



Introduction to the THUNNUS UK project

David Righton & Matthew Witt



Rationale



- Increased sightings of bluefin tuna in UK waters, increased frequency of bycatch and in recreational fisheries
- UK has no quota for ABFT and is committed to conservation goals for ABFT
- Trends in abundance and assessment of ABFT/ fisheries interactions is needed, but knowledge of residency, stock identity and behaviour is limited...most existing data are from tuna tagged elsewhere.

Funding



Marine
Management
Organisation



Department
for Environment
Food & Rural Affairs



Defra and EMFF are providing funding between 2018 and 2020 to support the THUNNUS UK project to develop more understanding of tuna in UK waters



Team

- University of Exeter, led by **Witt**
Worked on large-marine vertebrate conservation since 2007 using satellite tracking, regional expertise
- Cefas, led by **Righton**
Operated large scale tagging programmes since 1995, including one of the first ever ABFT satellite tagging projects (TUNASAT, 1999). Working in SW on elasmobranch migrations/ bycatch since 2009
- Collaborators: **Block Lab** (Stanford, US), **Aarestrup** (DTU, Denmark), **Ferter** (IMR, Norway), **Marine Institute** (Ireland)
- Stakeholders (**you!**)

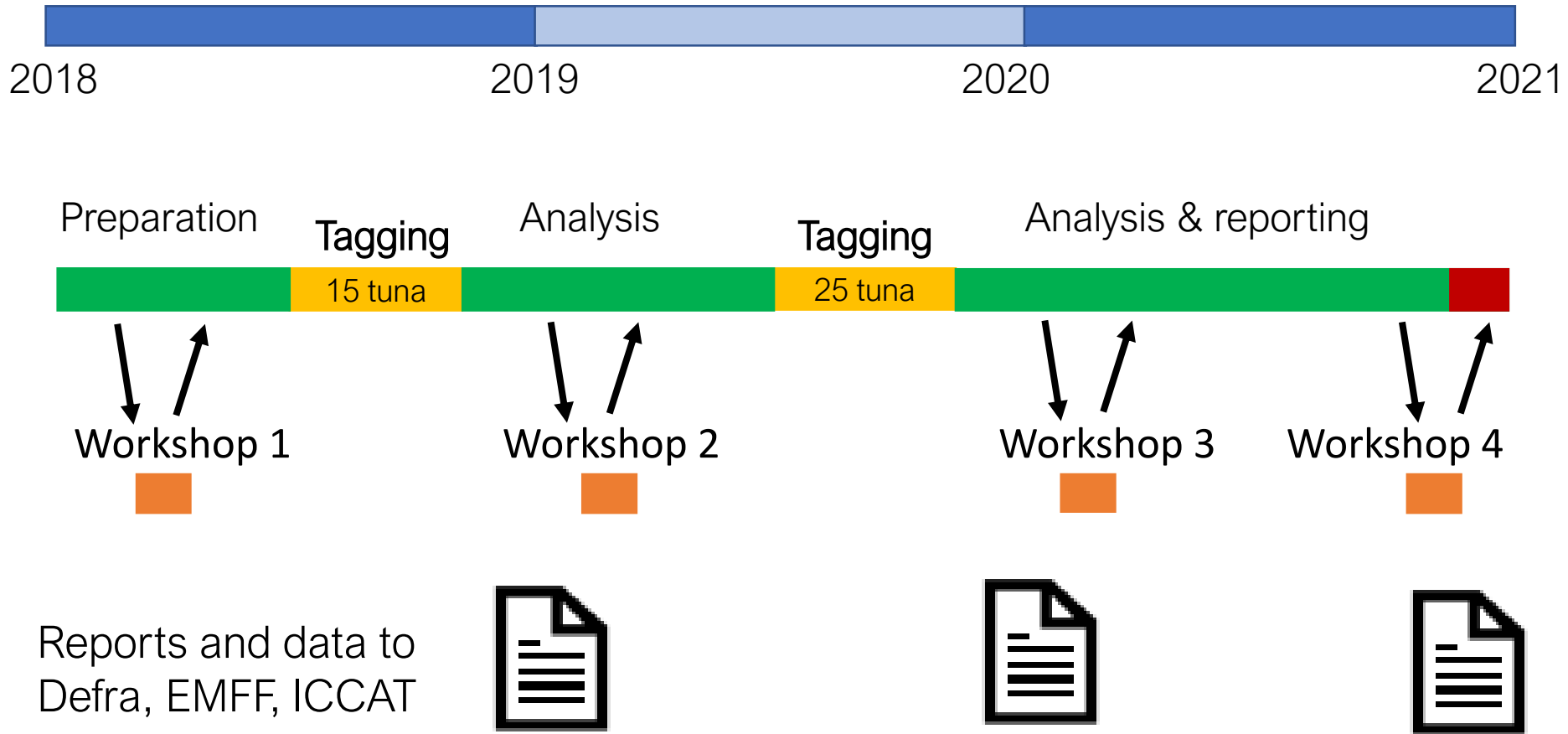


Objectives

- **Compile existing data**
 - Scientific surveys
 - Reported landings
 - Sightings (direct reports/ from social media)
 - Input from stakeholders
- **Scientific tagging programme**
 - Two tagging seasons (2018 & 2019), stakeholder involvement
 - ~40 PSAT tags will be deployed to track movements and behaviour
- **Fisheries interactions**
 - Overlap between fishing activity and tuna movements
 - Information provided to stakeholders, Defra/ MMO



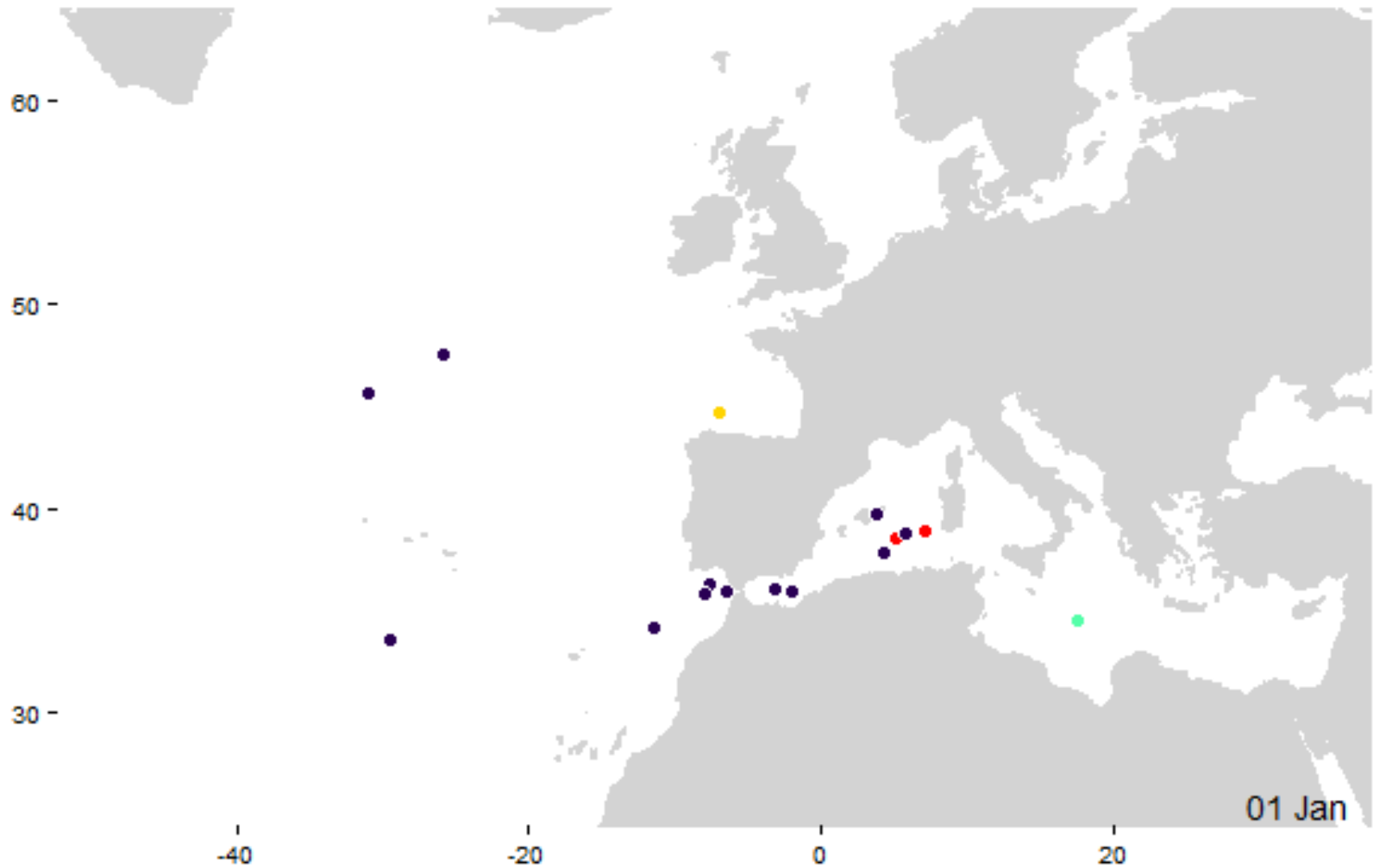
Timeline





- Record data on light, depth and temperature
- Tags detach from fish on pre-determined day and send data via ARGOS satellite system
- Data are used to reconstruct migrations in fine detail, linked to use of water column and prey data collected on scientific surveys
- High reporting rate (90%), high quality data; the most cost-effective method for collecting exploratory data

ICCAT tagging 2011-2017 (n=120)





Tagging programme

- Tagging will be undertaken by UoE & Cefas staff
- Tuna caught on rod & line, using protocol developed by Stanford & modified to suit local conditions. **UK Home Office regulated**
- Charter requirements for tagging vessel/s will be set by protocol, advertised in May/June
- We want to engage with as many stakeholders as possible
- How to maximise opportunities to tag tuna?



How can I get involved?

- Being here tonight
- Tagging programme as vessel owner or fisher
- Sharing knowledge of bluefin tuna handling and bycatch minimisation
- Contribution of observations, sightings or historic data (catch records, logbooks)
- Keeping abreast of progress on project blog, website & Twitter

Time for some questions!

