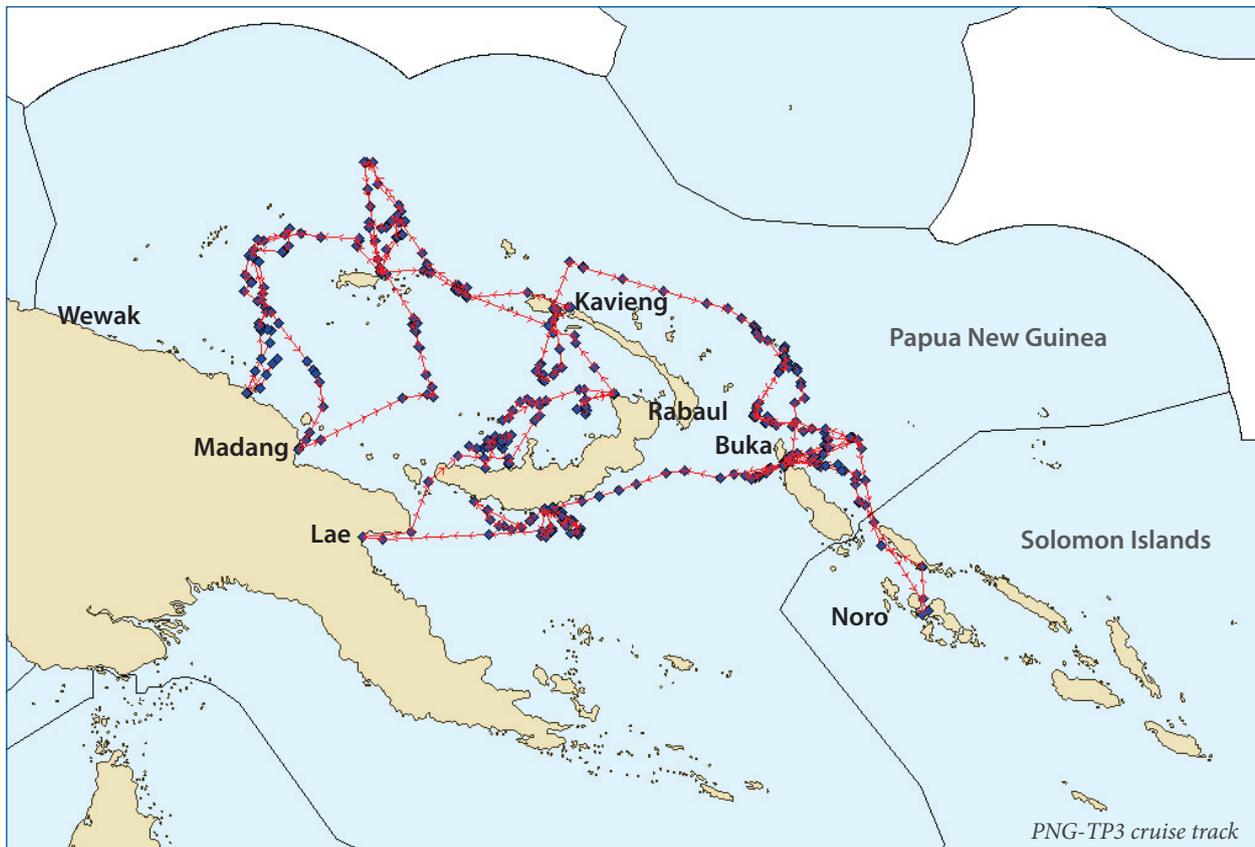


Last PNG tagging cruise concludes the end of an era



When the F/V Soltai 101's main engine was turned off at Noro base in the Solomon Islands on 6 June 2013, crew members and others who have been involved in the tagging programme run by the Oceanic Fisheries Programme of the Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC) since August 2006 had mixed feelings. The 2013 cruise tagged 29,920 tuna in Papua New Guinea (PNG) waters in two months and the PNG tagging project successfully reached its target goal with 110,501 releases.

But this cruise meant the conclusion of seven years of almost continuous (no cruise in 2010) tuna tagging in the western and central Pacific Ocean region using pole-and-line boats from the Solomon Islands National Fisheries Development company. More than 360,000 tuna have been tagged onboard the fishing vessels *Soltai 6*, *Soltai 105* and *Soltai 101*, and the success of what could be considered the biggest ever tuna tagging programme is largely due to the efficiency, professionalism and dedication of the crews of these boats and the company they work for. A big thank you to all of you. No doubt this work will contribute to the better management of our tuna resources.

Nearly 15,000 tagged fish have been recaptured from the PNG tuna tagging project and recoveries are expected to continue for several years, providing a full-time job for tag recovery officers who are placed in key tuna unloading points in PNG (Lae, Madang, Rabaul and Wewak).

The tag recoveries officers are now entering data into a specialised database that allows the importation of recovery information directly into SPC's database on a monthly basis. These data will be used primarily to assess the status of tuna resources in PNG for national fisheries management, and will contribute to the regional assessment of tuna stocks. A number of analyses are being undertaken to use tagging data to estimate movements and mortality rates within stock assessment models. Before being used, the data (especially position and date of recapture) need to be verified and corroborated with logsheets (declarations of captures by the fishery), and vessel monitoring system matching is an ongoing task. Close to 70% of recovery records (from the entire Pacific Tuna Tagging Project) have been verified and the remaining is expected to be completed in 2013.



Tagging yellowfin tuna on F/V Soltai 101.

PNG total release summary.

Time period	Tagging vessel	Number of releases
Apr–Jul 2011	<i>Soltai 105</i>	40,655
Jan–Mar 2012	<i>Soltai 105</i>	39,926
Apr–Jun 2013	<i>Soltai 105</i>	29,920
7 months		110,501

For more information:

Bruno Leroy
 Fisheries Scientist, SPC
 BrunoL@spc.int



This issue of SPC's Fisheries Newsletter was produced with the financial support of the European Union.

The contents of this publication are the sole responsibility of SPC and can in no way be taken to reflect the views of the European Union.