



PTTP Bi-Monthly Summary

April - May 2009

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Project News

Approaching 200, 000 tagged tunas



Figure 1. Archival tagging a large bigeye tuna..

The Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC) has been conducting tuna tagging of skipjack, bigeye and yellowfin tuna in the Western and Central Pacific since September of 2006. The aim of the project is to collect data on the movements, growth, and mortality rates of these tunas to improve the accuracy of stock assessments. Figure 1 shows crew of the tagging vessel, Soltai 105 using the triple pole method to catch a large bigeye for tagging.

Since the start of the tagging programme over 194,000 tunas have been tagged and released and according to the observed trends we expect over 200, 000 tunas to be tagged and released by the end of the project. As of 31st May 2009 almost 22,000 tags have been recovered and returned to SPC (Table 1).

Tag Releases

Total tag releases for the second western Pacific tagging cruise as at 31th May 2009, stands at 36, 251. This brings the total number of tag releases for the project to 194, 193.

Tag Recoveries

Recaptures from the recent releases are starting to be reported. Total tag recoveries as at 31st May, 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 May 2009.

	Releases	Recoveries	%
Skipjack	122,668	13,849	11.28%
Yellowfin	64,909	7,709	11.87%
Bigeye	6,616	967	14.61%
Total	194,193	22,525	11.59%

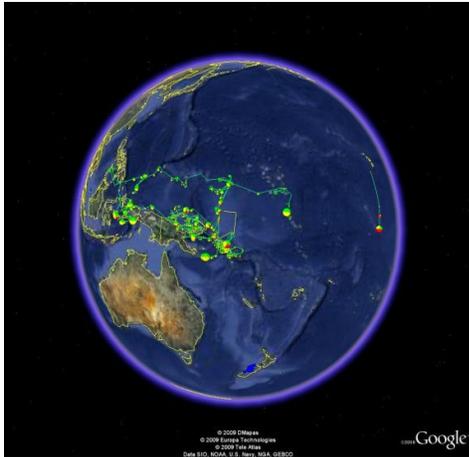
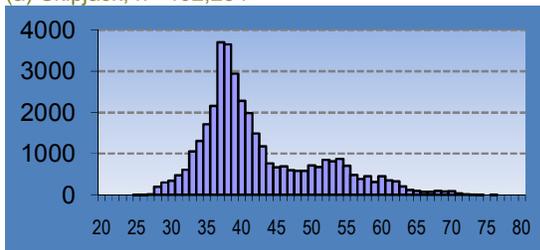
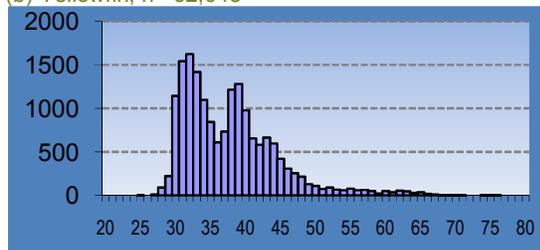


Figure 2. Tag release pie charts for the project including the central Pacific.

(a) Skipjack, n= 102,234



(b) Yellowfin, n= 62,043



(c) Bigeye, n= 3,292

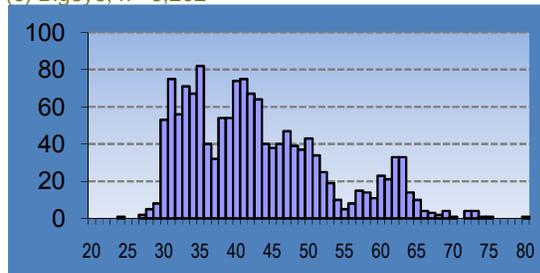
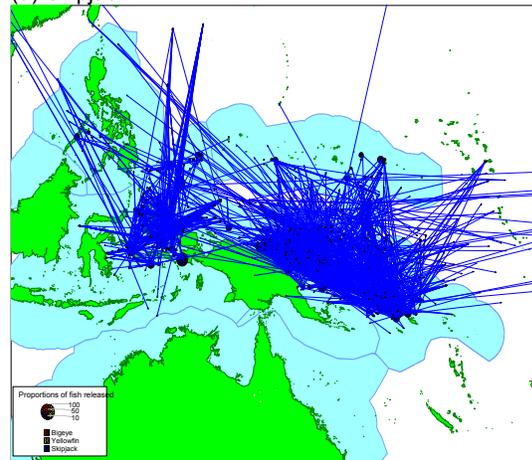
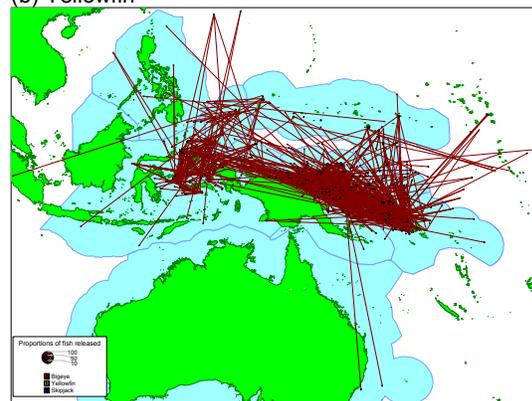


Figure 3. Length frequency distribution of tagged tuna population.

(a) Skipjack



(b) Yellowfin



(c) Bigeye

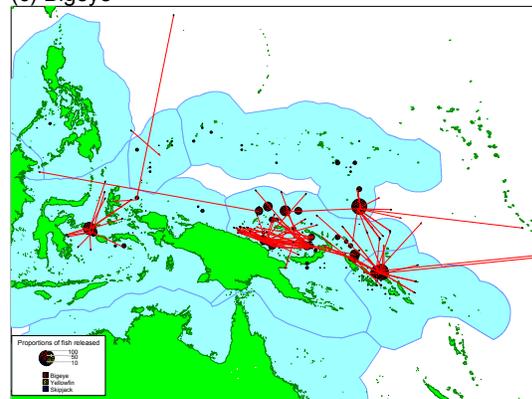


Figure 4 Tag release-recapture arrow map for skipjack, yellowfin and bigeye; >200nm.

TAG RETURNS BY VESSEL FLAG

Table 2. Tag recoveries by vessel flag.

	APR-MAY 09	Total
Australia	0	2
China	6	178
Ecuador	0	153
El Salvador	0	2
Fiji	0	2
FSM	18	39
Indonesia	660	3641
Japan	84	1360
Kiribati	1	4
Korea	41	563
Marshall Islands	8	43
New Zealand	0	5
Panama	0	17
Papua New Guinea	190	6338
Philippines	391	2858
Seychelles	0	1
Solomon Islands	140	3909
Spain	1	25
Taiwan	59	905
Tonga	0	0
United States	28	384
Unknown	23	992
Vanuatu	7	1095
Total	1657	22516

Figure 5 Tag releases and tag returns per month

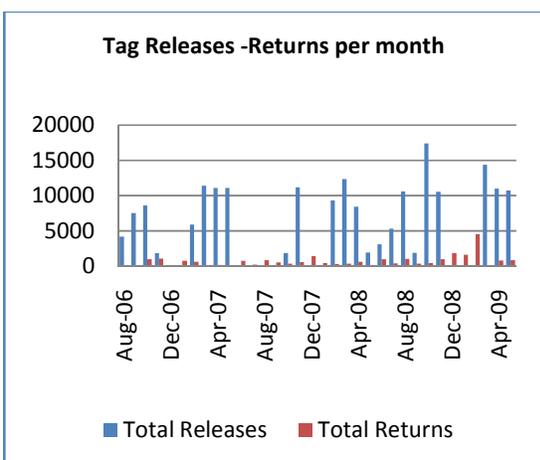


Table 3. Tag returns by tag recovery source

Tag Return Source	APR-MAY 09	Total
American Samoa	0	27
Carriers	0	0
China	0	1
FSM	3	10
IATTC	2	857
Indonesia	660	3490
IOTC	2	7
Japan	80	1299
Kiribati	6	6
Korea	1	293
Marshall Islands	14	15
Philippines (Direct)	492	2117
Philippines (Frabelle)	0	163
PNG (Frabelle)	49	944
PNG (NFA)	12	117
PNG (RD)	24	5118
PNG (SSTC)	67	799
PNG (Other)	2	50
Solomon Islands (NMFMR)	2	151
Solomon Islands (Soltai)	65	319
Solomon Islands (Global Investment)	0	1017
Solomon Islands (NFD)	0	3379
Solomon Islands (Other)	0	30
Taiwan	0	14
Tagging Vessel	80	150
Thailand	93	2357
Other	4	29
Total	1658	22759

TAG RETURN LOTTERIES

Tag return lotteries are currently being planned for the Philippines, Indonesia, Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands and Japan. These are being planned to coincide with large meetings and events in order to greater generate publicity and continued awareness of the importance of the tagging program.

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

Siosifa Fukofuka



Siosifa (Sifa) is the Port Sampling and Observer Trainer with SPC. Sifa was employed by the Tongan Ministry of Marine Resources from 1989 to 1994. During that time Sifa undertook a bachelor's degree program with the University of South Pacific. Sifa graduated from the University of South Pacific in 1990. Sifa joined SPC in 1991 as a Fisheries Observer under the SPRTRAMP Project where he remained until 2000 before rejoining the Tongan Ministry of Marine Resources in 2001. Sifa subsequently rejoined SPC in 2002 in his current capacity where he has been ever since.

Sifa was one of the SPC staff that was heavily involved in the fieldwork of Phase 1 and has tagged in excess of 10,000 tunas. Sifa also commenced the tag seeding experiment. During observer training Sifa alerts observers to be on the lookout for tags and the information that needs to be collected and submitted when a tag is returned.

TAG RECOVERY CONTACTS

Steve Retalmai



Steve is the Observer and Port Sampling coordinator for the National Oceanic Resources Management Authority in the Federated States of Micronesia (FSM). Steve handles observer placement for the longline fleet based in FSM as well as for the purse seine vessels fishing in FSM. Steve oversees a small team of observers and port samplers. Steve's duties include observer placement, performing debriefing and training for observers in data collection.

Steve has greatly assisted in the publicity of the PTTTP with the Palau longline fleet as well as assisting with other projects running concurrently. Steve also currently acts as the main tag recovery contact point for FSM.

Regards,

The Tagging Team