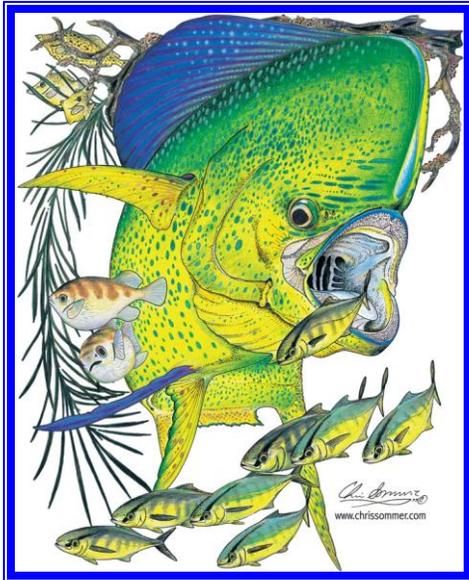


Cooperative Science Services, LLC Dolphinfish Research Program

Made possible by a grant from Costa Del Mar

July 2012



2012 Recaptures

The slow tagging activity in 2012 has resulted in fewer tagged fish being reported recaptured. Since the first two spectacular recoveries this winter, there have been six tagged fish reported recovered. All of these involved fish that were both tagged and recovered off Florida. The latest recaptures were for fish that were at liberty for rather short terms, one to 17 days.

Capt. Bouncer Smith, who operates the charter boat *Bouncer's Dusky* out of Miami, Florida, is one few fishermen who tag fish in the winter. It was a fish he tagged on March 13, 2012, that produced the third recovery of the year. After a liberty period of eight days, Doug Kane recovered the fish during a charter fishing trip aboard the *White Dog* off St. Lucie Inlet, Florida. The fish had traveled 112 miles north of its release site during its liberty, averaging a leisurely pace of 14 miles per day.

The next fish to be recovered was tagged off Marathon, Florida, by the charter boat *Keeper*, captained by Charlene Brown on May 9, 2012. The fish was recovered 17 days later off Pompano Beach, Florida, by Jonathan Major. Moving north at an average rate of 9.1 miles per day, the fish had moved 155 miles during its liberty.

The fifth tagged fish to be recovered this year was tagged off Cudjoe Key, Florida, on June 8, 2012, by Darryl Williams, a member of the crew aboard the *Killin Time II*, owned by Don Gates. The *Killin Time II* has been one of the top boats tagging dolphin for the past six years, having tagged more than 1,400 fish for the study. Glenn Monroe recovered the fish two days later during a fishing trip off Marathon, Florida. Realizing the fish was under size, 16 inches fork length, Glenn wrote down the

tag number and quickly re-released the fish with the tag in place. In its brief two days of freedom, the fish had moved northward 24.7 miles for a daily travel rate of 12.4 miles per day or 0.5 mile per hour.

The last three recoveries were also tagged off Cudjoe Key, Florida, by members of the *Killin Time II* crew. A fish tagged by Kelley Allen on June 9, 2012, was recovered the next day off Islamorada, Florida. The fast-moving fish had traveled 55.6 miles north overnight before being recaptured by Steven Isenhour during a charter fishing trip aboard the *Miller Time*.

The seventh fish recaptured this year was released on June 7, 2012, by Beau Benson, grandson of Don Gates and third generation of the Gates family to tag dolphin. This fish managed to avoid hooks for three days before being recovered off Ft. Lauderdale, Florida, by Jeff Salter, who was fishing aboard the charter boat *Lady Helen*. Having traveled 164 miles northward during its freedom, the fish averaged moving at the rapid pace of 54.7 miles each day.

Don Gates provided the final fish to be recovered in this report, tagging and releasing it on June 7, 2012. Like the previous recovery, this fish was recaptured off Ft. Lauderdale after just three days of freedom. It was recaptured by Mike Brown of Dania Beach, Florida. The recovery was reported by Capt. Bouncer Smith. Having traveled 161 miles from its release site, this fish had averaged traveling 53.7 miles per day.

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These six tag recoveries represent what has become accepted as the normal movement pattern for dolphin off South Florida and the Keys. The range of speeds at which these fish traveled, 9 to 56 miles per day, fall within previously observed rates. However, it seems a little more than coincidence that three fish tagged in the narrow window of June 7 to 9 off Cudjoe Key exhibited the same fast-paced travel of roughly 55 miles per day. Swimming at this speed these fish could travel from Key West to Cape Hatteras, North Carolina, a 900-mile trip in just 17 days.

Over the ten years of this study, dolphin moving from the Keys up to the south Florida area have averaged moving at the rate of 35 miles per day. The speed at which these three fish traveled is more than 50 percent above the average speed. This could indicate a change in the flow pattern of the Florida Current, which influenced the rate of travel of these fish.

Satellite Tag Deployed Off South Carolina



The twelfth satellite tag to be deployed on a dolphinfish was placed on a 44 inch bull on June 22, 2012, off Charleston, South Carolina.

Offshore fishermen know how carrying a cameraman along on a fishing trip can be the kiss-of-death in catching fish when trying to capture a specific fish, especially when it has to be a large individual. Bringing a satellite tag on a boat has about the same effect. Just ask any of the boat owners and captains who have been kind enough to assist in efforts to deploy these high-tech gadgets on dolphin.

Ritt Ritter, owner of the sports fishing vessel *Prowess*, home ported in Charleston, South Carolina, is all too familiar with this jinx, having made four prior attempts to catch a dolphin that would qualify for a satellite tag. This June trip started out looking like the previous tagging attempts, when the first three hours of fishing passed without catching a single fish. So when a nice fat bull dolphin of 26 to 27 pounds finally jumped on a hook, it took a strong commitment to science and conservation for the crew to give up what could be that

day's only decent meat fish. Few other crews would be so inclined.

Dolphin Tagging Progress by Zones, June 30, 2012.

Zone	Area	Southern Limit	Northern Limit	Number Tagged
1	Bahamas	22° N	28° N	7
2	FL Straits	23° N	25° N	181
3	South Florida	25° N	27° N	84
4	Central Florida	27° N	30° N	31
5	North FL & GA	30° N	32° N	4
6	Southern SC	32° N	33° N	26
7	N. SC - S. NC	33° N	35° N	11
8	Northern NC	35° N	36.5° N	0
9	Virginia	36.5° N	38° N	0
10	N. Mid-Atlantic	38° N		0
11	Gulf of Mexico			16
12	W Central Atlantic			11
13	Caribbean Sea			20
	Total			391



Ritt Ritter (blue shirt) and his crew aboard the Prowess were very generous in giving up the first fish of the day for science, when there were no fish in the box.

The tag's microcomputer will record the water temperature, pressure, and light intensity at intervals of two minutes for a 30-day period. This will allow the fish to be tracked as it moves up and down through the water column. At the end of the programmed period the instrument will release from the fish and float to the surface, where it will transmit its data via the Argos satellite system back to the office.

These instruments placed on other dolphin have provided many revelations. They have shown dolphin will dive to depths of 800 feet, engage in extensive use of deep waters, and inhabit much colder waters than previously thought.

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HH Reef Foundation/Dolphin Study

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Club Raises Money for Dolphin Research

The Blue Water Fishing Club in Florence, South Carolina, held its annual fundraising tournament on June 9, 2012, to benefit the Dolphinfish Research Program. It was held at the Georgetown Landing Marina on Winyah Bay, in Georgetown, South Carolina.

Following the one-day event, the money raised by the tournament, combined with personal donations from club members Kent Carraway, Michael Smith and Bryant Stokes, totaled more than \$2,000 to support the program. It is the support from such conservation-minded sports fishing clubs that is one of the pillars of popular support behind the project.

Clubs & Individuals Collect Dolphin Data

Four sports fishing clubs and three individuals have joined with DRP staff in collecting data on more than 450 dolphin this year. This included 208 female fish and 226 male fish with the sex of the remaining fish undetermined. The fish ranged in size from a 20-inch, two-pounder to a 52-inch trophy weighing 47 pounds.

John Ouellette and his sons Kyle and Brian of Miami, Florida, served as weigh masters for four tournaments in the Florida Keys. They seized this opportunity to collect data on the fish entered at each.

Numerous sports fishing clubs have recognized that with just a little additional effort they can provide valuable information to the study of dolphinfish during their tournaments. Collecting the length, weight, and sex of the fish allows these tournaments to maximize the value and benefit of the harvested fish. Participating are the **Central Florida Offshore Anglers** of Orlando, Florida, **Florida Sports Fishing Association** of Cocoa Beach, Florida, **West Palm Beach Fishing Club**, of West Palm Beach, Florida, and the **Blue Water Fishing Club** of Florence, South Carolina.

New 2012 Financial Contributors

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Michael L. Smith, Florence, SC
Blue Water Fishing Club, Florence, SC
Kent Carraway, Florence, SC
Bryant Stokes, Florence, SC
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This high-flying bull dolphin shows the grace and power that have earned the species the respect and admiration of fishermen throughout the world.

