

We want more!

10 successful tagging seasons +1: CP11 to be launched

The Oceanic Fisheries Programme of the Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC-OFP) has been conducting tuna tagging, which is focused on bigeye tuna in the equatorial central Pacific since 2008. This tagging work has been concentrated on tuna schools that are aggregated beneath the tropical atmosphere and oceans (TAO) oceanographic data moorings (see Fig. 1). In particular, this tagging work provides crucial information for tuna stock assessments and greatly improves the understanding of bigeye tuna movement behaviour. The reports on the 10 cruises undertaken to date are available on SPC's website at: <http://www.spc.int/tagging/en/publications/tagging-publications/viewcategory/12>.

In 2014, the 10th Central Pacific cruise (CP10) was implemented for the first time with the collaboration of the International Seafood Sustainability Foundation (ISSF) and the US purse-seine company TriMarine International. This joint effort allowed research to be carried out for the first time around drifting fish aggregating devices (dFADs), with the objective of improving our knowledge on dFAD-associated tuna and bycatch species behaviour.

This year, the collaboration with TriMarine will be enhanced with the participation of their fishing analyst Beth Vanden Heuvel during the CP11 cruise. Another fishing company, the Spanish Garavilla group (Isabel brand tuna cans) that operates a fleet of four boats from Manta (Ecuador), will also collaborate by providing access to some of their dFADs.

The main objectives of the cruise are to:

1. provide information for the assessment and management of bigeye tuna in the Pacific Ocean. This will involve tagging and releasing bigeye tuna with conventional tags (CT) and archival tags (AT) around the equatorial TAO moorings that are placed along the 170°W, 155°W and 140°W meridians. The same experiment will be conducted around dFADs; and
2. improve knowledge on tuna and bycatch behaviour around dFADs. This will involve tagging and releasing tuna and associated species with acoustic tags around dFADs, which have been pre-equipped with acoustic receivers.

Tagging platform: For CP11, the project has chartered FV *Gutsy Lady 4*, which is a US-flagged long-liner based in Honolulu. Captain Tim Jones has already participated in three previous central Pacific tagging cruises. He is keen to sail again for the project with this bigger vessel (30 metres), which will provide a comfortable platform with enough autonomy to operate over the considerable distances (over 6000 nautical miles) that will have to be covered (Fig.1)

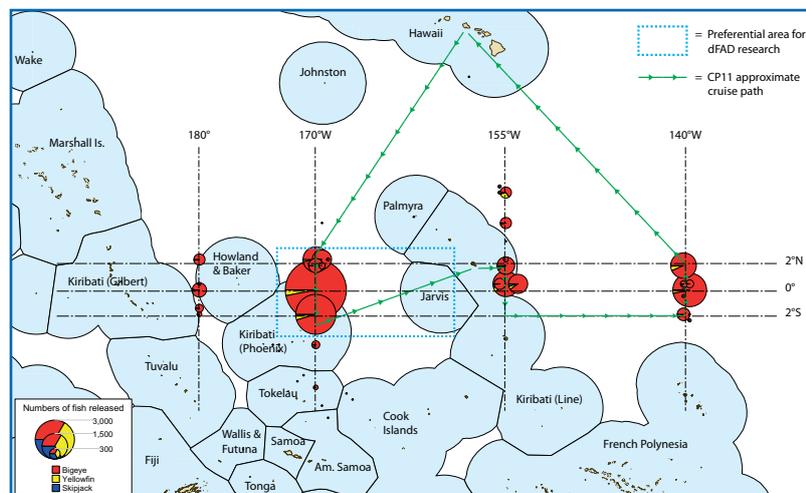


Figure 1. Distribution of tag releases (by species) during the previous CP cruises. The blue dashed line delimits the preferential area of research for CP11.



Figure 2. FV *Gutsy Lady 4*.

For more information:

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