



A Summary of the IOTC Regional Observer Programme During 2025

Indian Ocean Tuna
Commission

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Acronyms

Acronym	Description
ATF	Authorisation to Fish
CCSBT	Commission for the Conservation of Southern Bluefin Tuna
CDS	Catch Documentation Scheme
CMF	Catch Monitoring Form
CV	Carrier Vessel
EEZ	Exclusive Economic Zone
TD	Transshipment Declaration
ICCAT	International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas
IOTC	Indian Ocean Tuna Commission
IRCS	International Radio Call Sign
LSTLV	Large Scale Tuna Longline Fishing Vessel
NRN	National Registration Number
RAV	Record of Authorised Vessels
ROP	Regional Observer Programme
VMS	Vessel Monitoring System

1 Introduction

During the calendar year 2025, the Regional Observer Programme (ROP) monitored a total of 1,536 transshipments from Large Scale Tuna Longline Fishing Vessels (LSTLVs) within the Indian Ocean Tuna Commission’s (IOTC) Area of Competence.

Table 1 No. of transshipments and deployments from the last 5 years

Year	Number of Deployments	Number of Transshipments	Average Deployment Days
2021	60	1,531	70.35
2022	51	1,677	61.96
2023	46	1,599	56.57
2024	66	1,499	42.92
2025	46	1,536	50.02

The distribution of transshipments by LSTLV fleets during 2025 was similar to previous years; as shown in Figure 1 below.

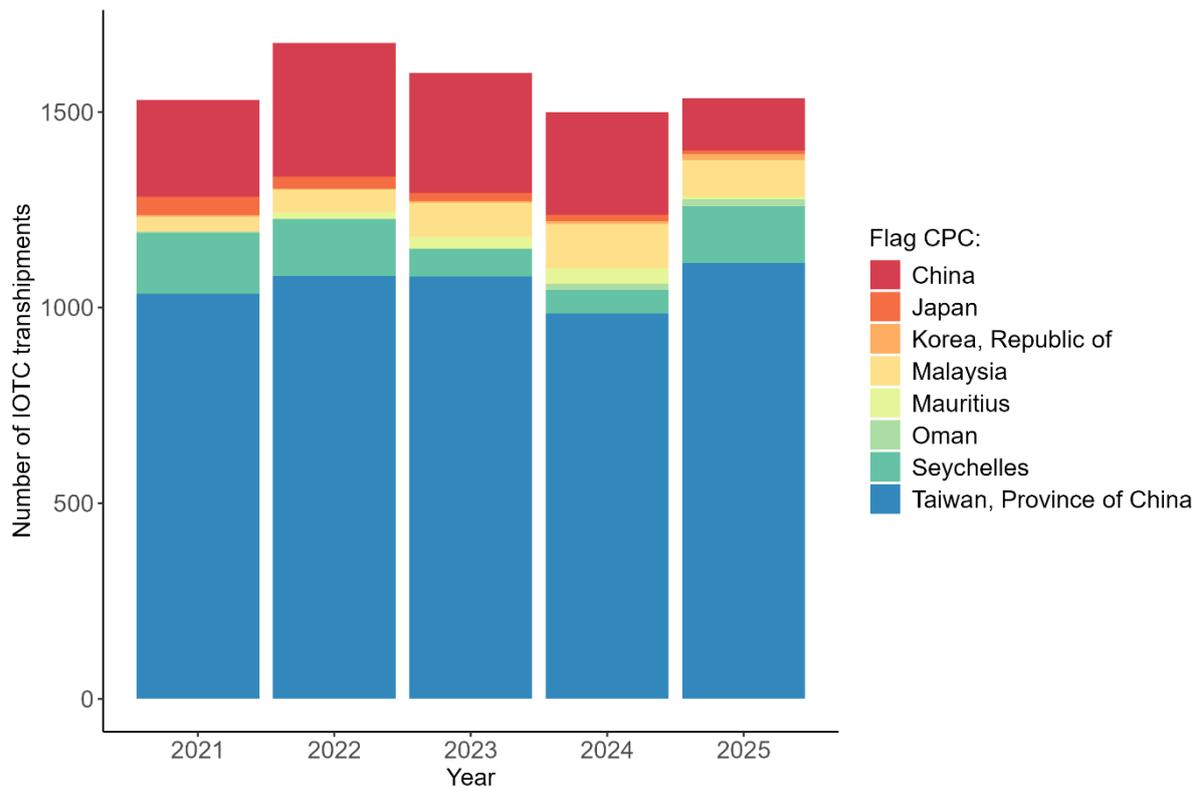


Figure 1 The total number of IOTC transshipments by fleet during 2025 and for comparison the previous 4 years.

47 deployment requests were approved in 2025 (request 892/25 to 939/25), 46 of which were monitored by an IOTC ROP observer. One deployment request (930/25) was cancelled, and deployment number 916/25 was not assigned due to an administrative error. Deployment 939/25 had not arrived back at time of writing, and the data have not been included. Observers were deployed to Carrier Vessels (CVs) predominantly flagged to Taiwan, Province of China (36%), followed by Panama (15%), Malaysia (15%), Republic of Korea (13%), Japan (11%), and Singapore (11%).

The number of observers deployed during each five-day period over 2025 is shown in Figure 2. Four observer deployments continued directly to, or from, the regulatory area of the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT) without making a port call at the point of crossing. Deployment requests were highest during May, June, and November, peaking with 10 total active CVs. The distribution of deployments over the year during 2025 differed from 2024. There was a peak in May-June and November, and a drop in February/March, all of which were absent in 2024.

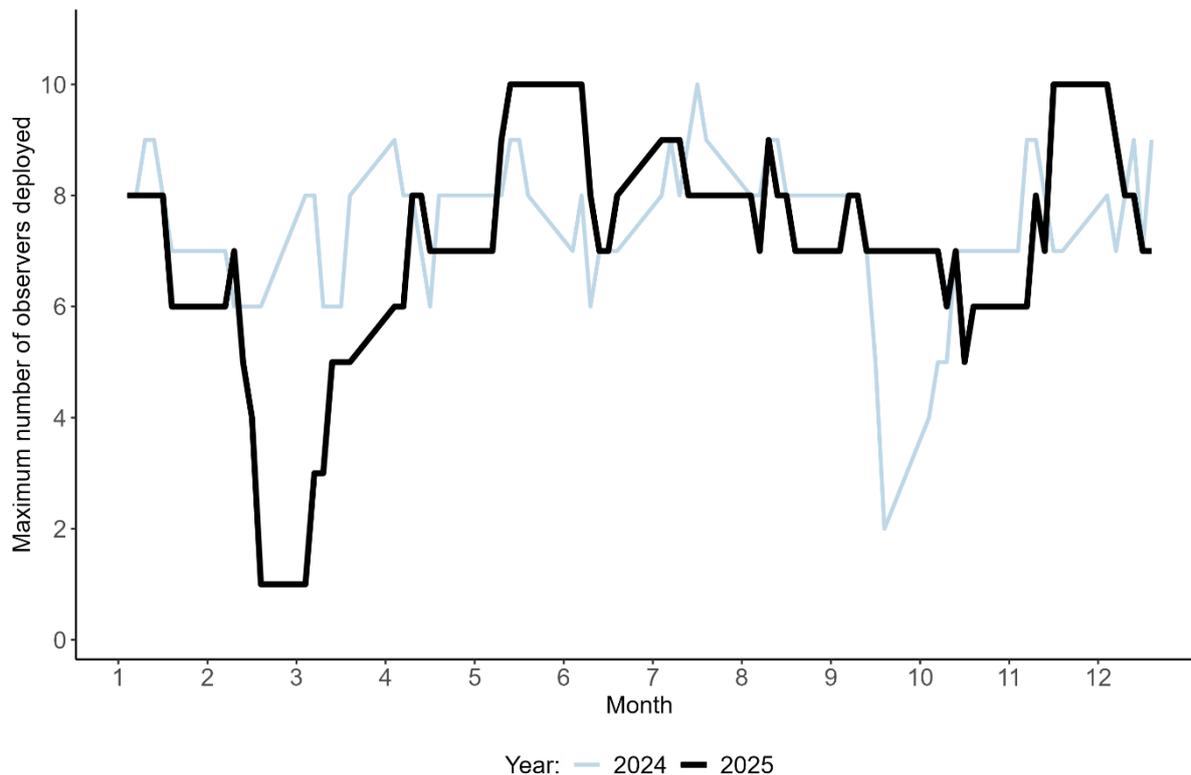


Figure 2 Maximum number of observers deployed in the IOTC ROP in each 5-day period in 2024 and 2025

The location of transhipments during 2025 is shown in Figure 3 and follows a broadly similar pattern to previous years, with the majority of transhipments occurring in the western Indian Ocean and a distinctive 'band' at around 30 degrees south. Transhipments from the previous four years are also shown in Error! Reference source not found., with observed transhipments represented by green dots and unobserved by orange dots in 2021 and 2022.

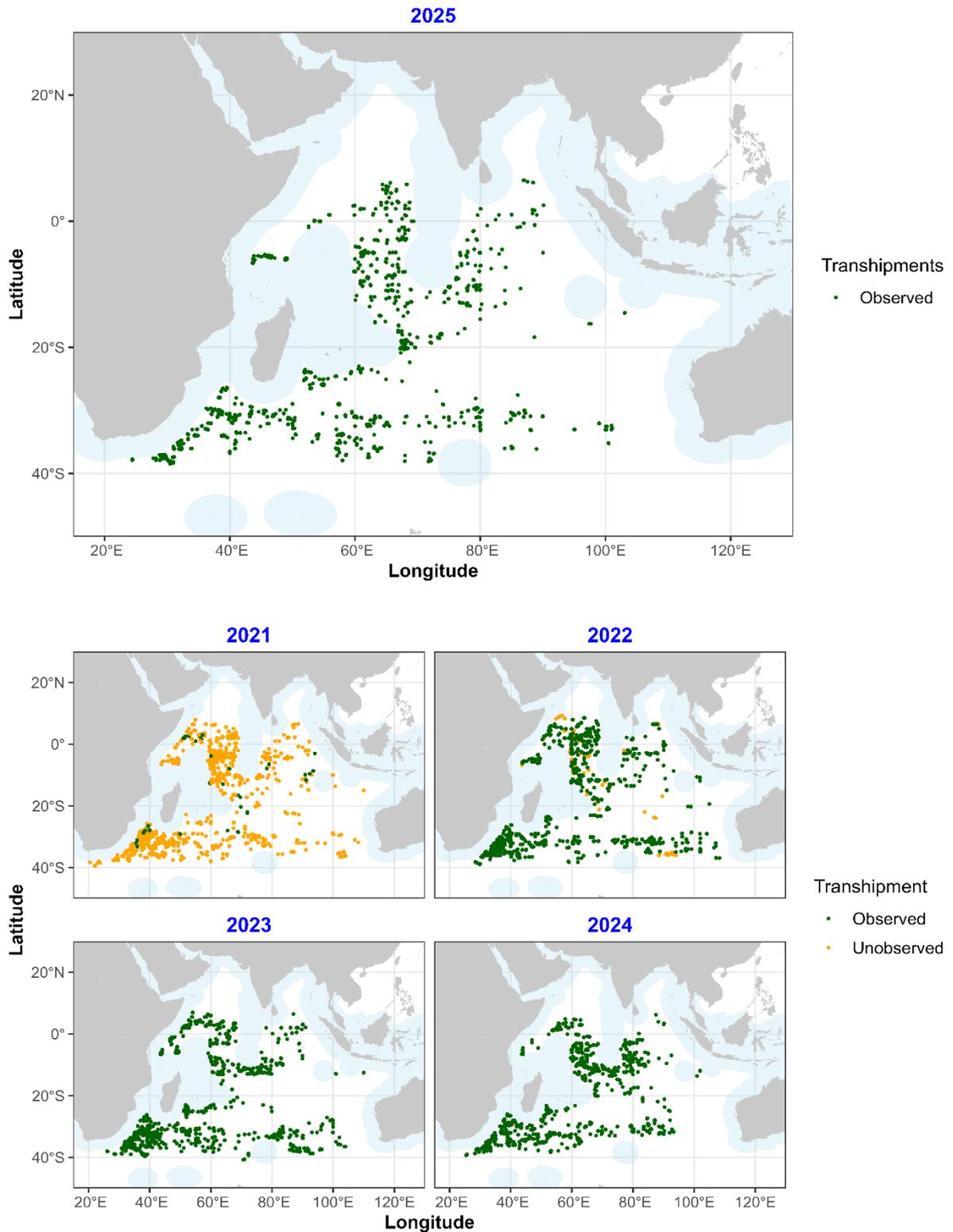


Figure 3 Transshipment locations in 2025 (top) and the previous 4 years (bottom). Observed transshipments are shown in green and unobserved transshipments are shown in orange.

2 Sampling

2.1 Weight estimations

Weight estimation procedures have been previously discussed in the [Review of the IOTC ROP](#)¹. The percentage differences between the overall observed weight and the vessel declared weight for all species are shown in Figure 4 and for tuna species only in Figure 5.

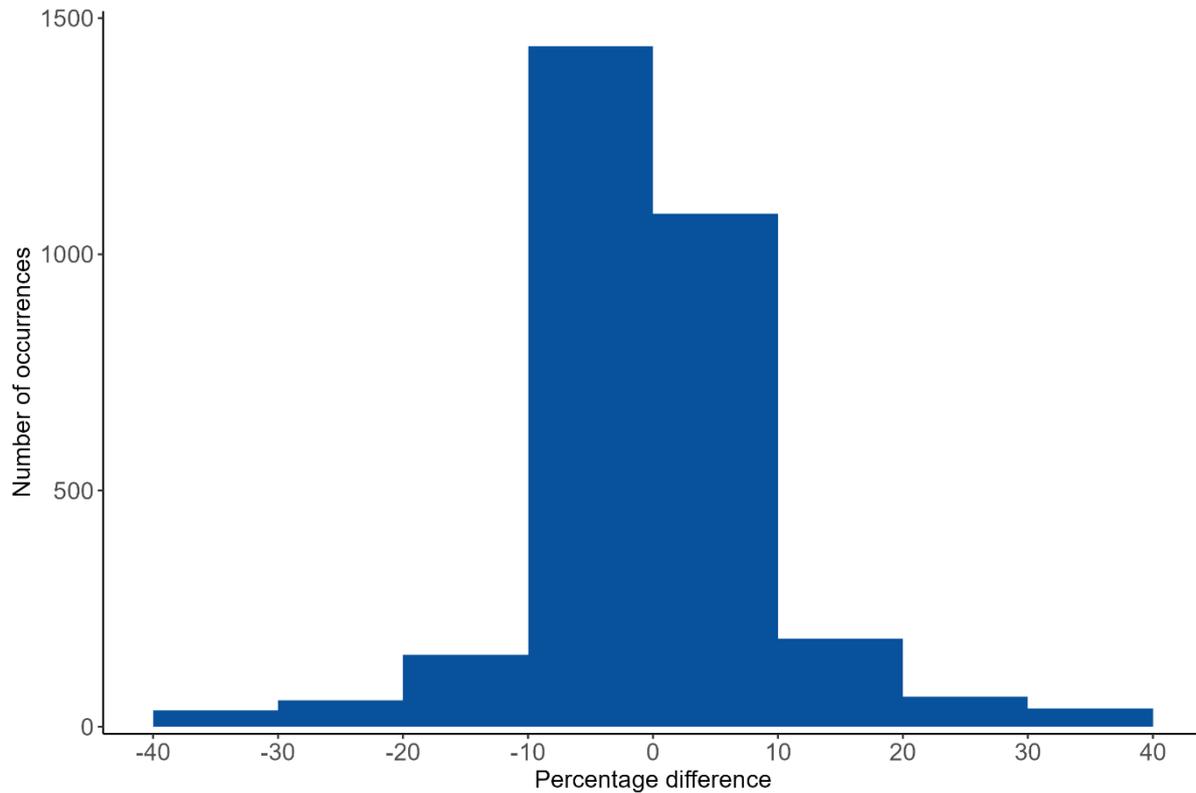


Figure 4 Percentage difference in observed weight compared to vessel declared weight (all species) based on the occurrences of each species being transhipped.

¹ MRAG and CapFish (2010). Review of the IOTC Regional Observer Programme. CoC48_Add1[E]

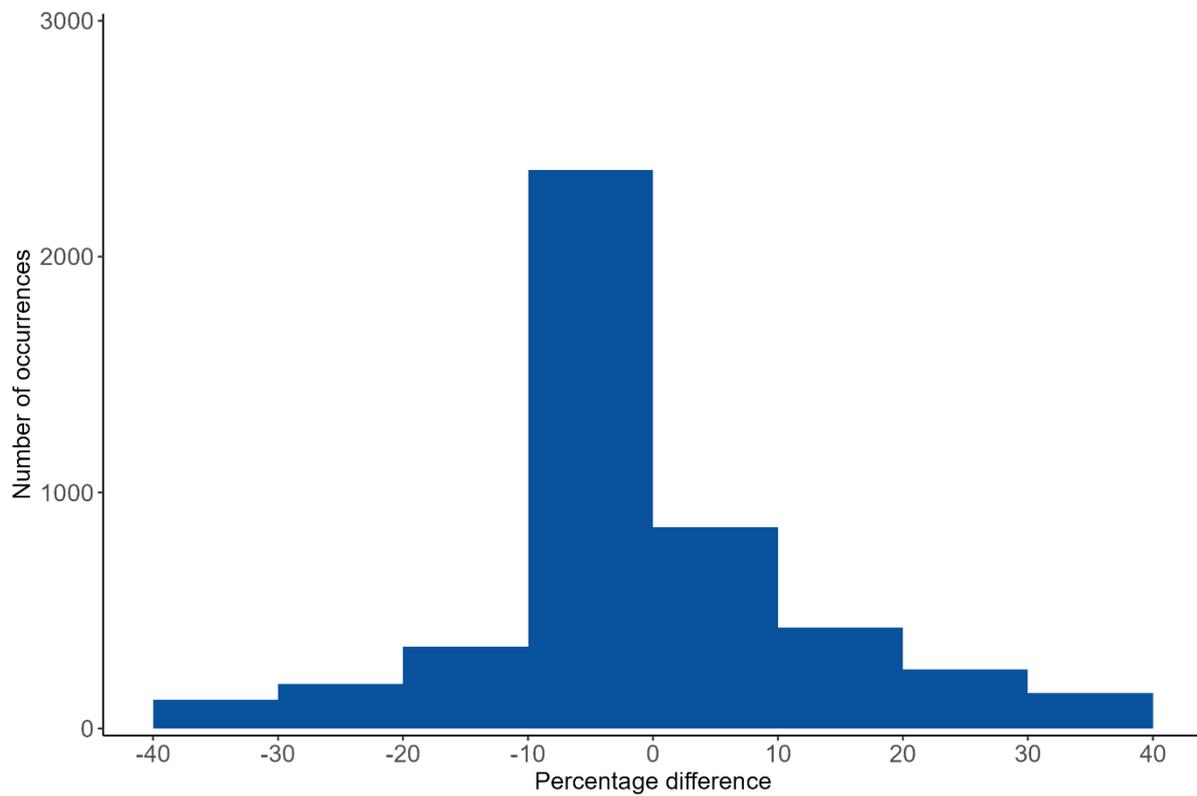


Figure 5 Percentage difference in observed weight compared to vessel declared weight (tuna species only) based on the occurrences of each species being transhipped.

Positive differences in the percentage represent transhipments where the observer's estimate is higher than the vessel's declaration, negative differences are where the observer's estimate is lower. Differences of greater than 20% usually occurred where small amounts were being transferred (less than 20 tonnes).

2.2 Species Transhipped

Table 2 shows the species transhipped by product type according to the Transshipment Declarations (TDs). Albacore was the most commonly transhipped species by weight, followed by bigeye and yellowfin tuna. In 2025 albacore accounted for 38.67% and bigeye for 27.36% of the species transhipped, in comparison with 2024 where albacore accounted for 26.67% and bigeye for 23.61%. Figure 6 shows the overall transshipment trends for these three main species since the start of the programme in 2009.

Table 2 Declared quantity (tonnes) of transhipped IOTC and CCSBT managed species by product type during 2025.

English Name	Species Name	Total	Gilled And Gutted	Rounded Weight	Dressed Weight	Headed Various	Other Various
Albacore	<i>Thunnus alalunga</i>	20,019.087		19,913.494	6.889		98.704
Bigeye tuna	<i>Thunnus obesus</i>	14,165.233	13,401.361		354.291	335.328	74.253
Skipjack tuna	<i>Katsuwonus pelamis</i>	132.157		129.584	2.015		0.558
Southern bluefin tuna	<i>Thunnus maccoyii</i>	1,503.120	1,503.120				
Yellowfin tuna	<i>Thunnus albacares</i>	12,152.868	11,468.613		511.278	146.710	26.267
Black marlin	<i>Makaira indica</i>	159.780	0.529	0.954	148.597	9.700	
Indo-Pacific blue marlin	<i>Makaira mazara</i>	493.500			440.031	53.469	
Indo-Pacific sailfish	<i>Istiophorus platypterus</i>	162.280		1.013	144.540	16.727	
Marlins, sailfishes, etc. nei	<i>Istiophoridae</i>	0.111			0.048	0.063	
Striped marlin	<i>Tetrapturus audax</i>	172.389	48.373	1.622	108.647	13.747	
Swordfish	<i>Xiphias gladius</i>	2,804.305			2,448.705	329.876	25.724
Narrow-barred Spanish mackerel	<i>Scomberomorus commerson</i>	7.284			7.236	0.048	

Table 3 Declared quantity (tonnes) of transhipped non-IOTC managed species by product type during 2025.

English Name	Species Name	Total	Rounded Weight	Dressed Weight	Headed Various	Other Various
Longbill spearfish	<i>Tetrapturus pfluegeri</i>	0.704		0.704		
Shortbill spearfish	<i>Tetrapturus angustirostris</i>	50.513	0.837	40.424	9.252	
Butterfly kingfish	<i>Gasterochisma melampus</i>	41.760		39.639	2.121	
Seerfishes nei	<i>Scomberomorus</i> spp	0.028	0.028			
Wahoo	<i>Acanthocybium solandri</i>	261.435	3.847	222.542	35.046	
Barracudas nei	<i>Sphyraena</i> spp	18.656	0.152	16.436	2.068	
Dorado/Mahi Mahi	<i>Coryphaena hippurus</i>	47.664	43.858	1.143	0.159	2.504
Escolar	<i>Lepidocybium flavobrunneum</i>	2,951.246	5.050	2,549.466	396.730	
Mixed Tunas	N/A	0.035				0.035
Oceanic Sunfish	<i>Mola mola</i>	41.679		25.768		15.911
Oilfish	<i>Ruvettus pretiosus</i>	3,779.977	0.184	2,933.690	846.050	0.053
Opah	<i>Lampris guttatus</i>	354.766	1.876	309.376	43.514	
Other fish Unclassified	N/A	754.909	25.596	154.454	27.410	547.449
Pomfret	<i>Brama</i> spp.	28.731	20.501	5.592	2.638	
Pomfrets, ocean breams nei	<i>Bramidae</i>	123.532	7.164	108.822	7.546	
Tunas nei	<i>Thunnini</i>	1.550				1.550
Blacktip shark	<i>Carcharhinus limbatus</i>	0.678		0.678		
Blue shark	<i>Prionace glauca</i>	1,753.276		1,230.296		522.980
Longfin mako	<i>Isurus paucus</i>	0.973		0.500		0.473
Mako sharks	<i>Isurus</i> spp	30.394		30.364	0.030	
Pelagic Sharks nei	Pelagic Sharks nei	20.494		1.747		18.747
Scalloped hammerhead	<i>Sphyrna lewini</i>	174.722		66.985	1.858	105.879
Shortfin mako	<i>Isurus oxyrinchus</i>	284.673		199.454		85.219
Silky shark	<i>Carcharhinus falciformis</i>	83.219		57.755		25.464
Smooth hammerhead	<i>Sphyrna zygaena</i>	8.684		6.694		1.990
Tiger shark	<i>Galeocerdo cuvier</i>	10.537		10.114		0.423
Various sharks nei	<i>Selachimorpha(Pleurotremata)</i>	47.256		47.073		0.183
Mixed Fish Species	Mixed Fish Species	24.010	2.049	0.550		21.411

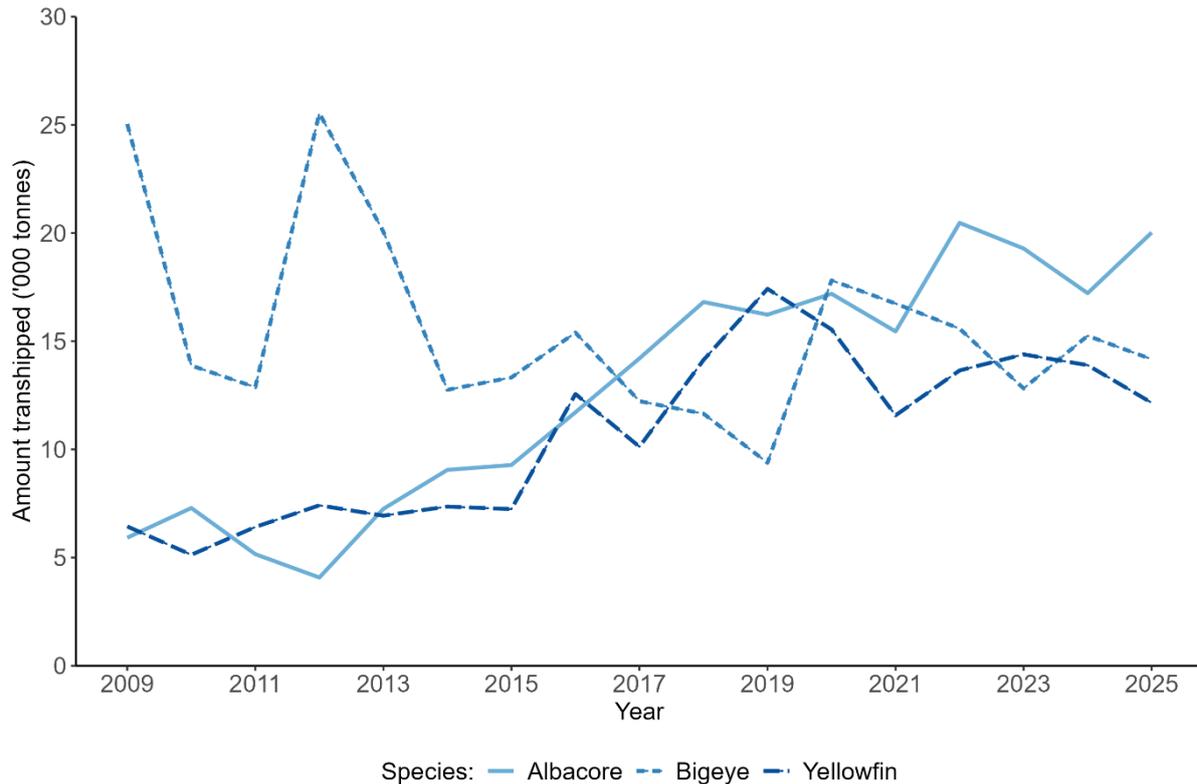


Figure 6 Trends in transshipments of albacore, bigeye and yellowfin tuna since the start of the ROP.

3 Southern bluefin tuna

Since adoption of the Resolution on the Implementation of the Commission for the Conservation of Southern Bluefin Tuna (CCSBT) Catch Documentation Scheme (CDS) on 1st January 2010, any southern bluefin tuna transhipped must be accompanied by a catch monitoring form (CMF). This form is countersigned by the observer to verify they have monitored the transhipment. During 2025 transshipments of southern bluefin tuna (*T. maccoyii*) were declared on 71 occasions within 10 different deployments, with 1,503.12 tonnes recorded by the vessels as being transhipped (Table 4). This is an increase when compared to 2024, where the total quantity transhipped was 1,001.42 tonnes.

Table 4 Transshipments of southern bluefin tuna declared by vessels during 2025.

Deployment Id	CV Name	CV IOTC Ref No	No Of Transshipments	Total Weight (tonnes)
886	CHEN YU NO. 7	IOTC080046	1	3.228
891	CHITOSE	IOTC015114	2	14.162
896	TAISEI MARU NO.15	IOTC008465	7	99.880
906	CHITOSE	IOTC015114	22	479.616
912	TAISEI MARU NO.15	IOTC008465	16	184.030
919	TAISEI MARU NO.24	IOTC008466	4	166.210
923	SEIYU	IOTC008620	3	92.665
924	IBUKI	IOTC014787	14	443.328
929	SHENG HONG	IOTC080040	1	9.982
931	HO YUAN	IOTC070039	1	10.019

4 Vessel checks

The roles and responsibilities of the observers with regard to at-sea vessel checks are outlined in Annex IV of Resolution 25/05. A total of 1,536 inspections were undertaken on 299 different LSTLVs during 2025. Figure 7 shows the number of times individual vessels were checked. There were 133 instances in which it was deemed that it was unsafe for the observer to transfer to the LSTLV due to poor weather conditions. In these cases, the observer was still able to check the necessary documents by having the LSTLV masters pass their logbooks and ATF to the CV to be inspected by the observer. The observer would also pass a camera to the LSTLV for them to photograph their VMS unit to checked after being returned.

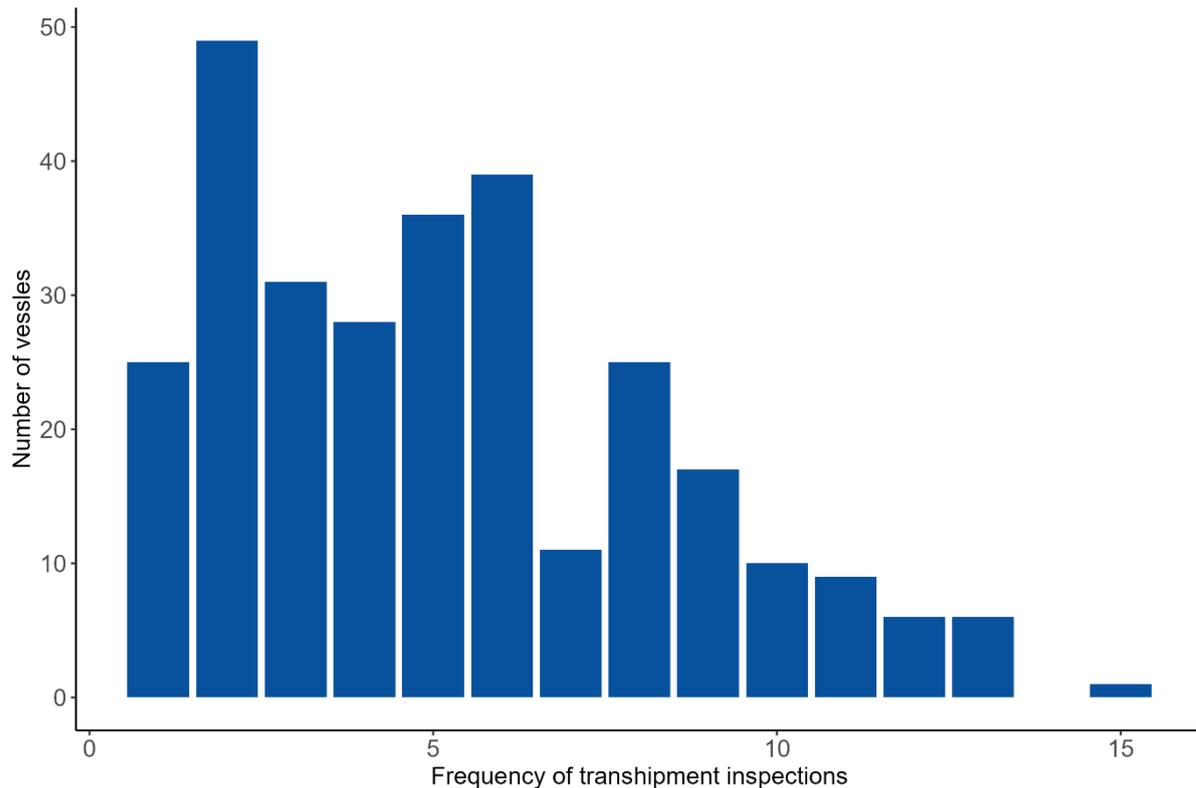


Figure 7 Number of times vessels (LSTLVs) were inspected in 2025.

A summary of the results of the LSTLV checks, along with the results of the investigations conducted by the concerned fleets, are given in [IOTC-2026-WPICMM09-05](#).

5 Other Possible Infractions

None recorded.

6 Observer Training

To date, 184 observers who have received IOTC training since 2009, some of whom were trained directly through the IOTC whilst others crossed over from ICCAT with prior approval from the IOTC Secretariat. All observers are also trained to monitor CCSBT transshipments. The ROP consortium trained 6 observers in 2025. Not all observers who have been trained are currently active and many have left the programme. There are currently 48 observers actively participating in the programme, although some have limited availability, being involved in other programmes. It is therefore necessary to continue to hold observer courses on a regular basis to replace those who drop out, and to ensure demand is met. In addition, refresher training is provided for current observers where necessary. Courses have been run in conjunction with ICCAT and CCSBT for a number of years, allowing observers to be eligible to work in all three programmes.

7 Other Issues

7.1 Health and Safety

During 2025 there were no deployments refused by an observer on the grounds of safety. While overall observers reported good health and safety standards on board CVs operating in the programme, a number of issues were highlighted.

- Observers reported that no safety drills were carried out on the following deployments: 897/25, 898/25, 901/25, 903/25, 905/25, 909/25, 910/25, 915/25, 918/25, 920/25, 922/25, 925/25, 926/25, 929/25, 931/25, 934/25, & 936/25.
- In deployments 894/25, 910/25, 925/25, 934/25 the observer expressed concern about the level of cleanliness and cockroach infestations in the CV galley.
- In deployments 898/25, 902/25, 915/25, & 918/25 observers reported that CV crew were not using appropriate safety equipment. In deployment 898/25 this resulted in one CV crew member becoming injured while working in the hold not wearing a helmet
- In deployment 905/25 the observer reported that the basket the CV was using for vessel transfers was unfit for use making it dangerous for the observer to transfer to the LSTLVs to perform inspections, the consortium raised this with the vessel operator, who agreed to replace the basket.
- In deployment 910/25 the observer reported that the engine mounting the CVs rescue boat was heavily damaged, rendering it inoperable.
- In deployment 912/25 the observer reported that a CV crew member developed a severe infection during the deployment and the CV captain did not appear to take immediate efforts to disembark them to seek medical treatment, only doing so several days later when the crew member's condition appeared critical.
- In deployment 926/25 a CV crew member passed away while the observer was onboard. Also, in deployment 926/25 the observer reported misleading safety signage and inappropriate safety equipment storage.
- In 931/25 upon embarkation the observer discovered there were only 28 immersion suits on board the CV, while the vessel's total compliment was 35, the observer refused to board the CV, the CV was able to procure 10 additional immersion suits, and the deployment was allowed to proceed.
- On deployment 933/25 during a transshipment an LSTLV crew member was witnessed to fall off a crane into the hold of the LSTLV, when he was carried out the observer saw blood on his face, the CV offered the LSTLV medical assistance however was informed that it was not required.

The consortium requests that CV operators and flag CPCs endeavour to ensure that safety drills are carried out monthly, and that CV cleanliness is maintained to prevent the outbreak of infestations on board the CVs, as agreed in the Memorandum of Understanding between the consortium and the CV operators

On 17/03/25 a female observer working on board a carrier vessel in the IOTC area contacted the ROP consortium alleging that the captain of the CV had sexually harassed her. The consortium informed the IOTC secretariat and the vessel operator of the incident and requested that the observer be disembarked at the soonest possible opportunity. She was successfully disembarked soon after in Male, Maldives. The vessel operator was cooperative throughout the incident. The consortium was informed by the vessel operator that as a result of the incident the CV captain has been removed from his position, both the consortium and the observer were satisfied with this outcome and no further action was taken.

7.2 Waste disposal

Waste disposal methods vary among CVs and most have operational waste disposal plans in place which includes having an incinerator on board, instructions and containers to separate and store different waste products. The methods for doing this continue to be recorded by observers.

Observers reported the following waste disposal related issues in 2025:

- In deployment 897/25 the observer reported witnessing CV crew discarding non-biodegradable waste overboard on multiple occasions.
- In deployment 898/25 the observer reported that despite the incinerator on the CV not functioning, waste was not seen to build up throughout the deployment.
- In deployments 912/25 & 926/25 the observers reported witnessing the vessel incinerate plastic waste in what appeared to be a non-IMO approved incinerator, they also reported that after incineration the ashes were being left to wash overboard rather than being collected for disposal onshore.

7.3 Vessel cooperation

Cooperation from both LSTLVs and CVs continues to be good, and no negative reports have been received from observers. As in previous years the Consortium would like to extend their gratitude to the vessel operators for their assistance and cooperation in maintaining the reporting objectives of the ROP.

7.4 Disembarkation Ports

There has been an increase in the average amount of time from the completion of the last transshipment to the date of observer disembarkation, with the average number of days being 29 in 2025, up from 23 in 2024. This is likely due to an increased number of observers being disembarked in more distant ports (such as Shidao, China and Kaohsiung, Taiwan, Province of China), rather than ports closer to the area of transshipment operations (such as Port Louis, Mauritius or Victoria, Seychelles). The consortium requests that carrier vessel operators and flag CPCs endeavour to ensure that observers are disembarked in a timely manner after the completion of transshipment operations, in order to reduce the overall cost of the programme.