

50,000th tag recovered in Papua New Guinea

Tag number P199008, deployed on a yellowfin tuna on 15 May 2011, was recovered by a Papua New Guinean fisher in 2012. Johnathan Joul, from Kananam village near Madang, found the plastic dart tag that was attached to the back of the tuna while he was working on a tuna purse-seine vessel, the Dolores 828, when fishing about 140 miles from where the fish had been released in the Bismarck Sea. The tagged fish was spotted during the brailing process when tuna are scooped out from the purse-seine net into the vessel's wells.

This was the 50,000th tag recovered since the start of the Pacific Tuna Tagging Programme in 2006. A special reward of USD 500 was given to Johnathan to celebrate this milestone.

The fish was tagged and released during the first cruise of the Papua New Guinea (PNG) Tagging Project. Fully funded by PNG's National Fisheries Authority and jointly undertaken with the Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC), this project aims to establish an "experimental" population of tuna, which can be monitored and modelled as the tagged fish are recaptured.

SPC has been tagging tuna since the 1970s to collect critical information for the assessment of tuna species in the western and central Pacific Ocean, the world's

biggest tuna fishery. Its Pacific Tuna Tagging Programme is an initiative of the Pacific Island community to ensure that the best information is available to manage their oceanic ecosystems. Tagging is currently focused in Papua New Guinean waters. In 2011 and 2012, a three-month and a two-month cruise, respectively, have allowed the deployment of 80,589 tags on skipjack, yellowfin and bigeye tuna.

A short video documenting tuna tagging onboard the chartered pole-and-line fishing vessel *Soltai 105* is available for viewing on YouTube by typing "PNG Tuna Tagging 2012" in the search bar or through this link:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-get6e202BA>.



The milestone tag finder Jonathan Joul with Madang TRO Jacinta Jacob at left and RD Fishing representative Nilbert Mullet at right.