fish must be *inferred* from data collected by the tag such as daylength, sea temperature and depth.



AOTTP Workshop 2 Abidjan: Estimating Tropical Tuna Growth and Mortality from ICCAT Tag-recapture Databases. 25 people from 13 ICCAT countries participated. Preliminary estimates of growth parameters and mortality for bigeye tuna were made.



Geographic tracks off South Africa for a yellowfin estimated from Lotek archival tag using TrackIt software at AOTTP Workshop 3. The fish was released in April 2017 (green point) and recovered in November 2017 (red point). It migrated south, north-east, and finally north-west, being recaptured again close to where it was originally tagged.

Other activities

- Tags from tuna tagged in St Helena and Ascensions Islands (other tagging programs) were recovered in Abidjan. Rewards have been paid.
- Trans-Atlantic migrations (between Brazil and West Africa) of both skipjack and yellowfin tuna recorded by AOTTP.
- Tagging of 5600 tropical tuna around Saint Helena in the remote SE Atlantic will begin in May 2018.
- Tagging will re-start in the NW Atlantic and Caribbean Sea in May 2018 using commercial longliners and sport fishers.
- Call for Tender for tagging in the Gulf of Guinea and West Africa has been re-launched.

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