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**ANNUAL REPORT TO THE COMMISSION
PART 1: INFORMATION ON FISHERIES, RESEARCH AND STATISTICS**

**WCPFC-SC21-AR/CCM-15
17 July 2025**

NEW CALEDONIA

ANNUAL REPORT TO THE COMMISSION PART 1: INFORMATION ON FISHERIES, RESEARCH AND STATISTICS

NEW CALEDONIA - 2024

Technical report written by the fisheries and natural park of the Coral sea department of the New Caledonian Government

17 July 2025

Scientific data were provided to the Commission in accordance with the decision relating to the provision of scientific data to the Commission on the 30th April 2024	YES
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1. Summary

Tuna and associated species fishing by New Caledonian vessels started in 1981 with pole-and-line (less than 3 vessels) which stopped very quickly (1981: 228 mt; 1982: 998 mt; 1983: 492 mt).

Some domestic longliners started operating at the same time and it took almost 20 years before this domestic fleet had significant activity.

The New Caledonian fleet operates in the New Caledonian EEZ exclusively. In 2024, the New Caledonia government granted 15 licences to longline vessels. All of these licensed domestic longliners were active. Similarly to past years, there were no foreign vessels licensed or chartered to operate within the New Caledonian EEZ.

In 2024, the total catch was higher (+17%) compared to 2023. The annual catches of 2,961 mt were mainly composed of albacore, the main target species of all the vessels, which accounted for 68% of the total catches (2,022 mt) and yellowfin tuna with 25% of the total catch (730 mt). Striped marlin is the main bycatch of the fishery (113 mt; 4% of the total catch).

Catches of sharks have been decreasing since 2006, due to an increasing use of monofilament branch lines and the adoption of a regulation in April 2013 prohibiting the catch, the disturbance and the retention on-board of any shark or ray.

In 2024, observer activities carried out under the New Caledonia Observer Program reached a 9.7% coverage rate of the longline hooks. The aim of this activity is to collect information on all the components of the fishery harvest to be checked with other sources of data and to provide accurate data for stock assessments (biological samples, size composition, estimates of incidental catch).

During all the trips observed in 2024, there were 6 sea birds, 3 sea turtles and 2 marine mammal interactions reported. The incidental catches of shark and ray species were reported by the Observer Program as 737 individuals in 2024 (including 95 rays).

In 2024, port sampling resumed in New Caledonia, carried out by observers from the New Caledonia fisheries Observer Program, in collaboration with local fishing companies.

Finally, almost all observation campaigns were reported using OLLO, the application set up by SPC.

2. Background

Longline fishing was introduced to the Pacific and New Caledonia by the Japanese in the 1930s. After World War II, several fishing bases were established throughout the Pacific and the number of Japanese longliners operating increased to 200 vessels by the 1960s. Until then, the longliners targeted albacore tuna for canneries, but from 1970, the Japanese turned to fishing for tuna closer to the equator, such as yellowfin and bigeye tuna.

From 1978, the year of creation of the Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) of New Caledonia, foreign fishing was subject to the prior signature of bilateral agreements between the fishing countries and France. Successive Franco-Japanese agreements were signed until 2001, by which time Japanese fishing had almost disappeared from the New Caledonian EEZ.

The development of the domestic longline fleet started in 1983 and the early 2000s saw a significant increase in the number of longline vessels. However, from 2003 onwards, the lack of skilled manpower led to an under-utilisation of the vessels and several fishing companies stopped their activity. The number of fishing vessels continued to decrease gradually until 2013 and the fishing fleet is now composed of 15 vessels, owned by 5 local companies.

3. Flag State Reporting

3.1 Fleet and activity

In 2024, 15 licensed domestic longliners belonging to 4 fishing companies were active (**Figure 1** and **Table 2**).

All active vessels in 2024 are less than 200 tons GRT (**Table 1**). These vessels have limited cruising range within the EEZ. The larger longliners nearing 150 tons can stay at sea for two or more weeks. Fishing campaigns last on average 12 days and fishing activity lasts on average 8 days.

280 fishing trips with sets in 2024 were reported, totalling 3,445 days at sea (-15% compared to 2023), 2,239 fishing days (-19% compared to 2023) and 4.8 million hooks (-21% compared to 2023). These data might indicate that the fishing strategy has changed to adapt to current constraints (fuel prices and depredation). The 2024 trend shows fewer trips to the fishing areas but just as many - if not more - fishing days and hooks in order to maximise catches.

As in previous years, no fishing activity by the New Caledonian fleet neither north of the equator, nor south of 30° South was reported.

Table 1: Number of New Caledonia vessels, by gear and size category, active in the WCPFC Convention Area, over 2020-2024

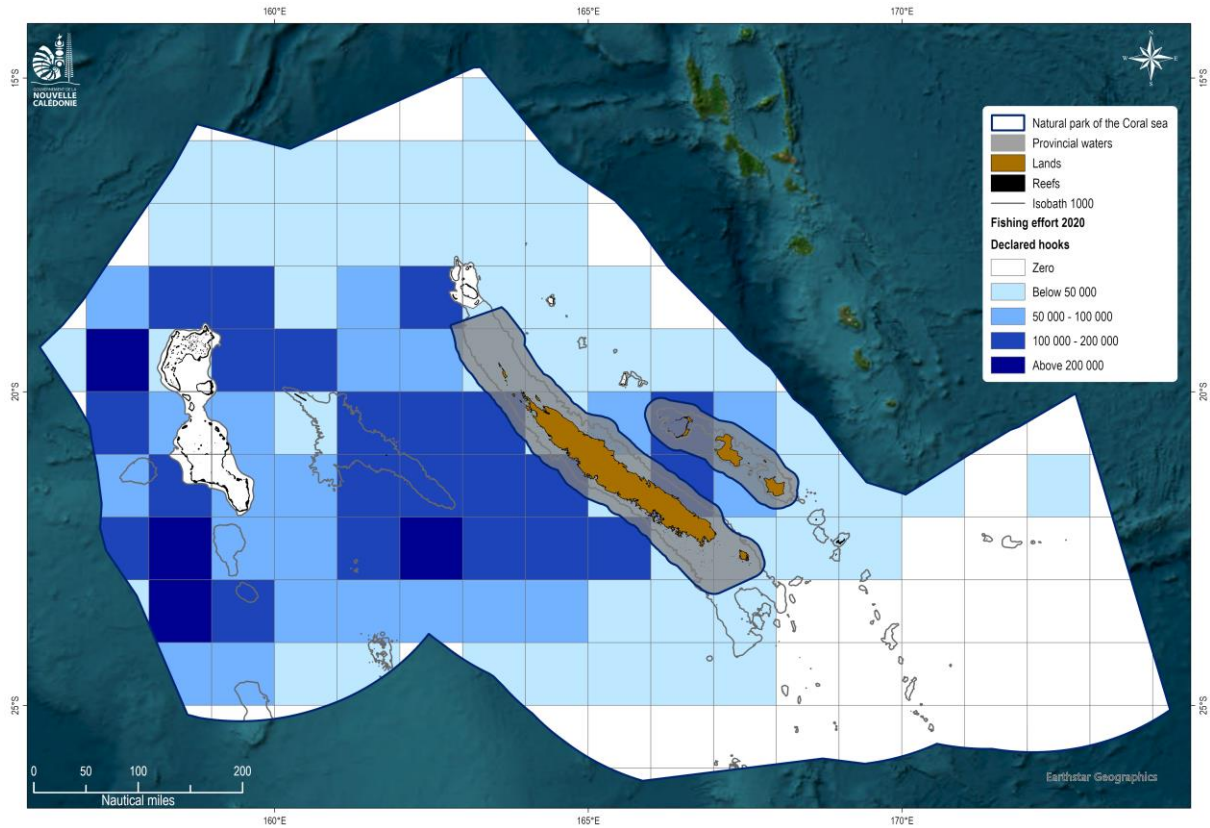
Gear	Size Category (GRT)	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Longline	0 - 50	1	1	1	0	0
	51 - 200	21	17	16	16	15
	201 - 500	0	0	0	0	0
	500+	0	0	0	0	0

3.2 Fishing patterns

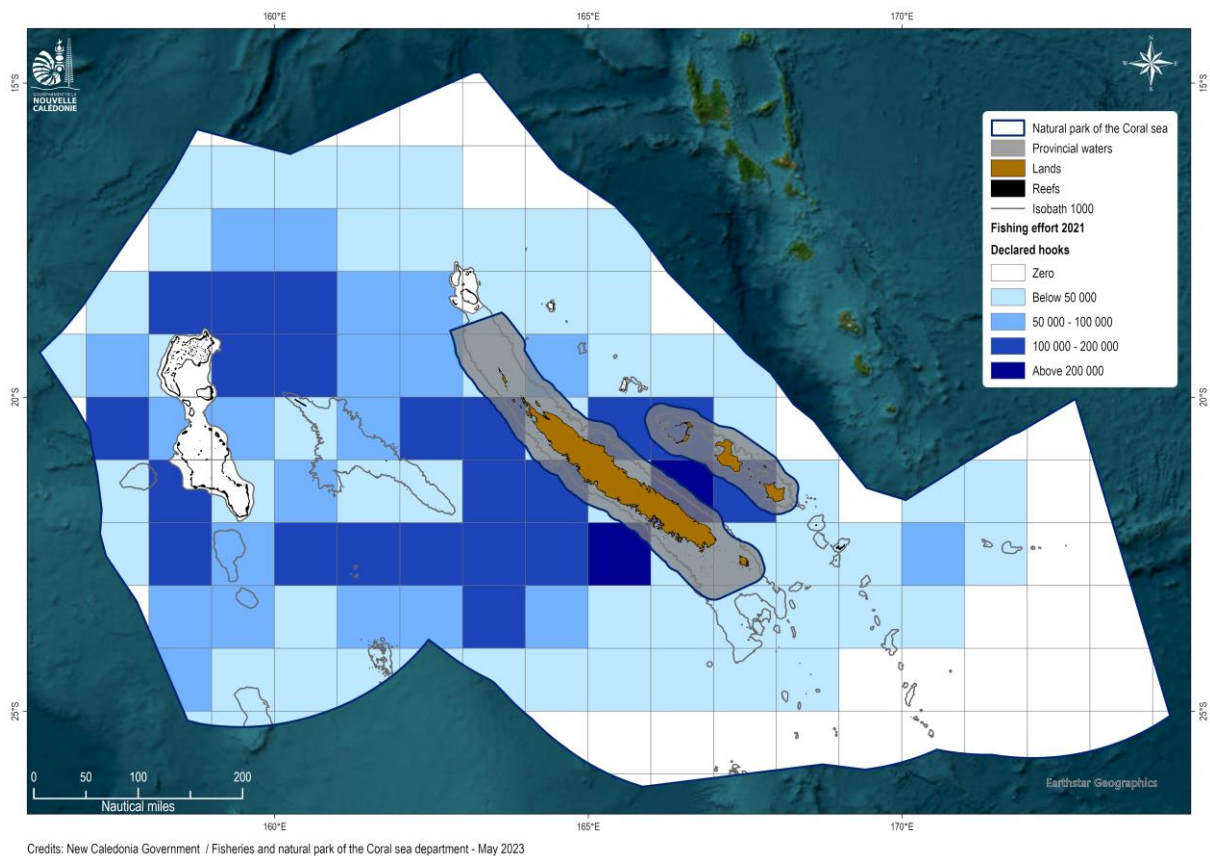
Fishing patterns vary with seasons and catches of targeted species. With catches of albacore tuna declining each year from March to May and from September to November in New Caledonian waters,

fishing companies target yellowfin tuna around the reefs of the EEZ during these months. **Figure 2 (a-e)** below shows the annual fishing effort of domestic longliners in New Caledonia EEZ from 2020 to 2024.

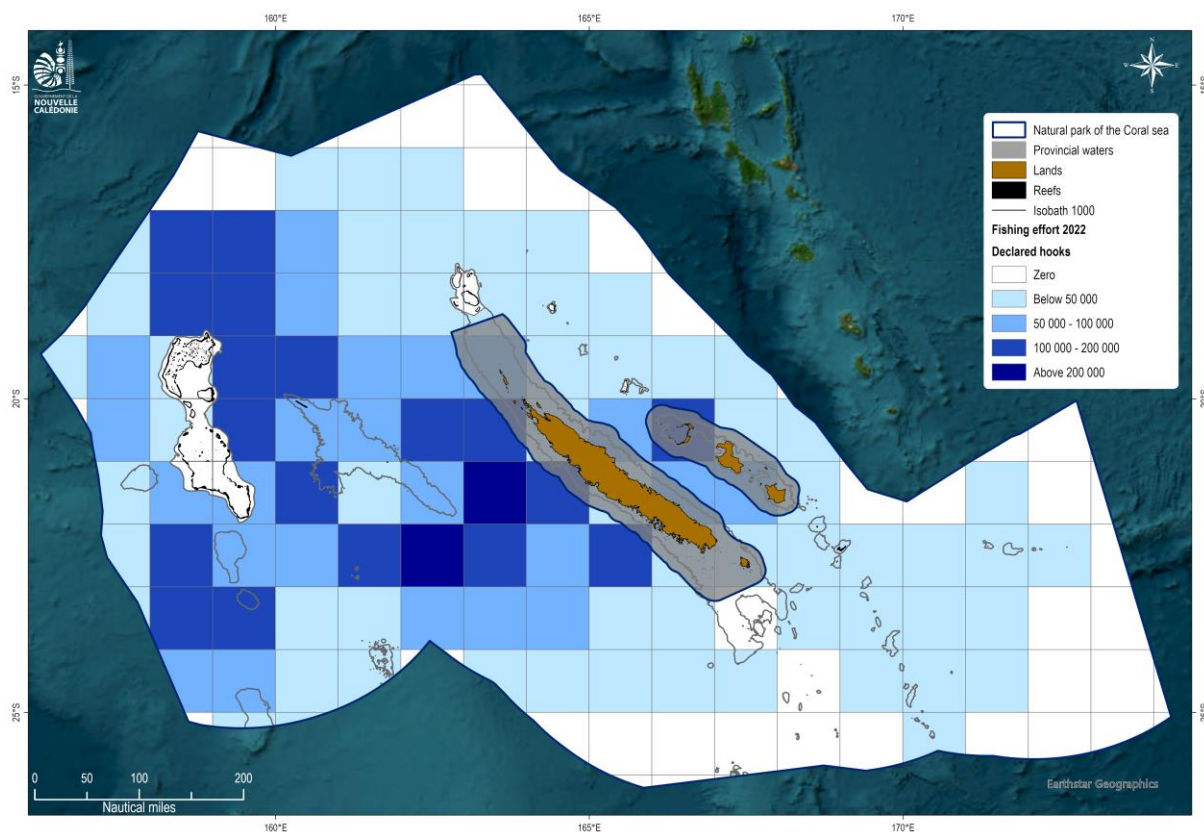
a) 2020



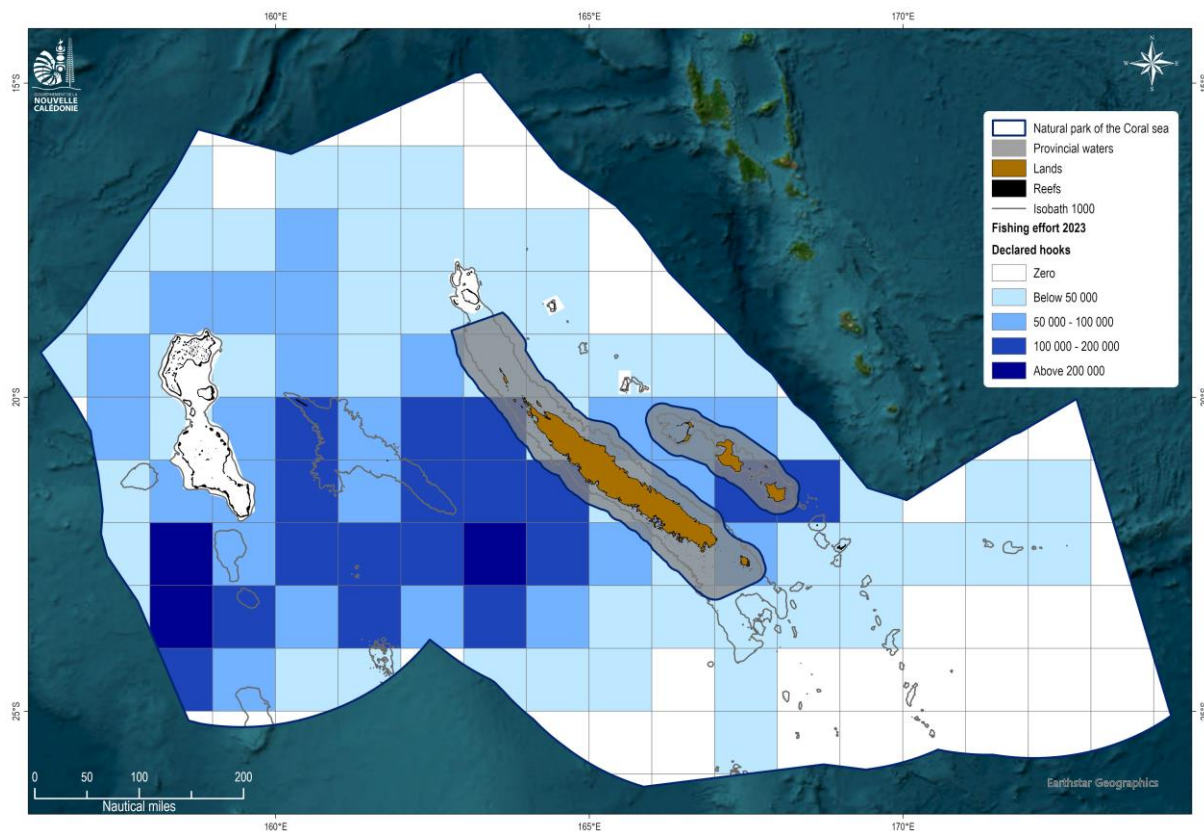
b) 2021



c) 2022



d) 2023



e) 2024

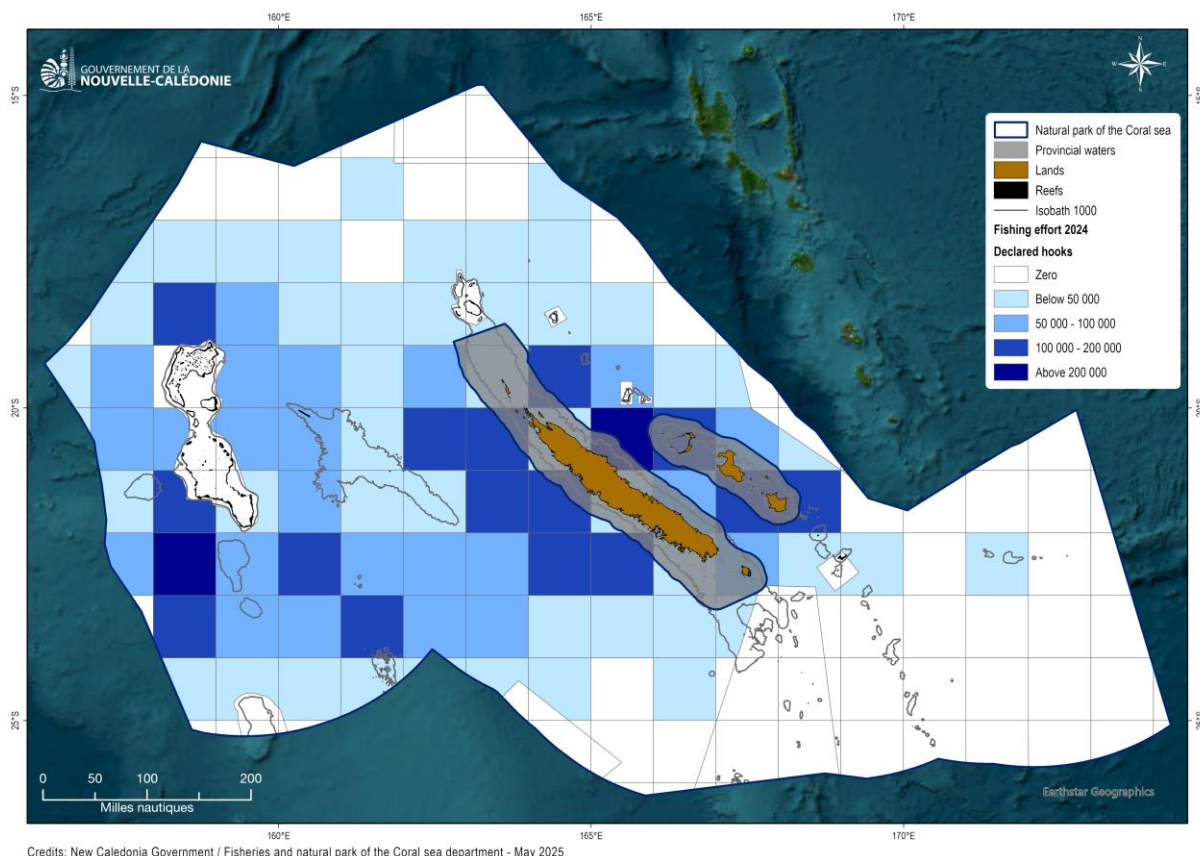


Figure 2 (a-e): Historical annual fishing effort (by hooks), of the New Caledonia longliners from 2020 to 2024. Hooks have been aggregated into 1 degree squares and the colour varies according to the number of hooks deployed.

3.3 Catch statistics

In 2024, the catch level estimate of WCPFC key species is 2,961 mt. The main tuna species estimated catch is 2,802 mt (**Table 2 and Figure 3**).

As the target species of the New Caledonian fishery, the South Pacific albacore and yellowfin tunas are predominant in the catches with respectively 2,022 mt (68%) and 730 mt (25%) in 2024 (**Table 2 and Figure 3**). The average weight of albacore is 18 kg and that of yellowfin tuna is 25 kg, an increase of 2 and 4 kg respectively compared with 2023.

No New Caledonian vessel targets bigeye, marlins or swordfish. Therefore, all reported catches for these species are bycatch. In 2024, 28 mt of bigeye, 113 mt of striped marlin and 10 mt of swordfish were caught (**Table 2 and Figure 3**).

No fishing activity occurred south of 25° South in 2024.

Since the adoption of the regulation for the conservation of sharks in April 2013, which prohibits the catch, the disturbance and the retention of any sharks, all the sharks caught are not boarded and must be released, whatever their condition. In 2024, data from the observer program indicates that out of all the sharks observed, 86.8% were released alive. This regulation was updated in 2025 to also apply to all ray species.

No New Caledonian vessel takes part in transshipment activities in the WCPFC area.

Table 2: Historical annual fishing effort and catch estimates (in metric tons) by species from New Caledonia longliners in the WCPFC area

Fishing effort	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Days fished	2,797	2,754	2,604	2,674	2,239
Hooks	6,056,461	5,917,950	5,624,328	5,873,040	4,839,374

Species	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
ALBACORE	1,897	1,774	2,158	1,858	2,022
BIGEYE TUNA	51	59	67	39	28
BLACK MARLIN	33	35	37	27	27
BLUE MARLIN	10	16	20	14	8
PACIFIC BLUEFIN TUNA	0	0	0	0	0
SKIPJACK TUNA	8	12	92	8	22
STRIPED MARLIN	81	98	132	138	113
SWORDFISH	9	10	13	11	10
YELLOWFIN TUNA	512	624	588	426	730
TOTAL	2,601	2,628	3,107	2,521	2,960

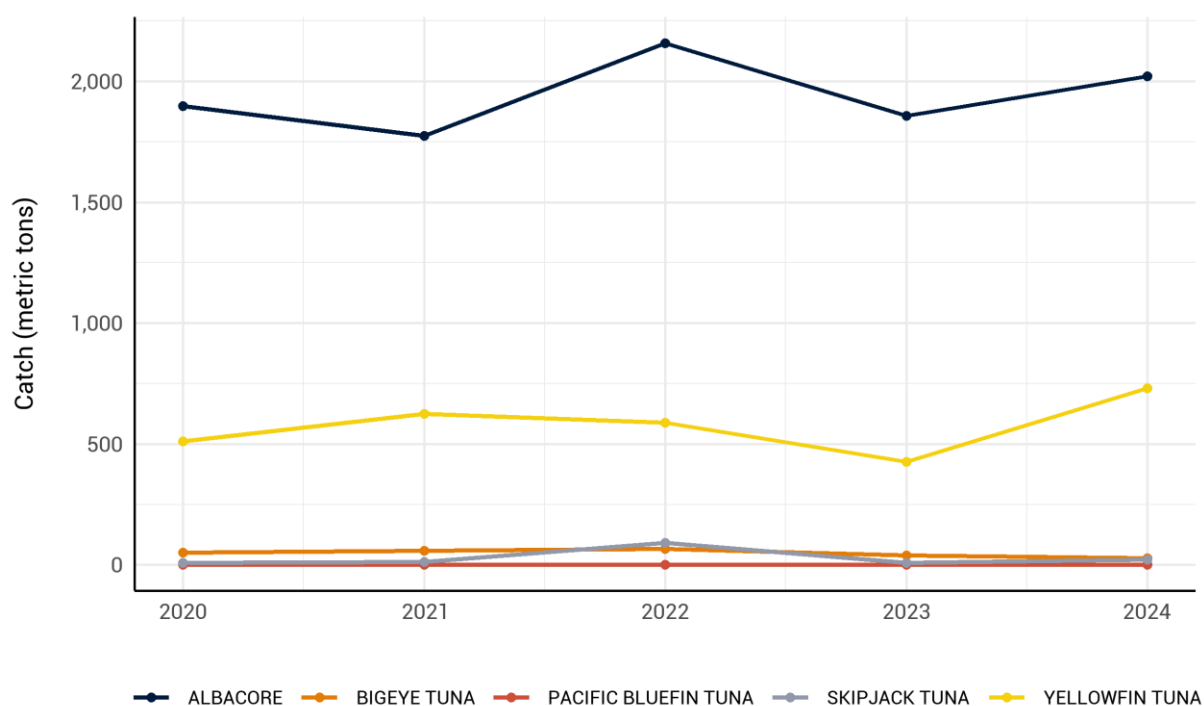


Figure 3a: Historical annual catch of primary tuna species by the New Caledonia longliners in the WCPFC area

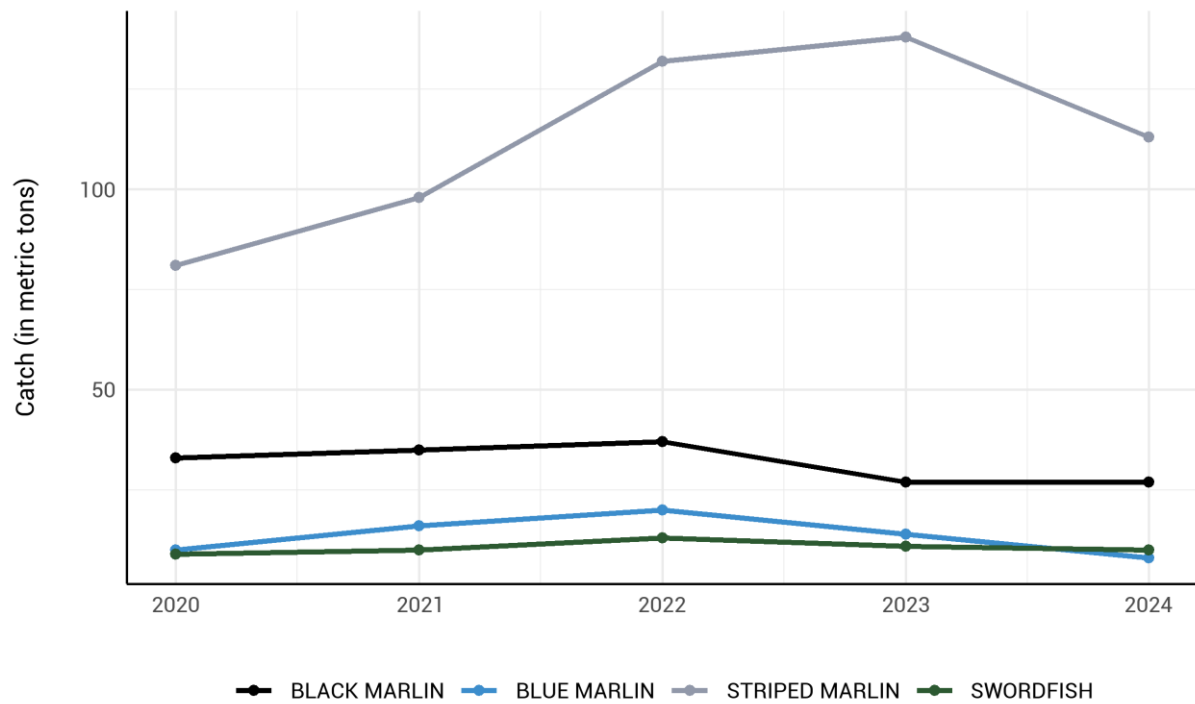
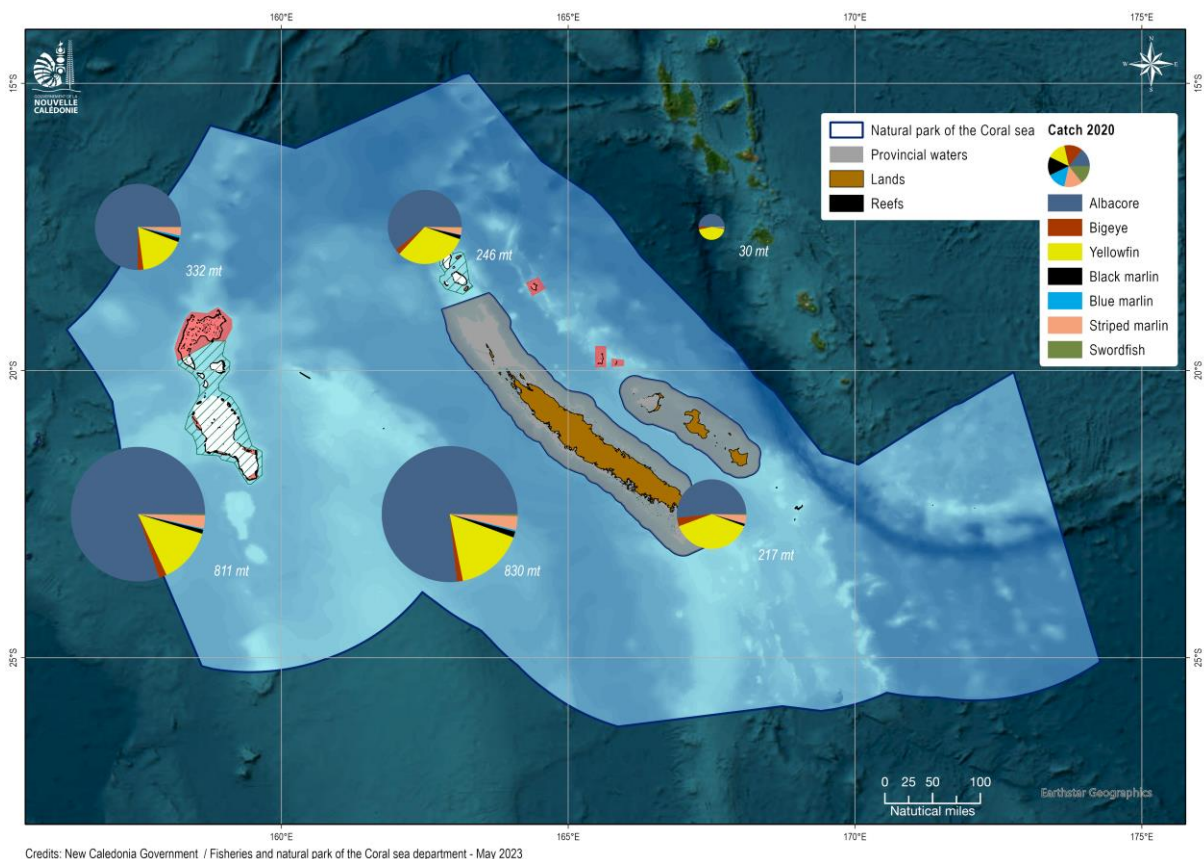


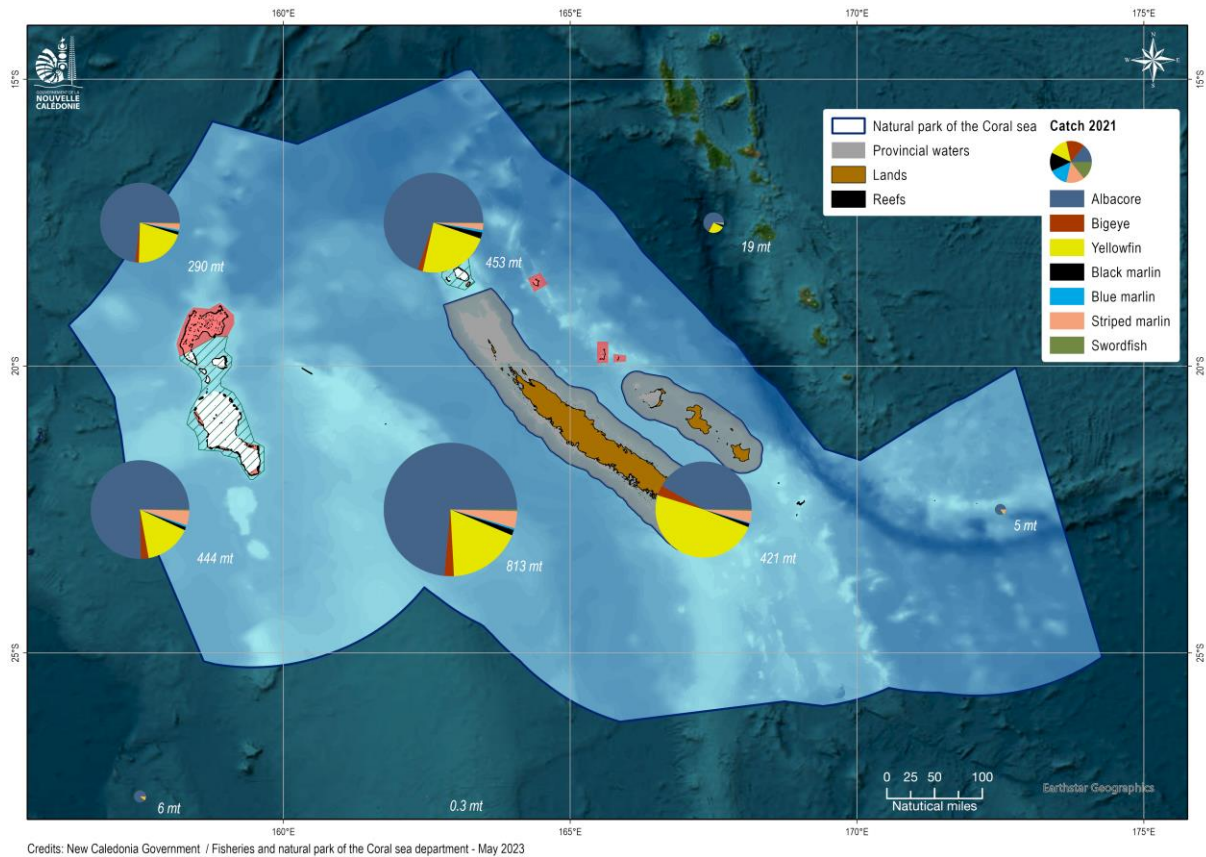
Figure 3b: Historical annual catch of primary billfish species by the New Caledonia longliners in the WCPFC area

Figure 4 (a-e) below shows the annual distribution of primary species caught by the New Caledonian longliners fleet from 2020 to 2024.

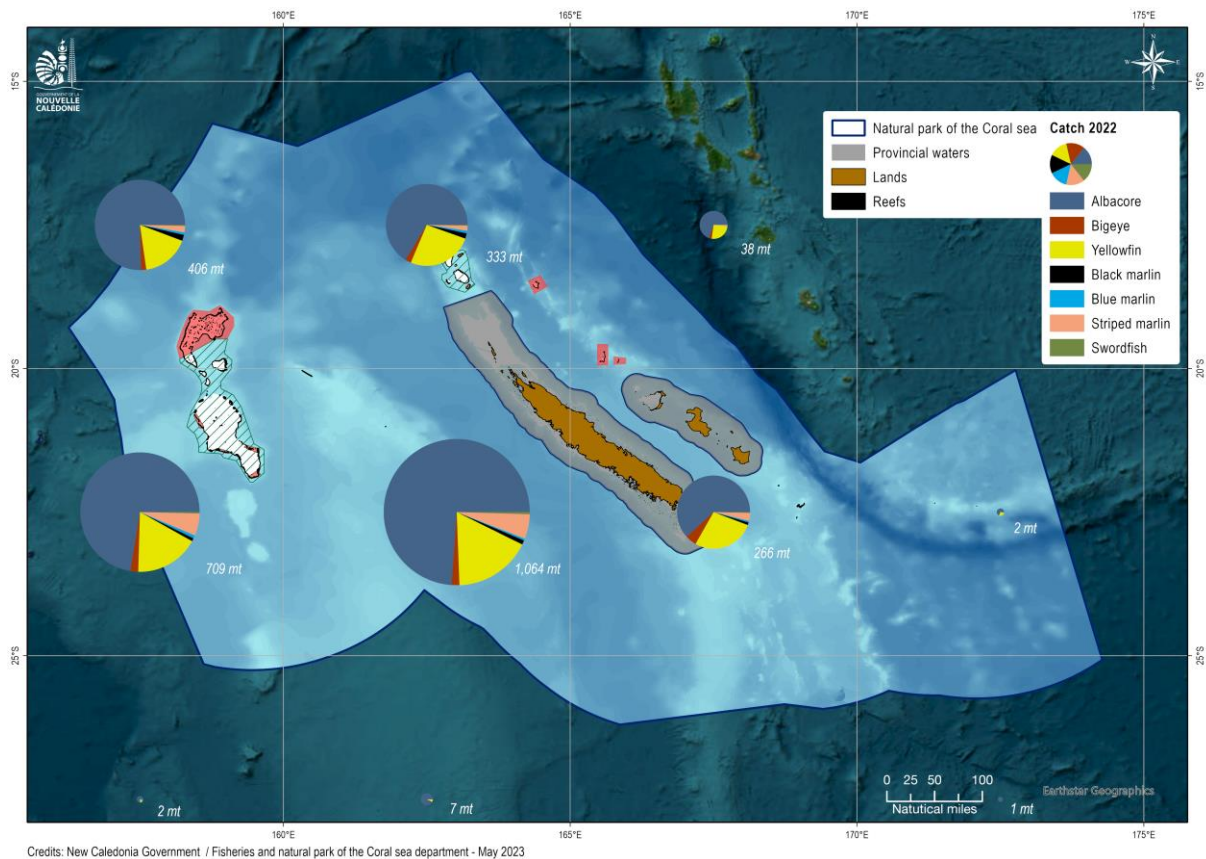
a) 2020



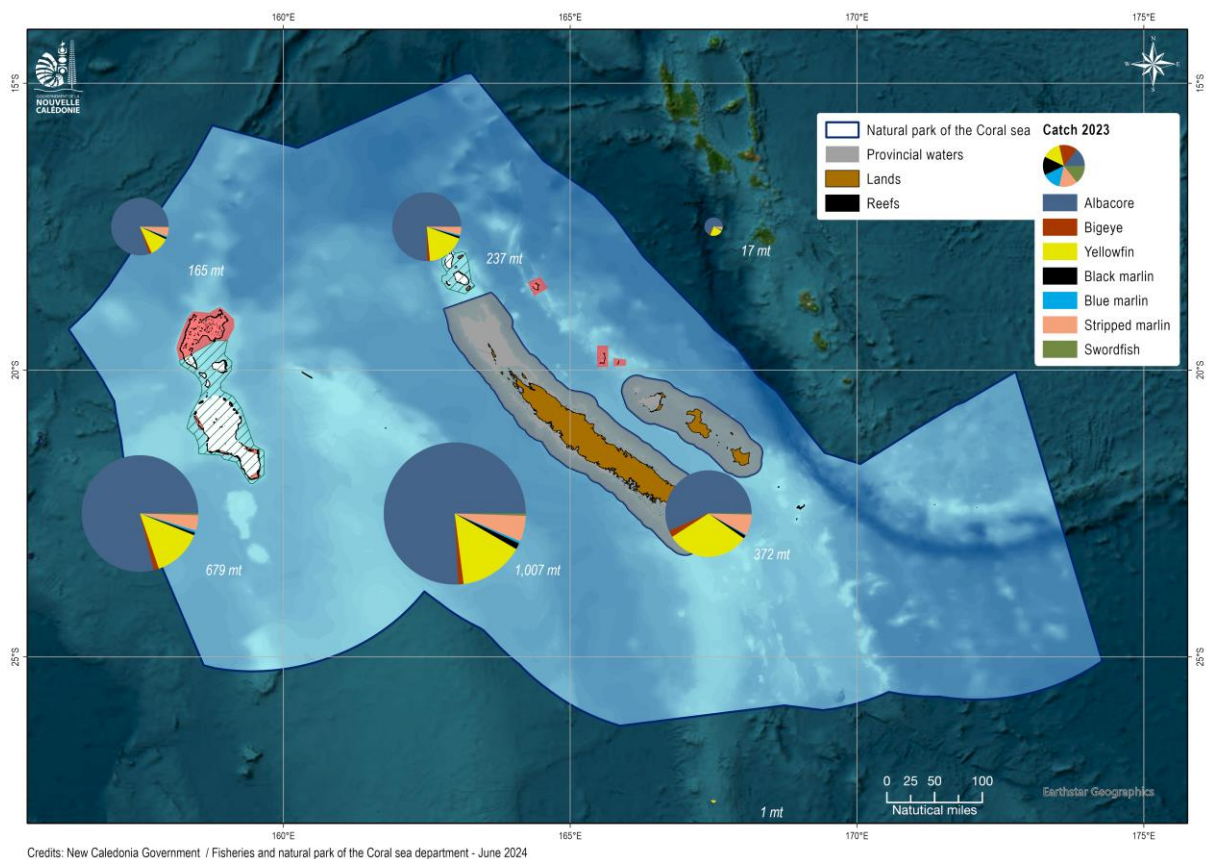
b) 2021



c) 2022



d) 2023



e) 2024

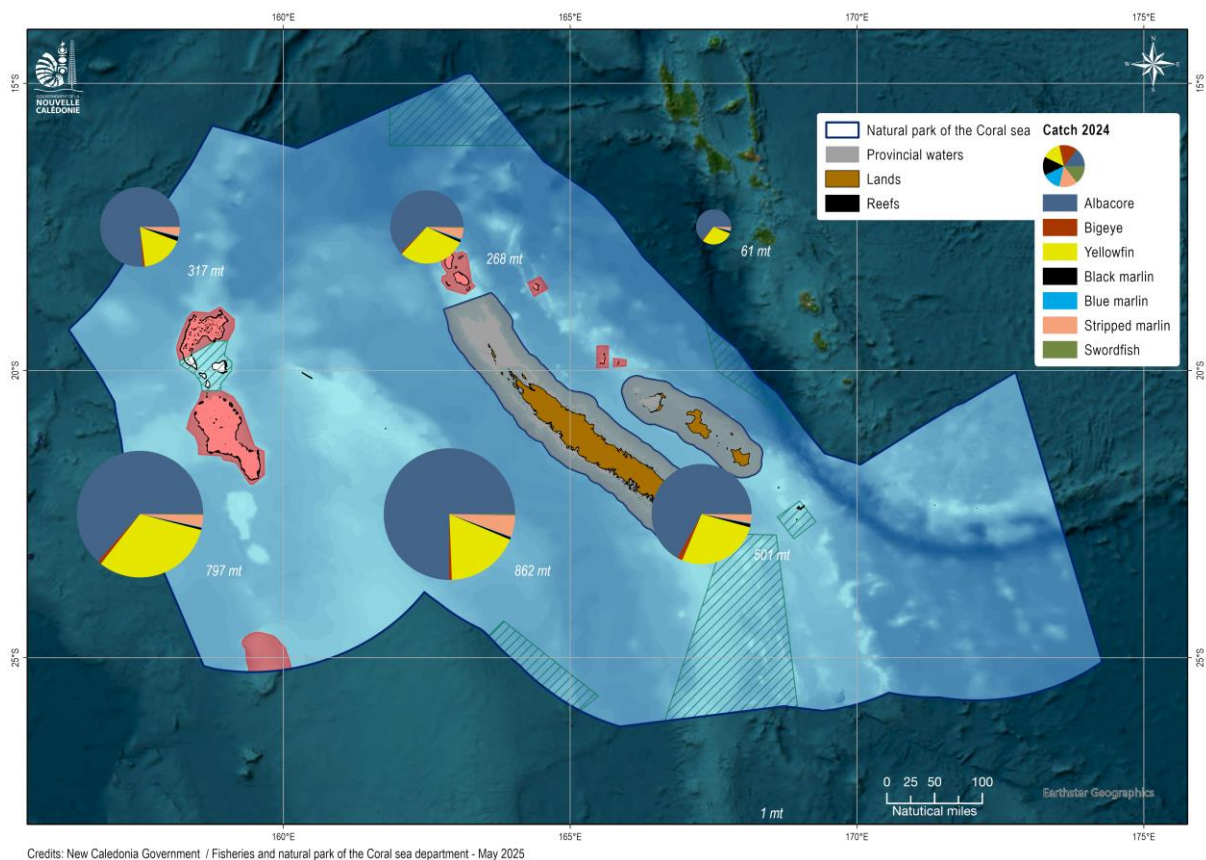


Figure 4 (a-e): Annual distribution of primary species caught by the New Caledonian longliners fleet from 2020 to 2024. The catches are aggregated by 5 degrees squares and the diameter of each pie chart varies according to total tonnage of each square. The green and red areas represent natural reserves and integral reserves, respectively, where fishing is prohibited.

3.4 Species of special interest

Interactions between seabirds, sea turtles, mobulid rays and marine mammals are recorded by observers of the New Caledonia Observer Program (NCOB). In 2024, interactions with the fishing gear were observed for 6 seabirds, 3 sea turtles and 2 marine mammals (**Table 3**). Among the individuals observed, 2 sea turtles were released dead and 1 alive, 4 seabirds were released dead and 2 alive. The 2 marine mammals were released alive (**Figure 5**).

Table 3: Observed annual catches of species of special interest

Year	SEABIRDS	SEA TURTLES	MOBULID RAYS	MARINE MAMMALS	TOTAL
2020	2	2	1	0	5
2021	3	2	0	0	5
2022	4	0	0	2	6
2023	2	2	0	1	5
2024	6	3	0	2	11

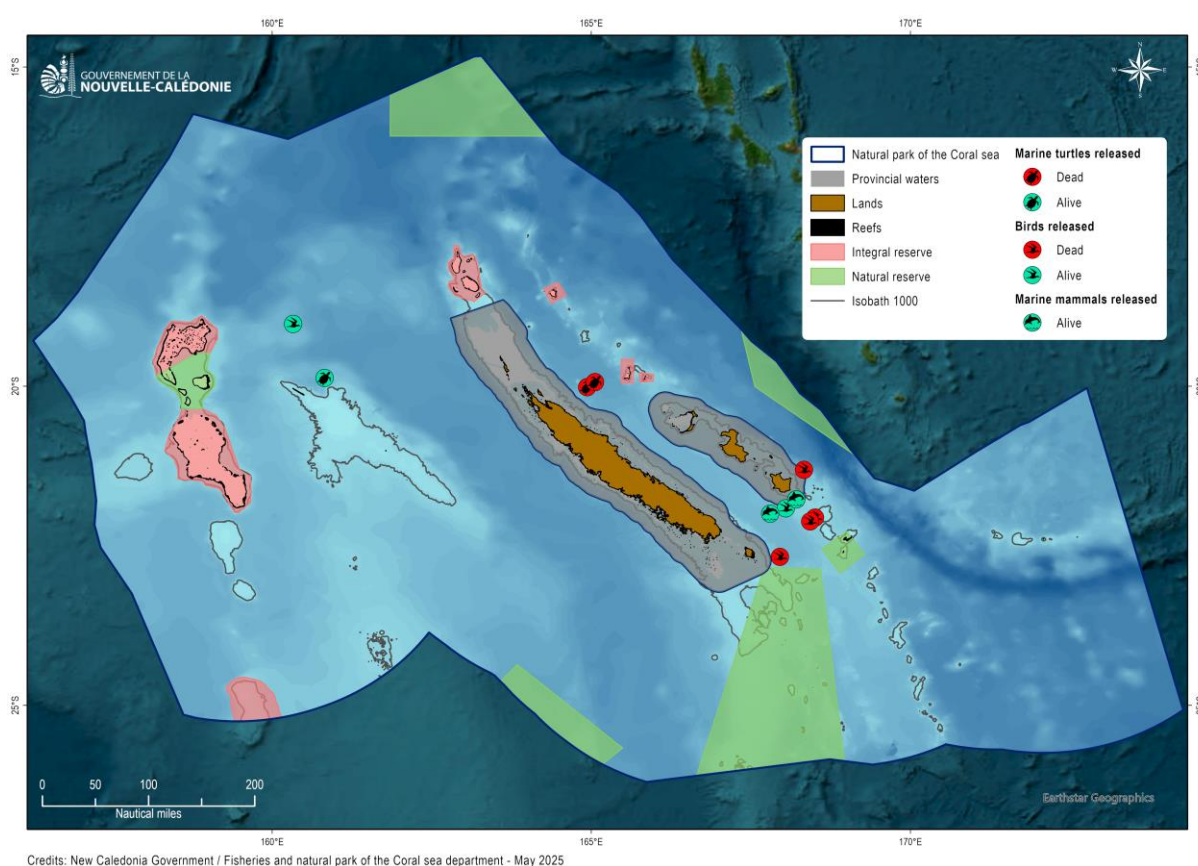


Figure 5: Catches of species of interest observed in 2024 by the New Caledonia Observer Program

3.4.1 Seabirds

Table 4: Historical effort, observed and estimated seabird captures from New Caledonia longliners

Year	Fishing effort				Observed seabird captures 23°N - 30°S	
	Number of active vessels	Total hooks	Observed hooks	% observed hooks	Number of observed birds	Rate (per 100 hooks)
2020	18	6,022,982	437,466	7.3	2	0.0046
2021	18	5,885,350	430,278	7.3	3	0.0070
2022	16	5,600,574	451,934	8.1	4	0.0089
2023	16	5,854,872	516,140	8.8	2	0.0039
2024	15	4,827,041	469,002	9.7	6	0.0133

Table 5: Number of observed seabirds captures in New Caledonia longline fishery in 2024 by species and area

Species	South of 30°S	25°S- 30°S	23°N- 25°S	North of 23°N	TOTAL
BLACK-FOOTED ALBATROSS	0	0	1	0	1
BOOBIES AND GANNETS NEI	0	0	1	0	1
GULLS - TERNS AND SKUAS	0	0	2	0	2
PETRELS AND SHEARWATERS NEI	0	0	2	0	2

Table 6: Historical annual estimated catches of sharks (part of non-target, associated and dependent species) by New Caledonian longliners in the WCPFC area

Discarded Catch Estimates (MT)					
Species	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
BLUE SHARK	187	155	285	346	96
SILKY SHARK	7	5	7	14	6
HAMMERHEAD SHARK	0	1	1	1	3
SHORT FINNED MAKO SHARK	3	8	22	9	4
OCEANIC WHITE-TIP SHARK	9	3	10	22	0
PORBEABLE SHARK	0	0	0	0	0
WHALE SHARK	0	0	0	0	0
THRESHER SHARK	1	0	5	4	1
TOTAL	207	172	330	396	110

3.4.2 Sharks

In 2024, 642 sharks of at least 19 different species (**Table 7**) were observed and 86.8% of them were released alive.

Table 7: Historical annual shark catches observed by New Caledonia observers on longliners

Species	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
BIGEYE THRESHER SHARK	3	1	6	4	7
BIGNOSE SHARK	0	0	4	1	0
BLACKTIP REEF SHARK	0	1	2	0	1
BLACKTIP SHARK	0	0	7	0	0
BLUE SHARK	475	277	594	642	477
BRONZE WHALER SHARK	1	1	10	1	16
BULL SHARK	11	3	1	0	1
CROCODILE SHARK	1	0	1	1	2
GALAPAGOS SHARK	1	0	1	0	6
GREAT HAMMERHEAD	1	0	0	1	0
GREAT WHITE SHARK	0	1	0	0	0
GREY REEF SHARK	1	1	1	1	4
HAMMERHEAD SHARKS NEI	0	0	1	0	0
LONGFIN MAKO	11	16	2	10	6
OCEANIC WHITETIP SHARK	33	11	40	47	13
PELAGIC THRESHER SHARK	7	0	2	5	3
SANDBAR SHARK	2	2	4	6	10
SCALLOPED HAMMERHEAD	0	0	2	1	1
SHORTFIN MAKO	18	26	26	16	27
SILKY SHARK	53	10	75	39	24
SILVERTIP SHARK	0	0	1	0	5
SMOOTH HAMMERHEAD	0	0	0	2	0
THRESHER SHARK (VULPINUS)	1	1	4	6	6
THRESHER SHARKS NEI	0	0	1	0	0
TIGER SHARK	6	5	11	5	10
VARIOUS SHARKS NEI	96	62	2	30	23
WHITETIP REEF SHARK	0	0	2	2	0
TOTAL	721	418	800	820	642

4. Coastal state reporting

Since 2001, no foreign vessel licensed or chartered operates in the New Caledonia EEZ.

5. Socio-economic factors

The latest available economic data for the fishery for highly migratory species is for 2023 (to date, analyses for 2024 have not yet been conducted).

In 2023, the turnover of the fishing sector was around 1.4 billion CFP francs, lower to that of the previous year, due to a decrease in production. In 2024, the expected results should be better thanks to the increase of the production.

6. Disposal of catch

About 80% of pelagic species annual production is destined to the local market. The rest is exported to Europe, Japan and the United States.

Table 8 below details the different market destinations in 2023, according to the last available data.

Table 8: Destination of New Caledonia fishery production in 2023 (last economic data available)

	Tuna			Billfish				Other		
Market	Domestic	Export		Domestic		Export		Domestic		Export
%	85%	15%		91%		6%	3%	99%		1%
Condition	Fresh	Fresh	Frozen	Fresh	Frozen	Fresh	Frozen	Fresh	Frozen	Fresh
%	100%	31%	69%	nd	nd	67%	33%	nd	nd	100%
Metric tonnes	1787	320		132		8	4	104		1

7. Onshore developments

Nothing to report.

8. Prospect of fisheries

New Caledonia adopted a master plan for offshore fishing in 2023, and some of the actions set out in this roadmap are currently being implemented. They will continue over the next few years.

Moreover, the review of the legislative and regulatory framework for offshore fishing began in 2024 and is due to continue in 2025. This work concerns, among other things, the regulatory texts relating to the exploitation of resources, protected species, the allocation of fishing licences and the fisheries observer programme.

9. Status of tuna fishery data collection systems

9.1 Logsheet data collection and verification

As a counterpart to their fishing licences the New Caledonian fishing companies must provide logsheets which are collected by the New Caledonia fisheries authority at the end of each trip. In 2024, the coverage rate of collected logsheets is 100%.

In 2024, 39% of the fishing logsheets were received in electronic format. Indeed, 9 of the 15 vessels have sent at least one electronic logsheet, via the Onboard application developed by SPC.

In accordance with the provision of scientific data to the WCPFC all the logsheets data are made available to the SPC/OFP through the TUFMAN2 software. All the data presented in this report were both extracted from the TUFMAN REPORT system operated by SPC (which contains data from the NC Observer Program and the fishing logsheets) and from the Annual Catch Estimates module developed by SPC and presented during the Tuna Data Workshop carried out in April 2024.

9.2 Observer program

In 2024, 28 fishing trips were observed by 3 observers on-board 14 of the 15 vessels of the fleet (93%), representing 366 days at sea, 216 fishing days, 469,002 hooks and 17,946 specimens observed (Table 9).

The observer activity covered about 9.7% of the fishing activity (in number of hooks).

Table 9: Summary of the longline observer coverage for 2024 in New Caledonia

Year	Hooks			Days fished			Days at sea			Trips		
	Tot.	Obs.	%	Tot.	Obs.	%	Tot.	Obs.	%	Tot.	Obs.	%
2024	4,839,374	469,002	9.7	2,239	216	9.6	3,445	366	10.6	280	28	10

Table 10: Historical estimated annual coverage of operational catch/effort and observer data

Year	Catch/Effort annual coverage	Hooks deployed	Hooks observed	Rate (%)
2020	100	6,056,461	437,466	7.3
2021	100	5,917,950	430,278	7.3
2022	100	5,624,328	451,934	8.1
2023	100	5,873,040	516,140	8.8
2024	100	4,839,374	469,002	9.7

Through collaboration with SPC, the New Caledonia Observer Program continued its on-board biological sampling activities this year.

In 2024, biological samplings were collected during 2 of the 28 observed fishing campaigns. The observers collected 352 samples from 44 fishes: 35 albacore, 8 yellowfin and 1 bigeye.

9.3 Port sampling program

In 2024, New Caledonia Observer Program restored the port sampling program, with the help of SPC funding granted to the fisheries observer program and framed by a letter of agreement (LOA).

The LOA also provides for the collection of biological samples on board vessels, and for the collection of information on fishery products from New Caledonian vessels.

9.4 Unloading/Transshipment

Nothing to report.

10. Research activities

By Valerie Allain from SPC - July 2025

Biological sampling at port

In addition to the work conducted by the observers from New Caledonia authorities, SPC is also conducting biological sampling at Noumea port and at sea in collaboration with the fishing companies to contribute to the Pacific Marine Specimen Bank.

An LOA has been signed between SPC and ADECAL to continue the biological sampling activity at sea and at port and for the sampling to be coordinated by the observer program with the fishing companies. Samples are collected at sea by crew members then subsequently sampled at port by the port samplers and SPC staff (when necessary). A meeting with the industry and ADECAL was organised in February 2025 to explain the sampling projects and seek collaboration with the local fishing industry.

In 2024, a total of 2565 fish were sampled for gonads, liver, muscle, spine, otoliths and stomachs gathering a total of 4809 tissue samples (Table 1). Albacore and yellowfin were the main species sampled. The increase of muscle tissues (and specimens) sampled compared to previous years is linked to the development of the Close-Kin Mark Recapture project.

Table : Number of specimens sampled, and number of tissue samples collected in 2024 by SPC at Noumea port and by fishermen onboard vessel (excluding sampling by observers); note that several muscle and gonad samples can be collected on one specimen explaining there are more gonads or muscles than specimens.

Species	Nb Specimens	Nb Blood	Nb Gonads	Nb Livers	Nb Muscles	Nb Otoliths	Nb Spines	Nb Stomachs
Blue marlin BUM	6	6	6	6	9	0	10	6
Albacore ALB	2,333	55	459	357	2,518	295	65	358
Bigeye BET	3	1	1	1	4	1	0	1
Yellowfin YFT	223	32	91	91	285	60	0	91
Total	2,565	94	557	455	2,816	356	75	456

Albacore connectivity project

Based on preliminary results from a study reported in 2024 to test for population structure in South Pacific albacore between New Caledonia and French Polynesia, a second round of analyses has been designed to provide more and more detailed map of structure across the WCPO. The new analyses will co-analyses the original study's New Caledonian samples with roughly 1200 other samples from across the region. Sequencing for this new study is complete, and new results are expected to be presented to SC21 in 2025.

Close-Kin Mark Recapture (CKMR)

Close-Kin Mark-Recapture takes advantage of modern genotyping methods to identify pairs of close relatives (e.g. parent-offspring, half-brother/sister) among large collections of tissue samples (i.e. biopsies). The number of kin-pairs found, and the way they are distributed in space and time, can be embedded into a population dynamics model and used to estimate important demographic parameters such as absolute adult abundance, mortality rates, and connectivity. The application of CKMR methods to WCPFC stocks aims to reduce the uncertainty in stock assessments.

The CKMR assessment of South Pacific albacore began in 2022 (first samples collected in 2023) and started in New Caledonia in July 2024 focusing first on albacore, but also opportunistically collecting YFT and BET. Of 25,057 albacore samples collected for CKMR in 2024, 1991 were collected in New Caledonia. It is expected that the project will be reviewed at SC21 to determine if the South Pacific albacore assessment is continued, and if additional species will be pursued with this type of assessment.

Exploring tuna feeding behaviour

One scientific paper was published by SPC and collaborators on tuna feeding behavior using stomach content data from the Pacific Marine Specimen Bank and including samples from New Caledonia. Based on more than 8000 stomach contents of skipjack, yellowfin and bigeye in the western and central Pacific, statistical models demonstrated that tuna with empty stomachs were more likely to be caught by purse seine and earlier in the day. Skipjack and bigeye tuna were likely to have empty stomachs when association with FADs (Machful et al, 2024).

Stranded FADs record and retrieval

Even though no purse seine activity is conducted in New Caledonia waters, the presence of Fish Aggregating Devices has been observed in the waters of New Caledonia, as well as stranded on the coast. New Caledonia contributes to the initiative developed by Pacific Island Countries and Territories (PICTs) and in collaboration with the Pacific Community, local organisations, and/or Non-Governmental Organisations, to collect data on lost/abandoned Fish Aggregating Devices (FADs) reaching coastal waters and/or becoming stranded, as well as the potential impacts of these events on coastal environments. The data collected feeds a regional database which has four objectives defined: (i) quantify and characterize stranding events using data collected directly in-situ; ii) evaluate number of entanglements and area of habitat impacted; (iii) assess the design and materials of FADs found stranded; (iv) highlight any origins areas of FADs found stranded in relation to areas of deployment and owner fleets. Eleven new data were collected in 2024.

Publications 2024

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ADDENDUM TO ANNUAL REPORT

PART 1

SECTION A: SPECIFIC INFORMATION TO BE PROVIDED IN ANNUAL REPORT PART 1 AS REQUIRED BY CMMS AND OTHER DECISIONS OF THE COMMISSION

CMM 2009-03 [Swordfish], Para 8

No vessel targeted swordfish south of 20°S in 2024. However, catch reported on logsheets is 10 mt for 15 vessels.

Observer coverage (WCPFC 11 decision – para 484(b))

Observer coverage is 9.7% (number of hooks) in 2024.

Year	CMM fleet	Fishery	Number of hooks		
			Total	Observed	Rate (%)
2024	New Caledonia	Domestic (longline)	4,839,374	469,002	9.7

CMM 2009-06 [Transshipment], Para 11 (ANNEX II)

No NC flagged vessel transhipped in 2024.

CMM 2011-03 [Impact of PS fishing on cetaceans], Para 5

New-Caledonia has no flagged purse seine vessels.

CMM 2018-03 Seabirds Para 13

Fishing activities only take place within the EEZ of New-Caledonia, there is no regulatory mitigation measure in New-Caledonia. Of the 6 birds accidentally caught and observed in 2024 in the NC-EEZ 4 were released dead and 2 alive. The details are available in the Annual Report Part 1 (**Table 4** and **Table 5**).

SECTION B: ADDITIONAL ANNUAL REPORTING REQUIREMENTS THAT COULD BE INCLUDED IN ANNUAL REPORT PART 1, IF NOT OTHERWISE REPORTED ANNUALLY TO WCPFC

CMM 2006-04 [South West striped Marlin], Para 4

No vessel targeted striped marlin south of 15°S in 2024. However, the catch reported on logsheets is 113 mt for 15 vessels.

CMM 2015-02 [South Pacific Albacore] Para 4

Addressed through the regular provision of operational catch/effort logsheet data to SPC, which automatically include these data in the WCPFC databases, as per our authorization.

CMM 2019-03 [North Pacific Albacore], Para 3

New Caledonia has no fishing activity north of the equator.

CMM 2022-02 [North Pacific Swordfish], para 4

New Caledonia has no fishing activity north of the equator.