

SC Dolphin Tagging Study

April 2003



Project Status

The project continues to meet with outstanding public support as it enters its second year with an additional 61 individuals volunteering to assist the project. More charter boats, private vessels and individual anglers fishing bluewater in the Mid-Atlantic Bight and off the eastern Bahamas are needed to volunteered their time and effort to tag dolphin in these areas of high priority.

Already anglers have tagged 78 dolphin this year off south Florida, in the Florida Straits and off the Abacos, Bahamas. But this is just a drop in the bucket compared to the program's 2003 desire to have 2,000 dolphin tagged from Key West to Boston. Such large numbers are needed due the nature of the fish. Very low tag recovery rates are to be expected for an animal which has an annual total mortality rate estimated at 99.7 percent, is a major forage species for apex predators and which is as highly migratory as the dolphin.

It is now time for all who have volunteered to assist this research effort to make plans to carry through with your promise. Don't wait until summer to begin marking dolphin for this study. Start tagging those small 16 to 36 inch fish on your first trip out. At over 440 anglers strong, the volunteer recreational fishing community has the opportunity to make a significant contribution to the future management of the east coast dolphin stock. Get out those tags.

Tagged Dolphin Recoveries

Three recoveries of tagged dolphin have been reported since January 1, 2003. The first report came from the commercial fishing vessel "Dakota" and fisherman J. Juntunen. The fish was recovered the same day and roughly the same location off Charleston, SC that it was tagged by biologists aboard the SC DNR research vessel "Palmetto".

The other two fish were members of the same school. They were originally tagged off Key West March 1, 2003 by C. Kalb II, winner of one of the programs rod and reels in 2002. The first recovery was made March 16 by R. Walker off Ft. Pierce, FL aboard his boat "Streaker". The fish had traveled roughly 251 miles during its 15 days of liberty. The second fish was recover March 29 off Jupiter Inlet, FL by B. Smith aboard his vessel "Skirt Chaser". This fish was at liberty for 28 days and had moved northward 215 miles.

Tagging Initiated Off Eastern Bahamas

An attempt was made in the end of March to tag dolphin off the Abacos. The project biologist joined four sportfishing vessels from the Carolinas who were visiting Marsh Harbour, Abacos, Larry Harvey (The Office), Jim Johnston (Big Sky), Harry Oxner (Hat Trick) all home ported in Georgetown, SC and James Weeks (Soul Food) out of Atlantic Beach, NC. These owner/captains graciously offered to host project personnel in an attempt to get a large number of fish tagged for the project in this high priority area.

Unfortunately the weather was typical with one low pressure system followed by another. Fishing became more boat riding than anything else. Dolphin were widely scattered and not schooled up. After seven full days of fishing only four dolphin were tagged for the study. This clearly demonstrates why a multitude of volunteer anglers are vital to accomplish the goals of this study.

Check out the Dolphin Tagging Web Site!

<http://dolphintagging.homestead.com>

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Shimano Joins Star Rods in Sponsoring Awards

The SC Dolphin Tagging Study proudly announces the association of Shimano Fishing Tackle with the Dolphin Study. Through the generous support of the Don Coffey Company based in Ollafee, Kansas the 2003 Project will feature Shimano reels as part of the annual incentive awards.

Shimano Tiagra 50W LRS reels will be featured along with Star Rod Company's standup rod model B50100RSHC. This is a rod and reel combo valued at over \$900 and it can be yours at no cost.

The charter boat, private boat and individual angler who tags the most dolphin during the 2003 calendar year will be presented with one of these outfits. Only one outfit will be presented to a boat or individual. In case of a tie the boat/individual tagging their fish first will win.

One of the 2002 winners of a rod and reel had tagged only 14 schoolies. Bet you can you catch more schoolies than this?

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 page. Digital images are preferred but color slides or prints will 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.



Chester Kalb II of Key West shows that it pays to tag dolphin as he displays his new Star Rod and Penn International 50TW he received from the Dolphin Study.



Photo By Bill Miller

A bull dolphin is tagged off the Abacos, Bahamas in an effort to determine if the US east coast shares the same fish.

Note of Appreciation

The SC Department of Natural Resources wishes to extend a note of thanks to the following individuals and businesses for generously providing financial support to the 2003 Dolphin Tagging Study

Shimano Fishing Tackle - Olafsee, KS

Star Rod Company - Morehead City, NC

Haddrell's Point Tackle & Supplies -
Mt. Pleasant, SC

Sea Pro and Palmetto Custom Boats - Newberry, SC

Charlotte Offshore Sportfishing Club - Charlotte, NC

Columbia Offshore Fishing Club - Columbia, SC

Greenville Salt Water Sportfishing Club - Greenville, SC

Sebastian Inlet Sportfishing Association -
Melbourne, FL

Georgetown Landing Marina - Georgetown, SC

Charleston Harbour Marina - Mt. Pleasant, SC

Harry L. Johnson, Jr. - Mt. Pleasant, SC

William L. Cox, Jr. - Orangeburg, SC

James Price - Charlotte, NC

For more information on the project, visit

<http://dolphintagging.homestead.com> or contact

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