

# Cooperative Science Services, LLC Dolphinfish Research Program

Made possible by a grant from Costa Del Mar

December 2011



## Gulf Council to Drop Dolphinfish Management

A NOAA Southeast Fishery Bulletin (FB11-084) dated October 24, 2011, announced that NOAA's Fisheries Service was seeking public comment on a proposed rule to implement annual catch limits and accountability measures for coastal migratory pelagic species in the Gulf of Mexico and South Atlantic. One of the actions proposed was **to remove** four species (cero mackerel, little tunny, **dolphin** and Gulf of Mexico bluefish) **from federal management**. This resulted in several irate anglers calling me, asking what-the-H\_\_ was going on.

Most fishermen reading this message would immediately wonder why the South Atlantic Fisheries Management Council just underwent a year-long process to establish new guidelines for the management of dolphin in the South Atlantic Bight, if the species is being removed from all management consideration. The answer is that this is a typical NOAA misstatement. The action proposed has no effect on the regulations on dolphin in the South Atlantic Bight.

The real issue is that the Gulf of Mexico Fisheries Management Council has petitioned NOAA to remove dolphin from the list of species that they are responsible for managing. The reasons are that the Council currently does not have any restrictions on the harvest of dolphin and, secondly, they do not want to prepare a management plan for dolphin as mandated by the Magnuson Reauthorization Bill.

Because the species is completely unregulated in the Gulf, many would say that it makes sense to reduce the Council's work load by dumping the responsibility for managing dolphin. However, the fact that dolphin is the most harvested species in the Gulf by the blue water

recreational troll-fishery clearly indicates the great importance the species has to the recreational fishing industry of the Gulf. Yet the Gulf Council does not consider the species important enough to spend the effort to develop a precautionary management plan. Is this another case where government is content to wait until the stocks are overfished before beginning any action to conserve the stock? If you fish the Gulf, you may wish to speak with your Gulf Council staff about this action. The Gulf Council can be reached at 1-888-833-1844.

## Capt. Bouncer's Confused Fish

Talk about contradicting movements, here is a case where two fish tagged the same day by the same boat were confused as to which direction they should travel. This story begins on November 4, 2011, when Capt. Bouncer Smith tagged eight dolphin off Miami, Florida, during a trip aboard his charter boat *Bouncer's Dusky*.

Capt. Nick Campbell operator of the charter boat *Doghhouse* recovered the first of Capt. Bouncer's tagged dolphin during a trip off Islamorada, Florida. The dolphin had been at liberty for seven days before being recovered. It had traveled 62.7 miles southwest of its release point. The second tagged dolphin was recovered by Michael Marino off Juno Beach, Florida, during a fishing trip aboard the private boat *Bluewater Bones*. This fish was at liberty for 15 days before its recapture. This fish had moved 84.5 miles to the north of its release point. Interestingly enough, the fish traveling south, supposedly against the Florida Current, moved at a faster speed. The south-bound fish averaged 8.9 miles per day while the fish moving northward, with the current, traveled at an average rate of 7.7 miles per day.

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Is this southerly movement a confirmation of an annual fall/winter southerly movement off south Florida by dolphinfish? Only two other fish tagged in the fall/winter have shown similar movements. One was a fish tagged off West Palm Beach, Florida, in December and recovered 23 days later, 52.7 miles to the south. The other was tagged in March off Miami (Capt. Bouncer) and recaptured 17 days later, 145 miles to the southwest off Key West.

There have been more than 250 tagged dolphin recovered off the Florida Keys, and south Florida during this study, of which only three have shown a fall/winter movement to the south. This suggests that if there is a regular fall southerly movement by dolphin off south Florida, it involves only a small segment of the dolphin population present in this area.



Two dolphinfish tagged off Miami, Florida, on the same day in the same location had very different ideas about where they wanted to go. One went north while the other went south.



## Year-End Awards

Four tagging participants will each receive a new rod and reel valued at more than \$500 provided by the Dolphin Tagging Study. Four other participants will receive a pair of world famous brand sunglasses. These awards are intended to recognize those individuals who have invested considerable time and effort in tagging dolphin

The Dolphinfish Research Program needs your financial support. No federal funds support this important research. This program exists because of private donations.

Dolphin Tagging Progress by Zones, November 30, 2011.

Zone	Area	Southern Limit	Northern Limit	Number Tagged
1	Bahamas	22° N	28° N	62
2	FL Straits	23° N	25° N	351
3	South Florida	25° N	27° N	297
4	Central Florida	27° N	30° N	49
5	North FL & GA	30° N	32° N	30
6	Southern SC	32° N	33° N	105
7	N. SC - S. NC	33° N	35° N	28
8	Northern NC	35° N	36.5° N	7
9	Virginia	36.5° N	38° N	0
10	N. Mid-Atlantic	38° N		4
11	Gulf of Mexico			110
12	W Central Atlantic			102
13	Caribbean Sea			40
	Total			1185



On November 17, 2011, the crew of Manuel Botello's boat Missing Angel deployed a pop-off satellite archival tag on a 51-inch dolphin off San Juan, Puerto Rico. This is the second satellite tag deployed in a cooperative study with Wesley Merten, a doctoral student at the University of Puerto Rico. Photo by Wess Merten.

for this important study. The possibility of winning one of these prizes also adds incentive for anglers to put forth a little extra effort that they would not otherwise have done. It also adds a competitive air to the program for those anglers who are serious about tagging fish for this study. The private boat, charter boat, boat tagging in areas other than the Florida east coast, and the individual angler that tag the most dolphin in 2011 will receive a TLD 30 on a Custom Crafted Star standup rod. The runner-up in each of these categories will receive a pair of Costa Del Mar sunglasses.

These awards are possible thanks to the generosity of **Haddrell's Point Tackle and Supply** of Mt. Pleasant and Charleston, South Carolina, **Star Rods of Sea Striker Tackle** of Morehead City, North Carolina, and **Costa Del Mar** of Daytona Beach, Florida. I deeply appreciate the support the program has received from Mike Able at Haddrell's Point and Dick Henry at Sea Striker and Alvin Perkinson at Costa Del Mar. It is through their loyal support that these year-end awards are possible.

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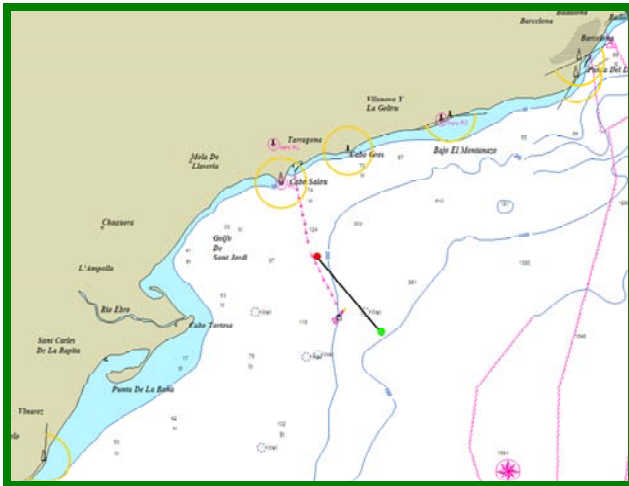
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## More Recoveries from the Mediterranean Sea

Oriol Ribalta, a fisheries biologist and vice president of the Confederation of Responsible Recreational Anglers in Spain has reported two new tagged dolphin recoveries from the Mediterranean. Oriol, along with Dr. Gorka Sancho, fisheries scientist at the College of Charleston, Charleston, South Carolina, heads up a cooperative study with the DRP on the movements of dolphinfish in the Mediterranean and Eastern North Atlantic.

The first tag recovery occurred on October 3, 2011 at the weather buoy east of Delta de Ebro, Spain. The fish was recovered by Chris Van Poelje of Miami Platja, Spain, at the same buoy where it was tagged the day before. The second tag recovery was made by a commercial seine boat on October 6, 2011, a few miles north of the first tag recovery. This *llampuga* (Spanish for dolphin) was also at liberty for only one day, but it had traveled 15.5 miles northwest from its release site during its brief freedom.



Two tagged dolphin were recently recovered in the Balearic Sea off the Spanish Coast at Cabo Salou. One fish came from the weather buoy east of Cabo Tortosa and the other just northwest of the weather buoy. Graphics provided by Oriol Ribalta.

## New 2011 Financial Contributors

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