

# Atlantic Tropical tuna Tagging Programme

## ICCAT/AOTTP NEWSLETTER

A quarterly newsletter published by the ICCAT Secretariat

No. 7



Fishing for tropical tuna on board John Melliss off St Helena with whaleshark for company, January 2019.

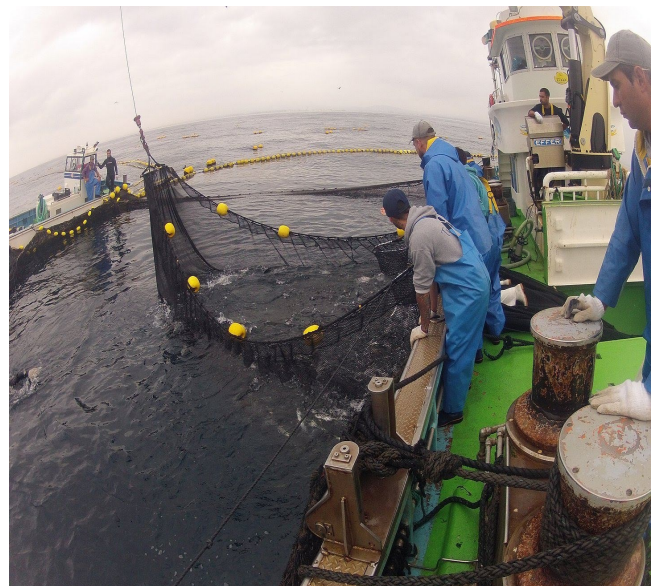


Landing cradle with yellowfin off St Helena, January 2019

**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.



Tagging yellowfin off St Helena, January 2019



Tagging little tunny in traps in Portugal, August 2018.

**Tagging at sea:** AOTTP have now tagged well over 100,000 tropical tuna across the Atlantic. Recent efforts have focused on Portugal (using traps), Côte d'Ivoire, the USA (sport fishers), Senegal, St Helena, and the Canary and Cape Verde islands. The AOTTP Coordinator visited St Helena in January and took part in some tagging trips on board FV John Melliss.



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ICCAT-AOTTP lottery winner in Abidjan.

**Tag recovery:** More than 15,000 tags have now been recovered in the Atlantic. To incentivise tag-finders ICCAT organises an annual lottery with substantial prizes of 500 euros offered. All tags recovered during the previous year on any ICCAT tagging programme are entered into the competition and there is a category for each species. The draw is held at the SCRS Plenary meeting each year usually in late September. This year's winners came from Senegal and Côte d'Ivoire.



ICCAT-AOTTP Lottery winner in Dakar.

AOTTP has been cooperating with the Blue Belt Programme which is also tagging tropical tuna in the Atlantic around British Overseas Territories. A number of Blue Belt tags from fish tagged at the seamounts around St Helena have already been reported by AOTTP tag-recovery offices in West Africa. Data from both programmes are shared and stored in ICCAT databases.



Tagging and Blue Belt Program Coordination team in St Helena.

AOTTP Coordination has recently been reviewing its tag-recapture database, together with the reward schemes set up in 2016, to encourage tag recovery with the important metadata. Improvements relating to the metadata we collect are being made. In particular we need more information about the likely accuracy of the fish size data, and the time and location of capture. Was the fish, for example, measured physically at the tag recovery office? These changes require modifications of the Memento smartphone template, particularly for the recoveries. Most recovery teams have been contacted and the issue discussed. We would like to thank everyone involved for their cheerful co-operation.

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**IATTC Regional Tagging Programme Review of Proposed Activities, La Jolla. 28-30 January 2019.**

**Yellowfin Stock Assessment:** The ICCAT Standing Committee on Research and Statistics (SCRS) will assess the yellowfin stock in the Atlantic this year. AOTTP data will inform the stock assessment process, providing new estimates of mortality, movement/migration and growth. AOTTP coordination will prepare and present the available data for yellowfin to the SCRS prior to the Data Preparation meeting planned for late April, while the stock assessment itself will take place in July.

**Capacity building:** AOTTP has recently been tagging on board large baitboats around the Canary Islands and off West Africa. The consortium involved has 8 African developing countries as partners: Senegal (CRODT); Côte d'Ivoire (CRO-CI); Ghana (FSSD); Guinea-Bissau (CIPA); São Tomé and Príncipe (DP-STP); Mauritania (IMROP); Cape Verde (INDP); and Gabon (DGPA). Staff from all these countries have taken part in tagging trips and received training in all aspects of tagging at sea, safety and transmission of data to ICCAT.



**Francisco Livramento (INDP, Cape Verde) tagging on board Aita Fraxku in late 2018.**

### Other news

- AOTTP Coordination (Doug Beare) described AOTTP experiences with pop-up tags at The European Users Conference on Argos Wildlife (21-22 November 2018) in Toulouse, France.
- AOTTP Coordination (Lisa Ailloud) attended a workshop (28-30 January 2019) in La Jolla, California organised by the The Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission (IATTC) which is starting a tagging program for tropical tuna in the eastern Pacific Ocean.
- A multi-national Consortium will begin in March to estimate mortality and movement rates using AOTTP tag-recapture data.
- Proposals for extra tagging work in the NW Atlantic are being evaluated.
- A Call for Tender to analyse growth using AOTTP data was launched on 15th February 2019 ([https://www.iccat.int/Documents/CFT/A-0178-19\\_ENG.pdf](https://www.iccat.int/Documents/CFT/A-0178-19_ENG.pdf)). The deadline for proposals is 1 April 2019.
- A second AOTTP tropical tuna ageing workshop, at which hardpart readings by different experts, will be compared, will be held in Dakar between 18 and 22 March 2019.

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