

Atlantic Tropical tuna Tagging Programme

ICCAT/AOTTP NEWSLETTER

A quarterly newsletter published by the ICCAT Secretariat

No. 8



AOTTP Tagging Team, Areia Branca, Brazil in May 2019 about to set out to sea.

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.



AOTTP Tagging Team catching a yellowfin tuna off Grenada in March 2019.



AOTTP Tagging Team on board Aita Fraxku off Senegal in April 2019.

Tagging at sea: AOTTP have now tagged 113000 tropical tuna across the Atlantic. Overall targets are close to being met and tagging activity is slowing down. Thanks to all who have either tagged or recovered tagged fish and sent associated data.

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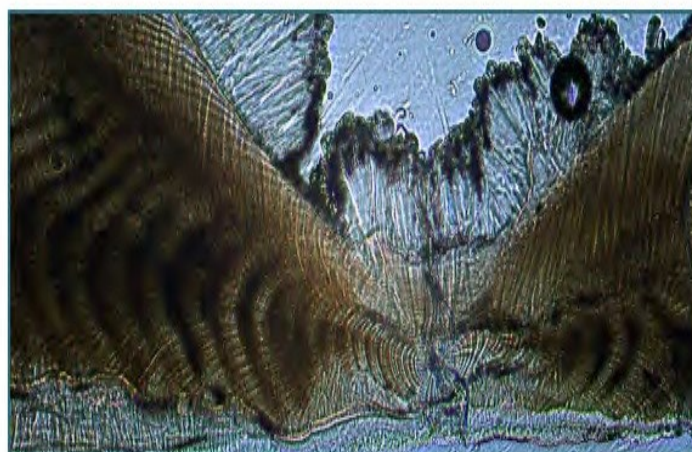
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Partially digested yellowfin with an AOTTP tag found in the stomach of a large marlin off Abidjan.

Tag recovery: During this quarter AOTTP teams have made some especially interesting recoveries of tagged fish. Off Abidjan, for example, a large blue marlin was caught containing the partially digested remains of a 60cm long yellowfin tuna which had been tagged 2 days before. In April an internal archival tag was also recovered in West Africa from a 129cm yellowfin; a fish that had been tagged off Brazil 18 months earlier! In St. Helena several more internal archival tags have been recovered. Once the data are extracted from these tags and tracks estimated, it is certain that they will reveal new and interesting information about the migrations and stock structure of tropical tuna around the Atlantic Ocean, leading to more accurate estimates of their population sizes and improved advice to managers.

Hard part analyses: Two laboratory technicians were hired by ICCAT-AOTTP partners in January 2019: one at the CRO in Abidjan; and one at the CRODT in Dakar. Dr. Khady Diouf from the IFAN provided these trainees with an intensive week of targeted training in otolith preparation for daily ageing in February 2019. These new hires also attended a second otolith workshop in March 2019 where they learned more advanced techniques in otolith preparation, growth ring interpretation, and calculation of bias and precision in age readings. They are scheduled to undergo one more week of training in July/August 2019, which will be focused on the preparation and interpretation of otoliths for annual ageing (as opposed to daily ageing), and on the use of the fluorescent microscope to validate the deposition rate of otolith rings in OTC marked fish.



Sadio N'fally and Venance Ngouan being trained by Dr. Khady Diouf in February 2019 in Dakar, Senegal .

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Yellowfin Stock Assessment: This took place in Abidjan in July 2019. The tagging data were formatted for inclusion in the integrated assessment model, Stock Synthesis, and provided needed estimates of selectivity for the Brazilian handline fleet. AOTTP and partners also provided the stock assessors with daily YFT ages from the reference collection and annual ages of large individuals caught off South Africa. Growth trajectories from tagging data and otolith ages were used to guide the estimation of growth in Stock Synthesis. Preliminary analyses of fish marked chemically by AOTTP contributed to the decision to raise the assumed maximum age of yellowfin tuna from 11 to 18 years. This is important for the stock assessment as the assumed lifespan of a fish impacts estimates of mortality and productivity.



Dr Ailloud at the AOTTP Exhibition Stand, European Tuna Conference, Brussels, May 2019.

ICCAT Executive Secretary and AOTTP Coordination visit to the Fisheries Ministry in Dakar, Senegal.

AOTTP Final Symposium: This will be held in Dakar, Senegal between 16th and 18th June 2020. The final results of the entire programme will be presented to a diverse group of stakeholders.

Other news

- A second AOTTP tropical tuna ageing workshop, at which hardpart readings by different experts were compared, was held in Dakar between 18 and 22 March 2019.
- AOTTP Coordination traveled to Grenada (Caribbean) in March 2019 to support tagging activities organized by the University of Maine, and raise awareness among sport and recreational fishers.
- AOTTP Coordination presented the project at the European Tuna Conference in Brussels on 6th May 2019.
- AOTTP Coordination attended 70th Tuna Conference in California, USA between 21st and 23rd May 2019. Drs. Beare and Ailloud each gave talks during the Tagging Data session.
- A project to tag 2500 fish in northern Brazil has been awarded to the FADURPE Consortium.
- Growth analyses involving the Virginia Institute of Marine Science (VIMS) and the Shedd Aquarium using AOTTP data began in June 2019.

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