

**Report of the Meeting of the Ad Hoc Working Group on Coordination of Tagging Information**  
(online, 3 February 2026)

*The results, conclusions and recommendations contained in this report only reflect the view of the Ad Hoc Working Group on Coordination of Tagging Information. Therefore, these should be considered preliminary until the SCRS adopts them at its annual Plenary meeting and the Commission revises them at its annual meeting. Accordingly, ICCAT reserves the right to comment, object and endorse this report, until it is finally adopted by the Commission.*

## **1. Opening of the meeting, meeting arrangements, agenda and rapporteurs**

The meeting was held online on 3 February 2026. It was opened by Dr Federico Mas (Uruguay), the Working Group (“the Group”) rapporteur and meeting Chair, who welcomed the participants. The ICCAT Executive Secretary, Mr Camille Jean Pierre Manel, welcomed the participants and highlighted, among other aspects, the importance of discussing the current ICCAT rewarding policy related to tagging, due to the current high costs and wished them success in their meeting. Dr Miguel Neves dos Santos, the ICCAT Assistant Executive Secretary, highlighted some logistical aspects and the need to adjust the tag rewarding policy to the current funds available, but also taking into consideration the discrepancy compared to other tagging programmes managed by CPCs.

The SCRS Chair, Dr Craig Brown, welcomed the participants, and reminded that the meeting reflected the need to enhance synergies and cooperation among the different ICCAT tagging programmes, and wished the participants success in their meeting.

The Chair proceeded to review the Agenda which was adopted with some changes (**Appendix 1**). The List of Participants is included in **Appendix 2**. The List of presentations provided at the meeting is attached as **Appendix 3**. The abstracts of all SCRS presentations are included in **Appendix 4**. The following participants served as rapporteurs:

<i>Sections</i>	<i>Rapporteur</i>
Items 1 and 10	M. Neves dos Santos
Items 2 and 5	J. Garcia, A. Pagá
Items 3 and 4	F. Alemany, T. Minch
Item 6	F. Más
Items 7 and 8	F. Más
Item 9	C. Mayor, J. García

## **2. Current ICCAT tagging programmes (including a brief reference to previous programmes)**

The ICCAT Secretariat gave a presentation that provided a historical overview of ICCAT tagging activities, which were initiated in 1979 (SCRS/P/2026/001). The past and ongoing research programmes managed by ICCAT Secretariat were listed, highlighting those including electronic and conventional tagging activities, detailing the number and type of tags deployed and recovered by species. Currently ICCAT conventional tags database contains information on more than 750,000 conventional tags deployments and about 55,000 conventional tags recoveries. Electronic tagging activities were also summarized, informing about the type and number of ICCAT owned tags, approximately 1600 deployed by species. The rewarding system for tag recoveries, including the annual lottery held during the SCRS plenary sessions, was also described.

The Group discussed the high variability observed in recapture rates among species and programmes, concluding that it could be due to multiple program specific interacting factors, as tagging campaigns strategies, fishery-specific operational conditions, tag insertion techniques, tag type, expertise of taggers, reporting and reward systems, and species-specific capture and handling practices. Consequently, the Group emphasized that recovery rates are highly species-dependent and that meaningful interpretation requires species-specific and temporal analyses rather than direct comparisons across taxa or programmes. The Group recognized the value of conventional tagging programmes but highlighted the need of optimizing tagging strategies and methodologies to minimize uncertainties and increase their cost effectiveness.

### **3. Rewarding related to tag recoveries**

The presentation SCRS/P/2026/002 provided an update on the number of electronic tags of different types (internal, archival pop-up and acoustic), that have been recovered along the last decade, in order to illustrate the increasing trend in recoveries and its impacts on the budgets of ICCAT tagging programmes. Different actions aiming at reducing these rewarding costs were proposed, such as decreasing the rewards amounts and assuming the rewards payment only for ICCAT owned tags, or eliminating the “ICCAT lottery” if these measures are not implemented.

The Group noted that the current ICCAT reward amounts are much higher than those applied in several national tagging programmes, which creates inconsistencies and potential reporting issues. Based on experiences from different programmes, several participants recommended reducing the reward amounts. It was also discussed the possibility of linking the amount of the rewards for archival tags recoveries to the scientific value of the data they contain, paying more for tags that have remained more time on the fish, but it was concluded that more complex reward structures could be confusing and potentially counterproductive.

Finally, the Group agreed to reduce the amount of the rewards paid by ICCAT by 50% and limiting reward payments to ICCAT-owned tags. The ICCAT Secretariat confirmed that it will circulate the updated reward information and encouraged dissemination through ongoing tagging programmes. The ICCAT lottery for conventional tags will be maintained.

### **4. Brief update on the performance of eTAGs after Wildlife Computers modifications to solve battery passivation issues**

The presentation SCRS/P/2026/004 provided an analysis of the performance of pop-up satellite archival tags (PSATs) deployed within ICCAT electronic tagging programmes, focusing on Wildlife Computers miniPATs. The analysis integrated metadata provided by the manufacturer, metadata reported by CPCs, and data from the internal inventory maintained by the ICCAT Secretariat. All available information was cleaned, consolidated and structured within a centralized relational database, updated through 31 December 2025. It was noted that transmission performance varied substantially among tag series, with recent versions showing improved reliability, with percentages of transmitting tags, transmissions duration and number of transmitted messages similar to those occurring prior to 2019, when higher than usual transmission failures were observed for the first time.

Participants welcomed the analysis of tag performance developed by the ICCAT Secretariat and noted that the results were consistent with observations from other tagging programmes. The Group agreed to work with the ICCAT Secretariat on the monitoring of this data to further develop such analysis.

In addition, the Group coordinator presented some practical cases showing an important improvement, both in the amount and quality of transmitted data, when using KINÉIS system instead of ARGOS, suggesting that future analyses should consider integrating KINÉIS data to better assess tag performance.

### **5. Brief update on eTAGs DataBase development and European Tacking Network**

The presentation SCRS/P/2026/003 provided a brief update on the progress of the eTAGs database development and reported on the collaboration with the European Tracking Network (ETN), which has already resulted in joint acoustic tags deployments under ICCAT programmes.

The Group acknowledged the progress made in the development of the electronic tagging database, including the integration of metadata, raw data and tag performance modules.

The Group discussed about the advantages and disadvantages of the acoustic tagging in terms of cost and logistics. The Group concluded that acoustic tagging could be beneficial in combination with other techniques, and recommended the use of the open protocol in the tags and receivers. Also, the Group agreed in exploring the possibility of deploying acoustic receivers in areas of interest for the species managed by ICCAT.

Participants recognized the value of collaboration with the European Tracking Network (ETN), while noting the high infrastructure costs associated with acoustic telemetry, particularly regarding receivers' deployment and maintenance. It was emphasized that any expansion of acoustic tracking should carefully balance scientific benefits against logistical and financial constraints.

## **6. Terms of reference of the Working Group: Scope, objectives and potential tasks including coordination with Species Groups**

During the meeting, a draft of a proposal for the Terms of Reference (TORs) was presented by the Chair in the spirit of providing a starting point from which the Group could work on. Some members of the Group noted that several objectives or tasks presented in the TORs were already being done by the ICCAT Secretariat and that some refinement of the text was needed to make clear that these activities would be carried out in collaboration with the ICCAT Secretariat. Given the short nature of the meeting, it was noted that more time was needed, so everyone at the meeting could go through the document and continue to provide feedback.

The Group agreed that the Chair would revise all feedback received and provide a new version of the TORs to be revised by correspondence during the adoption of the report. The revised TORs are included in **Appendix 5**.

## **7. 2026 and 2027 workplans**

The Group acknowledged that it may not need to meet every year, but rather work upon request of the ICCAT Secretariat and the SCRS.

The Group noted that it would be important to analyze the performance of conventional tags across and within tagging programs, in order to better understand and improve recovery rates.

In light of the results presented in document SCRS/P/2026/003, the Group highlighted the importance of this type of analysis and the need to move forward towards a deeper and more comprehensive analysis by taking into consideration other variables.

The Group also agreed on the importance of collaborating with the ICCAT Secretariat in importing data from e-tags into the ICCAT database, including both types of archival tags (PATs and internal).

## **8. Recommendations (to the Species Groups and the ICCAT Secretariat)**

The Group agreed on the importance of reactivating and maintaining its activity more regularly, aiming for the provision of a coordination platform between the different tagging activities carried out by the Species Groups and the ICCAT Secretariat.

It was highlighted that tagging activities remain valuable tools to address several biological and ecological aspects of interest to the SCRS and the different Working Groups. In addition, it was mentioned that an important step forward could be to coordinate tagging activities with other modern and complementary techniques such as genomics and close-kin mark-recapture (CKMR).

## **9. Other matters**

The ICCAT Secretariat recalled that, as of 1 November 2025, the submission of tagging forms (TG01, TG02 and TG03) is carried out exclusively through the Integrated Online Management System (IOMS), CPCs have been duly notified and submit tagging information via their designated tagging correspondents.

However, Research Programmes users cannot currently be registered in the IOMS, as the system only allows the registration of users associated with CPCs. Given that the nature of these Research Programmes differs from that of CPC reporting, there is currently no dedicated IOMS mechanism enabling them to report tagging information directly. In such cases, the results of these studies are communicated to the Secretariat by email, which uploads the information into the IOMS on their behalf and ensures that the provenance of the data is appropriately identified.

For other data providers that are neither CPCs nor Research Programmes, an appropriate reporting mechanism will need to be identified and agreed. The ICCAT Secretariat suggested this matter to be addressed during the Intersessional meeting of the Subcommittee on Statistics (SC-STATS) (24-25 February 2026).

#### **10. Report and meeting adjournment**

Due to the short duration of the meeting, it was agreed that the report would be adopted by correspondence. The ICCAT Secretariat requested that all rapporteurs to provide text as soon as possible, to avoid delay on the adoption of the report. The Chair thanked all participants and adjourned the meeting.

**Agenda**

1. Opening of the Meeting, meeting arrangements, agenda and rapporteurs
2. Current ICCAT tagging programmes (including a brief reference to previous programmes)
3. Rewarding related to tag recoveries
4. Brief update on the performance of eTAGs after Wildlife Computers modifications to solve battery passivation issues
5. Brief update on eTAGs DataBase development and European Tacking Network
6. Terms of reference of the Working Group: Scope, objectives and potential tasks including coordination with Species Groups
7. 2026 and 2027 workplans
8. Recommendations
9. Other matters
10. Adoption of the report and closure

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**Appendix 3****List of presentations**

<i>Doc Ref</i>	<i>Title</i>	<i>Authors</i>
SCRS/P/2026/001	Overview on ICCAT tagging programmes	García J., Pagá A., Alemany F.
SCRS/P/2026/002	Rewarding related to tag recoveries	García J., Pagá A., Alemany F.
SCRS/P/2026/003	Update on the performance of eTAGs	García J., Pagá A., Alemany F.
SCRS/P/2026/004	Update on eTAGs DataBase and European Tacking Network issues	Pagá A., Garcia J., Alemany F.

**SCRS presentations abstracts as provided by the authors**

*SCRS/P/2026/001* - The Secretariat presented a brief overview of the conventional and electronic tagging related activities within past and current ICCAT research programmes managed by the Secretariat, including also info from other national tagging programmes that has been reported to ICCAT, updated to 31<sup>st</sup> December 2025. A summary table detailing the total number of conventional tags released (751,520) and recovered (55,325) for each of the main ICCAT species was provided, showing a great range of recovery rates, from 2% in Atlantic white marlin to 23% inf bigeye tuna, with an average for all species of 7%. Secretariat also informed about the total number of electronic tags released by species and by type of electronic tag (acoustic, internal or pop up) in the case of ICCAT owned tags. Additionally, the Secretariat informed the Group on the current awareness and rewarding activities, to promote tag recoveries, such as the annual lottery held since 1990 during the SCRS Plenary meeting.

*SCRS/P/2026/002* - The Secretariat presented an update on the number of electronic tags physically recovered from 2015 whose reward costs were assumed by ICCAT, by type of tag and year, in order to illustrate the increasing trend in recoveries and its implications for the budgets of tagging programmes. The data showed a marked increase in pop up tags recoveries for BFT during the period 2023–2025, as well as a significant increase in recoveries of internal electronic tags for ALB in 2025, while recoveries in other programmes (e.g. SHK, BIL and SWO) remained more or less constant. The Secretariat presented draft proposals aimed at containing the increasing rewarding costs (including a 50% of the reduction of reward amounts, discontinuation of the lottery scheme and limiting reward payments to ICCAT-owned tags).

*SCRS/P/2026/003* - The Secretariat presented an updated analysis of the transmission performance of ICCAT owned pop-up satellite archival tags (PSATs), focusing on Wildlife Computers miniPATs. Such analysis was based on metadata provided by the tags manufacturer, metadata reported by the CPCs teams deploying the tags and those available from the internal inventory maintained by the ICCAT Secretariat. All available information was cleaned, consolidated and structured within a centralized relational database, updated until 31 December 2025. A total of 765 datasets from miniPATs deployed across several ICCAT programmes were analysed, of which 660 transmitted data. Tag performance was evaluated using multiple indicators, including transmission success, number of days transmitting, total number of messages received, and the proportion of light-based geolocation (lightloc) data transmitted. Results were examined by tagware version and by tag manufacturing year. The analysis confirmed a marked decrease in transmission performance for tags manufactured between 2020 and 2023, consistent with previously identified battery-related issues. From 2023 onwards, a progressive improvement in performance was observed, coinciding with the introduction of new tagware versions specifically designed to prevent battery passivation and resolve reset-related problems. Among the most recent versions, tagware 2.5h showed the most balanced overall performance in terms of transmission duration and volume of messages received. An additional evaluation of light-based geolocation data indicated that tags from the 18P to 22P series showed relatively low proportions of transmissions with lightloc values above the 30% threshold, whereas this proportion increase in the more recent 24P and 25P series, in which a higher percentage of tags exceeded the 30% lightloc threshold considered necessary for reliable track reconstruction.

*SCRS/P/2026/004* - The Secretariat informed the Working Group about the progress in the development of the eTAGs database and the next steps in this project. It was highlighted that the database is already operative, and dashboards to facilitate the visualization of the available info have been created, but for some species the percentage of data sets uploaded is still limited, due to technical problems in some tags models an large files. The plan for 2026 is to push up the database development, addressing the technical problems detected, which will allow to complete the data ingestion. To achieve this objective the Secretariat will count on the support of an external expert. The Working Group was also informed about the progress in the collaboration with the European Tracking Network (ETN), initiated in 2022 following a recommendation from SCRS to leverage synergies between both institutions. Specifically, in 2024 ICCAT, under the GBYP program, supported the deployment of 28 tags owned by the EU STRAITS project in Southern Portugal, whose metadata and detections have been already uploaded to ETN DB and are available for ICCAT. In addition, in 2025 and in the same area, ICCAT, in collaboration with IPMA and IFAPA deployed 33 ICCAT GBYP owned acoustic tags, whose metadata have been uploaded in the ETN DB, within the first ICCAT project in ETN created to this end.

## Appendix 5

### Terms of Reference for the Ad Hoc Working Group on Coordination of Tagging Information

These Terms of Reference were drafted following a decision taken by the SCRS in 2024 to reactivate the Ad Hoc Working Group on the Coordination of Tagging Information (hereafter, the Group).

The objective of the Group is to facilitate coordination among tagging programs conducted within the Convention area and to address issues of common relevance to tagging activities, acting in a horizontal coordinating capacity among species groups, with a view to resolving common challenges and sharing past experiences.

The Group will meet as required by the SCRS. The Group's work will encompass the specific tasks listed below, *inter alia*.

1. Coordination (in collaboration with the Secretariat)
  - a. Continue the development and maintenance of conventional and electronic databases, incorporating feedback from Species Groups and conveying it to the Secretariat.
  - b. Review, revise and update tag-related information on ICCAT's web page
    - i. Poster formats
    - ii. Tagging procedures
    - iii. Electronic forms (TG01, TG02, TG03)
  - c. Develop and maintain tag catalogues, including stock control, and distribution of tags (conventional and electronic) and materials (i.e. applicators, posters, etc.).
  - d. Coordinate between SGs when dedicated tagging activities are developed, so that these activities may also benefit multiple SG's objectives at once.
  - e. Serve as a liaison, in a coordinating capacity, between Species Groups, the Secretariat, and tag manufacturers, with a view to centralizing and channeling scientific requirements, technical difficulties, and requests for tags and tagging materials.
2. Monitoring (in collaboration with the Secretariat)
  - a. Tag performance
  - b. Tag-related failures and problems
3. Advice
  - a. Inform Species groups on the latest developments in electronic tags and provide advice on the best available options to tackle their scientific needs and research objectives (newly developed tags, sensors, technologies, etc.).