

# Atlantic Tropical tuna Tagging Programme ICCAT/AOTTP NEWSLETTER

A quarterly newsletter published by the ICCAT Secretariat

No. 5

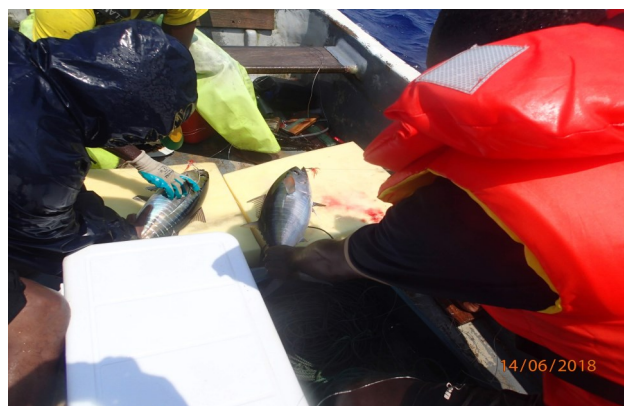


Skipper and crew of trolling vessel, *Txilamon ni Son*, setting off from Sao Tome on a tagging trip to grounds north of Príncipe in June 2018.

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



Mirian briefing the tagging team in Sao Tome in June 2018.



Tagging tuna onboard *Boy*. The fish were caught surface trolling 25 nautical miles east of Sao Tome island, June 2018.

**Tagging at sea:** AOTTP teams have made stunning progress since the last newsletter was published in April. An additional 19,000 tuna were tagged and released by AOTTP in the last 3 months, taking the overall total to 86,000. Well done to all the tagging teams.

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**Tagging team in Saint Helena (British Overseas Territory) in the south-east Atlantic.**

In May 2018, tagging began in São Tomé and Príncipe and around the island of St Helena, including the offshore Cardno and Bonaparte sea-mounts.



**AOTTP baseball caps.**

**Hardware:** 30 pop-up satellite tags from Microwave Telemetry arrived at ICCAT recently, and will be deployed off the USA and Caribbean. 4000 new AOTTP baseball caps are also being provided as an alternative option to the t-shirts.

**Tag recovery:** More than 13,000 tags have now been recovered in total. Tag recovery rates are 22% for bigeye, 20% for yellowfin, and 7% for skipjack.

AOTTP is also tagging fish with chemical markers which allow their otoliths (or other hard parts) to be 'read', and the fish aged more easily. When a chemically tagged fish is reported the fish are purchased and the relevant hard parts processed and stored. To make the age determination more reliable, AOTTP partners are creating a pan-Atlantic Reference Collection of Otoliths for 'calibrating' the age-readings from fish caught off Brazil and off West Africa. When the Reference Collection is complete and calibrations are done, a Workshop will be held to train future otolith/hard part age-readers around the tropical Atlantic.



**Working on the otolith reference collection in Dakar, Senegal.**



**Pop-up satellite tag from Microwave Telemetry.**

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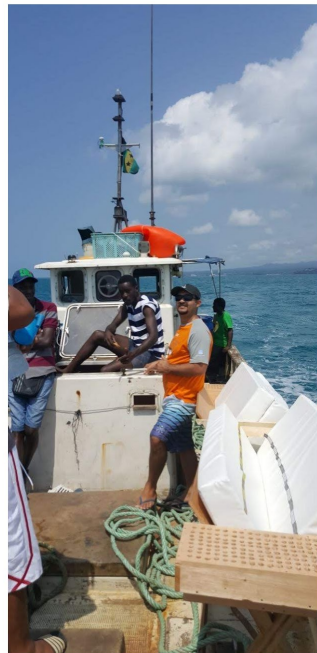
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**Capacity building:** In June 2018 Iñigo Onandia from AZTI joined an AOTTP tagging trip on board the Ponta Calhau north-west of Madeira to share his expertise in the deployment of electronic, internal tags, which must be carefully and rapidly sewn into the body cavity of each tuna. 158 bigeye tuna were tagged on the trip and 27 internal tags were also inserted. Interestingly, 8 of those tags have been reported and sent to ICCAT HQ where all of the data have been successfully extracted. These data now await detailed analyses.

Similarly Prof Guelson da Silva, who worked with the FADURPE Consortium tagging fish off Brazil under AOTTP, was contracted to run training courses in tagging methods and protocols in São Tomé and Príncipe .

It is particularly encouraging that many of our colleagues, who learnt tagging skills during AOTTP's earlier phases are now going on to share those skills in different contexts.



**AOTTP tagger training activities at São Tomé and Príncipe during June 2018.**

### Other activities

- Two tags and metadata, recovered by long-liner, were sent to AOTTP by the focal point in the People's Republic of China.
- The AOTTP Coordinator visited The Fisheries Directorate in São Tomé and Príncipe in June 2018 to deliver tags and discuss tagging protocols.
- ICCAT-AOTTP has signed a contract with the University of Maine in Portland in the USA to organise the tagging of 5000 fish with voluntary sport-fishers in the north-west Atlantic and Caribbean. Activities are being rolled out now and the AOTTP Coordinator visited Portland in July 2018 to deliver tags and discuss the workplan.
- A contract to tag 3000 tuna around the Canaries, 3000 off Mauritania, and 2000 around the Cape Verde islands has been awarded.
- The ICCAT-AOTTP contract with Flutoantodisseia in Madeira/Azores was extended to promote the tagging of bigeye (which are under-represented) in the region.
- Additional tagging is being considered in the territorial waters of São Tomé and Príncipe , Gabon, and in the High Seas north of Brazil.
- AOTTP-ICCAT submitted financial and technical reports for period 3 to the European Union at the end of June 2018.
- AOTTP tag-recapture data was sent to eligible scientists in July 2018 in response to an SCRS recommendation.

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