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Tongan fisherman catches huge tuna 13 years after it was tagged

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By Radio New Zealand

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A large Pacific tuna has been re-captured 13 years after it was tagged by a fisherman, in almost the same spot it was tagged.

The 100-kilogram bigeye tuna was caught 1000 kilometres east of Fiji, by fisherman Samuela Ratini, a crew member of a Taiwanese vessel.

Fish have been tagged for research since the 1970s, but the Secretariat of the Pacific Community has increased the programme since 2006 and has tagged close to 400,000 fish.

Bruno Leroy, a fisheries scientist with SPC, says trained teams catch and release thousands of tuna after fitting them with a numbered plastic tag and recording its species, size, condition, tagging date and location.

He says it's interesting that the fish was so close to the place it was tagged in 2000.

"Of course we don't know where it's been during all this time, but this is suggesting that this particular species present may be a kind of homing behaviour, coming back regularly or time to time to the same grounds."

Bruno Leroy.

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