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## Yellowfin tuna with a heart of gold

**A Papua New Guinean fisher has won US\$500 for recovering a plastic tag that was attached to the back of a yellowfin tuna.**



Credit: Bruno Leroy. Copyright Secretariat of the Pacific Community

The fish was tagged and released by the Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC) on 15 May 2011 and is the 50,000th tag to be returned to SPC.

Johnathan Joul from Kananam village, near Madang, spotted the yellow tag on the back of the yellowfin on board the Dolores 828, about 140 miles from where the fish had been released in the Bismarck Sea.

‘Recovering the tags is crucial to the success of our tagging programme,’ says John Hampton, SPC’s Oceanic Fisheries Programme Manager, ‘so we offer cash rewards to fishers as an incentive to return the tags to us.’

The 50,000th tag came with a special reward of US\$500 to celebrate the milestone.

The objective of tagging is to establish an 'experimental' population of tuna which can then be monitored and modelled as the tagged fish are recaptured.

SPC has been tagging tuna since the 1970s to collect critical information for assessing tuna stocks 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 the best information is available to manage their oceanic ecosystems.

Tagging is currently focused in Papua New Guinean waters and is fully funded by the PNG Government. With more than 300,000 tuna now tagged, the programme is generating the most comprehensive data set for tuna management in the world.

'Tuna is hugely important to the region,' says Mr Hampton.

'Many Pacific Island countries and territories rely heavily on it for income through fishing licenses. Local people rely on it for their livelihoods. We need to know how much tuna is out there and whether the amount of fishing is sustainable.'

Yellowfin is one of the four tuna species mainly targeted by fishers in the Western and Central Pacific Ocean fishery; the others are bigeye, skipjack and south Pacific albacore.

SPC estimates the 2010 catch for all four species at 2.4 million tonnes, the second highest annual catch on record. That's 83% of the total Pacific Ocean catch and 60% of the global tuna catch.

Source: Secretariat of the Pacific Community

### **More information**

**[Overfishing of western Pacific bigeye tuna continues](#), *ECOS***

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