

SC Dolphin Tagging Study

May 2003

Project Status

Phenomenal! That is the word that best describes the recreational fishing community's support for this project. Since last December 120 new anglers have volunteered to tag dolphin for the study bringing the number of volunteers to 470 fishermen.

Sports fishermen have tagged dolphin in every month of 2003 so far. As of May 1, 141 dolphin have already been tagged from the Florida Straits and Eastern Bahamas to southern North Carolina. This was accomplished through the efforts of 29 boats and 37 anglers.

Out of the ten tagging zones established by the project to better assess movement patterns, seven have already had fish marked and released this year.

Dolphin Study Tagging Zones

Zone	Area	Southern Limit	Northern Limit	Number Tagged
1	E. Bahamas	22N	28N	3
2	FL Straits	23N	25N	63
3	South Florida	25N	27N	42
4	Central Florida	27N	30N	10
5	North FL & GA	30N	32N	4
6	Southern SC	32N	33N	18
7	N. SC - S. NC	33N	35N	2
8	Northern NC	35N	36.5N	
9	Virginia	36.5N	38N	
10	N. Mid-Atlantic	38N		

As would be expected, the southern-most zones dominated the winter and early spring tagging activity. Waters off South Florida down through the Florida Straits are thought to be part of the wintering grounds for east coast dolphin. However, there has not yet been a recovery in this area of a fish tagged off the east coast north of Florida.

The tagging study is making good progress, but is going to require the active support of all anglers who have volunteered to achieve the goal of 200 dolphin tagged in each zone this year. How is your fishing zone doing?

Tagged Dolphin Recoveries

Two tag recoveries were reported since the last newsletter. The first recovery involved a fish tagged in zone 3 off Boynton Beach by K. Kahl aboard his boat *Partner* at the end of April. Mr. T. Cox of Palm City reported recovering the 17 1/2 inch fish off St. Lucie Inlet following a 0 to 2 day



liberty (based on recovery letter post mark). More information is being sought on this recapture.

The second tag recovery was made by Captain R. Bost's charter boat *Au-Top-Sea* while fishing SE of Charleston, SC. Tagged just 7 days earlier by Capt. W. Skinner's *Houdini* out of the Isle of Palms, SC, the 7 to 8 pound fish had traveled only about 12 miles. This is the first indication that dolphin will linger off the S.C. coast.

Taggers Needed in Mid-Atlantic Region

Only a dozen anglers who regularly fish the waters from Hatteras to Montauk have signed up to assist the dolphin study. This area may be an important summering grounds for these great gamefish, but assistance from area anglers is needed to accurately assess the Mid-Atlantic Bight's role in their pelagic life.

If you fish this area, please consider donating five of your school dolphin to this study by tagging and releasing them. Consider it an investment in the future of your fishing. Visit our website and register to tag fish for the study.

Also more anglers who fish the eastern Bahamas are also needed to volunteer to tag fish in that region.

SC Dolphin Tagging Study

May 2003

Page 2

Check out the Dolphin Tagging Web Site!

<http://dolphintagging.homestead.com>

The website has been undergoing a major updating with new information and pages added. Now you will be able to access the project's newsletter archives through the site.

Receive the Official Project Tee Shirt

Join a very elite group of offshore fishermen wearing the SC Dolphin Tagging Study tee shirt. This shirt can not be bought. It has to be earned!

Anglers who tag five or more dolphin, captains whose vessels tag ten or more dolphin and fishermen who report recoveries of tagged dolphin receive this distinctive t-shirt free. Fishermen who achieve these levels should indicate on their tag card what size t-shirt they wish to receive.

When can we send you yours?



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 S.C. Dolphin Tagging Study authorization to publish the photo.



Harry Johnson of Mt. Pleasant, SC prepares to release Asa Wynne's dolphin after tagging it as part of the study.

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.

If your offshore sportfishing group is not listed here, then you should consider making a donation in support of this study. This is being done to benefit you, the fisherman.

Shimano Fishing Tackle - Olafsee, KS

Star Rod Company - Morehead City, NC

SC Saltwater Sportfishing Association -
Charleston, SC

Roffer's Ocean Fishing Forecasting Service -
Miami, FL

HMY New Yacht Sales - Dania, FL

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

Donald L. Hammond

SC Department of Natural Resources

P. O. Box 12559

Charleston, SC 29422

Voice (843) 953-9847