

Cooperative Science Services, LLC Dolphinfish Research Program

Made possible by a grant from Marine Ventures Foundation

December 2008



2008 Dolphin Tagging Activity

Participating anglers have reported tagging 1,337 dolphinfish during 2008. This is just over half the number that was tagged in 2007. However, it is above the 1,000 fish level set as the program's annual goal.

The distribution of the tagging activity changed in 2008. In four of the last six years anglers tagged more dolphin off the Florida Keys than in any other area. This year, south Florida fishermen, fishing from Key Largo to Stuart, dominated the tagging activity for the first time, marking 42% of all dolphin tagged. This is 48% more fish than those tagged by anglers in the Keys this year. Fishermen in the Keys have averaged contributing 40% of all dolphin tagged, but in 2008 that figure dropped to 28%. Overall, anglers along the Florida east coast tagged 73% of the fish marked in 2008. While high, it is below the 76% share they provided in 2005 and 2006.

South Carolina fishers dominated the tagging in two years, 2002 and 2004. This is in spite of the fact that South Carolina and Georgia anglers harvest only 1.5% of the dolphin landed each year on the U.S. East Coast. Fishermen off South Carolina have averaged tagging 24% of the fish marked annually. However, in 2008, their participation dropped to a new low, accounting for only 10% of all dolphin tagged. This could be the result of the reduced number of trips made because of the fuel expense for the long run required to the fishing grounds.

The Dolphin Tagging Study continues to benefit from the tighter harvest restriction placed on dolphin and other species caught trolling in the Bahamas. Prior to the reduced bag limit only 3 to 4% of the fish tagged annually were being tagged in the Bahamas. In 2007 that number jumped to 14% with the new creel restrictions.

In 2008 anglers in the Bahamas provided 12% of the fish tagged for the year.

North Carolina, which annually harvests an average of 38% of all dolphin landed on the East Coast has contributed an average of 2.3% of the fish tagged each year. This year only six boats tagged dolphin in North Carolina, and they provided 2% of the fish marked for 2008.

Dolphin Tagging Progress by Zones, November 30.

Zone	Area	Southern Limit	Northern Limit	Number Tagged
1	Bahamas	22N	28N	161
2	FL Straits	23N	25N	378
3	South Florida	25N	27N	561
4	Central Florida	27N	30N	36
5	North FL & GA	30N	32N	48
6	Southern SC	32N	33N	90
7	N. SC - S. NC	33N	35N	17
8	Northern NC	35N	36.5N	10
9	Virginia	36.5N	38N	8
10	N. Mid-Atlantic	38N		4
11	Gulf of Mexico			17
12	W Central Atlantic			4
13	Caribbean Sea			3
	Total			1337

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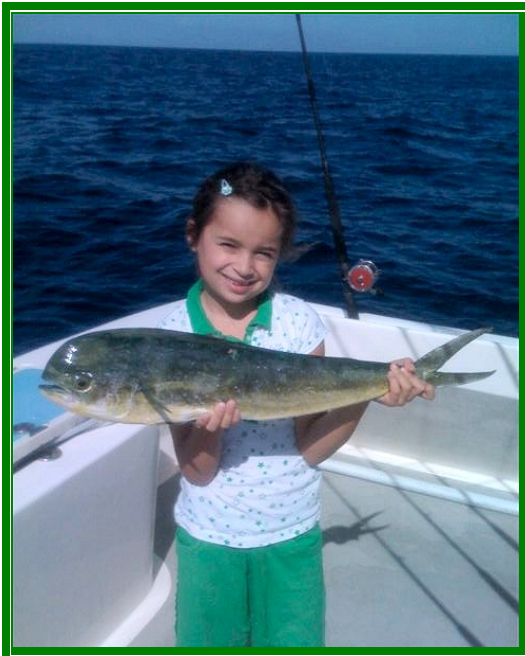
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Participation by anglers fishing the Gulf of Mexico was still low in 2008, but there is hope that it will pick up in 2009. Several anglers in the Florida panhandle as well as a charter boat in Venice, Louisiana, signed up to tag late in the summer. The Dolphinfish Research Program is working to develop a cooperative program with the Texas Sea Grant Consortium to get more dolphin tagged off their coast to learn who shares in this resource.

Why I Am Conducting This Research



Ms. Kayla Needl, age 7, proudly displays the tagged dolphinfish (tag already removed) that she caught in November while fishing with her father off Juno Beach, Florida.

This is an example of a picture being worth a thousand words. It clearly explains why I am conducting this research and why every offshore fisherman should support this and other research programs that seek to conserve marine resources for future generations.

Chuck Needl of Jupiter Inlet Colony, Florida, recently reported the latest recovery of a tagged dolphin. The fish had been tagged four days prior, November 11, by Capt. Bouncer Smith off Miami. It had traveled 74 miles up the coast from its release site at an average speed of 18.5 miles per day.

The value of this recapture rests in a picture of his daughter, Kayla, with her trophy. I believe that I can speak for virtually every offshore angler, when I say that we need to work today to ensure that our children and grandchildren will be able to experience the same exciting offshore fishing that we have enjoyed.

World Recreational Fishing Conference Dolphin Tagging Study Talk Available

A copy of the talk on the findings of the Dolphin Tagging Study presented at the international conference is now available online. The article shows the benefits of using recreational anglers as field staff. It also gives one of the first detailed looks at the movements and migrations of U.S. East Coast dolphinfish. To read the article, visit the program's Web site at www.dolphintagging.com and go to the Study Results page.



Manuel Botello of San Juan, prepares to release one of the first dolphinfish to be tagged for the Dolphin Tagging Study off Puerto Rico. (Photo by Irvin Baez)

Dolphin Tagging Promoted in Puerto Rico

An avid offshore angler in Puerto Rico has taken it upon himself to encourage his fellow blue-water anglers to get involved in the Dolphin Tagging Study. Manuel Botello of San Juan believes that recreational anglers must get more involved in fisheries management. He sees the Dolphin Tagging Study as a way fishermen can directly contribute to needed fisheries research that will come back to benefit recreational anglers.

Capt. Botello's commitment to the study is clearly demonstrated by the fact that he has already recruited three offshore anglers and has provided financial support for the Dolphin Tagging Study. He was instrumental in getting Ryan Christiansen, host of the WOSO radio talk show, Live from Club Nautico de San Juan, to discuss the Dolphin Tagging Study with Don Hammond on a recent program.

He sees this as a first step to getting more fishermen in Puerto Rico to tag their throw-back dolphinfish. The new 10 dolphinfish per boat per day restriction for recreational anglers instituted by Puerto Rico should provide a great opportunity for anglers to tag their small fish for science. This will begin the process of learning where dolphinfish in Puerto Rican waters come from and go to.

**Donations to the Dolphin Study are
Fully Tax-Deductible**

Make checks out to:

HH Reef Foundation/Dolphin Study

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Year-end Incentive Awards



Through the generosity of Shimano Fishing Tackle and the Don Coffey Company and Star Rods and the Sea Striker Fishing Tackle Company, the Dolphin Tagging Study can offer four year-end awards. In addition to giving a Shimano TLD50 2 speed on a standup Star Rod for the most dolphin tagged by a private boat, charter boat and individual angler, a rod and reel will also be given to the boat tagging the most dolphin in areas other than off the east coast of Florida.

Send in Your Favorite Tagging Photos

The Dolphinfish Research Program would like to have your favorite photo of tagging dolphin or trophy dolphin that you have caught, especially those caught by women and children. These photos will be used in the newsletter and other publications of the program. High resolution digital images in at least 1mb file size should be e-mailed to the program at the e-mail address shown below. Please provide the names of all people in the pictures and a narrative about the scene.

Mail in Your Tag Cards

All tag cards must be in the CSS office by January 7, 2009, to be counted toward the 2008 year end awards. Four dedicated taggers will receive a Shimano TLD50LRS on a Star Custom Crafted standup rod. The awards categories are private boat, charter boat, individual angler, and boat tagging the most dolphin in areas other than the Florida east coast.



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