



ICCAT NEWSLETTER

No. 33, September 2021

Note from the ICCAT Executive Secretary

Dear friends of the tuna world,

With renewed pleasure, we are issuing this 33 ICCAT Newsletter, we sincerely hope finds you and your family healthy given the ongoing situation caused by the Covid-19 pandemic, the consequences of which we are unfortunately still experiencing at all levels.

Due to this pandemic, it is with deep sorrow that Prof. Dr. Fábio Hissa Vieira Hazin, former Commission Chair, incumbent Chair of Panel 4, and member of the Brazilian Delegation to ICCAT, passed away earlier this year due to Covid. The entire ICCAT Community would like to send their sincerest condolences to his family and his closest friends. Quoting a statement presented by the Brazilian delegation this year "*May in some way his spirit, his perspectives and feelings be perpetuated and prevail in this Commission, in the difficult task of consensus and flexibility that the Commission is assigned to perform*"., we realise how conciliatory was this Honourable Delegate. The ICCAT Community will miss you, Fábio!

Moreover, under the constraints of the same pandemic, the Secretariat unfortunately continues to be closed and the staff continue to carry out remote work, while all in-person meetings, including the annual meeting will continue to be held online. The Secretariat, however, continues to work with determination, maintaining the continuity of activities and delivering the highest possible levels of standard customary to ICCAT. As always, the ICCAT staff have been committed to provide their full support to ensure the Commission's success, while optimising the use of electronic communication tools and platforms although we recognize that access to the Internet services can be challenging for some of our CPCs.

Last year, given the restrictions, the Commission adopted a decision-making process through correspondence and put the focus on a series of priorities. Hence, the [Discussions on Essential Commission Business in lieu of the 22nd Special meeting of the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tuna](#) has been published on the ICCAT Website. This year's intersessional meetings have been held successfully online, and many of these have been published.

Aimed at providing the *2021 SCRS Report* to the Commission in early October, a mixed process was agreed, which includes a correspondence period to adopt various sections of the Advice. A similar process has also been developed for several subsidiary bodies of the Commission, to advance on possible consensus on management and conservation measures, and leaving more time to focus on essential business during the annual meeting.

Dear readers, the Secretariat should like to reiterate its full commitment and readiness to continued delivery.

Wishing you all the best and assured that we will get back to our normal working conditions as soon as possible.

Keep safe and enjoy your reading!

Camille Jean Pierre Manel



WORKSHOPS, MEETINGS AND TECHNICAL CONSULTATION PROCESSES

The Secretariat has participated in the following:

Workshops

- **Institute for advanced sustainability studies online workshop on combating marine plastic pollution** (9 October 2020, Online)
- **Experience, Results and Lessons Learnt from Oceanic Tuna Tagging Campaigns: the AOTTP in Context** (12-14 January 2021, Online)
- **GBYP Close-Kin workshop** (8-9 February 2021, Online)
- **GBYP Electronic Tagging workshop** (15-16 March 2021, Online)
- **2021 ICCAT Swordfish Biology workshop** (22-26 March 2021, Online)

Meetings

- [Regional Coordination Group on Large Pelagics \(RCG LP\) 2021 \(28-23 June 2021, Online\)](#)
- [Regional Coordination Group on Large Pelagics \(RCG LP\) 2021 Annual Meeting \(23-24 September 2021, Online\)](#)

RECENT MEETINGS THAT HAVE TAKEN PLACE

Commission meetings

- [Meeting of the Working Group for the development of an Online Reporting System \(IOMS\) \(16-18 February 2021, Online\)](#)
- [Intersessional Meeting of the Panel 2 \(2-5 March 2021, Online\)](#)
- [Meeting of the eBCD Technical Working Group \(TWG\) \(8-9 June 2021, Online\)](#)
- [14th Meeting of the IMM Working Group \(14-17 June 2021, Online\)](#)
- [Intersessional Meeting of Panel 1 \(1 and 2 July 2021, Online\)](#)
- [Intersessional Meeting of Panel 4 \(6-8 July 2021, Online\)](#)
- [2nd Intersessional meeting of the Panel 1 \(1-3 September 2021, Online\)](#)
- [2nd Intersessional meeting of the Panel 2 \(13-15 September 2021, Online\)](#)

SCRS meetings

- [3rd Intersessional Meeting of the ICCAT Bluefin Tuna Species Group \(1-3 December 2020, Online\)](#)
- [Atlantic Ocean tropical Tuna Tagging Programme \(AOTTP\) Final Symposium \(12-14 January 2021, Online\)](#)
- [Intersessional Meeting of the Billfish Species Group \(8-12 March 2021, Online\)](#)
- [Intersessional Meeting of Tropical Tunas MSE Technical Group \(29-31 March 2021, Online\)](#)
- [Intersessional Meeting of the Bluefin Tuna Species Group \(including WBFT Data Preparatory\) \(5-13 April 2021, Online\)](#)
- [Bigeye Tuna Data Preparatory Meeting \(22-30 April 2021, Online\)](#)
- [Meeting of the Working Group on Stock Assessment Methods \(WGSAM\) \(5-10 May 2021, Online\)](#)
- [Intersessional Meeting of the Sub-Committee on Ecosystems and Bycatch \(5-10 May, Online\)](#)
- [Intersessional Meeting of the Swordfish Tuna Species Group \(including MSE\) \(31 May – 7 June, Online\)](#)
- [Intersessional Meeting of the Albacore Species Group \(including MED Assessment\) \(21-30 June, Online\)](#)
- [Intersessional Meeting of Bluefin Tuna MSE Technical Group meeting \(5-10 July, Online\)](#)
- [Bigeye tuna Stock Assessment Meeting \(19-29 July, Online\)](#)
- [2nd Intersessional Meeting of the Bluefin Tuna Species Group \(2-9 September 2021, Online\)](#)
- [SCRS Species Group Meetings \(20-25 September 2021, Online\)](#)
- [Meeting of the Standing Committee on Research and Statistics \(SCRS\) \(27 September – 2 October 2021, Online\)](#)



2021 Calendar for remaining events

- [Billfishes ageing workshop \(25-29 October, Online\)](#)
- [Meeting of the Compliance Committee \(COC\) \(13-14 November 2021, Online\)](#)
- [Meeting of Panel 2 on BFT-MSE \(12 November 2021, Online\)](#)
- [27th Regular Meeting of the Commission \(15-22 November 2021, Online\)](#)

TBD

- Second Intersessional Meeting of Panel 4 (27 October 2021, Online)
- [GBYP Workshop on e-tagging planning, database development and data sharing](#)
- [GBYP Workshop on larval indices coordination and standardization](#)

Meetings cancelled

- Small Tunas Ageing Workshop (12-13 June 2021, Online)

ICCAT Data Collection and Research programmes

The ICCAT **Atlantic-wide Research Programme on Bluefin Tuna (GBYP)** has continued to carry out most of the activities planned for Phase 10 of the programme in spite of the difficult circumstances resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic. GBYP Phase 10 was extended for 7 months until 31 July 2021 to allow to carry out within this phase the pilot aerial survey designed as an alternative to the aerial surveys in 2020, which were cancelled because of COVID-19. Phase 11 started on 1 January 2021 with an initial duration of 12 months. The most relevant research activities carried out during this reporting period (October 2020-October 2021) including: data mining, recovery and management, focusing on DB development; support to development and improvement of fishery independent indices, including aerial survey on bluefin tuna spawning aggregations; support to national conventional and electronic tagging programmes; biological studies and modelling, focusing on supporting the implementation of MSE BFT process. Additional information can be found [here](#).

The **ICCAT Atlantic Ocean Tropical tuna Tagging Programme (AOTTP)** formally ended on 28 February 2021. The programme reached the majority of its final targets since it last reported to the SCRS via the 2020 Advice to the Commission process. Much progress has been achieved during the AOTTP and the 'objectively verifiable indicators' in the original logical framework of the Grant Contract have been met. Inevitably, however, the COVID-19 pandemic has caused problems and some delays in the provision of deliverables. Two contracts have been signed with the teams of Senegal and Côte d'Ivoire for continuing the tag recovery, awareness and age readings. One new contract will soon be signed, aiming at tagging in the NW Atlantic which was short on the number of fish targeted. The final report of ICCAT-AOTTP is currently being reviewed by the main funding Agency. Once it is approved, the report will be made available to ICCAT CPCs upon request to the Executive Secretary. More information can be found [here](#).

Small Tunas Year Programme (SMTYP) A number of documents and presentations were provided during 2021 Intersessional Meeting of the Small Tunas Species Group, which presented results of the research conducted in the previous years within SMTYP. In addition, the Group identified the priorities that should be taken into account in terms of the species and areas to be sampled and revised the biological data to be collected under the SMTYP biological collection contract in 2021-2022. Details on other relevant research activities to be developed throughout 2022-2024 including: updating the biological meta-database, estimation of length-weight relationships representative at the stocks/regional level; calibration and adopting internationally agreed maturity scales and, further investigating and applying of Data Limited methods to be used for the provision of management advice to these stocks will be available during the SCRS meeting. A request has been made to include *Scomberomorus commerson* in the list of SMT.



Enhanced Programme for Billfish Research (EPBR) The EPBR continued its activities in 2021, although with restrictions due to the COVID-19 pandemic situation. The Secretariat coordinates the transfer of funds, information, and data. The overall programme Coordinator and eastern Atlantic Coordinator during 2021 was Dr. Fambaye Ngom Sow (Senegal) and Ms. Karina Ramírez López (Mexico) remaining as Coordinator for the western Atlantic. The new contract awarded to the *Centre de Recherches Océanographiques de Dakar/Thiaroye* (ISRA/CRODT, Senegal) continued its activities until June 2021. Soon a new contract shall be signed to continue the activities throughout the second semester of 2021. The first steps of this work are ongoing, and results are expected to be provided within the next months.

Shark Research and Data Collection Programme (SRDCP) The Shark Species Group (SSG) continued the work on the age and growth of the South Atlantic shortfin mako study with the incorporation of samples from Japan, Namibia, and Brazil. Sample processing is currently being carried out and should be completed by the end of 2021. Therefore, final results are planned to be provided to the Shark Species Group in 2022. Studies are ongoing for population genetics study to estimate stock structure and phylogeography of shortfin mako, the post-release mortality study on shortfin mako caught on pelagic longline fisheries, tag deployment with the remaining miniPATs, for both telemetry studies, which will be done during the second semester of 2021 and throughout 2022, depending on the opportunities, considering the current difficulties with onboard missions due to the pandemic. In addition, porbeagle electronic tagging continued by teams from EU-France, EU-Portugal and Norway in the North Atlantic. Tags acquired in 2021 are planned to be deployed throughout 2021 and 2022.

JCAP-2

Due to the impact of COVID-19 on ICCAT activities throughout 2020, the Steering Committee meeting of the JCAP-2 Steering Committee was divided in two sessions, held on 26 January and 9 February 2021. During these sessions, the Committee revised the activities concluded during year #1 of JCAP-2 and took decisions on the activities to be financed during the second year of the five-year project term. An international call for tenders was launched to hire an expert to evaluate the current fisheries data base system of Senegal and propose a model for improvement in June 2021. The selection of the expert is currently being made, aiming at issue of a short-term contract. In addition, a contract was signed to FADURPE (Brazil) aiming at capacity building on MSE for scientist, managers and stakeholders for Spanish and Portuguese speaking developing CPCs. The first two courses targeting scientists took place in August 2021, involving 50 participants from 14 different ICCAT CPCs. Course 3 targets managers and will provide a presentation of the philosophy, concepts and a study case, based on the initial results observed and presented at the last ICCAT meeting on MSE for the western skipjack tuna stocks. Further information on the course will be provided at a later date. Finally, following a selection process, two young researchers from Uruguay and Senegal will receive financial support for a 3-month training in research laboratories.

OTHER NEWS



The ICCAT Atlantic Ocean Tropical Tuna Tagging Programme (AOTTP) ended in February 2021 consequently ending the contracts of the AOTTP Team, Dr. Doug Beare as Coordinator; Ms. Seynabou Kebe as Financial Administrator; and Mr. Ricardo Pastor as Accountant. We would like to thank the Team for all the work they performed during their stay at the Secretariat and through this Newsletter, their colleagues from the Secretariat would like to wish them every success in their new stages of life.



Mr. Dashiell Porter joined the Department of Research and Statistics as Software Developer (IOMS) in April 2021, for a 12-month period.



At the termination of the AOTTP Programme, Mr. Jesús García who was a member of the AOTTP team, was hired to join the Department of Research and Statistics as Database Programmer/GIS Expert in March 2021.

From the Secretariat, we would like to wish them both a warm welcome as new staff members of ICCAT.