

PAPUA NEW GUINEA

POLE-AND-LINE TUNA FISHERY

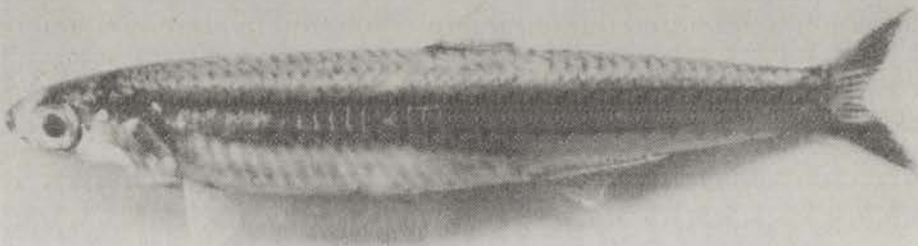
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Commercial fishing for skipjack tuna in Papua New Guinea started in 1970. The amount of tuna caught before this was probably less than 100 tonnes a year. Now the country has developed into a major tuna fishing nation.

In 1976, the last year for which we have international records, Papua New Guinea had the fourth largest skipjack tuna catch in the world. Only Japan, the United States and Indonesia had higher catches.

Last year 48 000 tonnes of skipjack tuna were taken in Papua New Guinea waters. These fish were caught using the baitboat pole-and-line method of fishing.

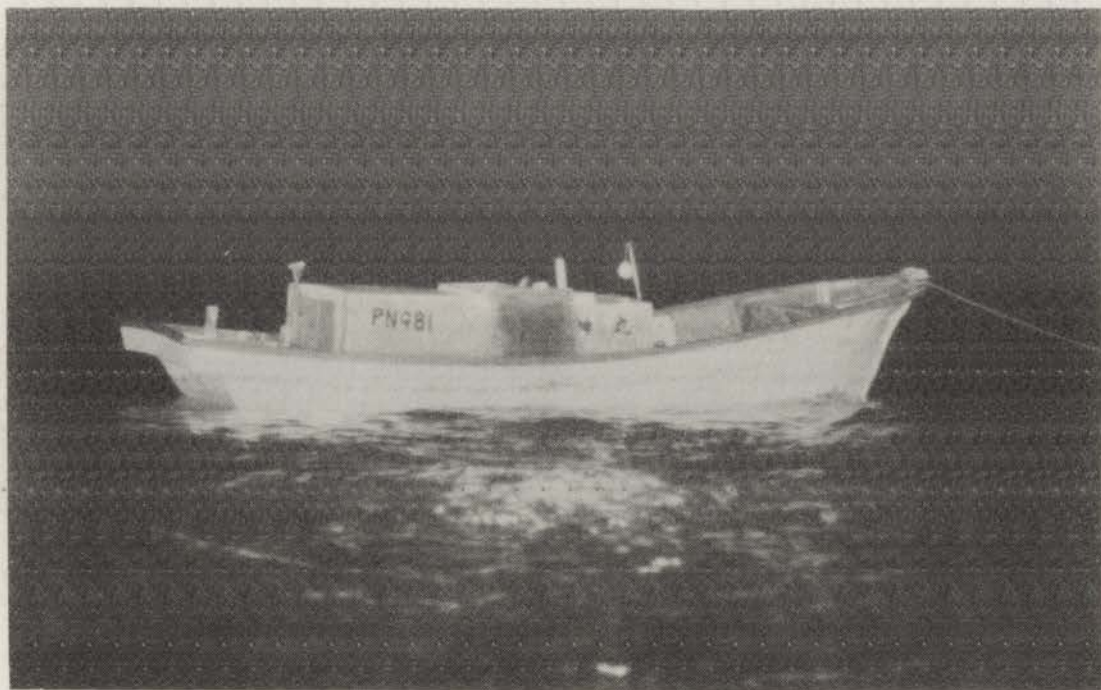
This fishing method is shown in the following photographs.



For pole and line fishing it is important to have enough baitfish. These are small anchovies and sprats about 6-10 cm long



Baitfish are caught inshore among the reefs. The tuna fishing boats mark the places where they catch their bait (baiting stations) with buoys and baiting dories



Baiting dories are small diesel-powered boats which have a generator and underwater lights. The lights are used to attract baitfish at night



Baitfish are caught using a large (25 metre) lift net operated from the tuna fishing boat. The net is lowered below the light, then raised to trap all the fish from around the light

The baitfish are then gathered into one part of the net and buckets are used to bring them on board alive. They are kept alive in special bait wells on board the tuna fishing boats

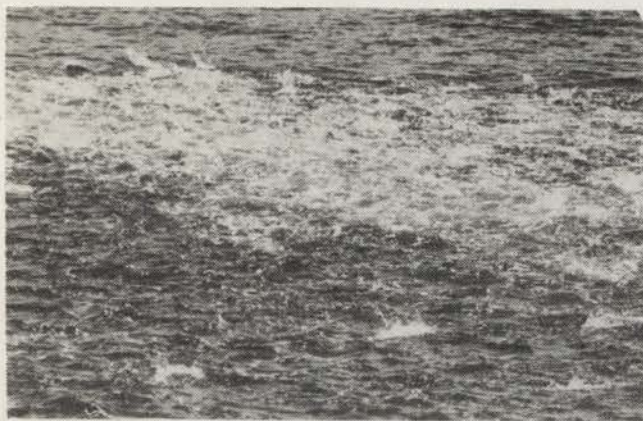




In the morning the fishing boat sets off for the tuna grounds, often up to 60 miles away



The crew search for schools of tuna using binoculars. The fishing boat cruises around until a school is spotted. Schools of tuna are often accompanied by flocks of sea birds



A school of tuna. The schools are called names like "splashers", "breezers" and "rippers" to describe the way they disturb the sea surface

When a school is spotted, the live baitfish are removed from the baitwells



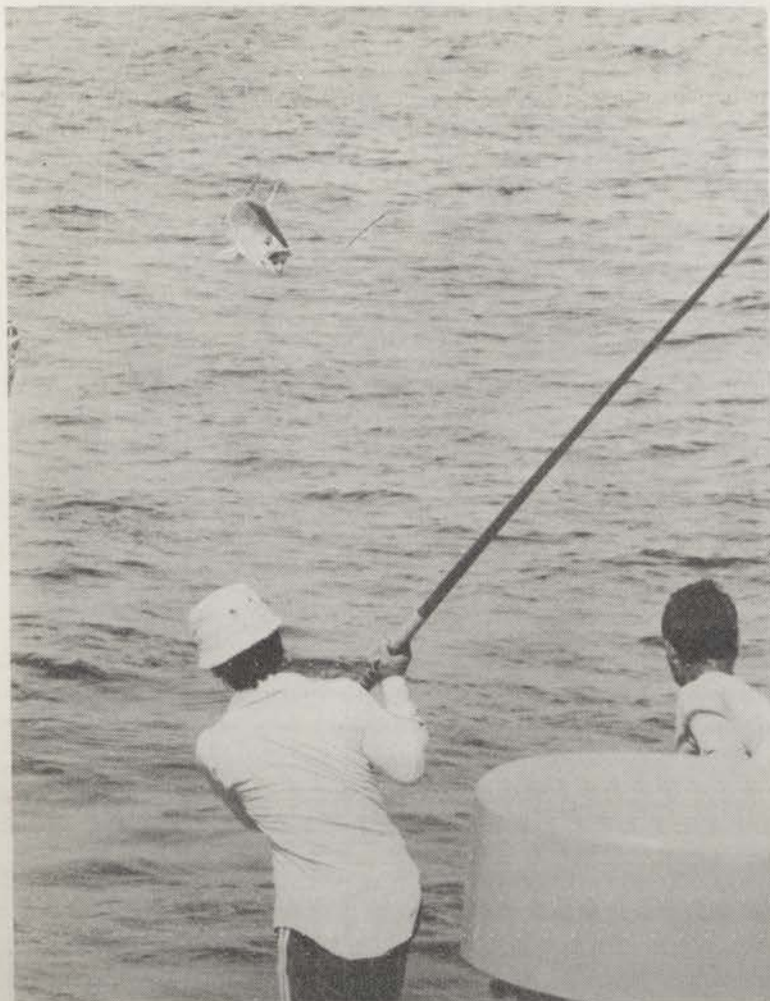
The baitfish are put into the chumming tank. One of the crew, called the chummer, takes the baitfish out of the tank (seen behind him in the photograph) and throws them into the school to start the tuna feeding. Note the sprays of seawater which hide the fishermen from the tuna



A boat in a tuna school preparing to fish



Poling tuna from the stern of the boat. The poles are made of fibreglass and have a monofilament line attached to them. At the end of the line is a feathered lure and barbless hook. The lures are pulled through the water and the tuna mistake them for baitfish, are hooked and are poled on board



Poling skipjack tuna on board



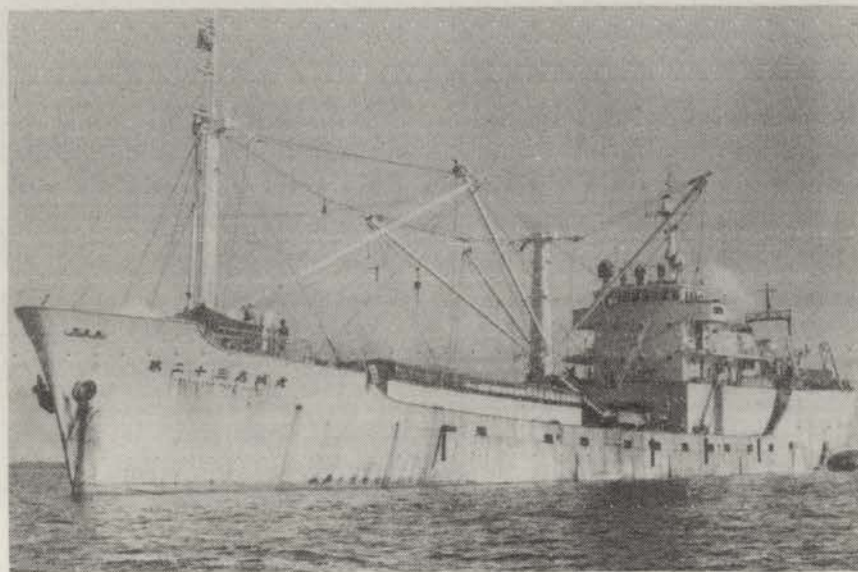
The catch from one school on deck. The boat now goes searching for another school. Several schools can be fished during one day



The catch is loaded below decks into the ice wells or freezer holds



The mother-ship is really just a floating freezer warehouse and store. Six to ten fishing boats are based at one mother ship



At the end of the day the fishing boat returns to the mother-ship to transfer the catch



The catch is weighed. After unloading, the fishing boat returns to the baiting station to catch the next day's supply of bait



After weighing, the catch is transferred to brine tanks on board the mother-ship where it is frozen. After a day the fish are frozen enough to be put in the freezer holds. The catch will be exported to Japan for smoking and drying or to the U.S. and Samoa for canning. Some smoking and drying to make katsuobushi is done in Kavieng at the Nago Island Katsuobushi Plant

In 1978, 46 fishing boats and five mother-ships operated in Papua New Guinea. Some boats belong to the three PNG-registered fishing companies which operate the fleets but most boats are hired from Japan. The diagram on the next page shows the baitfishing and tuna-fishing areas. Those areas on the south coast of New Britain and the mainland are used during the northwest season (from January to March). The other areas are used during the rest of the year.

