

Atlantic Tropical tuna Tagging Programme

ICCAT/AOTTP NEWSLETTER

A quarterly newsletter published by the ICCAT Secretariat

No. 9

The Atlantic Ocean tropical Tuna Tagging Programme Final Symposium

*Experience, Results and Lessons Learnt from Oceanic Tuna Tagging
Campaigns: the AOTTP in Context.*

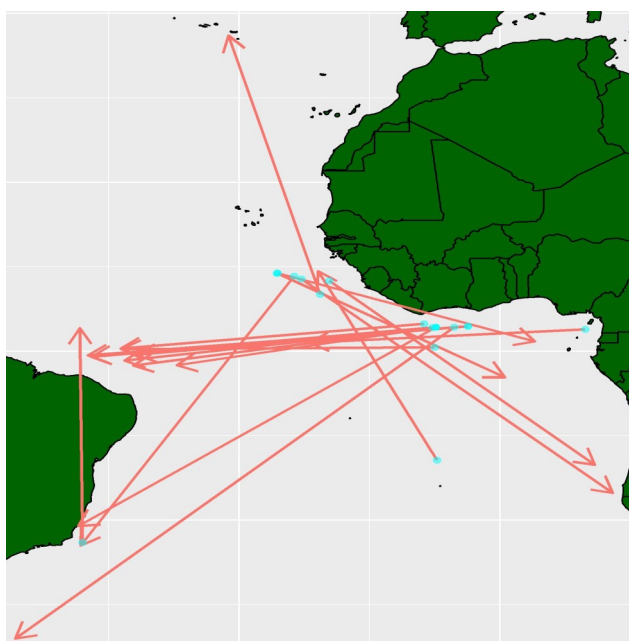
Save the date!
16th to 18th June 2020, Dakar, Senegal

Please register your interest by sending an email to
aottp.symposium@iccat.int

Interested in sponsoring an Early Career Researcher? [Contact us](#) for more
information!

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 at sea: AOTTP have now tagged over 114000 tropical tuna across the Atlantic. Of those 94000 have been single-tagged and 20000 double-tagged allowing tag-shedding rates to be estimated. The project has also chemically tagged over 8500 fish and retrieved biological samples, including otoliths, from over 700 of them. This information is now improving our understanding of the growth of yellowfin tuna. Tag reporting rates for the purse-seine fleet are 77% for bigeye, 80% for skipjack, and 71% for yellowfin. Well over 100 fish have been tagged with satellite pop-up tags, and nearly 400 with internal archival tags, 44 of which have been returned to ICCAT yielding rich data on behaviour and migrations.



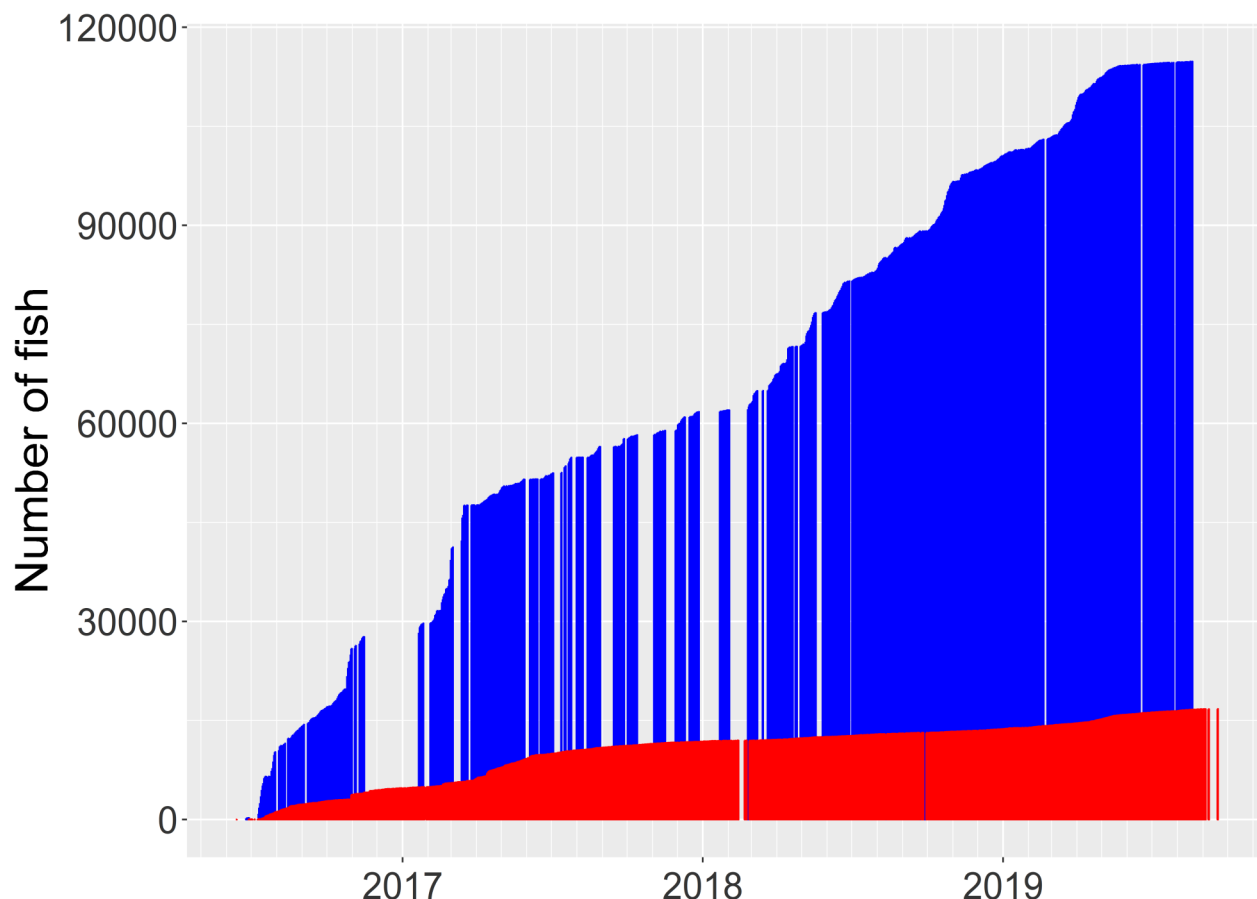
Yellowfin tuna tagged by AOTTP that have distance of more than 1500 nautical miles between release and recovery. Cyan circles are release locations.

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AOTTP progress towards its tag-release target of 120000 fish. Blue vertical lines represent the cumulative sum of the numbers of tropical tuna tagged each year by our partners while the red vertical lines are the cumulative sum of all the recoveries.

Tagging at sea (cont.): Tagging activity will continue into 2020 and, while slowing down, is ongoing around Saint Helena, off northern Brazil, in the Caribbean Sea and off the east coast of the USA where voluntary sport and recreational fishers are tagging fish for AOTTP, and their efforts are very much appreciated.

Tag recovery: Tagged fish, together with their important metadata continue to be reported and interesting and unexpected observations continue to be made. An internal tag was recently discovered in Cabo Verde, for example, that had been completely cut in half at the fish processing factory. This tag came from a bigeye tuna tagged in March 2019 off Senegal. The manufacturer was consulted but unfortunately we were informed that the data from such a damaged tag are irretrievable.



AOTTP internal archival tag cut in half at processing factory.

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ICCAT Standing Committee on Research and Statistics (SCRS) meetings: The SCRS is responsible for making sure that the ICCAT Commission has all the available and relevant fisheries data for highly migratory fish stocks in the ICCAT Convention area. The SCRS also coordinates national and international research activities, conducts stock assessments, and provides the Commission with advice on management and conservation. Every year in autumn two important SCRS meetings are organized: The SCRS Species Group Meetings and the SCRS Plenary. Progress on AOTTP was presented at both meetings by AOTTP Coordination to a positive and interested audience, including new insights on movement and migration. Many SCRS scientists have been, or are involved in all aspects of the AOTTP project including tagging at sea, tag recovery, data analysis and stock assessment. Lunchtime meetings were, therefore, organized with the tag recovery teams and data analysis consortia allowing us to catch up on all aspects of the project. *Ad hoc* meetings with AOTTP database specialist, Jesus Garcia, were also organized to try and correct errors in the data. The traditional SCRS football match was also organized between AOTTP and GBYP (bluefin project) and AOTTP lost 3-2.



AOTTP Tag Recovery Officers lunchtime meeting during SCRS Species Group in Madrid, September 2020.



SCRS football match 2019 between AOTTP and GBYP.

Other news

- AOTTP Steering Committee met on 26th September 2019 to discuss all aspects of the project.
- A Concept Note describing the objectives and theme sessions of the AOTTP Final Symposium (Dakar, 16-18 June 2020) has been developed, together with EU DG-DEVCO
- Proposals/budgets for an Event Manager to organize AOTTP Final Symposium logistics are being assessed.
- A team of consultants will evaluate all aspects of the AOTTP over the next few months. In addition to meeting the ICCAT Secretariat, and the AOTTP team at HQ in Madrid, they will also visit TROs in West Africa and Brazil.
- AOTTP coordination will attend the Commission tropical tuna (Panel 1) meeting in November and promote the project to managers and decision-makers via a Side Event.

Email AOTTP: aottp@iccat.int