

PACIFIC POSTCARD: Discarded fish from large fishing boats are often sold as byproduct in the markets of Honiara, Solomon Islands.

CAUGHT IN THE ACT

Fishing is all about targeting certain profitable species such as tuna and trying to catch as many as possible within the specified management limits. But when fishing, some other species are caught as well which are not sold – this is known as 'bycatch'. Bycatch is often thrown back to sea (in other cases, particularly with juvenile tuna that cannot be traded, it might end up in local markets, this is known as 'byproduct').

In the Pacific Islands region, there are concerns about bycatch of sharks and turtles. Observer reports indicate dolphin

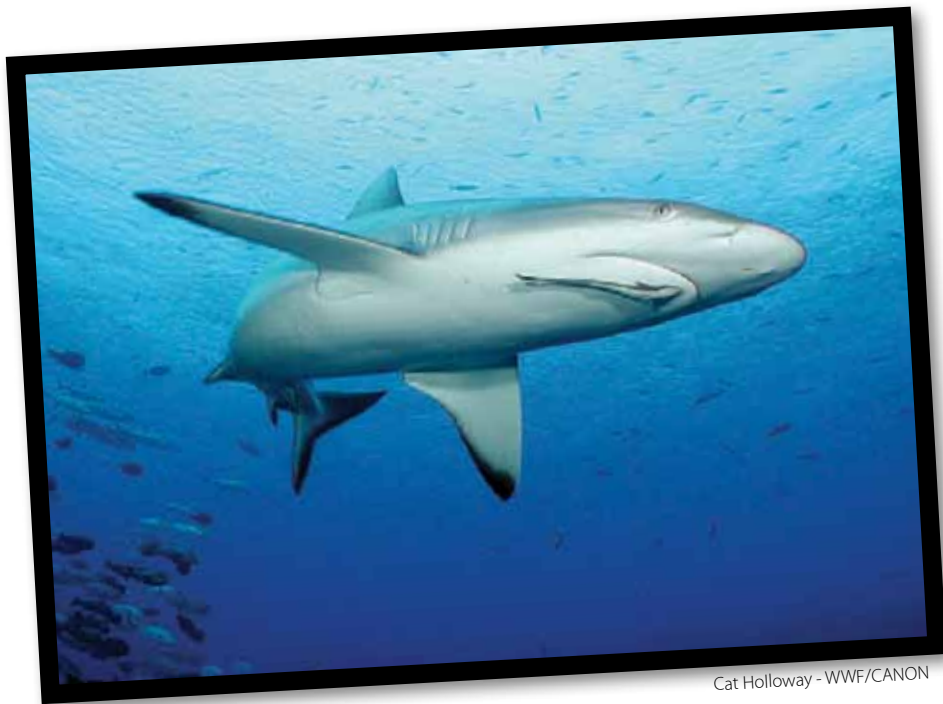
catch is extremely rare in the Western and Central Pacific Ocean so all tuna from the Pacific Islands is 'dolphin safe'. Seabirds are also not caught in the Pacific Islands region (instead their range is lower than 20° South and higher than 20° North).

Catch of juvenile tuna has also been a concern for the sustainability of tuna stocks – particularly for the large and relatively slow growing bigeye tuna, which scientists say is overfished in part because a lot of juvenile tuna are caught during purse seine fishing mainly for skipjack, and also yellowfin tuna.



BONUS SCORES

When fishing for tuna, sometimes fishers catch '**bonus scores**' – for example, when longline fishing sometimes marlin, swordfish (and others including mahi mahi, wahoo, opah) are caught which, like the tuna, can be sold or exported. These are known as 'non-target species' and their catch needs to be considered when looking at the impact of tuna fishing on other fish stocks.



Cat Holloway - WWF/CANON

these methods to avoid capturing sea turtles: 1) large circle hooks (which are easier to remove from turtles) 2) use whole finfish for bait (less appealing to turtles) 3) carry and use dip nets to rescue turtles. (Alternatively, countries can make other measures to avoid catching turtles and get WCPFC to approve it).

Sharks: tuna fishers are encouraged to take measures to release live sharks that are caught incidentally and are not used for food or other purposes. Shark catch must now be reported. But the most significant rule is that if fishing vessels have on board shark fins, then the fins must total no more than 5% of the weight of sharks on board. This is to discourage finning of sharks and throwing the carcass back to sea.

Seabirds: rules on seabirds are based on the *International Plan of Action for Reducing Incidental Catches of Seabirds in Longline Fisheries (IPOA-Seabirds)*. Longline vessels are asked to take at least two actions to reduce catch of seabirds such as methods and fishing gear to make lines sink quickly and discharging offal in a way that does not attract seabirds.

Driftnets: use of large scale driftnets is prohibited by WCPFC. This move follows on from the Wellington Convention, passed by FFA members, which outlawed driftnets in the Pacific Islands region in 1989.

BYCATCH RULES

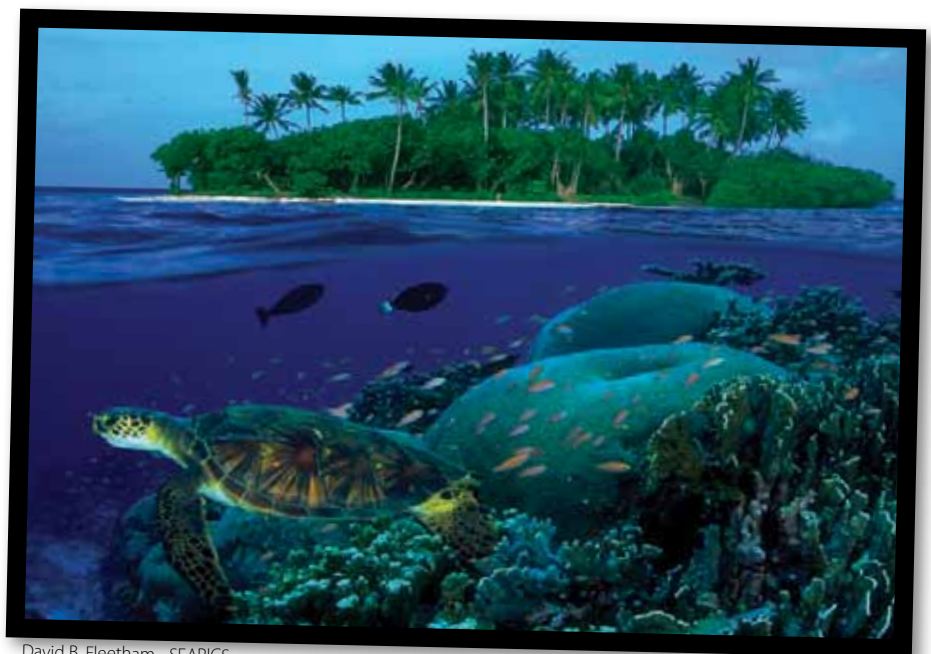
Bycatch rules: The Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission (WCPFC) is the regional decision making body for management of tuna fishing in the Western and Central Pacific Ocean. Conservation and Management Measures (CMMs) of the Commission are legally binding and apply to all WCPFC members and the Convention area.

WCPFC's current members include Australia, China, Canada, Cook Islands, European Community, Federated States of Micronesia, Fiji, France, Japan, Kiribati, Korea, Republic of Marshall Islands, Nauru, New Zealand, Niue, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Philippines, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Chinese Taipei, Tonga, Tuvalu, United States of America and Vanuatu. Out of a total of 32 participating territories and members of WCPFC, over half (17) are FFA members, forming a significant voting bloc (although so far in the WCPFC's history decisions have been made by consensus).

Conservation and Management Measures on bycatch include these requirements:

Sea Turtles: members must implement the *FAO Guidelines to Reduce Sea Turtle Mortality in Fishing*

Operations. Purse seine fishing vessels are instructed to take practicable steps to avoid encirclement of turtles when fishing and release turtles caught in fishing gear, to stop the net if turtles are observed inside it and to carry dip nets on board to fish out turtles and release them back to sea. Longline fishing vessels, fishing for swordfish are instructed to carry and use line cutters and de-hookers to handle and promptly release sea turtles caught or entangled. These fishers are also required to use one of



David B. Fleetham - SEAPICS