

SC Dolphin Tagging Study

September 2003

Project Status

The number of fishermen volunteering to tag dolphin for the study is now at 600. Many of the volunteers have been anglers fishing the dolphin's northern summering grounds of the Mid-Atlantic Bight.

For the first time dolphin were tagged in 9 of the 10 study zones in one month which also resulted in fish having been marked the full range of the study. As of September 1, anglers have achieved the project's base level goal of tagging over 1,000 dolphins in a single year. This has been accomplished through the efforts of only 111 boats and 236 anglers.

The biggest news was that the first fish to be tagged for the study in Zones 8, 9 and 10 were recorded in August. While research project staff marked fish in Zone 8 off Oregon Inlet, NC, a private fisherman tagged the first two fish off Virginia. Nantucket fishermen made history, tagging dolphin the furthest north they have ever been marked. Fish marked in this northern area have great potential for aiding in identifying the fall migration route(s).

Florida Strait anglers, Zone 2, increased their contribution to the study by tagging 69 percent of the fish marked and released in August. This brings the number of dolphin tagged after July 1 in south Florida and the Florida Straits to 295 fish. These fish hold the key to confirming the exciting potential of a Western Caribbean connection for dolphin in these southern areas during the summer. The project's hypothesis is that these fish will move through the Yucatan Channel into the Western Caribbean this fall and winter.



Tag Recovery Reports Pickup

Five tag recoveries have been reported since August 1. However, only two of these actually occurred in August. The others took place from early June to mid-July. Time delay between recovery and reporting ranged from 27 days to over three months. One of the critical problems with these late reports, is that fishermen often forget details surrounding the catch, which diminishes the value of the recovery. But a late report still beats no report.

Recent articles in national magazines (see Sport Fishing, Oct. 2003 and Tide, Oct. 2003) very likely sparked the recall of these fishermen regarding their tag recovery and prompted them to report the information. This shows just one of the many ways that sportfishing media can contribute to the success of fisheries research.

Four of the five recoveries reported this period involved fish tagged off South Carolina and recovered off North Carolina. The fifth recovery involved a fish tagged by C. Kalb II off Key West, FL on June 8th and was recovered two days and 28 miles later by W. Forster of Jacksonville off Marathon, FL aboard his boat, *Martha Jean*.

The four other recoveries were tagged by boats based out of Charleston, SC with two fish recovered off Morehead and two off Hatteras. The first recovery was a fish tagged by B. Walker of Mt. Pleasant, SC fishing aboard his boat, *Farmer's Tan*, SE of Charleston and was recovered 14 days and 246 miles later off Hatteras by a charter boat and reported by T. Salyers of Hatteras. The second recovery was a fish tagged by S. Lowe aboard Rit Ritter's boat, *Prowess*, SE of Charleston, which was at liberty for 38 days during which it traveled 215 miles before being recovered.

Dolphin Study Tagging Progress By Zore

Zone	Area	Southern Limit	Northern Limit	Number Tagged
1	E. Bahamas	22N	28N	9
2	FL Straits	23N	25N	472
3	South Florida	25N	27N	156
4	Central Florida	27N	30N	40
5	North FL & GA	30N	32N	53
6	Southern SC	32N	33N	274
7	N. SC - S. NC	33N	35N	54
8	Northern NC	35N	36.5N	0
9	Virginia	36.5N	38N	2
10	N. Mid-Atlantic	38N		8

How is your fishing zone doing? Have you contributed to the tagging effort in your zone?

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by M. Wichtrich fishing aboard the charter boat *Bill Collector* out of Morehead. The third tag recovery involved a fish released SE of Charleston by H. King of Anderson, SC while fishing aboard his vessel *Laidback*. This dolphin was at liberty 46 days and traveled 220 miles before being recaptured by M. Brown of New Bern, NC while fishing off Atlantic Beach, NC aboard the charter boat *Sunrise*. The final recovery came from a fish tagged SE of Charleston by R. Brown while fishing on Ed Kosnik's boat *Special Lady*. The fish traveled 295 miles during its 27 days at liberty before being recaptured by B. Pleasants of Mineral, VA while fishing aboard his boat, *Elesue*, SE of Hatteras.

Competition for Year End Awards Heats Up

It has become apparent that some anglers can be very competitive even when tagging fish for science. The serious taggers have learned that by parking on a school of small dolphin, 20 or more fish can be tagged in short order. Whether it is the desire to win a Shimano TI50 on a top-of-the-line Star Standup Rod (an \$800+ value) or just to be recognized as having tagged the most dolphin, the result has been a big win for science and fisheries management.

Last year, fishermen won the rods and reels with as few as 16-tagged fish to their credit. In March when one fisherman had already tagged over 50 fish, it became apparent that low numbers would not win this year. This year 19 anglers have tagged 10 fish or more with 8 of these having marked 20 or more fish. So far 25 boats have released 10 or more dolphin with tags while 15 boats have tagged 20 or more.



This study is being conducted to help insure that this scene will continue to be as common for future generations as it is today. It is for this reason that fishermen should be assisting this study.

Private sports fishermen have been the backbone of the tagging activity marking and released over 90 percent of the fish. The top 10 private boats accounted for 65 percent of the fish tagged. It is also impressive that the top 10 individuals were responsible for 47 percent of the fish tagged.

The current standings for individual angler shows last year's top angler currently retaining his title, Chester Kalb of Key West, FL with 110 fish. But Justin Brown of Pembroke Pines, FL is posing a serious threat having tagged 104 fish. In third place but well within striking distance of the leader is Kerry Kahl of Lake Worth, FL with 84 fish to his credit. Bob Delizza of Weston, FL is presently in fourth place having tagged 54 fish. Bill Baugh of Ramrod Key, FL with 48 fish tagged, holds fifth place.

In the private boat competition it is Chester Kalb's boat out of Key West that currently leads the field with 163-tagged dolphin. Don Brown's boat *Draggin Dreams* from Pembroke Pines in second place with 105 fish tagged. The Partner owned by Kerry Kahl of Lake Worth with 97 fish holds third place. A South Carolina boat, *Triple Play* owned by Jimmy and Art Hightower of Goose creek holds the fourth position having tagged 74 dolphin. Fifth place is held by the *Ballyhoo* owned by Bill Baugh out of Ramrod Key with 60 fish tagged.

The charter boat category has not enjoyed as strong competition as the other categories. However, recent interest shown by several NC and SC vessels indicate that this competition may be just starting to heat up. Currently in first place is the Charleston, SC based *Plumb Krazy* captained by Jerry Williams with 27 fish tagged. Another Charleston area boat *Special Lady* captained by John Thomas follows closely in second with 21 fish. Third is held by the *Anticipation* owned by Albert Springs and based out of Oregon Inlet, NC with 10 fish. The Georgetown, SC boat, *The Office* owned and captained by Larry Harvey is in fourth place while Captain Alex Sorice's boat *Handel'n Business* out of Satellite Beach, FL is in fifth place.

For more information on the project, visit
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