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ANNUAL REPORT ON THE REGIONAL OBSERVER PROGRAMME

WCPFC -TCC20-2024-RP02
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Submitted by the Secretariat

1. This paper presents the 16th Annual Report on the WCPFC Regional Observer Programme (ROP), for 2022-2024 for the information and consideration of TCC20.

Introduction

2. The ROP was established pursuant to Article 28 of the Convention and has the stated function "to collect verified catch data, other scientific data and additional information related to the fishery from the Convention Area and to monitor the implementation of the conservation and management measures adopted by the Commission." Paragraph 2 of Article 28 of the WCPFC Convention states that: "The observer programme shall be coordinated by the Secretariat of the Commission and shall be organized in a flexible manner which takes into account the nature of the fishery and other relevant factors."

3. Paragraph 3 of CMM 2018-05 for the ROP states that: "The Secretariat of the Commission shall provide an annual report to the Commission with regard to the Commission ROP and on other matters relevant to the efficient operation of the programme." Paragraph 13 of CMM 2018-05 on the "Role of the Secretariat" lists several ROP activities that the Secretariat is required to conduct. This paper reports on the several aspects of the ROP as required by the Convention, CMM 2018-05, and the outcomes of WCPFC20.

Background

4. Unfortunately, political tensions in New Caledonia where the Commission data provider (SPC) is based delayed the ability to enter some 2023 observer data and catch information. At the time of writing, figures for 837 purse seine trips and 417 longline trips had been entered.

5. On 1 January 2023, the ROP coverage suspension that had been in place during the COVID-19 pandemic was lifted and observer coverage requirements of 100% coverage resumed for purse seine vessels operating between 20N and 20S. Observers continued to be placed by national programmes for bilateral licensed vessels and the Parties to the Nauru Agreement Observer Programme (PNAOB) placed observers for the US Treaty and vessels operating

under the Federated States of Micronesia Arrangement (FSMA). This report covers the information and data that has been entered and collected by observers in 2023, and for the early part of 2024.

6. Pacific Island national and subregional observer programmes experienced a loss of trained observers during the pandemic due to employment instability brought on by reduced, and in some cases, suspended observer coverage requirements. When 100% observer coverage for carriers and purse seine vessels was reinstated on 1 January 2023, extra training was implemented to increase the number of trained observers available to meet the coverage requirements. Fortunately, most observer programmes had managed to develop enough trained observers in 2022 and 2023 to service 100% coverage on purse seine vessels.

7. The Secretariat continued to support observer programmes during 2023 and 2024 and assisted with training and advice to assist CCMs to rebuild their programmes up to pre-COVID numbers. The Secretariat continues to assist national and sub-regional observer programmes on matters regarding provider and observer roles in relation to Commission requirements of CMMs, data collection issues, and other ROP observer related matters. The Secretariat continued to utilize ROP observer data in the online "WCPFC online Compliance Case File System" (CCFS) and in other papers and reports prepared for WCPFC meetings.

8. In 2023, the observer-related meetings and workshops where the Secretariat was represented by the ROP Coordinator included several virtual meetings, in addition to in-person attendance at TCC19, the annual Regional Observer Coordinators Workshop, PNA Observer meetings, and the International Fisheries Observer and Monitoring Conference (IFOMC). Following notification by the Secretariat at WCPFC20 that a restructuring of Secretariat staff positions would be undertaken in 2024, the ROP Coordinator position transitioned into a consultancy role of ROP Training and Certification/Audit Consultant. This restructuring of the ROP role reflected the maturity of the ROP within the Commission and the transition to maintenance and support for established national observer programmes. The consultancy includes ongoing support to the cross endorsement of observers as part of WCPFC's cooperation with IATTC. Karl Staisch, the inaugural ROP Coordinator, was transferred into the ROP consultancy position and continues supporting the WCPFC's ROP objectives from his home in Brisbane, Australia. In 2024, the ROP Training and Certification Consultant represented the Secretariat at the annual Regional Observer Coordinators Workshop, PNA Observer meetings, and participated in observer training sessions in the Philippines and Cross Endorsement training in Tuvalu, Fiji, and Kiribati. Several ROP Programme Audits have been completed virtually and in person over the period 2023 – 2024.

Observer Data and Observer Coverage

9. The minimum standard ROP data fields for purse seine and longline fisheries remain unchanged since 2016. As was noted in ROP Report 13 (2021), experience with existing ROP data collection and processes has identified some CMMs that have requirements that must be followed by vessels, however there are insufficient observer data fields collected to monitor and verify compliance with these requirements. The Commission's intersessional

activities undertaken through the Transhipment Intersessional Working Group (TS-IWG) and the IWG on the ROP (IWG-ROP) include reviews of key CMMs that have and will impact the ROP data fields and supporting processes. With the evolution of electronic reporting (ER), several fields should be automatically generated from existing databases where the information fields remain the same. Additionally, there is discussion within the IWG-ROP to review data fields to ensure they continue to be aligned with current CMMs and data collection obligations.

10. The Commission at WCPFC19 considered several recommendations from TCC18 in respect of observer monitoring of transshipments, and adopted new Minimum Data Fields for Observer Transhipment Monitoring to be collected during transhipment events as of 1 April 2023. The Agreed Minimum Standards and Guidelines for the Regional Observer Programme were amended to require that for transhipments on the high seas, transhipment ROP providers shall send the ROP Minimum data fields to the Secretariat within 90 days of the disembarkation of the observer from the Carrier. The Transhipment IWG will have an informal meeting in advance of TCC20 and an update from the co-Chairs will be provided to TCC20.

11. The paper TCC20-2024-IP03 on the Status of Observer Data Management indicates the amount of observer data that has been entered and highlights CCMs with fleets active in the WCPFC Convention Area (WCPFC-CA). The implementation of 100% observer coverage from 1 January 2023 has seen data availability increase since the suspension of observer coverage during the COVID period. SPC has included additional tables and figures to indicate the spatial coverage of purse seine and longline observer coverage over recent years in the report.

12. Table 1, below, represents the regional observer trips and observer sea days between 2012 to 2024. The raw, unraised data collected on these trips is used to populate all the tables in this report, including Annex A, noting that in the 13-year period between 2012 and 2024, there were 14,773 ROP purse seine trips and 5,484 ROP longline trips, for a total of 20,257 regional observer trips and 774,892 observer sea days where ROP observers collected data and information. Observer collected information and data significantly assists science, management, and compliance in the sustainability of the WCPO tuna fishery.

13. The average observer trip time on longliners pre COVID was 35 to 40 days from 2012 to 2016. This increased to 48-51 days per trip from 2016, after observers overcame their original reluctance to work on the large freezer longline vessels that typically stay at sea longer than other longline vessels. During the early COVID period when ports and country borders started to close, some observers found themselves stranded on vessels and unable to be offloaded in ports that would allow for their return travel back to their homes. This situation caused some observers to experience an increase to 59 days at sea for 2020. In 2021, this number started to decrease back to 49 days as travel restrictions eased and observers were able to be repatriated. The 2024 figures in Table 1 are preliminary data from one CCM observer programme that has placed observers on high seas freezer longliners.

14. Table 1 shows that the 2023 ROP purse seine coverage entered at the time of writing reflected 837 observer purse seine trips. The 2020 to 2022 figures show an increase of days observers spent on purse seine vessels due to various conditions caused by COVID. In 2023 at the recommencement of 100% observer coverage, the trip day average returned back to 35 days.

Table 1 - 2012-2024 Observer Days on PS &LL

Trip Year	No of PS Trips	Observer PS Sea days	No of Sets	Average days per PS trip	No of LL Trips	Observer LL Sea days	Number of Hooks observed	Fishing Days/ Sets	Average days per LL trip	Total Observer LL &PS Trips	Total Observer LL &PS Sea Days
2012	1267	39962	31617	31.5	350	12300	15059587	7728	35	1617	52262
2013	1511	50277	38295	33	379	14540	18969371	9631	38	1890	64817
2014	1625	53793	39072	33	369	14318	16424998	8199	39	1994	68111
2015	1629	52214	37065	32	466	17328	18307361	9825	37	2095	69542
2016	1591	53309	34532	33.5	466	17945	19401346	10077	38.5	2057	71254
2017	1508	53342	36538	35	528	25324	30941256	14241	48	2036	78666
2018	1840	59228	42455	32	584	29551	36800635	17221	50.5	2424	88779
2019	1863	57503	43628	31	609	29745	38910920	17532	49	2472	87248
2020	725	27451	15953	38	402	23621	30897851	13226	59	1127	51072
2021	143	8315	3826	58	423	20618	26633351	11595	49	566	28993
2022	181	8014	4139	44	469	23058	29434832	12651	49	650	31072
2023	837	29609	21063	35	417	20560	31588995	12762	49	1254	50169
2024	53	1674	779	31.5	22	1293	2369033	793	59	75	2967
Total	**14773**	**494691**	**348183**	**33.5**	**5484**	**250201**	**315739536**	**145481**	**46**	**20257**	**744892**

Figures entered as of 17 July 2024

Authorized Observer providers to the ROP and update on ROP audits

15. A list of ROP authorised observer programmes and their National Observer Coordinator contacts are available on the WCPFC website: https://www.wcpfc.int/wcpfc-national-observer-coordinator. National Observer programmes are reminded of the requirement (CMM 2018-05 paragraph 14) to keep the Secretariat informed of any changes to contact information for coordinators. The observer coordinators list on the WCPFC website enables CCMs to update their information directly through their national CCM Party Administrator on the WCPFC website. The ROP Observer Coordinators list is important for observer safety responses and is essential as an official source of contacts for use by observers, vessels, fishing companies, flag states, and members.

16. The Secretariat continues to audit required minimum standards in ROP observer programmes. The online auditing process, which includes consultation via Zoom, is being used by some programmes to receive audits, in addition to in person audits, where requested. CCMs with ROP-authorised national observer programmes can check the website for information on their valid audit period, and arrangements can be made with the ROP Audit Consultant on scheduling any required updates.

17. During 2023 and early 2024, PNAOB, New Zealand, Japan, China, Korea, Cook Islands, and Chinese Taipei were audited by the WCPFC ROP Training and Audit consultant, and all were authorised to continue operating as ROP providers. The EU-nominated Portuguese Observer

programme (ProMarinha), Solomon Islands, Vanuatu, and Philippines are scheduled to be audited during the remainder of 2024.

IWG-ROP

18. The IWG-ROP was tasked by the Commission to carry out some additional work on the ROP data fields and other areas related to observer roles and conditions. The IWG-ROP will develop working and information papers to report to the Commission and subsidiary bodies on chosen priority tasks. A work plan for the IWG-ROP was developed with the assistance of IWG-ROP members. A copy of all IWG-ROP materials including the workplan can be found at this link. To commence work for the IWG-ROP, the Chair has selected from the IWG-ROP work plan "Observer data fields for "Species of Special Interest" **1(b**) and "Consider removal of redundant ROP data fields" **1(d)**. Agreed data fields will be retired from observer collection either due to redundancy or the availability of better sources of the same data. A report on the status of the IWG-ROP was provided by the Secretariat to SC20 (SC20-ST-WP-04), and a copy of this report will be provided to TCC20.[1]

Observer Trip Monitoring Summary

19. The "Observer Trip Monitoring Summary" is part of the minimum data standards of the Commission, commonly referred to as the GEN-3 format. The ROP data is essentially a "tick" (an answer in the affirmative) by the observer against the relevant Trip Monitoring Summary Codes (see Table 2, below, for a list of the codes). Observers will then include in their written report the reasons "Yes" were circled.

20. Table 2 represents data available from 837 purse seine and 417 longline trips across all fishing fleets for 2023. The data shows the number of reports made by observers when "Yes" was indicated in the trip monitoring summaries. The high number of reports of vessels inaccurately recording information in their vessel logs is notable. This included target species discards, recording species inaccurately on purse seiners, inaccurately recording by catch species retention, and discards. These discrepancies are reported every year, and this highlights the value of the observer data as being the only information source in these areas that is dependable and available.

Table 2 - 2023 Trip Monitoring Summary Codes reported on GEN-3 forms or similar formats.

TMI Codes	Observer Trip Monitoring Summary		
Observer Rights		**PS**	**LL**
RS -a	*Did the operator or any crew assault, obstruct, resist, delay, refuse boarding to intimidate or interfere with observers in the performance of their duties*	10	1
RS -b	*Request that an event not be reported by the observer*	6	0
RS -d	*Did the operator fail to provide the observer, while on board the vessel, at no expense to the observer or the observer's government, with food, accommodation, and medical facilities of a reasonable standard equivalent to those normally available to officers of the vessel.*	3	3
National Regulations			

[1] It is noted that at the time of compiling this report the IWG chair resigned as he had taken up a position with a private observer provider and a new chair is required to continue the work already achieved.

NR-a	*Fish in areas where it is not permitted to fish*	10	1
NR-c	*Use a fishing method other than the method the vessel was designed or licensed*	13	0
NR-e	*Transfer or tranship fish from or to another vessel*	26	30
NR-g	*fail to stow fishing gear when entering areas where they were not authorized to fish;*	15	1
WCPFC CMMs			
WC-a	*Fail to comply with any Commission Conservation and Management Measures*	86	2
WC-b	*High-grade the catch*	15	7
Log Sheet Recording Position & Catch			
LP-a	*Inaccurately record vessel position on vessel log sheets for sets, hauling and catch*	3	0
LP-b	*Fail to report vessel positions to countries,* where required when *entering and leaving an EEZ (crossing to or from an EEZ into or out of the High Seas)*	5	0
LC-a	*Inaccurately record retained 'Target Species" in the Vessel logs*	27	25
LC-b	*Inaccurately record 'Target Species" Discards*	178	39
LC-c	*Record species inaccurately*	317	0
LC-d	*inaccurately record by catch species discards;*	268	46
LC-e	*Inaccurately record retained bycatch Species.*	93	18
Species of Special interest			
SI-b	Interact with non-target species	191	48
Pollution			
PN-a	*Dispose of any metals, plastics, chemicals, or old fishing gear*	105	7
PN-b	*Discharge any oil*	17	2
PN-c	*Lose any fishing gear*	1	29
PN-d	*Abandon any fishing gear*	16	2
PN-e	*Fail to report any abandoned gear*	4	0
Sea Safety			
SS-a	*Fail to monitor international safety frequencies*	0	3

*Figures as of 15 July 2024

Observer Welfare and Safety Matters

21. Of concern are trips where observers reported obstruction, intimidation and interference and not being accommodated properly. Observer coverage of the 1254 PS & LL ROP trips in Table 2 shows that observers reported ten alleged incidents on purse seiners and one on longliners for obstruction. CMM 2018-05 on the WCPFC ROP requires CCMs to ensure that their vessel operators comply with observer safety guidelines specified in the CMM. The *Observer Trip Monitoring Summary* provides an opportunity for observers to record an indication of when the discharge of their duties has been obstructed (RS-A, RS-B and RS-D). Advance notification to flag States of alleged infringements reported on the *Observer Trip Monitoring Summary* continues to be delivered through the upgraded WCPFC online compliance case file system as Observer Obstruction Alleged Infringements (OAI). Table 3 provides a summary of the outcomes of investigations by flag CCMs of ROP observer-reported alleged observer obstruction incidents notified in ROP observer data for the period 1 January 2015 – to 2023.

Table 3 - Summary of Observer Obstruction Alleged Infringement cases (related to (CMM 2007-01 14(vii) and CMM 2018-05 15(g)) notified in the WCPFC online Compliance Case File System that were based on Observer Trip Monitoring Summary data (2016 – 2023)

RS-A: *Did the operator or any crew member assault, obstruct, resist, delay, refuse boarding to, intimidate, or interfere with, observer in the performance of their duties.*

	NEW CASE	Investigation IN PROGRESS	Investigation COMPLETED			Investigation COMPLETED Total	Grand Total
			No infraction	Infraction - warning	Infraction - sanction		
2016	0	13	12	0	3	15	28
2017	2	8	7	2	1	10	20
2018	0	17	14	1	0	15	32
2019	2	24	4	0	4	8	34
2020	0	10	2	0	0	2	12
2021	0	2	0	0	0	0	2
2022	3	2	0	0	0	0	5
2023	7	1	0	0	0	0	8
Grand Total	14	77	39	3	8	50	141

RS-B: *Request that an event not be reported by the observer.*

	NEW CASE	Investigation IN PROGRESS	Investigation COMPLETED			Investigation COMPLETED Total	Grand Total
			No infraction	Infraction - warning	Infraction - sanction		
2016	0	12	3	0	6	9	21
2017	0	5	3	2	2	7	12
2018	1	12	9	1	2	12	25
2019	4	14	3	0	3	6	24
2020	1	7	2	0	0	2	10
2021	0	2	0	0	0	0	2
2022	2	0	0	0	0	0	2
2023	4	1	0	0	0	0	5
Grand Total	12	53	20	3	13	36	101

RS-D: *Did the operator fail to provide the observer, while on board the vessel, at no expense to the observer or the observer's government, with food, accommodation and medical facilities of a reasonable standard equivalent to those normally available and medical facilities of a reasonable standard equivalent to those normally available to an officer on board the vessel*

	NEW CASE	Investigation IN PROGRESS	Investigation COMPLETED				Investigation COMPLETED Total	Grand Total
			No infraction	Infraction - no sanction	Infraction - warning	Infraction - sanction		
2016	0	3	9	0	1	1	11	14
2017	1	3	1	0	0	1	2	6
2018	0	7	11	0	1	1	13	20
2019	3	15	1	1	2	0	4	22
2020	2	4	1	0	0	0	1	7
2021	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	2
2022	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1
2023	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	3
Grand Total	9	35	23	1	4	3	31	75

Observer Welfare & Safety Matters

22. Since 2017, the WCPFC has had a dedicated CMM for the Protection of WCPFC Regional Observer Programme Observers (CMM 2016-03/2017-03). The CMM outlines the requirements that observer providers, flag States, and vessel captains are required to take in the event that an observer dies, is missing or presumed fallen overboard, suffers from a serious illness or injury that threatens his or her health or safety, or if an observer has been assaulted, intimidated, threatened, or harassed such that their health or safety is endangered.

23. To date there have been six (6) incidents reported to the Secretariat in reference to CMM 2017-03, three (3) incidents related to the calendar year 2017, two (2) for 2020 calendar year

and one (1) in 2023. A summary of reported incidents and the flag CCM investigation response is provided in Table 4, below.

Table 4 - Summary of outcome of flag CCM investigations of alleged infringements related to observer safety and CMM 2016-03/2017-03

	Investigation IN PROGRESS	Investigation COMPLETED		Investigation COMPLETED Total	Grand Total
		No infraction	Infraction - sanction		
2017	0	3	0	3	3
2019	0	0	1	1	1
2020	1	1	0	1	2
2023	0	1	0	1	1
Grand Total	**1**	**5**	**1**	**6**	**7**

24. The agreed minimum standard regarding the issuing of independent two-way communications devices and other safety protocols is well supported and ROP audits have confirmed that all programmes have introduced independent 2-way communication devices in their programmes to issue to observers when commencing a trip. CCMs are reminded that these devices need to be activated and maintained to ensure they are working as required in case of an emergency. As part of the routine ROP Programme audits, the Secretariat checks that observer programmes are duly ensuring that the safety measures adopted by the Commission for observers are in place.

25. CMM 2017-03 Para 14 states "The Technical and Compliance Committee and the Commission will review this Conservation and Management Measure no later than 2019, and periodically thereafter. Notwithstanding this provision CCMs may submit a proposal to amend this CMM at any time." To date there have been no proposed changes to CMM 2017-03.

ROP Compliance related matters

26. A separate TCC20 paper provides additional information related to the use of ROP data in the Compliance Monitoring Scheme (TCC20-2024-09).

Data and monitoring through the ROP of the Commission's CMMs intended to minimize impacts of fishing on species of special interest including non-target species.

27. The Commission has adopted CMMs intended to minimize the impacts of fishing on species of special interest, including non-target species, and there are also guidelines that stipulate best practice handling of certain non-target species. Many of these CMMs task the Secretariat to provide reporting based on observer data of the interactions and catches of species of special interest such as seabirds, cetaceans, sea turtles, whale sharks, silky and oceanic white tip sharks, and mobulid rays. All catches of these species are a concern to Commission members and different mitigation methods and guidelines have been recommended and developed to assist in reducing catch and enhancing life status if caught

(see supplementary information on Conservation and Management Measures at this link https://www.wcpfc.int/conservation-and-management-measures)

28. Reports of catches of species of special interest was reduced during the years 2020-2022 due to COVID exemptions on observer placements, and as a result there was lower trip reporting, however with the restoration of a 100% observer coverage on purse seiners from 1 January 2023, observer trip reporting increases saw an expected rise in the Species of Special Interest reporting in 2023. **Annex A** contains the data, figures, and monitoring of the Commission's CMMs intended to minimize impacts of fishing on species of special interest for the period 2012 to 2023. A separate TCC20 paper provides information on trends in CCFS cases related to cetaceans, whale sharks and sharks (refer TCC20-2024-09).

Support from the Secretariat to National and Regional Observer programmes

29. As part of the Western Pacific-East Asia Improved Tuna Monitoring (WPEA-ITM) project, Philippines commenced training of national observers in 2009. Training sessions have been held regularly every year and approximately 650 observers and 28 debriefers have been trained to WCPFC standards. Strict, in-country COVID requirements during the pandemic prevented trainings from taking place during 2020 and 2021. Observer training courses resumed in late 2022 when Philippines placed observers on their vessels. The Secretariat has continually assisted the Philippines observer training programme as part of the WPEA project and attended the latest Philippines observer training held in Navotas, Philippines in June and November 2023, and in May 2024. Philippines observers collect data and information using SPC forms and formats and are employed domestically and in the high seas pocket one special management area (HSP1-SMA).

30. Training has been conducted for the development of observer programmes in Vietnam and data collection formats for the collection of data from gillnets and other gear types have been developed. This work is on a continuing basis.

Cross Endorsement of ROP Observers to collect data on behalf of other tuna RFMOs

31. The IATTC/WCPFC Cross-Endorsement (CE) arrangement was initiated to permit a WCPFC ROP observer to continue their duties on vessels that may operate in both the WCPO and the Eastern Pacific on the same trip. Early in 2023, (February) CE training was held in Funafuti, Tuvalu, followed by CE training held in Suva, Fiji, and in Tarawa, Kiribati in October 2023. This bolstered the numbers of CE observers to pre-pandemic levels, where several observers from Pacific Island countries who had IATTC/WCPFC cross endorsement qualifications left observer programmes to find other work. Following the resumption of 100% observer coverage requirements there has been a high demand for observers who have completed the cross-endorsement training, particularly from the US purse Seine fleet.

32. The Secretariat has received requests from ROP Observer Programmes and flag CCMs for additional CE training. Although there are approximately 100 trained and active CE observers, it is often difficult to find a CE observer available for a trip, as many observers on the CE list are regularly out at sea observing trips, or have just returned from a trip and are not immediately available. Proposed CE training is only possible if sufficient funding is available and the IATTC observer trainer is available to conduct the course. CCMs that requested CE

training at the 2024 ROCW were Tonga, RMI, and FSM. The 5-6 day CE training course is conducted by the IATTC Observer Trainer and the WCPFC ROP Training and Audit Consultant.

33. Table 5, below, shows pre-pandemic cross-endorsement placements noting that there were no CE placements in 2021 and 2022. Since the recommencement of 100% observer coverage on 1 January 2023, the US fleet requested CE observers be placed on sixty-five of the seventy-one US-flagged vessels trips made in 2023. Of the sixty-five requests, only twenty-nine vessels moved from the WCPFC-CA into the IATTC-CA. The other thirty-six trips with cross endorsed observers on board commenced and were completed in the WCPO to fish.

34. The US vessels continue to be the dominant user of CE observers. Data up to 30 July, 2024 show that there were thirty-nine CE observer requests from US vessels and one European Union vessel, of which twenty-eight vessels crossed from the WCPFC-CA into IATTC waters.

Table 5 - ROP Trips with fishing activities in the WCPO & EPO by year by flag and Provider

Flag CCM	ROP Provider	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	Total
Ecuador	**KI**	1	9	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	**13**
El Salvador	**KI**	0	4	3	3	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	**11**
EU- Spain	**VU**	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	**1**
EU-Spain	**CK**	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	**1**
USA	**FFA***	1	0	3	7	12	14	14	22	6	0	0	0	0	**79**
USA	**PNAOB**	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	65	39	**104**
Total 2012 – 2023		**2**	**13**	**9**	**10**	**12**	**14**	**15**	**22**	**7**	**0**	**0**	**65**	**40**	**209**

*FFA were responsible for observer placements on US Treaty Vessel observers up to late 2022; PNAOB took over placements of US Treaty Vessel observers 1st Jan 2023.

COVID-19 Resumption of Mandatory Observer Coverage

35. During the latter part of 2022, it was deemed safe to travel and place observers on vessels in various ports. Travel restrictions had eased throughout many locations and although up to date COVID vaccinations were still required to gain entry to some countries, the requirements for 100% coverage on purse seine vessels resumed from 1 January 2023. Consequently, there was a need to train extra observers to maintain the required 100% coverage levels in 2023. Some programmes held virtual observer training courses during the pandemic months to boost their numbers, however most programmes organised in person training sessions to take place as early as possible. To date, there are enough ROP-trained observers available to meet the 100% observer coverage requirement for purse seine vessels.

Secretariat observations

36. The COVID years of 2022-2022 were challenging for many observer programmes with observers being stranded or unable to work, and consequently without a steady source of income. Several CCMs provided work opportunities for their observers in other areas. Some national observer offices suspended their observer operations completely, while others continued to place observers on vessels operating in their own waters.

37. During 2022, most countries started to lift travel restrictions, making it possible to resume 100% observer coverage on purse seine vessels from 1 January 2023. Purse seine observer placements increased immediately from the beginning of 2023, and this should see data and information figures that are eventually back to pre-COVID levels.

38. The Secretariat continued to support member country programmes in returning to agreed levels of coverage and will continue to assist CCM observer programmes where assistance is requested. Areas of assistance include observer and safety issues, observer training, programmes operations, and clarifications of observer roles in monitoring CMMs and other Commission requirements.

Administrative notes

39. For several years, the Secretariat has compiled an updated booklet of the current Conservation and Management Measures and Resolutions that are relevant to ROP observers. Following a Commission decision at WCPFC15 that the booklet should no longer be printed, the Secretariat maintains an updated, electronic version on the WCPFC website: https://www.wcpfc.int/regional-observer-programme

40. General information on the WCPFC ROP, including ROP Minimum Standards for Observer Programmes, the list of ROP Observer Programmes and the ROP Minimum Data fields, are publicly available at this link: https://www.wcpfc.int/regional-observer-programme. This includes an updated set of guidelines on WCPFC ROP requirements on the handling of varied species of special interest (SSI).

41. The Secretariat welcomes TCC's focus through the TCC Workplan 2022 – 2024 to consider potential improvements to the ROP minimum standard data fields commencing in 2023. The IWG-ROP will assist in tasks to update and correct aspects of several CMMs where ROP data fields could be included or refined so that observers can more fully assist in efforts to support monitoring the implementation of WCPFC CMMs.

Annex A

Data and monitoring through the ROP of the Commission's CMMs intended to minimize impacts of fishing on species of special interest.

1. Table A1 indicates the codes used in this Annex. The information in the Species of Special Interest (SSI) report is held by SPC and is available to the Secretariat through the TUFMAN2 database. All figures represent raw data collected by observers that have been debriefed and whose data has been reviewed for quality assurance. A separate TCC20 paper provides information on trends in CCFS cases based on observer data (refer TCC20-2024-09).

Table A1- Life Status & Gear Codes used in Annex A

Codes	Explanation	Codes	Explanation
R	Retained whole or processed	**U**	Unknown Condition when released or discarded.
A	Alive when released or discarded	**PS**	Purse-seine
D	Deceased when discarded	**LL**	Longline

Whale Shark Interactions in purse seine fisheries as reported by ROP Observers

2. Whale shark interactions between purse seine vessels in the WCPO have been monitored by Pacific Island observer programmes since the early 1990's, and the shark CMM 2022-04 (which replaced CMM 2012-04 on 1 Nov 2020) prohibits deliberate setting on whale sharks and requires best efforts to be made to ensure safe release of the whale shark where an encirclement occurs. Table A2 shows the number of whale shark interactions and landings for 837 ROP purse seine trips reported from observer data entered for 2023. The interaction and landings of 88 Whale sharks for 837 ROP purse seine trips was recorded.

Table A2 Purse Seine Whale Shark 'Landings and Interactions' for 2023

Activity	Total Number	Released/ Escaped Alive and Healthy	Released Alive Injured or Distressed	Alive Unknown Condition	Deceased	Unknown
Landings	**23**	**0**	1	**16**	**2**	**4**
Interactions	**65**	**25**	**27**	**9**	**3**	**1**
Total	**88**	**25**	**28**	**25**	**5**	**5**

*Figures as of 24 July 2023

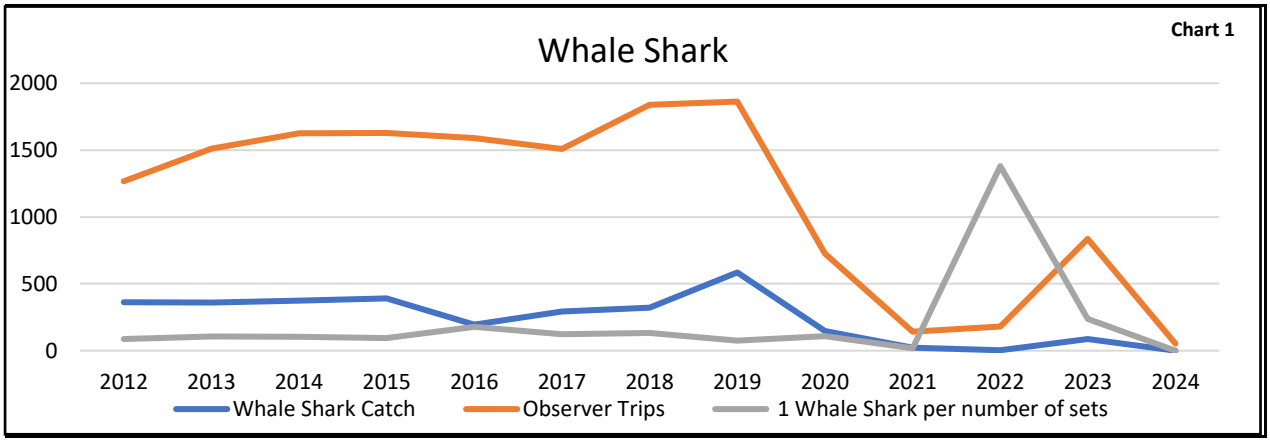
3. Table A3 and Chart1 shows the updated figures for whale sharks since 2012 to 2024. The set catch occurrence from 2012 to 2020 was one whale shark caught every 105 purse seine sets. From 2021 to 2023 during COVID, effects on fishing and observer coverage suspension shows one whale shark was caught every 257 sets. For 2023, the catch rate was one whale shark per 86 sets.

Table A3 Observer Reported Whale Shark Interactions and Landings from 2012-2024

Year	Observer Report Whale Shark Interactions & Landings	Trips analysed for ROP Annual Report	No's of Vessels that caught Whale Sharks	Total No of Sets Made	No's of Sets Whale Sharks reported	Sets per one whale Shark caught
2012	363	1267	134	31617	336	87
2013	361	1511	146	38295	354	106
2014	374	1625	141	39072	361	104
2015	390	1629	156	37065	376	95

2016	194	1591	96	34532	184	178
2017	294	1508	118	36538	253	124
2018	321	1840	122	42455	313	132
2019	585	1863	159	43628	563	75
2020	147	725	75	15953	141	109
2021	22	143	13	3826	22	17
2022	3	181	2	4139	3	1380
2023	88	837	51	21063	86	239
2024	0	53	0	779	0	0
2012/24	**3142**	**14773**	**1213**	**348962**	**2992**	**111**

Figures as of 16 July 2024



Cetacean and Pinniped interactions in purse seine fisheries as reported by ROP Observers.

4. Table A4 shows Cetacean interaction data from 837 Purse seine trips and 417 longline trips entered so far for 2023. Many varied species of whales, dolphins and seals were observed by ROP observers. The SPC-produced 'On Deck Species ID Guides' is issued to many observers and allows for a more accurate identification of each animal. Purse seine observers recorded up to eighteen different species and longline observers eleven different species that interacted with the fishing gear on observed vessels in 2023.

5. During 2023, the 837 purse seine trips recorded a predominance of dolphin species interactions. 434 of the 592 interactions were rough toothed, bottle nose, indo pacific spinner dolphins, false killer and melon head whales, with the whale species being made up of 130 baleen whales, 36 brydes whales, and 94 sei whale. There were also five toothed whales recorded, Sperm and Cuvier's beaked whales.

6. There were ninety deceased animals recorded by observers from the catch of 592 animals by purse seine vessels. Eighty-nine of the deceased animals were dolphins with one Sei whale reported as deceased. Observers reported that 290 animals caught in the net had the crew of the vessels assisting 207 animals to be released from the purse seine net, and 83 animals reported as breaking through or jumping out of the net by their own accord. A further 192 animals were landed or interacted with in other ways, with the fate of 20 animals unknown. It was noted that 24 animals alive when first noticed (one common, twenty-one rough tooth and one spinner dolphins) later died during the process of being landed or trying to be released from the net.

7. Longline vessels caught or interacted with 34 animals. Ten Antarctic fur-seals plus 24 dolphins were reported caught or interacted by observers. Altogether there were 11 varied species that interacted or landed on longliners, most were released alive. However, nine of the 34 captures were reported deceased. One animal barely alive when landed died before being discarded, and the other animals were deceased before landing.

Table A4 Cetaceans and Seals Observer Reported Interactions - 2023

Species	PS	LL	Escaped, Cut-off, Assisted Escape Alive before Landing		Interacted or landed Discarded Alive		Interacted or landed. Discarded Dead		Unknown Condition when Discarded	
Antarctic Fur Seal		10				7		3		
Aquatic Mammal	1		1							
Beaked Whales Unidentified	1	1	1			1				
Baleen Whales	2		2							
Bottle Nose Dolphin	23	2	3		17	1		1	3	
Brydes Whale	36		34		1				1	
Common Dolphin	11						11			
Cuvier's Beaked Whale	1				1					
Dolphins Nei		1				1				
False Killer Whale	130	7	41		73	5	7	2	9	
Ind/Pac Bottle Nose Dolphin	11		11							
Killer Whale		2				1				1
Long Beaked Common Dolphin	3		3							
Melon Headed Whale	16		12						4	
Pan Tropical Spotted Dolphin	11	1			1		7	1	3	
Rough Tooth Dolphin	107	2	48		10	1	49	1		
Risso's Dolphin	4	4	4			3		1		
Sei Whale	94		33		60		1			
Short Fin Pilot whale	8		8							
Sperm Whale	3		3							
Spinner Dolphin	130		86		29		15			
Spotted dolphin		1				1				
Unidentified Whale		3				3				
Totals	592	34	290	0	192	24	90	9	20	1

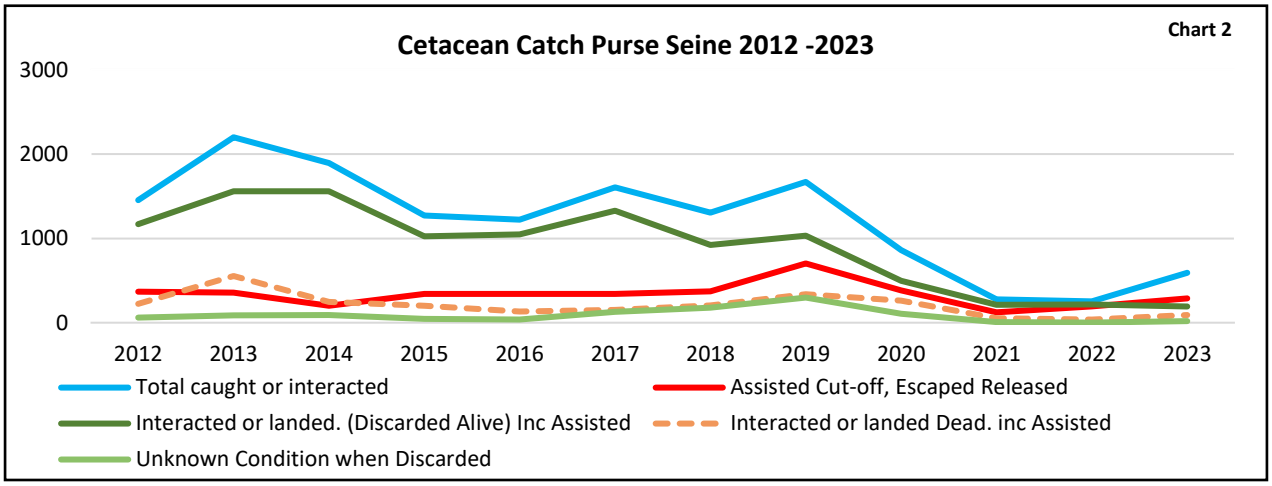
*Figures as of 24 July 2023

8. Table A5, Chart 2 & 3 shows the catch rates on purse seine and longline vessels since 2012 when the CMM for Cetaceans CMM 2011-03 was agreed, following a combination of all the data over the years collected by mainly Pacific Island programme observers using the early versions of General Form 2 (Gen-2) format. All the figures from 2012 in the table have been updated to better reflect catches and conditions of Cetaceans. The table reflects the current data held by SPC.

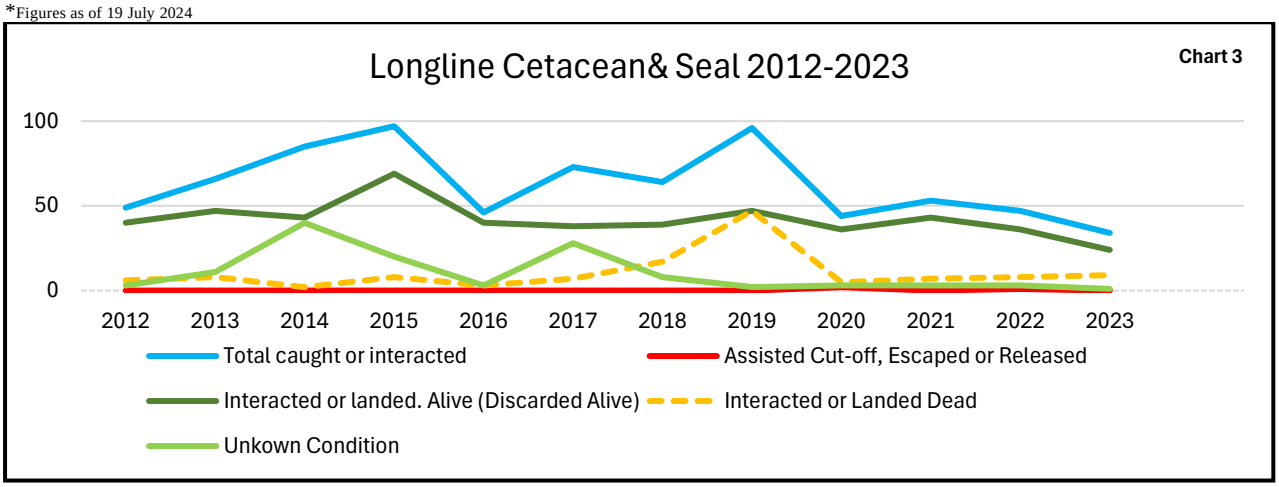
Table A5 Cetaceans caught from 2012-2023.

Year	Total caught or interacted		Assisted Cut-off, Escaped Released		Interacted or landed. (Discarded Alive)		Interacted or landed Dead.		Unknown when discarded	
Gear Type	PS	LL	PS	LL	PS	LL	PS	LL	PS	LL
2012	1454	49	368	0	1170	40	222	6	62	3
2013	2201	66	355	0	1560	47	554	8	87	11
2014	1895	85	202	0	1560	43	245	2	90	40
2015	1273	97	341	0	1026	69	200	8	47	20
2016	1221	46	340	0	1048	40	134	3	39	3
2017	1607	73	343	0	1330	38	150	7	127	28

2018	**1305**	**64**	373	0	921	39	204	17	180	8
2019	**1670**	**96**	703	0	1034	47	338	47	298	2
2020	**861**	**44**	383	2	496	36	260	5	105	3
2021	**277**	**53**	123	0	214	43	54	7	9	3
2022	**253**	**47**	194	1	215	36	37	8	1	3
2023	**592**	**34**	290	0	192	24	90	9	20	1
Total 2012-23	**14107**	**720**	**4015**	**3**	**10766**	**502**	**2488**	**127**	**1065**	**125**



*Figures as of 19 July 2024



*Figures as of 19 July 2024

Seabird fishery interactions as reported by ROP observers for 2023.

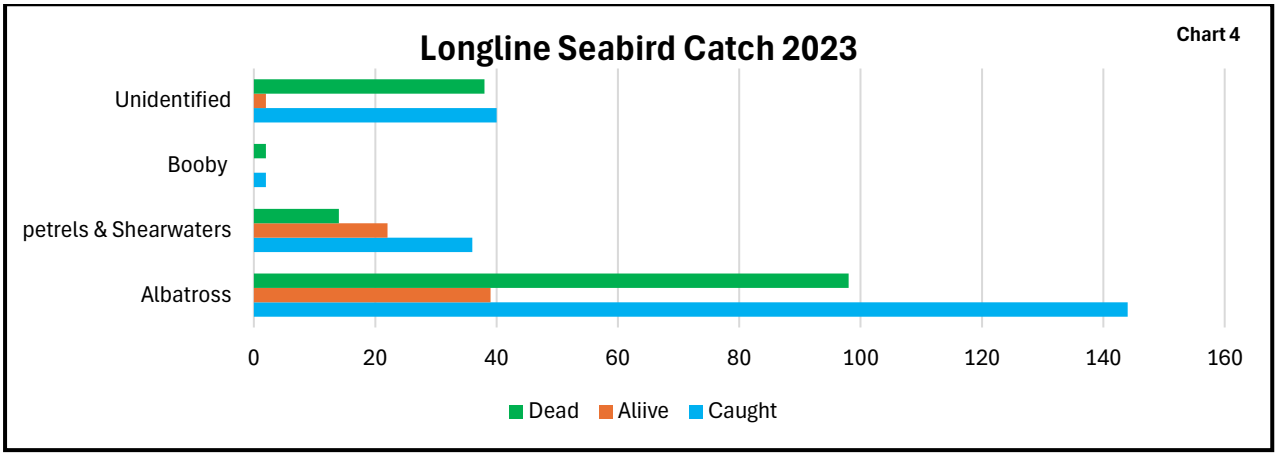
9. Table A6 & Chart 4 shows available 2023 Observer data collected by observers from China, Hawaii, Fiji, New Caledonia, French Polynesia, Chinese Taipei, New Zealand, and Vanuatu which indicates that birds were recorded as caught and landed on 417 longline trips entered so far for 2023. The observer collected data shows that observers confirmed 175 deceased and 38 released alive birds with laysan albatross (42), black footed albatross (62) being the predominant species recorded. No catches were recorded on the 817 purse seine trips during 2023.

Table A6 -Observer Reported 2023 Seabird Bycatch - Long Line Vessels

Gear	Species	Number Caught	Released Alive	Dead	Unknown	<23N >30S	<30S	>23N
LL	**Albatross Nei**	5	4	1	0	3	2	0

LL	**Birds Unidentified**	40	2	38	0	40	0	0
LL	**Black Browed Albatross**	8	0	3	5	1	7	0
LL	**Black-Footed Albatross**	62	21	41	0	7	0	55
LL	**Bullers Albatross**	3	0	3	0	1	2	0
LL	**Grey Headed Albatross**	1	0	0	1	0	1	0
LL	**Laysan Albatross**	42	14	28	0	2	0	40
LL	**Masked Booby**	2	0	2	0	0	2	0
LL	**Northern Royal Albatross**	1	0	1	0	0	1	0
LL	**Petrels and Shearwaters**	23	22	0	1	0	23	0
LL	**Royal Albatross**	1	0	1	0	0	1	0
LL	**Short Tailed Shearwaters**	8	0	8	0	8	0	0
LL	**Sooty Shearwater**	1	0	1	0	0	0	1
LL	**Wandering Albatross**	12	0	11	1	11	0	1
LL	**Westland Petrel**	3	0	2	1	0	0	3
LL	**White Capped Albatross**	9	0	9	0	0	0	9
LL	**White Chinned Petrel**	1	0	1	0	0	0	1
LL 2023		**222**	**38**	**175**	**9**	**73**	**39**	**110**

*Figures as of 24 July 2023



10. Observers reported 5,299 sightings (Table A7) on longline vessels with Molly hawks being the most predominant sighting of known species below 30°S, noting the high sightings reported of northern hemisphere albatrosses, laysan and black footed albatrosses north of 23°N. The southern hemisphere seabird sightings saw many wandering albatrosses recorded as well as a high number of petrels, particularly westland petrels. It is noted that many birds may be counted multiple times in a set or over the period of a trip, therefore numbers sighted is not a good indicator of the actual individual numbers following a vessel over the period of a trip. The figures however are a good indicator of the varied species, and the predominance of that species sighted during a trip.

11. Purse seine recorded no catches. Table A8 shows all sightings were between 23°N and 30°S, which shows the different types of bird species that inhabit the more tropical areas of the Convention area: Boobies, Gannets, Gulls, Terns, Skuas, and Petrels with 2,229 (90%) of the 2,478 of the numbers sighted by observers on purse seine vessels.

Table A7 - Longline Seabird Sightings 2023

Gear	Species	Number Sighted	<23N >30S	<30S	>23N
LL	Black Browed Mollymawk	1515	0	886	629
LL	Black footed Albatross	419	0	0	419

LL	Boobies & Gannets	129	129	0	0
LL	Grey Headed Albatross	888	0	888	0
LL	Grey Petrel	42	42	0	0
LL	Gulls, Terns and Skuas	27	0	0	37
LL	Laysan Albatross	97	0	0	97
LL	Masked Booby	1	1	0	0
LL	Petrels and Shearwaters	107	107	0	0
LL	Petrels Nei	94	98	0	0
LL	Wandering Albatross	241	241	0	0
LL	Westland Petrel	1627	1627	0	0
LL	Bird (Unidentified)	112	112	0	0
Longline Birds Sightings 2023		**5299**	**2357**	**1774**	**1182**

*Figures as of 24 July 2024

Table A8 – Purse Seine Seabird Sightings 2023

Gear	Species	Number Sighted	<23N >30S	<30S	>23N
PS	Albatross Nei	140	140	0	0
PS	Black footed Albatross	55	55	0	0
PS	Boobies & Gannets	820	820	0	1
PS	Gulls, Terns and Skuas	759	759	0	0
PS	Laysan Albatross	54	54	0	0
PS	Petrels and Shearwaters	650	650	0	0
Purse Seine Birds Sightings 2023		**2478**	**2478**	**0**	**1**

Figures as of 24 July 2024

12. Tables A9a, A9b, A9c & Chart 5a – 5e show recorded observer seabird catches since the first seabird measure was adopted (CMM 2012-07). In the early periods, observers did not have good ID guides to assist in properly identifying species of birds. Improvements in seabird ID by observers was due to the development of comprehensive Seabird ID manuals and restructuring of observer training. Albatross and petrels are the predominant species caught on longline vessels. Figures over the period 2012-2023 indicate that about 87% of Albatross and Petrels are deceased when caught.

Table A9 (a) Seabird Catch Information 2012 to 2023

	Albatross							Petrel & Shearwaters						
Year	Total	A	%	D	%	U	%	Total	A	%	D	%	U	%
2012	140	0	0	76	54	64	46	6	0	0	6	100	0	45.5
2013	136	6	4	90	66	40	27	16	0	0	16	100	0	12
2014	131	25	19	71	54	35	27	20	5	21	12	63	3	16
2015	880	46	5	803	91	31	4	111	5	5	99	89	7	6
2016	1444	18	2	1348	92	78	5	181	10	5	153	85	18	10
2017	523	62	12	449	86	12	2	57	0	0	49	86	8	14
2018	577	29	5	524	91	24	4	84	0	0	82	98	2	2
2019	1626	51	3	1575	97	0	0.0	153	1	0	152	99	0	0.0
2020	267	80	30	187	70	0	0	48	8	17	40	83	0	0
2021	163	52	32	111	68	0	0	26	3	12	23	88	0	0
2022	315	114	36	201	64	0	0	50	6	12	44	88	0	0
2023	144	39	27	98	68	7	5	36	22	61	14	39	0	0
Total	**6346**	**483**	**8%**	**5533**	**87%**	**291**	**5%**	**788**	**60**	**8%**	**690**	**87%**	**38**	**5%**

*Figures as of 24 July 2023

Table A9(b)

	Gulls Terns Skua							Boobies and Gannets						
Year	Total	A	%	D	%	U	%	Total	A	%	D	%	U	%
2012	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
2013	3	0	0	2	67	1	33	1	0	50	1	50	0	0
2014	2	0	0	2	100	0	0	2	2	100	0	0	0	0
2015	2	0	0	0	0	2	100	2	1	50	1	50	0	0
2016	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	100	0	0	0	0
2017	3	0	0	3	100	0	0	5	1	20	2	40	2	40
2018	1	0	0	1	100	0	0	2	0	0	2	100	0	0
2019	1	0	0	1	100	0	0	3	0	0	3	100	0	0
2020	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	1	50	1	50	0	0
2021	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	2	100	0	0
2022	1	0	0	1	100	0	0	24	23	96	1	4	0	0
2023	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	2	0	0	0	0	0
Total	**13**	**0**	**0**	**10**	**77%**	**3**	**23%**	**46**	**31**	**67%**	**13**	**28%**	**2**	**5%**

*Figures as of 24 July 2023

Table A9(c)

Seabirds Unidentified							
Year	Total	A	%	D	%	U	%
2012	12	2	17	10	83	0	0
2013	6	0	0	5	83	1	17
2014	4	2	50	2	50	0	0
2015	24	1	4	21	88	2	8
2016	25	1	4	22	88	2	8
2017	14	1	7	13	93	0	0
2018	7	0	0	6	86	1	14
2019	10	0	0	10	100	0	0
2020	2	0	0	1	50	1	50
2021	16	0	0	16	0	0	0
2022	8	1	12	7	88	0	0
2023	40	2	5	38	95	0	0
Total	**168**	**10**	**6%**	**151**	**90%**	**7**	**4%**

Figures as of 24 July 2023

Chart 5a

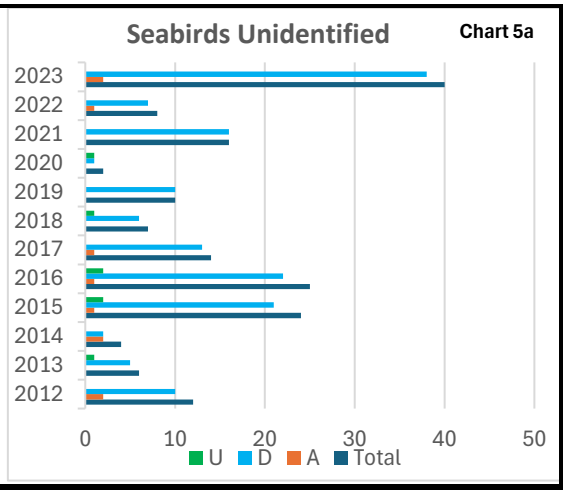


Chart 5b

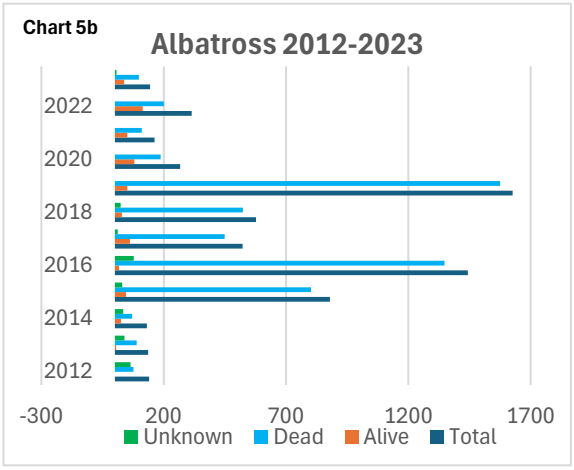
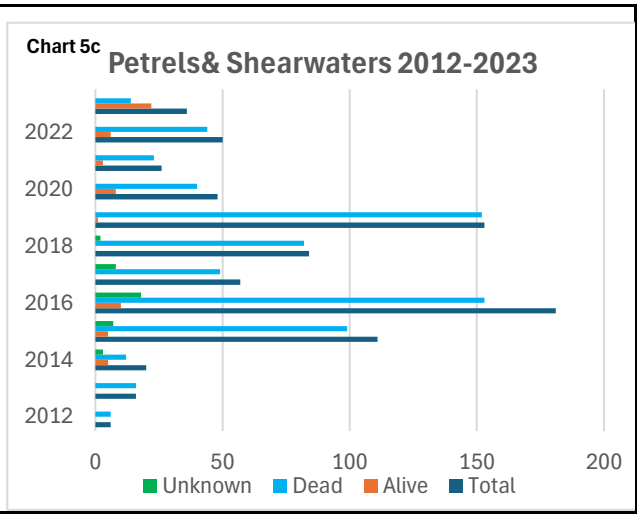
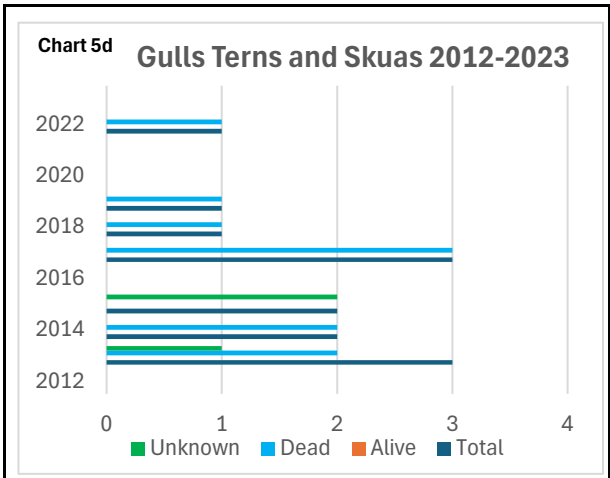
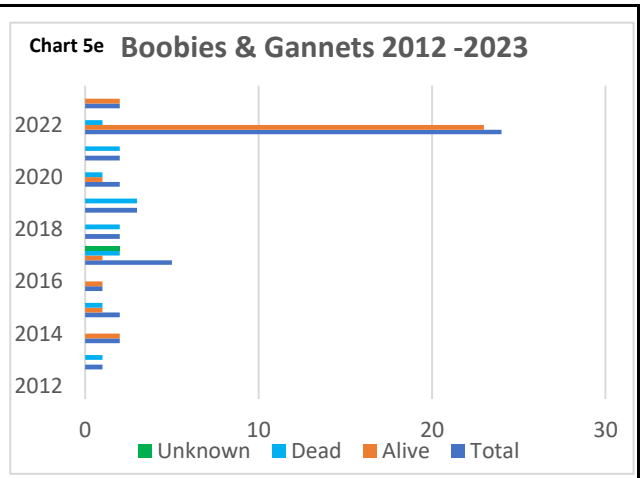


Chart 5c







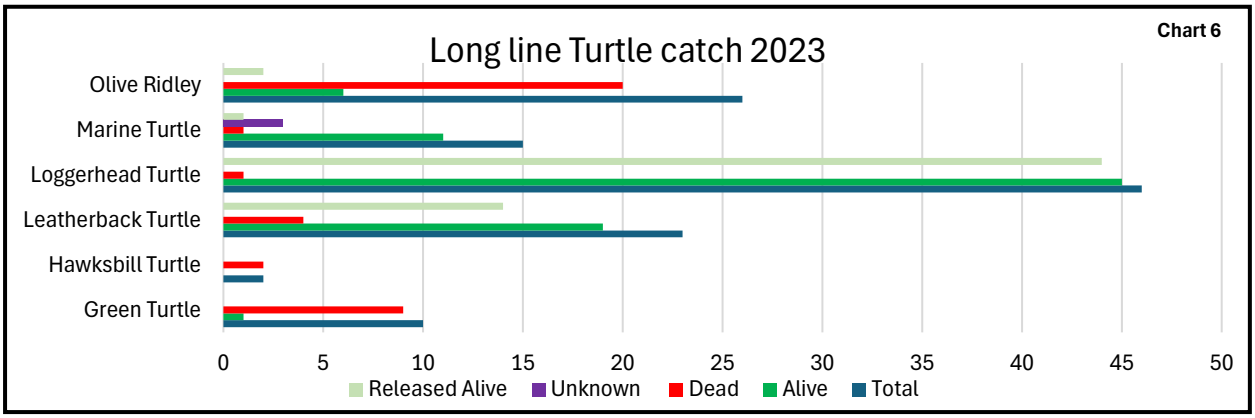
Sea turtle interactions as reported by ROP observers.

13. Observer data for catches and other interactions from turtles in 2023 are from 837 purse seine trips and 417 longline trips. A total of 198 observed turtle landing and non-landed interactions on purse seiners and longliners were recorded by observers in 2023. There were 122 turtles reported caught by longliners, (Table A10) 61 were released alive and 37 deceased when discarded. Observers reported that crews assisted with the recovery of live turtles landed on board longline vessels with all deceased turtles being in that state when landed. Main species caught were olive ridley, loggerheads, and an increase in leatherbacks.

Table A10 Longline Turtle Landings and Interactions for 2023

Gear	Species	Number Observed	Retained	Number Discarded Alive	Number Discarded Dead	Unknown Condition	Released Alive before landing
LL	Flatback Turtle	0	0	0	0	0	0
LL	Green Turtle	10	0	1	9	0	0
LL	Hawksbill Turtle	2	0	0	2	0	0
LL	Leatherback Turtle	23	0	19	4	0	14
LL	Loggerhead Turtle	46	0	45	1	0	44
LL	Marine Turtle	15	0	11	1	3	1
LL	Olive Ridley	26	0	6	20	0	2
Long-Line Turtles Caught 2023		**122**	**0**	**82**	**37**	**3**	**61**

Figures as of 24 July 2024



14. Table A11 shows that there were 76 turtles recorded caught by purse seiners, with zero turtles reported as deceased, and 42 released from the net before landing. The crew assisted turtles when brailed aboard and landed on deck, and they were released in the same condition as when landed. Olive Ridley and Loggerhead are the predominant turtle species caught in purse seine sets.

Table A11 Purse-seine Turtle landings and interactions for 2023

Gear	Species	Number Observed	Retained	Number Discarded Alive	Number Discarded Dead	Unknown Condition	Released Alive before landing
PS	Flatback Turtle	1	0	1	0	0	0
PS	Green Turtle	21	0	20	0	1	14
PS	Hawksbill Turtle	9	0	8	0	1	6
PS	Leatherback Turtle	3	0	3	0	0	1
PS	Loggerhead Turtle	15	0	14	0	1	8
PS	Marine Turtle	0	0	0	0	0	0
PS	Olive Ridley Turtle	27	0	25	0	2	12
PS Turtles Caught 2023		76	0	71	0	5	42
Turtles LL & PS 3023		198	0	153	37	8	80

Figures as of 24 July 2024

15. Table A12 to A12c and Charts 6a to 6g show the catches between 2012 and 2023. It is noted that a large majority of turtles caught by purse seiners are returned to the sea alive and in a reasonable condition. Most deceased turtles occur in long lining and in most cases where a turtle is recorded as deceased, it has expired before being landed. The figures indicate that green, loggerhead, and olive ridleys are the most predominant turtle species caught in the WCPO.

Tables A12 (a)- Flatback, Green and Hawksbill Turtle observed 2012-2023.

Year	Flatback	A	D	U	Green	R	A	D	U	Hawksbill	R	A	D	U
2012	5	5	0	0	66	5	52	5	4	32	0	25	5	2
2013	9	5	3	1	121	4	90	12	15	65	0	51	7	7
2014	6	2	3	1	256	5	230	11	10	72	1	54	10	7
2015	8	8	0	0	102	1	82	13	6	31	0	24	6	1
2016	7	6	1	0	78	0	47	15	16	40	0	31	6	3
2017	3	3	0	0	287	0	252	14	21	243	0	231	10	2
2018	8	5	2	1	151	0	92	56	3	55	0	44	9	2
2019	2	0	2	0	116	1	86	27	2	54	0	45	8	1
2020	3	3	0	0	40	0	22	16	2	14	0	10	4	0
2021	1	1	0	0	11	0	3	8	0	8	0	2	5	1
2022	2	0	2	0	20	0	5	15	0	5	0	1	4	0
2023	1	1	0	0	31	0	21	9	1	11	0	8	2	1
Total	**55**	**39**	**13**	**3**	**1279**	**16**	**982**	**201**	**80**	**630**	**1**	**526**	**76**	**27**

Figures as of 24 July 2024

Table A12 (b) Leatherback, Loggerhead & Olive Ridley Turtles observed 2012-2023.

Year	Leather back	R	A	D	U	Logger head	R	A	D	U	Olive Ridley	R	A	D	U
2012	16	2	7	1	6	62	3	44	6	9	129	0	67	48	14
2013	36	2	18	3	13	82	1	59	6	16	112	0	71	27	14
2014	31	1	15	0	15	66	5	37	8	16	56	0	34	15	7
2015	28	0	19	6	3	133	0	55	7	71	152	0	66	67	19
2016	30	0	19	0	11	149	0	115	15	19	156	0	59	39	58
2017	38	0	21	1	16	180	0	59	12	109	208	0	82	90	36
2018	43	0	25	14	4	151	0	129	19	3	312	0	80	227	5
2019	22	0	14	7	1	226	0	199	26	1	192	0	57	133	2

2020	21	0	18	0	3	75	0	63	11	1	47	0	22	25	0
2021	10	0	6	3	1	42	0	42	0	0	112	0	25	86	1
2022	27	0	21	4	2	38	0	37	1	0	103	0	22	81	0
2023	26	0	22	4	0	61	0	59	1	1	53	0	31	20	2
Total	**328**	**5**	**205**	**43**	**75**	**1265**	**9**	**898**	**112**	**246**	**1632**	**0**	**616**	**858**	**158**

Figures as of 24 July 2024

Table A12(c) Unidentified Turtles 2012 -2023

Year	Unidentified	R	A	D	U
2012	5	0	3	2	0
2013	8	0	4	0	4
2014	8	0	5	0	3
2015	35	0	1	0	34
2016	86	0	73	1	12
2017	123	0	105	18	0
2018	132	0	120	10	2
2019	18	0	10	4	4
2020	8	0	8	0	0
2021	5	0	3	1	1
2022	3	0	2	1	0
2023	15	0	11	1	3
Total20	**446**	**0**	**345**	**38**	**63**

Figures as of 24July 2024

Chart 6a

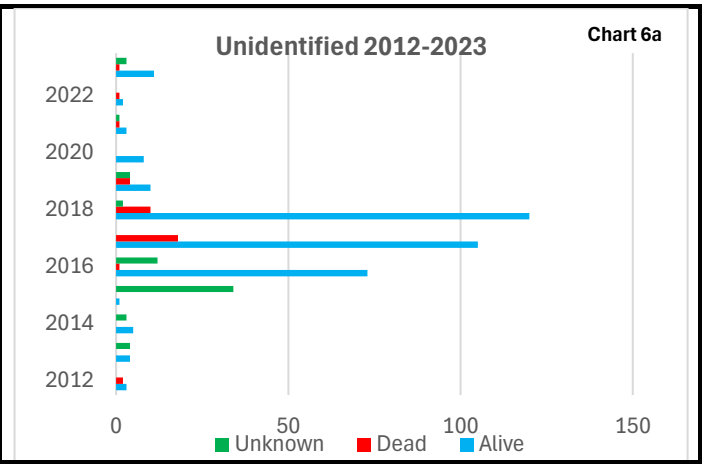


Chart 6b

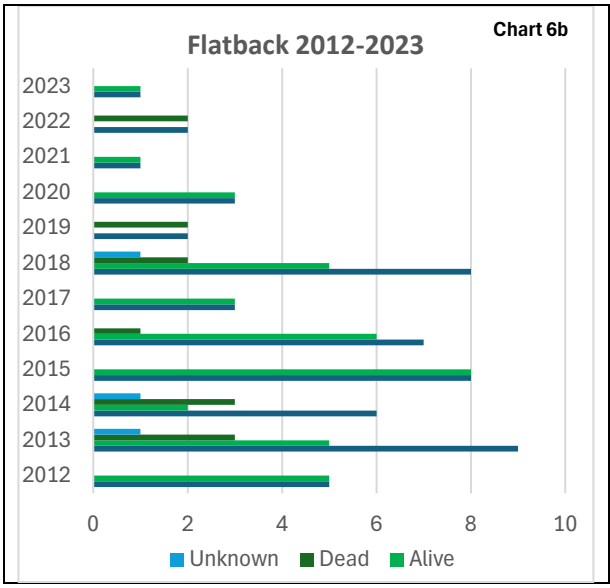
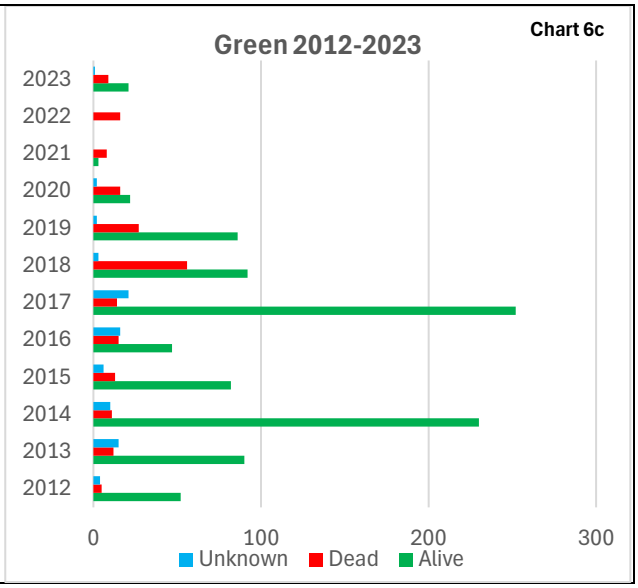
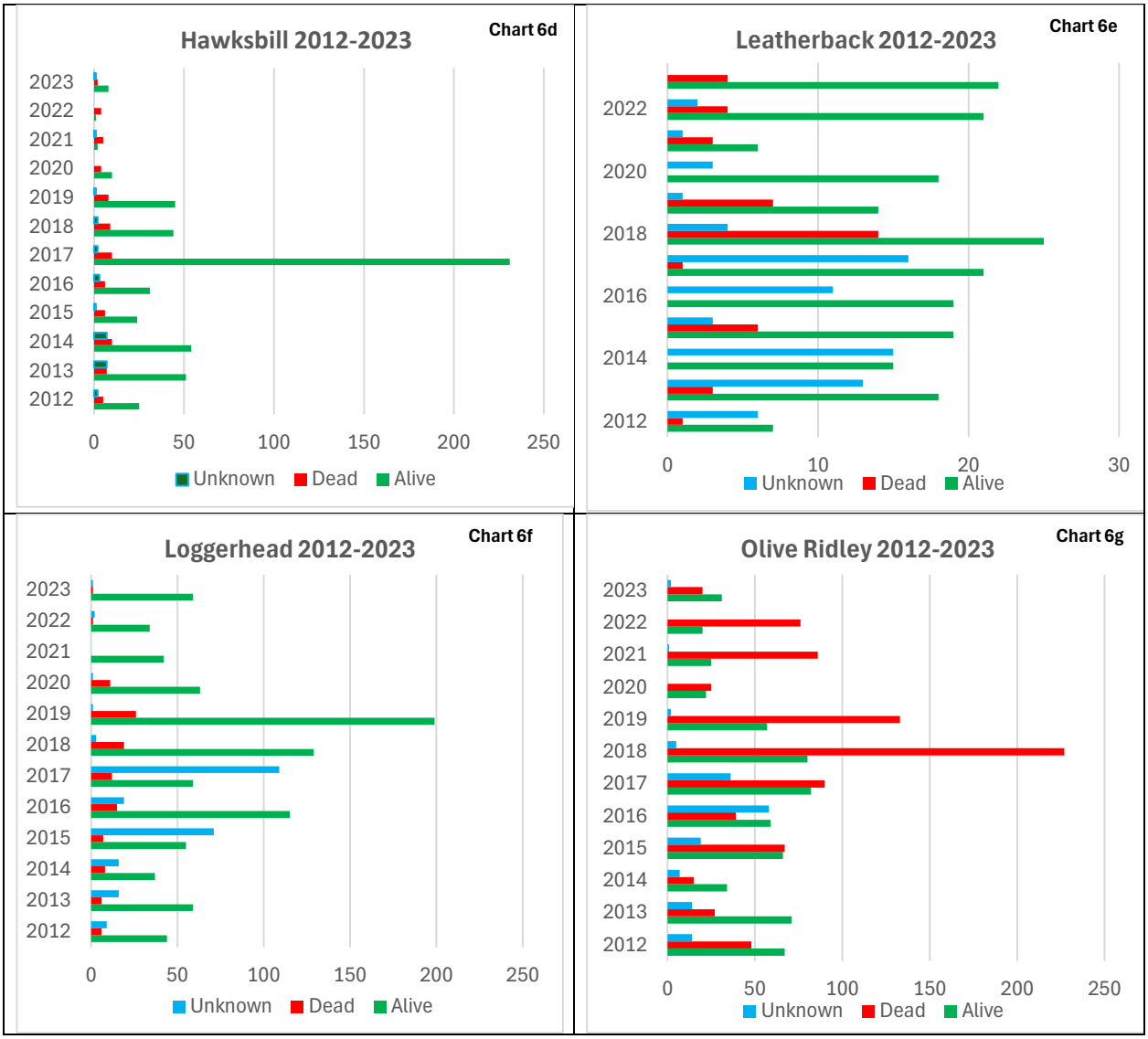


Chart 6c





16. During the period 2012-2023, the unidentified turtles in Table A12c, Chart 6g represent the turtles that were viewed by observers, and they were unable to positively identify the species of turtle. Noting that 345 out of 424 of these turtles are recorded as released alive, many of these were released before landing on deck, and therefore were hard to identify correctly. It is also noted that between 2019-2023, there has been a decrease in unidentified turtles due to a combination of observer placement restrictions during COVID where less trips were made, and improved turtle identification manuals available to observers.

Sharks (other than Whale Shark) fishery interactions as reported by ROP Observers

Silky Sharks

17. WCPFC's CMM for sharks (CMM 2022-04) prohibit vessels from retaining on board, transhipping, or storing or landing silky sharks, in whole or in part, in the fisheries covered by the Convention. Table A13 indicates that the catches of silky sharks are lower than pre COVID reports because of the lower data entry of the number of trips (1,254 Trips) so far for 2023. The catch figures per

trip pre COVID (2020) indicate that between 40 to 60 silky sharks are recorded per observer purse seine trip of 35 days. The figures entered so far for 2023 show an average of around 27 sharks per trip were reported.

18. "Silky Shark" landings or net interactions on purse seiners indicates that there was an increase in live sharks being discarded in 2023 (37%). Recorded deceased sharks in 2023 (59%) showed a slight decrease in numbers compared to pre COVID catches (64%) in 2019. Noting that the counting of silky sharks observed caught in the nets was often difficult, and estimated numbers were reported.

19. Data for 2023 shows that longline vessels recorded silky sharks caught, landed, and discarded alive represent 45% of the 1,668 silky sharks recorded, of which 248 (15%) were cut free before landing. Silky sharks discarded deceased represented 30% of the catch. No retention or finning of Silky Sharks were recorded for 2023 at the time of this report.

Table A13 Silky Shark Catch 2023

Gear	Total Caught	Condition Caught			Condition Discarded			LL Cut Free before Landing			Unhook before landing
		A	D	U	A	D	U	A	D	U	
PS	**33193**	13013	7889	12291	12049	19544	1600	0	0	0	0
LL	**1668**	912	656	100	750	840	78	248	15	2	0
Total	**34861**	**13925**	**8545**	**12391**	**12799**	**20384**	**1678**	**248**	**15**	**2**	**0**

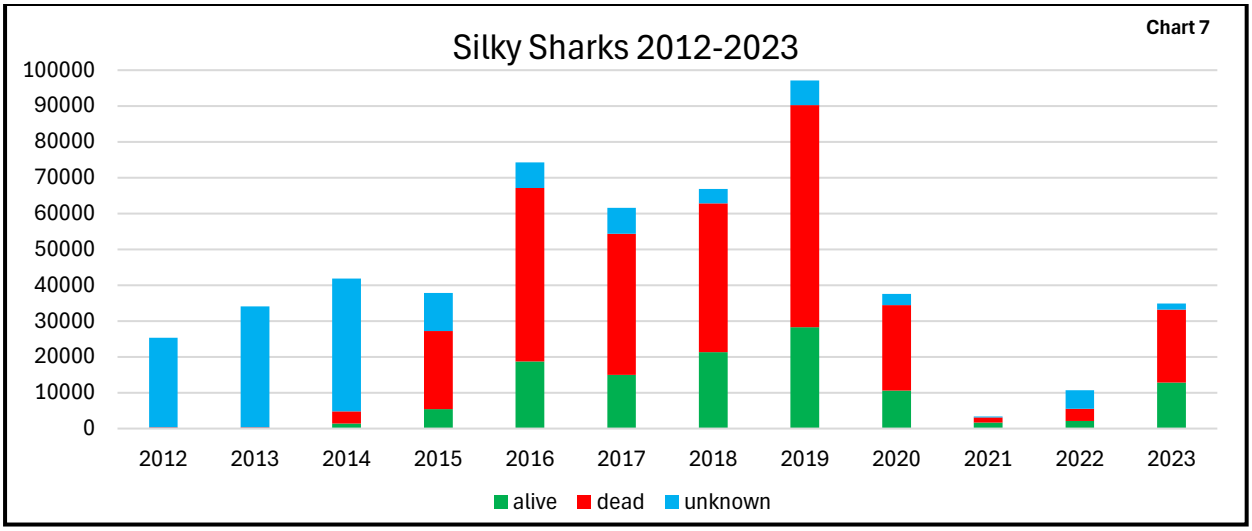
Figures as of 2024

20. Table A14 & Chart 7 indicate catches of silky sharks from 2012 to 2023 and shows that reporting of shark finning and retention has decreased noticeably. Figures for 2023 indicate no fins or body parts were retained on ROP trips. The alive status of released silky sharks has improved since the implementation of the CMM 2013-08 from 1% in 2012 to an overall 37% reported for 2023. Programmes are requested to ensure their observers collect the status of the shark's condition on discard.

Table A14 Silky Shark Catches 2012-2023

Silky Sharks	Estimated Number Caught	Discarded Body, Fins / Skins Retained	Retained Body, Fins Whole	Condition when Cut/Struck off or discarded			% Alive released	Cut/Struck off. Esc before landing on deck
				Alive	Dead	Unknown		
2012	**25310**	2025	3532	131	195	24984	1	84
2013	**34128**	2554	2402	138	236	33754	11	126
2014	**41862**	1039	1357	1432	3352	37078	12	267
2015	**37826**	329	566	5460	21745	10621	24	330
2016	**74224**	257	402	18703	48434	7087	20	1085
2017	**61615**	35	93	14987	39337	7291	24	933
2018	**66882**	34	21	21349	41533	4000	42	783
2019	**97166**	4	45	28325	61927	6914	29	655
2020	**37612**	131	42	10612	23859	3141	28	183
2021	**3388**	0	0	1705	1396	287	50	120
2022	**10649**	0	0	2103	3405	5141	20	112
2023	**34861**	0	0	12799	20384	1678	37	265
2012-23	**525523**	**6408**	**8460**	**117744**	**265803**	**141976**	**22**	**4943**

Figures as of 24 July 2024



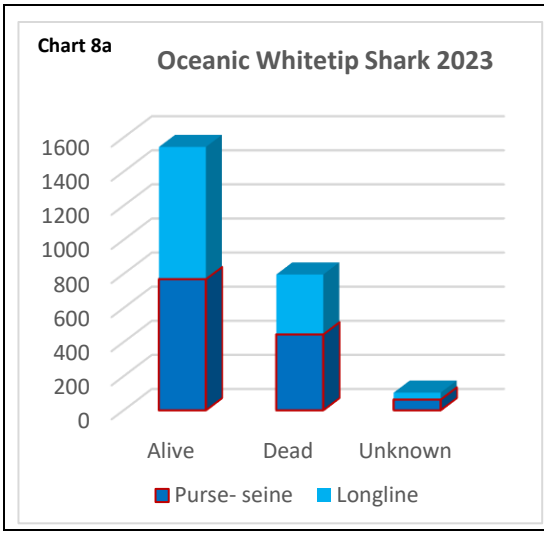
Oceanic Whitetip Sharks

21. CMM 2022-04 prohibit vessels from retaining on board, transhipping, or storing or landing oceanic whitetip sharks, in whole or in part, in the fisheries covered by the Convention. Table A15 shows the total catches reported by observers as discarded in 2023 from 837 purse seine trips and 436 longline trips. Oceanic whitetip sharks are usually predominantly caught by longline vessels however for 2023 purses seine vessels caught one about every 10 sets compared to longline catch of one every 18 sets. This is a change as usually longliners catch more oceanic whitetip shark than purse seine vessels.

Table A15 Oceanic Whitetip Sharks catch 2023

Gear	Number Caught	Discard Body, Fins Retain	Retain Body Whole	Condition Caught			Condition Discarded			LL Cut free before landing		
				A	D	U	A	D	U	A	D0	U
Purse-seine	**1277**	0	0	799	363	115	769	445	63	0	0	0
Longline	**1166**	0	0	931	172	63	775	351	40	77	0	0
Total	**2443**	**0**	**0**	**1730**	**535**	**178**	**1544**	**796**	**103**	**77**	**0**	**0**

22. The figures indicate that both the reporting and adherence to the CMMs has improved since the first CMM for oceanic whitetips was implemented in 2013. Table A16 and Chart 8 show reports of oceanic whitetip sharks being retained and processed has been reduced to zero, with no observer reports of fins or bodies being retained in 2023. The status of releasing oceanic whitetip sharks alive has improved from 2012 (19%) to 63% in 2023.



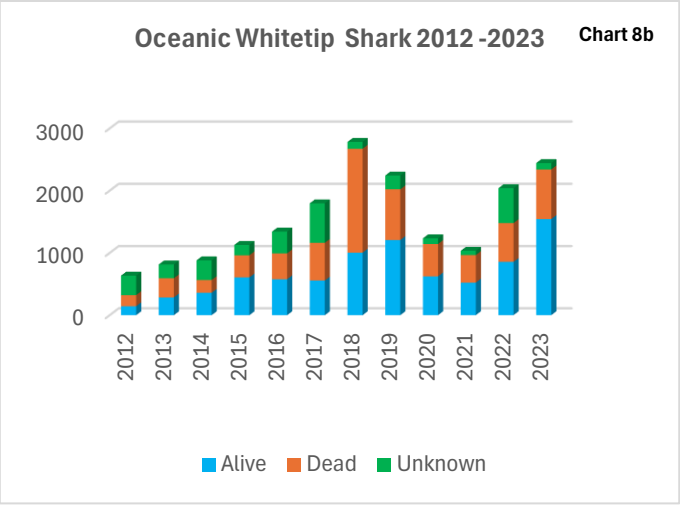


Table A16. Oceanic Whitetip Sharks 2012-2023

	Number Caught	Fins Only Retained	Whole Body & Fins Retained	Condition when Cut/Struck off or Discarded			% Alive Released	Cut/Struck off/ Esc before landing
				Alive	Dead	Unknown		
2012	744	50	109	144	178	313	19	104
2013	880	75	66	285	308	221	32	142
2014	942	30	61	359	205	317	38	265
2015	1197	10	69	607	354	167	51	149
2016	1344	11	2	577	415	350	43	306
2017	1801	0	5	557	605	634	31	155
2018	2783	10	21	1003	1670	110	36	227
2019	2243	6	0	1207	815	221	54	149
2020	1234	0	1	623	521	90	50	158
2021	1034	0	0	522	444	68	51	69
2022	2040	0	0	856	624	560	42	114
2023	2443	0	0	1544	796	103	63	77
2012-23	**18685**	**192**	**334**	**8284**	**6935**	**3154**	**44**	**1915**

Figures as of 24 July 2024

Shark Catches 2023

23. Shark catches for shark species other than whale, silky, and oceanic whitetip sharks for 2023 are shown in Table A17 for purse seine vessels and table A18 for longline vessels. A total of 18,685 sharks were reported caught on purse seine vessels, with ten dusky and one tiger shark reported as retained. Longline vessels caught a total of 72,575 sharks, of which 29,400 sharks were reported retained: big-eye thresher, blue shark. Mako sharks and hammerhead sharks were the predominant species retained, and a few other species such as salmon, porbeagle, school, and tiger were retained in small numbers. Fins from blue sharks were reported retained along with the trunks. One instance of fins-only retained was reported from two smooth hammerhead sharks on a longliner.

Table A17 Purse Seine Shark Catch -2023

Shark Species	Catch	Retained	Discard	Unknown	Fins Retained With Trunk	Finned-Trunk Discarded
BIGEYE THRESHER SHARK	**3**	**0**	**3**	**0**	**0**	**0**
BIGNOSE SHARK	**6**	**0**	**6**	**0**	**0**	**0**

BLACKTIP SHARK	22	0	21	1	0	0
BLUE SHARK	3	0	3	0	0	0
BRONZE WHALER SHARK	3	0	3	0	0	0
BULL SHARK	2	0	2	0	0	0
DUSKY SHARK	10	10	0	0	0	0
GALAPAGOS SHARK	11	0	11	0	0	0
GREAT HAMMERHEAD	8	0	8	0	0	0
HAMMERHEAD SHARKS NEI	2	0	2	0	0	0
LONG FIN MAKO	3	0	3	0	0	0
PELAGIC THRESHER SHARK	3	0	2	1	0	0
SANDBAR SHARK	21	0	21	0	0	0
SCALLOPED HAMMERHEAD	10	0	10	0	0	0
SHORTFIN MAKO	2	0	2	0	0	0
SILVERTIP SHARK	17	0	13	4	0	0
SMOOTH HAMMERHEAD	8	0	8	0	0	0
THRESHER SHARK VULPINUS	1	0	1	0	0	0
TIGER SHARK	9	1	8	0	0	0
VARIOUS SHARKS NEI	50	0	50	0	0	0
SHARK CATCH 2023 (PS)	194	11	177	6	0	0

Table A18 Long Line Shark Catch 2023

Shark Species	Catch	Retained	Discard	Unknown	Fins Retained With Trunk	Finned Trunk Discarded
BIG EYE SAND TIGERSHARK	6	0	6	0	0	0
BIGEYE THRESHER SHARK	2153	147	1938	66	0	0
BIGNOSE SHARK	35	0	24	11	0	0
BLACKTIP REEF SHARK	5	0	5	0	0	0
BLACKTIP SHARK	11	0	6	5	0	0
BLUE SHARK	63185	28080	26925	8009	1582	0
BRONZE WHALER SHARK	183	0	183	0	0	0
COOKIE CUTTER SHARK	5	0	5	0	0	0
CROCODILE SHARK	1067	0	1039	28	0	0
GALAPAGOS SHARK	32	0	22	10	0	0
GREAT HAMMERHEAD	7	3	4	0	0	0
GREAT WHITE SHARK	9	0	9	0	0	0
GREY REEF SHARK	3	0	3	0	0	0
HAMMERHEAD SHARKS NEI	1	0	1	0	0	0
KITEFIN SHARK	8	0	8	0	0	0
LONGFIN MAKO	306	41	203	62	0	0
MACKERAL SHARKS	11	0	0	11	0	0
MAKO SHARKS	7	0	7	0	0	0
PACIFIC SLEEPER SHARK	1	0	0	1	0	0
PELAGIC THRESHER SHARK	221	0	102	119	0	0
PORBEAGLE SHARK	459	18	41	400	0	0
REQUIM SHARK	12	0	0	12	0	0
SALMON SHARK	50	45	5	0	0	0
SANDBAR SHARK	8	0	8	0	0	0
SCALLOPEDHAMMERHEAD	6	1	5	0	0	0
SCHOOL SHARK	3	3	0	0	0	0
SHARKS (UNIDENTIFIED)	3	0	3	0	0	0
SHORTFIN MAKO	2850	860	1444	546	75	0
SILVERTIP SHARK	20	0	12	8	0	0
SMOOTH HAMMERHEAD	241	219	21	1	0	2
THRESHER SHARK (VULPINUS)	39	1	18	20	0	0
THRESHER SHARKS NEI	113	0	71	42	0	0
TIGER SHARK	13	1	10	2	0	0
VARIOUS SHARKS NEI	567	0	559	8	0	0
VELVET DOGFISH	932	1	894	37	0	0
WHITETIP REEF SHARK	3	0	2	1	0	0
SHARK CATCH 2023 (LL)	72575	29420	33756	9399	1657	2

Figures as of 24 July 2024

Mobulid Rays

24. The Commission's measure (CMM 2019-05) on Mobulid and Manta Rays arose out of the concern that the species of the family Mobulidae, which includes manta rays and mobula rays, are vulnerable to overfishing as they are slow-growing, experience late sexual maturity, have long gestation periods, and often give birth to only a few pups. From 1 January 2021, the following measures were included amongst others to be implemented by CCMs in respect of Mobulid and Manta Rays:

    - prohibit their vessels from targeted fishing or intentional setting on mobulid rays in the CA.
    - prohibit their vessels from retaining on board, transhipping, or landing any part or whole carcass of mobulid rays caught in the CA.
    - require their fishing vessels to promptly release alive and unharmed, to the extent practicable, mobulid rays as soon as possible, and to do so in a manner that will result in the least possible harm to the individuals captured.
    - encourage their fishing vessels to implement the handling practices detailed in Annex 1 of the CMM 2019-05 while taking into consideration the safety of the crew.

25. Table A20 and A21 shows the catch reported for 2023 and the observer reports since 2012 and as can be seen for the years before 2019, catches were high with many unknown fates when released because the data collected by observers on Mobulids was reported as bycatch. The COVID period saw low trips and therefore low catches were reported. However, since the adoption of CMM 2019-05, conditions as stated above highlighted the issues with Mobulid catches as a species of special interest. Observers were asked to conduct extra vigilance on Mobulid catches and report the handling, fate, and condition when the Mobulids were caught and discarded. This enhanced awareness shows the increase in the fate (alive and deceased) figures reported, and the unknown figure was reduced from 75% in 2018 pre CMM to 43% in 2023.

Table A20 Catch of Mobulid Rays 2023

Species	Number Caught	Purse Seine	Longline	Retained	Discarded / Released		
					Alive	Dead	Unknown
Chilean Devil Ray	**7**	**7**	**0**	0		1	6
Giant Manta	**820**	**692**	**128**	1	220	201	398
Manta /Devil Rays nei	**79**	**60**	**19**	1	17	4	57
Mobula	**730**	**664**	**66**	0	323	143	264
Spinetail Mobula	**30**	**0**	**30**	0	11	19	0
Total Catch 2023	**1666**	**1423**	**243**	**2**	**571**	**368**	**725**

Figures as August 10th, 2024.

Table A21 Catch of Mobulid Rays 2012-2023

Year	Total Caught	Purse Seine	Longline	Retained	Discarded / Released		
					Alive	Dead	Unknown
2012	4045	3943	102	81	72	13	3879
2013	3072	2981	91	76	38	16	2942
2014	2844	2723	121	50	74	7	2713
2015	2518	2360	158	9	114	104	2291

2016	3258	3170	88	19	62	33	3144
2017	2482	2390	92	30	190	203	2059
2018	3804	3467	337	25	642	307	2830
2019	4562	4187	375	5	1534	486	2537
2020	1024	907	117	0	245	111	668
2021	328	200	128	1	159	46	122
2022	403	155	248	o	171	90	142
2023	**1666**	**1423**	**243**	**2**	**571**	**368**	**725**
Total2012/2023	**30006**	**27906**	**2100**	**298**	**3872**	**1784**	**24052**

Figures as August 10th, 2024.