

Cooperative Science Services, LLC Dolphin Tagging Research Project

August 2006



Dolphin Move North

Anglers reported recovering 11 tagged dolphin during July 2006. This equals the highest number of recaptures recorded for the month of July during the past five years. Dolphin movements underwent a complete change, shifting from short liberties and distances (average of 6.4 days liberty and 115 miles traveled) in the first half of the year to longer freedom periods and longer movements (36.9 days moving 477 miles).

July tag recoveries involved fish released off the Bahamas (1 fish), South Carolina (3 fish), North Carolina (1 fish) and Florida (6 fish). Unlike the recoveries reported in the last newsletter, there was only one fish recovered in the zone where it was tagged and only one recovery off the Florida coast. Anglers fishing off North Carolina reported 8 out of the 11 tag recoveries. The remaining recoveries came from Florida, South Carolina and New York.

The tagging team of Don Brown and his son Justin of Pembroke Pines, Florida, marked four of the recovered fish. Three of their recaptured fish were particularly interesting. Two fish that were marked in the same school on June 24, 2006, off Islamorada, Florida, were recovered off North Carolina. The first recovery came 15 days later off Cape Lookout, 702 miles from the release site, while the second was made off Oregon Inlet 3 days after the first fish's recapture, a distance of 825 miles from the release point. These fish average traveling more than 45 miles per day in these travels.

This raises the old question of whether dolphin schools remain together during their brief life. If the school did, it would make these recoveries a chronicle of the movement of an entire school of fish.

Another dolphin tagged by the Browns off Islamorada on May 26 established a new distance record for domestic travel (in US territory) by a dolphin. Emanuel Amato of Niantic, Connecticut, reported catching the fish near Block Canyon off Montauk, New York, while fishing aboard the *Chumchucker*. The fish had traveled 1,198 miles from its release site during the 51 days of freedom. This movement covers almost the entire normal range for East Coast dolphin.

Three of the recovery reports involved dolphin tagged off South Carolina. One of these fish was recovered in-zone, 13 miles from where it was released following a liberty of 16 days. The other two tagged fish were recovered by North Carolina anglers fishing off Cape Lookout (58 days at liberty and 220 miles) and Frying Pan Shoals (54 days at liberty and 118 miles). These fish traveled at speeds of 1 to 4 miles per day, which is far below the speed traveled by the fish moving between Florida and North Carolina. This differential could be the results of the South Carolina fish spending time going in circles in the Charleston Gyre.

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The single Florida recovery is interesting from two perspectives. First, the fish tagged May 26 off Marathon was at liberty for 58 days when it was recovered off North Miami, a distance of only 112 miles. This is the longest period that a dolphin tagged in southern Florida has been recovered there. The other interesting fact shows the value of releasing small dolphin. This fish was physically measured at time of release and recapture. In less than two months the fish had grown from 18 inches to 32 inches fork length. This translates into an amazing growth rate of 1.7 inches per week.

A dolphin tagged in the western Bahamian waters off Andros Island on June 10 became the second recovery to link fish in the area of Andros with those found off North Carolina. This fish, tagged by Richard DeLizza's crew aboard the *Rock Boat*, was recovered 31 days later off Cape Lookout by the charter boat *Beats Workin*. The crew of the *Rock Boat* also tagged the other fish off Andros that went to North Carolina.

For a complete listing of recoveries of 2006 fish go to the "Study Results" page on www.dolphintagging.com.

Special Year-end Incentive Award Offered

The number of year-end awards has been increased to four. In addition to giving a Shimano TLD50 on a standup Star Rod for the most dolphin tagged by a private boat, charter boat and individual, a rod and reel will also be given to the boat fishing outside Florida that tags the most fish.

This is being done because of the distinct advantage that Florida anglers enjoy. As a rule, Sunshine State anglers have a much longer season of high abundance and enjoy a much shorter ride to the fishing grounds than most areas on the east and Gulf coasts.

Top Boats Tagging in Areas Outside of Florida

Name	Captain	City	2006
Makara	Steve Unsell	Miami, FL (Bahamas)	34
Houdini	Wayne Skinner	Isle of Palms, SC	32
Special Lady	John Thomas	Mt. Pleasant, SC	28
Rock Boat	Richard DeLizza	Weston, FL (Bahamas)	24
Prowess	Bryan Gulski	Charleston, SC	22
Outta Range	Fred Cory	Raleigh, NC	14
Seasonal Affair	Ken Nelson	Mt. Pleasant, SC	12
Caramba	Dale Lackey Jr.	Charleston, SC	10
Reel Estate	Bruce Campbell	Baltimore, MD	7
Winky Dink	Scott Rooke	Charleston, SC	6
Lady Grady	Jim Hardin	Greenville, NC	6
Fish Ng	Anthony Ng	Wintersville, NC	6

2006 Tagging Concentrated off Florida

Dolphin Study Tagging Progress by Zones, August 1, 2006

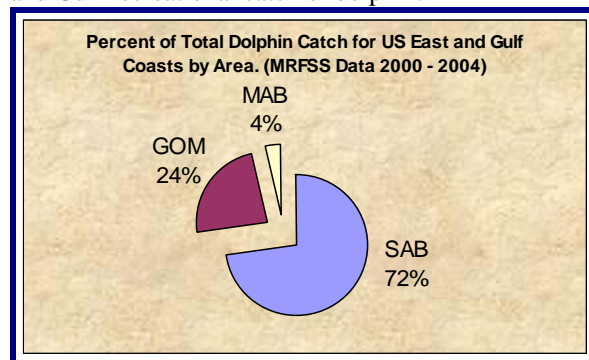
Zone	Area	Southern Limit	Northern Limit	Number Tagged
1	Bahamas	22N	28N	71
2	FL Straits	23N	25N	637
3	South Florida	25N	27N	296
4	Central Florida	27N	30N	55
5	North FL & GA	30N	32N	9
6	South Carolina	32N	33N	168
7	N. SC - S. NC	33N	35N	32
8	Northern NC	35N	36.5N	0
9	Virginia	36.5N	38N	3
10	N. Mid-Atlantic	38N		4
11	Gulf of Mexico	24N	30.2N	6

Anglers fishing on 85 different boats have reported tagging 1,281 dolphin this year. This is just 40 fish less than last year this time. The 2006 tagging has been heavily focused in the Florida Keys and South Florida areas. Anglers fishing these waters have tagged 73% of the dolphin marked this year.

With dolphin fishing just reaching its peak in the Mid-Atlantic Bight and dolphin fishing still good off the North Carolina coast, these areas have the opportunity to contribute to the Dolphin Study by aggressively tagging the small fish. If this study is to learn about the behavior and movements of domestic dolphin stocks, it will require that large numbers of fish are tagged throughout their range along the East and Gulf Coasts. It is up to local anglers to provide data on their dolphin fishery for inclusion in this study.

Importance of Dolphin

Dolphin are the dominant fish caught in the offshore recreational troll fishery in the Gulf of Mexico (GOM) and South Atlantic Bight (SAB). However, in the Mid Atlantic Bight (MAB), while dolphin are highly prized, they are overshadowed by tunas. Recreational anglers fishing the SAB catch almost 75% of the US Atlantic and Gulf recreational catch of dolphin.



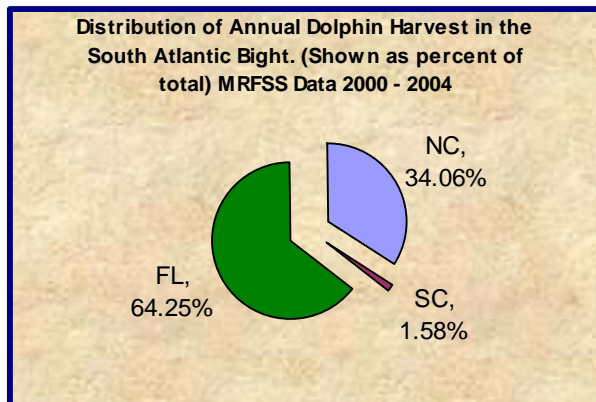
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Within the SAB recreational dolphin fishery two states account for more than 98% of the area's dolphin harvest. Florida anglers catch more than 64% of the fish while North Carolina anglers pull in 34% of the catch. Georgia lands only 0.2% of the fish and South Carolina fishermen bring in only 1.5% of the total catch.



This data clearly shows which states have the most to gain from a healthy dolphin fishery. Offshore recreational anglers fishing in Florida and North Carolina should be the leaders in ensuring the future of healthy dolphin stocks.

Donations Support Dolphin Research

The continuation of this highly successful study hinges on private financial support. In today's world of marine fisheries management there is not enough state or federal money available to finance research needed on fish stocks that are overfished. These declining fish stocks receive priority when it comes to research dollars.

Fishery managers know that proactive research should be done on important stocks before they get into trouble. However, it is hard for state and federal agencies to justify spending dwindling research dollars on species that are, by all indications, still healthy.

This is the dilemma that research on dolphinfish faces. The CSS Dolphin Tagging Research Project has gathered information on the species that had never before been achieved. It has provided insight into movements of the fish that astounded researchers and managers alike. But this study will only continue with financial help from private industry and individuals.

Donations to the Dolphin Study are fully tax deductible. Contributions should be made out to the Hilton Head Reef Foundation/ Dolphin Study and sent to CSS at the address shown at right.

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