



PTTP Bi-Monthly Summary

February - March 2009

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Project News

Second Western Pacific Cruise Commences.



Figure 1. Tagging in Milne Bay and up to FSM.

The main tagging vessel, Soltai 105, entered into the waters of PNG on 16th March 2009 extending the second phase of the Pacific Tuna Tagging Programme (PTTP) into the southern Solomon Sea, enabling a gap in the previous coverage area to be covered.

A total of 9243 conventional tags and 1 archival tags were released during this 8 day sortie into the southern tip of PNG. Tagging was conducted off Rossel Island Misima Island and south of Woodlark Island, baiting Hei Huti Bay, Pana Tinanae and by Pocklington Reef on the way back to the Solomon Islands (Figure 1).

The tagging vessel then turned north to complete second leg of tuna tagging in the greater western Pacific, heading to FSM before heading east to the Marshall Islands, south to Kiribati (Gilbert Islands) , south to Tuvalu and then heading back west to the Solomon Islands to complete the leg.

Tag Releases

Total tag releases for the second western Pacific tagging cruise as at 31st March 2009, stands at **14, 384**. This brings the total number of tag releases for the project to **176, 189**.

Tag Recoveries

Recaptures from the recent releases are starting to be reported. Total tag recoveries as at 31st March, stands at 497 for Phase 2. This brings the total number of tag recoveries for the whole project (PTTP) to 21,980 with a 12.48% recovery rate (Table 1). Figure 2 shows tag releases for the entire PTTP, including the releases in the central Pacific. Figure 3 illustrates the size classes tagged over the PTTP for each of the three target species. Figure 4 shows the displacement of tagged tunas from the area which they were tagged.

The number of tag recoveries by month (Figure 5) shows large fluctuations in the rate of recovery with the larger amounts of tags being returned a month or so after the commencement of tagging operations.

Table 1. Total tag releases, recoveries and recovery rate as at 31st March 2009.

	Releases	Recoveries	%
Skipjack	109,234	13,725	12.56%
Yellowfin	62,043	7,696	12.40%
Bigeye	3292	559	16.98%
Total	176,189	21,980	12.48 %

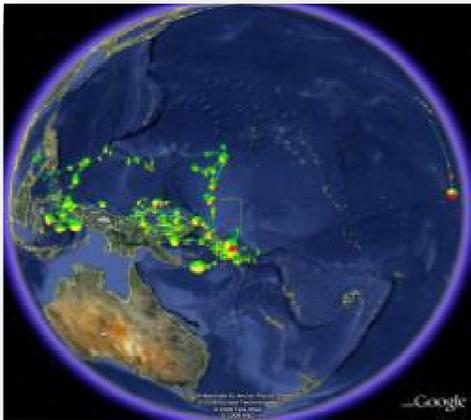
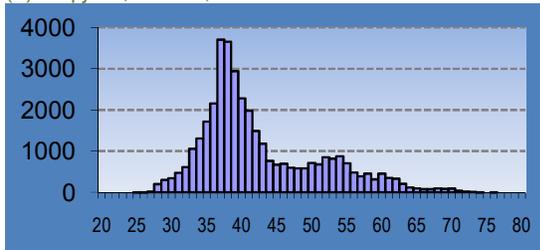
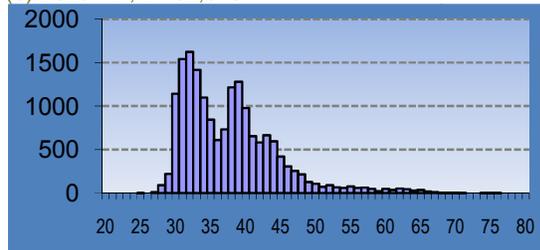


Figure 2. Tag release pie charts for the project including the central Pacific.

(a) Skipjack, n= 102,234



(b) Yellowfin, n= 62,043



(c) Bigeye, n= 3,292

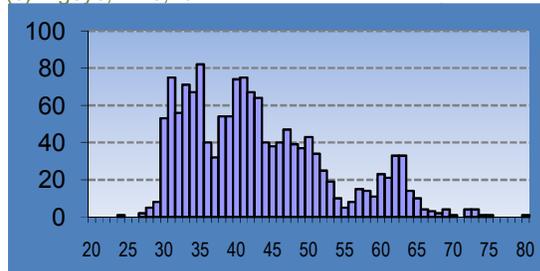
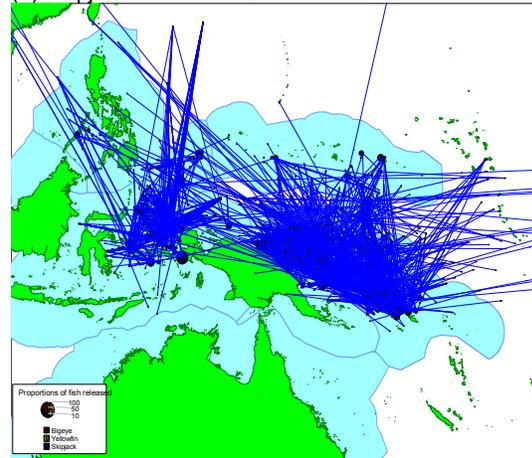
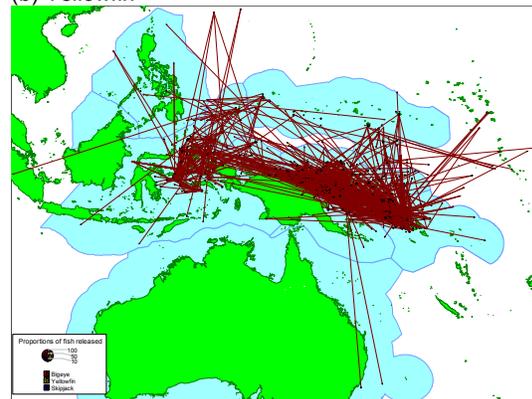


Figure 3. Length frequency distribution of tagged tuna population.

(a) Skipjack



(b) Yellowfin



(c) Bigeye

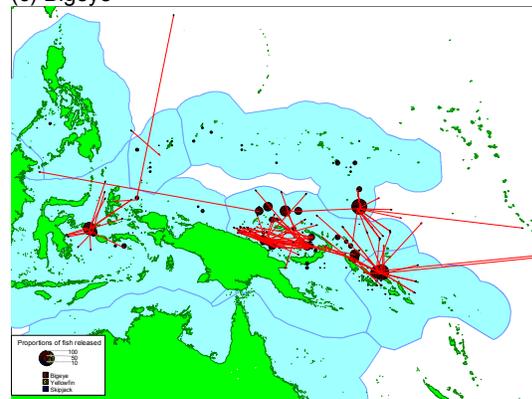


Figure 4 Tag release-recapture arrow map for skipjack, yellowfin and bigeye; >200nm.

TAG RETURNS BY VESSEL FLAG

Table 2. Tag recoveries by vessel flag.

Vessel Flag	FEB-09 to MAR-09	Total
Australia	0	4
China	39	318
Ecuador	34	70
Fiji	0	0
FSM	0	29
Indonesia	9	3046
Japan	61	2073
Kiribati	0	30
Korea	81	890
Marshall Islands	1	47
New Zealand	0	9
Panama	5	27
Papua New Guinea	219	9837
Philippines	198	3291
Seychelles	0	2
Solomon Islands	119	6889
Spain	48	215
Taiwan	97	1196
Tonga	0	6
United States	121	412
Vanuatu	32	2094
Total	1064	30485

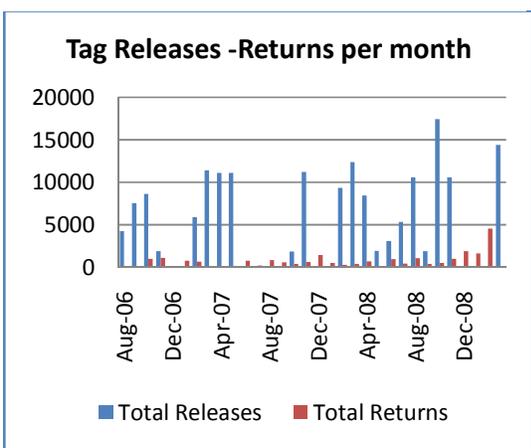


Figure 5 Tag releases and tag returns per month

TAG RECOVERY TRIP

From 18th March a tag recovery trip was undertaken to reemphasize the importance of tag returns and accurate data collection. The trip also served to increase the publicity of the tagging project with the longline fleets targeting tropical tunas (Figure 6). The countries visited were Federated States of Micronesia, Marshall Islands, Palau, Papua New Guinea and Solomon Islands.



Figure 6 Tag recovery publicity in Marshall Islands

During this trip the opportunity was also taken to demonstrate the method of deploying steel heads for the tag seeding experiment. Demonstrations were done for observer coordinators and the available observers in each of the ports visited. Tag seeding kits were also distributed to the observer coordinators for distribution to senior observers to undertake the tag seeding experiment (Figure 7).



Figure 7 Tag seeding demonstration in Marshall Islands

PROFILES

In this section we would like to acknowledge the persons who have contributed to the success of the project. We will endeavor to profile an SPC staff member involved in the project as well as one of our tag recovery contacts.

SPC PERSONNEL

Simon Nicol



Simon is the Principal Fisheries Scientist of the Ecosystem Analysis and Monitoring section with primary responsibilities for overseeing the administration of the group as well as participating in its research activities, including the population dynamics and ecology of tropical tunas and the development and applications of ecosystem models for fisheries management in the western and central Pacific Ocean.

Prior to this appointment he was a Principal Research Scientist with the Government of Victoria with responsibilities for leading research teams in quantitative ecology and ecosystem restoration. During this time he worked closely with senior resource managers, scientists and industry representatives on matters ranging from the implementation & interpretation of applied research, modeling of ecosystems and applications of adaptive management. He joined SPC in November 2006.

TAG RECOVERY CONTACTS

Ian Tervet



Ian is the Observer programme coordinator for the Palau Bureau of Marine Resources' Division of Maritime Law Enforcement. Ian handles observer placement for the longline fleet based in Palau as well as performing debriefing and training for observers in data collection. Ian oversees a small team of observers.

Ian has greatly assisted in the publicity of the PTPP with the Palau longline fleet as well as assisting with other projects running concurrently.

Prior to becoming the observer coordinator in Palau, Ian was captain of the Palau Patrol boat *PSS President H. I. REMELIIK* where he served for several years.

Regards,

The Tagging Team