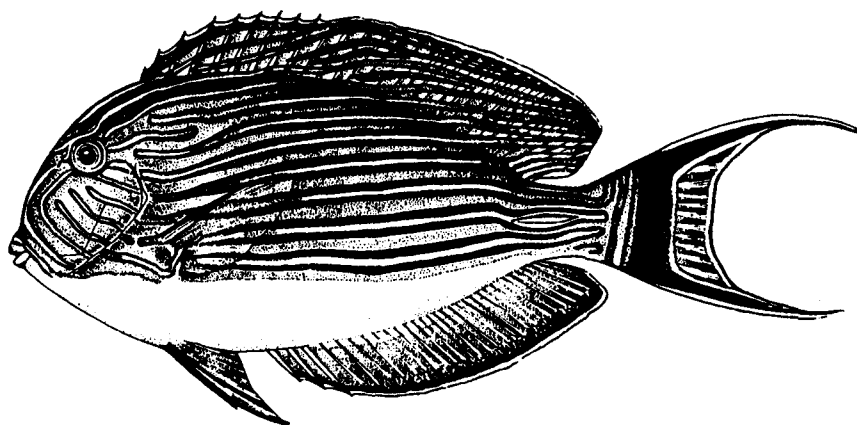

FISHERIES



Regional Technical Meeting on Fisheries

Almost 100 fisheries scientists, workers and managers crowded into the SPC centre hall to watch videos of SPC fisheries staff in action, discuss the state of Pacific fisheries, and consume very popular dried fish products from Tokelau. The occasion was the Twenty-third Regional Technical Meeting on Fisheries (RTMF), held from 5 to 9 August in Noumea, New Caledonia.

For the first time an open-day display was organised to allow a more direct presentation of programme activities. Participants could meet and discuss the projects in detail with the staff members concerned — after hours, of course, there were plenty of opportunities for more informal but no less serious get-togethers!

During the week, programme officers reported on their activities during the previous year: the Regional Tuna Tagging Project (at the time of the meeting a total of

about 90,000 fish had been tagged and released); the Deep Sea Fisheries Development Project (preparation of a FAD handbook and the vertical longline fishing video currently being made by Masterfisherman Peter Watt in Tonga); a study tour of Latin America for the Fish Handling and Processing Project; as well as the ongoing activities such as training and the Fisheries Information Project.

As in previous years, the RTMF featured a one-day workshop — this year's theme was 'People, Society and Pacific Islands Fisheries Development and Management' — a theme shared by this issue's Focus.

This meeting witnessed a major change in the Fisheries Programme as the Secretary-General thanked its former Co-ordinator, Mr Bernard Smith, who recently left the Commission after ten years of service, for his work during that time. Mr Baiteke then congratulated Mr Julian Dashwood from the Cook Islands on his appointment as Mr Smith's successor in the position.

Dr Tim Adams of Fiji and Mr Philippe Siu of French Polynesia were the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the meeting.

A full report of the meeting is available from SPC.

Contributor: Jean-Paul Gaudechoux

SPC Project tags over 100,000 tuna

By the end of September this year, SPC's Regional Tuna Tagging Project (RTTP) had broken through the 100,000 limit, with the total number of tagged tuna standing at 101,002. Tagging activities by project scientists started early last year when the chartered Tuvaluan pole-and-line vessel *Te Tautai* set forth on its first trip for SPC. In the last four months, the vessel has tagged 14,887 skipjack, 2,577 yellowfin and 15 bigeye tuna. Information gathered through the project assists scientists to understand more about these valuable fish, which form one of the major marine resources of the Pacific.

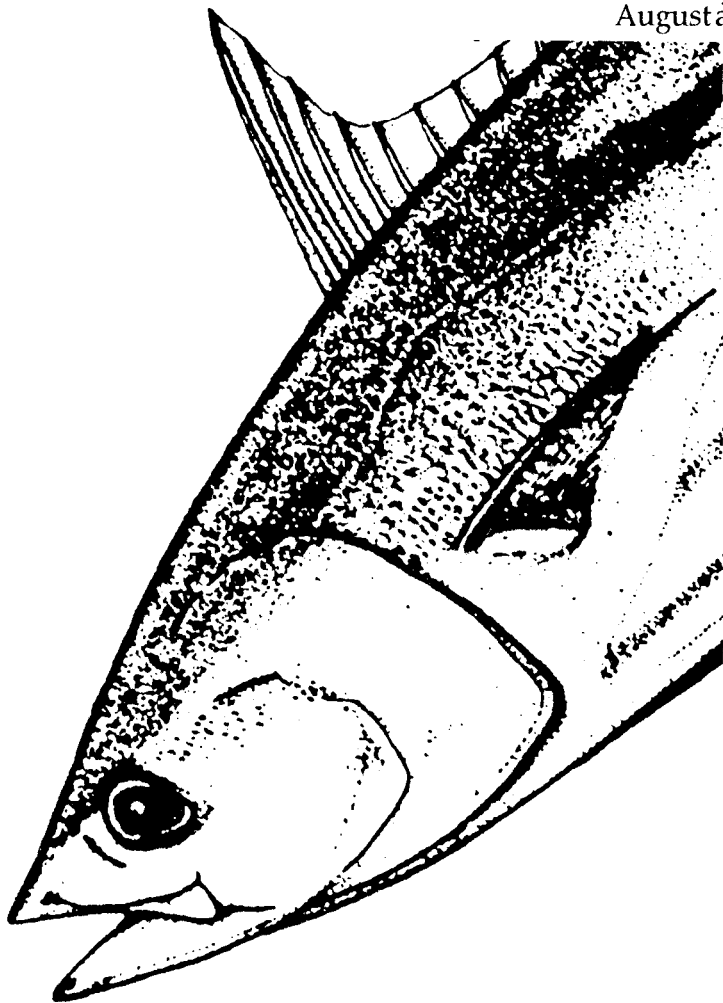
Return of the tags by fishermen and canneries within the SPC area and beyond is encouraged by lotteries: three were held in July and August, and the winners' names are given in this article.

The majority of the tag releases in June—September 1991 were made in southern Truk and Pohnpei States of the Federated States of Micronesia (FSM) and the Kiribati zone, although over 1,400 tuna were tagged in the Marshall Islands and over 2,000 in north-eastern Papua New Guinea (PNG). Fisheries Scientists Kevin Bailey and David Itano led these cruises, ably assisted by Fisheries Scientist Joel Opnai, Fisheries Experimental Officers Filipe Viala and Etimoni Palu, Albacore Tagging Officer Peter Sharples and Fisheries Statistician Tim Lawson. Former SPC Fisheries Scientist Benoît Caillart returned to provide assistance to the RTTP for a two-month period.

The *Te Tautai* spent June near New Hanover, New Ireland, and the small islands and atolls of north-eastern PNG, moving to Micronesia during July. Over 4000 tuna were tagged and a new RTTP record of 2,057 releases for a single day was set on 10 July. Tag releases were concentrated close to American and Japanese purse seine vessels that were fishing on tuna schools between Nukuoro and Kapingamarangi atolls.

Baiting visits to Kapingamarangi gave RTTP scientists an opportunity to lend support and technical assistance to a small-scale, FSM-based artisanal tuna tagging project. This project is being conducted in conjunction with the RTTP and is administered from Pohnpei through the Micronesian

Maritime Authority. The objective of this special tagging study is to tag large yellowfin tuna caught in the traditional handline fishery outside the outer reef slope of Kapingamarangi. Yellow SPC tags fitted with extra-long streamers are being used by Jonah George, the Kapingamarangi-based tagger for the project. Jonah has tagged over 200 tuna, with some of the yellowfin measuring over one metre in length.



The month of August was divided between cruises in the Marshall Islands, Kiribati (Gilbert Islands group) and Tuvalu. A thorough circuit of the Ratak chain of islands in the eastern Marshalls resulted in 1,403 releases. Tuna schools were scarce during this cruise, but these tag releases were of key importance, being at the eastern and northern geographical limit of RTTP operations to date.

The last part of the month was spent fishing on large skipjack schools found near the border between southern Kiribati and northern Tuvalu. The *Te Tautai* then returned to her home port of Funafuti, where the Tuvaluan crew enjoyed a well-deserved break after eight long months away from home.

Fishing in Kiribati was very productive with 6,481 releases being made by the *Te Tautai* during August and September. A further

4,257 tuna were tagged in Kiribati from the pole-and-line vessel *Nei Kaneati*, from the Tarawa-based fisheries company of Te Mautari Ltd. This vessel is conducting the Kiribati In-country Tagging Project, operating in conjunction with the RTTP and supported by staff from SPC and the Kiribati Fisheries Division. SPC Fisheries Experimental Officers Filipe Viala and Etimoni Palu both spent time on the *Nei Kaneati* working with Maruia Kamatie from the Kiribati Fisheries Division. They performed the tagging and data-recording duties on board and trained the crew in research-oriented activities.

The *Te Tautai* steamed west from Tarawa on 11 September, tagging over 450 tuna on the way to Solomon Islands, where fishing was very good.

Over 2,000 skipjack and yellowfin were tagged during the last four days of this month. One of the main objectives of this visit was to conduct field work for an age validation study of yellowfin tuna caught in the Solomons zone. Selected fish were injected with oxytetracycline (OTC) before release. This chemical puts down a layer on the bones and hard fin rays that can be discerned after recapture. The technique allows

scientists to compare layers of bone growth against the known days at liberty of a fish after recapture; this can help to confirm or refute the existence of daily growth increments on tuna bones and thus confirm or refute current estimates of tuna age and growth. As the study requires the return of the entire fish for examination, OTC-injected fish are tagged with special orange tags and a SI \$40 reward is given instead of the regular \$10 reward for yellow tags.

By the end of September, 7,706 tags had been returned to SPC. To reward those who have returned RTTP tags during 1990, and to encourage the continuing return of tags in future, the RTTP held three lotteries in July and August. A further lottery will be held in October to cover returns sent by Japanese fishermen.

In July the RTTP Fisheries Research Officer, Veronica Logez, visited Honiara to supervise the lottery draw for all tags returned to Solomon Islands since 1 July 1990. This draw was conducted in the presence of Walter Ramo, Permanent Secretary for the Ministry of Natural Resources. First prize (SI \$500) went to David Rapeasi, second prize (SI \$250) to Samuel Gibson Tara and third prize to the crew of the *Tokuyo 8*.

Principal Fisheries Scientist, John Hampton, supervised the lottery draw in Pago Pago, American Samoa, in July in the presence of the Director of Marine and Wildlife Resources, Mr Henry Sesepasara. This lottery was geared towards cannery workers, who have returned over 600 tags to date. The lucky winners for this lottery were Alofaiga F. (first prize US \$500), Viliamu Unutoa (second prize US \$250), and Paulo Luteru (third prize US \$150).

The third lottery draw was conducted in the Philippines and concentrated on artisanal Philippine fishermen who had returned tags over the last year. Winners were Antonio Serrano (first prize), Brenda Labajo (second prize) and

Cesar Garcia (third prize). A previous lottery held a few months earlier covered tag returns sent in by fishermen working on Philippine purse seiners in Papua New Guinea fishing grounds and people returning tags from Philippine canneries and unloading ports.

Another round of lotteries will be conducted during 1992. Congratulations to all the winners and many thanks for returning the tags and important catch information!

Contributors: David Itano, Veronica Logez

Fisheries Officers' study tour to Latin America



Pacific Island fisheries officers from Fiji, Papua New Guinea and Tuvalu were impressed by the level of technical expertise in post-harvest fisheries in Mexico, Ecuador, Peru and Chile, which they visited during a study tour of Latin America in April this year.

Areas of particular interest to the Pacific Islands include training in quality control and inspection services, particularly in Ecuador and Chile; solar tent fish drying technology from Ecuador; low-cost fish smoking and salting techniques in Ecuador and Peru; technical assistance at regional work-

shops such as SPC's regional workshop for the chilled fish sector; and a whole range of literature and product formulations (burgers, sausages, smoked products, etc.) which were collected in each country visited. The visitors also learnt of the possibility that funds could be made available for Pacific Island technical experts to work on specific projects or undergo training in Latin America.



The study tour representatives were impressed with the high degree of commitment to the post-harvest fisheries sector in each country and felt that the Pacific Islands need to expand their activities in this important technical area if they are to benefit fully from the utilisation of their marine resources. The establishment in Suva, Fiji, of the Regional Post-harvest Fisheries Centre, scheduled to take place in the next two years, will assist in this expansion.

The tour participants were Steve Roberts (leader), SPC Post-harvest Fisheries Adviser; Maciu Lagibalavu, Acting Principal Fisheries Officer, Fisheries Division, Fiji; Satalaka Petaia, Fisheries Extension and Development Officer, Fisheries Division, Tuvalu; and N. Rajeswaren, Senior Resources Development Officer, Department of Fisheries and Marine Resources, Papua New Guinea. The tour was joined by Gordon Munro, Coordinator PECC Task Force on Fisheries Development and Cooperation, and Senora Lola Dulanto de Soldi from Peru, who acted as interpreter.

The study tour was funded by the Canadian International Development Agency, and was the first activity to take place under the Trans-Pacific Fisheries Consultative Committee since its creation in July 1990.

Contributor: Steve Roberts

Tasty, kina-spinning fish products in PNG

'We can't stop here. We must go on and ensure that the other women in the villages have the opportunity to learn these same skills.'

This comment was made by the Vice-President of the PNG National Council of Women at the closing of a workshop in Kavieng which taught 16 women from the New Guinea Island region how to chill, smoke and salt fish, process beche-de-mer and market the results.

The general objective of the two-week workshop, which was held at the National Fisheries College in September, was to enhance the women's skills and knowledge in the area of fisheries. More specifically, the workshop was designed to train participants in the techniques of small-scale fish processing and marketing and to encourage them to develop and establish small-scale fisheries income-generating projects.

Each afternoon the participants put their newly acquired knowledge from morning lectures and demonstrations into practice. The highlight of these afternoon sessions was the actual consumption of products such as fish jerky (marinated dried fish), smoked fish, fish burgers, fish cakes and balls and fish crackers. From the comments made by the participants and the quick disappearance of the products, it was apparent that the resource people had been highly successful in their efforts.



On Friday 13 September, a closing dinner and presentation were held to mark the end of a successful two weeks. Before presenting the certificates to the women, a number of guest personnel were asked to make a few comments. One common theme was the need for such workshops and for ongoing assistance and training.

So it was agreed that this workshop was just the first step in enhancing the role of women in fisheries throughout the New Guinea Island region. In November, there will be follow-up visits to all four provinces to assist in provincial plans to assess the needs and interests of women.

The workshop was jointly organised by the PNG Departments of Fisheries and Marine Resources, and Home Affairs and Youth, and the South Pacific Commission. It was carried out as part of Papua New Guinea's Women in Fisheries Support Project, established in March 1991 under the auspices of the Department of Fisheries and Marine Resources, with funding from the International Centre for Ocean Development. The workshop was a practical demonstration of the Department's continuing commitment to promoting the role of women in fisheries throughout the coastal regions of Papua New Guinea.

Contributor: Shirley Steele