

# SC Dolphin Tagging Study

May 2004

## Tagging Activity Jump-Starts in April

Tagging has jumped into high gear off South Carolina and Georgia. Fishermen are reporting large numbers of 8 to 15 pound dolphin present in these two zones. Last year during the January through April 2003 period, only 28 fish were tagged in zones five and six combined. This year in the same period, the number rose to 154 tagged fish, a five-fold increase.

However, strong winds severely impacted tagging activity during the winter and early spring in many areas this year. Last year Florida anglers tagged 115 dolphin by the end of April, dominating the early season tagging activity. This year they managed to tag only 31 fish during the same period.

Zone 1, the Bahamas, has seen an increase in tagging activity so far for 2004. 2003 saw only nine fish tagged for the full year. Largely due to the effort of one fisherman, Forrest Engle, 36 dolphin have been tagged as of the end of April in Bahamian waters. Engle's tagging activity has already generated the first Bahamas' recovery.

With 228 fish already tagged and released by the end of April, tagging in 2004 could exceed last year's 1,200 fish. The number of dolphin tagged in 2004 is over 50 percent ahead of the same period last year.

The reversal in tagging activity between South Carolina and Florida is a clear example of why it is so important to have a broad base of support in tagging dolphin along its entire east coast range. Adverse weather conditions along one area of the east coast, such as what Florida has experienced, would seriously impact the full year's study if that were the only place where dolphin were being tagged. But with a large number of volunteer taggers scattered from Key West to Nantucket Island, the effect such weather conditions would have on this study is significantly reduced.



## Tagging Progress By Zone as of April30

| Zone | Area            | Southern Limit | Northern Limit | Number Tagged |
|------|-----------------|----------------|----------------|---------------|
| 1    | E. Bahamas      | 22N            | 28N            | 36            |
| 2    | FL Straits      | 23N            | 25N            | 15            |
| 3    | South Florida   | 25N            | 27N            | 9             |
| 4    | Central Florida | 27N            | 30N            | 12            |
| 5    | North FL & GA   | 30N            | 32N            | 7             |
| 6    | Southern SC     | 32N            | 33N            | 147           |
| 7    | N. SC - S. NC   | 33N            | 35N            | 2             |
| 8    | Northern NC     | 35N            | 36.5N          | 0             |
| 9    | Virginia        | 36.5N          | 38N            | 0             |
| 10   | N. Mid-Atlantic | 38N            |                | 0             |



Captain Forrest Engle and Karen Crabb hold one of the many dolphin that Engle has tagged in the Bahamas.

## Photos Requested

We would like to receive photos of your tagging activities. Pictures of anglers releasing tagged dolphin, recapturing tagged fish (including photos of fish with tags in place), or good action shots of dolphin in the water are wanted for use in the newsletter and on the Web site. Digital images are preferred but color slides or prints will also be accepted. Be sure to identify people appearing in the photo and include a statement giving the SC Dolphin Tagging Study authorization to publish the photo.

Send all photos to the project director at the contact information listed below.

# SC Dolphin Tagging Study

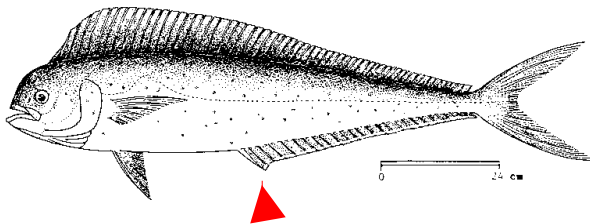
May 2004

Page 2

## Dolphin Identification 101 - Pompano Dolphin

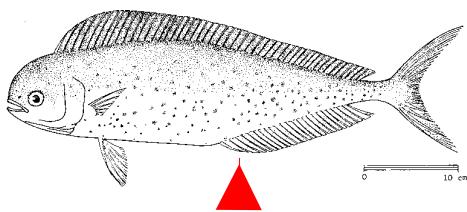
Numerous fishermen have inquired about how to recognize the pompano dolphin. The first difference is that the pompano is more oceanic, occurring farther at sea than the common dolphin. It is commonly found around Bermuda and off the eastern Caribbean Islands. The pompano dolphin was formerly thought to comprise a large portion of the harvest in the Gulf of Mexico but little data is available to support this theory.

The pompano dolphin is smaller than the common dolphin, and seldom exceeds 10 pounds in weight. It has a much deeper body with the greatest depth occurring at the middle of the body. The common dolphin has its greatest body depth just behind the head. The pompano's dorsal fin (along the back) contains 48 to 55 supporting fin rays while the common's dorsal fin has 55 to 65 rays. Differences can also be found in the shape of the tooth patch on the tongue.



Common Dolphin

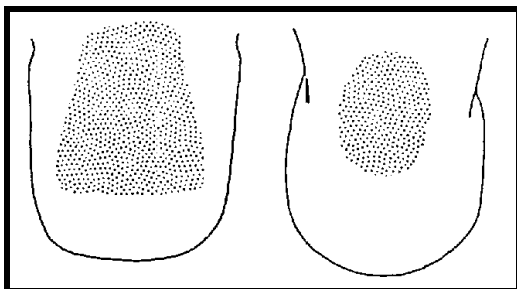
Longer lobe point on front of anal fin



Pompano Dolphin

No lobe point on front of anal fin

## Tongue Tooth Patch Pattern



Pompano

Common



Bull pompano dolphin caught off Morehead, NC.

The SC Dolphin Tagging Study is soliciting photos of pompano dolphin. Anglers who catch a pompano dolphin are asked to photograph the fish while it is fresh and the colors are bright. It should be photographed as a full side profile with the dorsal and anal fins fully extended, as in the black line drawings to the left.

High resolution digital photos are preferred but color slides or sharp-bright color prints will also be accepted. Please send the photographs to the project director at the contact information listed below. Be sure to include your name, address, telephone number and a statement giving the project permission to use your photos.

For more information on the project, visit <http://dolphintagging.homestead.com> or contact

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