

SC Dolphin Tagging Study

January 2004

Anglers Make 2003 A Big Success

What a year. Volunteers tagged 1,185 dolphin during 2003. Anglers marked and released fish along their entire east coast range from Key West, FL to Nantucket, MA. Their efforts resulted in 23 fish being reported as recaptured providing extremely important information for the management of this valuable resource.

The recovered fish had traveled a total of 5,360 miles collectively. They averaged being at liberty for 24 days and traveling 221 miles straight-line distance from their release point. Liberty periods ranged from 1 to 121 days with distances traveled by the recovered fish ranging from 5 to 995 miles. Rates at which the fish traveled ranged from a less than 1 mile per day to over 40 miles per day and averaged 9.5 miles per day.

Two of the most important pieces of information gained in the past year related to links between fish in geographical regions and migratory habits. For the first time a direct link was shown between the dolphin found in the Straits of Florida and those found in the northern Mid-Atlantic. Recoveries proved that some dolphin will linger in an area for short periods while at the same time, other fish travel northward at a fast pace.

Two other recoveries reflect the wild-animal nature of the fish. During May a fish tagged off Cape Canaveral, FL traveled south (rather than north) almost 150 miles to Boyton Beach. This reversed movement simply shows that animals are still individuals and that some random movements do occur. The other tag recovery, one picked up off a Ft. Lauderdale beach, probably reflects the role of dolphin in the ocean's food web. Small dolphin are known to serve as a primary food source for large predators such as marlin, sharks and even other dolphin. This tagged fish likely fell victim to such an animal with the tag passing through the digestive track undamaged.

2003 Results

The high level of public support for this research project continued during 2003. An additional 300 anglers volunteered to tag dolphin for the study bringing the number of fishermen participating to 655 individuals.

A total of 126 different boats tagged dolphin this year. Over half of the boats that tagged dolphin in 2002 continued tagging in 2003. These boats were based in seven east coast states and the Bahamas. The number of boats actually tagging dolphin from each area was: SC- 58, FL- 53, NC - 8, MA - 2, NJ - 2, MD - 1, VA - 1 and Andros Island - 1.

An amazing number of anglers, 258, gave up their dolphin to support this study. Over half of these fishermen gave up multiple fish to be tagged and returned to the water. Anglers from such unlikely areas as Wisconsin, Indiana, Arizona and Colorado even participated in tagging dolphin. The twelve states and one foreign nation where participating anglers resided and the number from each state are as follows:



South Carolina - 131	Arizona - 1
Florida - 82	Colorado - 1
North Carolina - 13	Indiana - 1
Massachusetts - 6	Virginia - 1
Georgia - 3	Wisconsin - 1
New Jersey - 3	Bahamas - 3
Maryland - 2	

When looking at the number of dolphin tagged off the different states, it not surprising that 61 percent of all dolphin tagged were off Florida since that state has been shown to have the highest annual recreational landings of dolphin every year. Conversely, North Carolina, which has the second highest annual recreational landings of dolphin, accounted for less than 5 percent of the total fish tagged. South Carolina, which usually ranks third to fifth in the annual dolphin landings by recreational fishermen, saw 25 percent of the fish tagged for the study release off its coast. It was largely the efforts of SC anglers who also marked and released another 6 percent of the total off the Georgia coast.

2003 Dolphin Tagging Results by Zone

Zone	Area	Southern Limit	Northern Limit	Number Tagged
1	E. Bahamas	22N	28N	9
2	FL Straits	23N	25N	507
3	South Florida	25N	27N	174
4	Central Florida	27N	30N	48
5	North FL & GA	30N	32N	69
6	Southern SC	32N	33N	297
7	N. SC - S. NC	33N	35N	57
8	Northern NC	35N	36.5N	0
9	Virginia	36.5N	38N	2
10	N. Mid-Atlantic	38N		22

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Winners and Top Finishers for 2003

Many anglers provided truly outstanding support for the study in 2003. Fifteen boats tagged more than 20 fish each while 19 individuals tagged over 10 fish apiece.

Chester Kalb II of Key West, FL repeated his 2002 tagging effort finishing first as individual angler and as top private boat. Chester has chosen to be recognized as the top private boat in the tagging competition. Justin Brown of Pembroke Pines, FL who fishes on his father's boat *Draggin Dreams* has earned the top angler award. The top charter boat award goes to Jerry William's *Plumb Krazy* based in Charleston, SC.

The Final standings for the year are:

Individual Angler Division

1. Chester Kalb II of Key West, FL – 124 fish
2. Justin Brown of Pembroke Pines, FL – 104 fish
3. Kerry Kahl of Lake Worth, FL – 84 fish
4. Bob Delizza of Weston, FL – 57 fish
5. Bill Baugh of Ramrod Key, FL – 48 fish
6. William Cathey of Greensboro, NC – 35 fish
7. Deanna Kalb of Key West, FL – 25 fish
8. Kelly Allen of Orlando, FL – 20 fish
9. Rob Harris of Cudjoe Key, FL – 19 fish
10. Sarah Hightower of Moncks Corner, SC – 16 fish

Private Boat Division

1. Chester Kalb's Boat of Key West, FL – 177 fish
2. Don Brown's *Draggin Dreams* of Pembroke Pines, FL - 105 fish
3. Kerry Kahl's *Partner* of Lake Worth, FL – 97 fish
4. The Hightower Brother's *Triple Play* of Charleston, SC – 74 fish
5. Richard Delizza's *Rock Boat* of Weston, FL – 62 fish
6. Bill Baugh's *Ballyhoo* of Ramrod Key, FL – 60 fish
7. Don Gates' *Killin Time* of Chuluota, FL – 49 fish
8. Steve Leasure's *Summer Girl* of Charleston, SC – 37 fish
9. Rit Ritter's *Prowess* of Charleston, SC – 35 fish
10. Will Cathey's *Will Power* of Greensboro, NC – 35 fish

Charter Boat Division

1. Jerry William's *Plumb Krazy* of Charleston, SC – 29 fish
2. John Thomas's *Special Lady* of Charleston, SC – 22 fish
3. Randy Ragland's *Castaway* of Charleston, SC – 21 fish
4. Albert Spring's *Anticipation* of Oregon Inlet, NC – 11 fish
5. James Messina's *Reel Fantasy* of Ocean City, MD – 7 fish
6. Charlene Brown's *Keeper* of Marathon, FL – 3 fish
7. Larry Harvey's *The Office* of Georgetown, SC – 3 fish



8. Alex Sorice's *Handel'n Business* of Satellite Beach, FL – 2 fish
9. Bob Norris' *Temporary Insanity* of Cocoa, FL – 1 fish

Anglers with Most Tag Recoveries Recognized

While it is critical to any tag study to get large numbers of animals marked and released, it is the recoveries of those tags that makes or breaks the study. Such studies operate on the basic premise that the more animals marked results in more recoveries. In many cases tag recoveries appear to be random. However, because you are dealing with live animals, the way individuals conduct the tagging has been found to have a large bearing on the results. In other words, some people release healthier fish and thus have a higher recovery rate.

Through the generous support of Chris Costello of Costello Studios, producer of unique trophies and plaques in Titusville, FL, and internationally renowned artist Cary Chen of Miami, FL, the project is able to acknowledge those anglers who efforts resulted in the most tag recoveries during 2003. The following anglers will receive a beautifully engraved plaque and a fantastic dolphin poster entitled "Definite Signs".

First Place Tag Recoveries

Chester Kalb II of Key West, FL - 5 Tag Recoveries

Second Place Tag Recoveries

Justin Brown of Pembroke Pines, FL – 3 Tag Recoveries

Third Place Tag Recoveries

Bill Baugh of Ramrod Key, FL – 2 Tag Recoveries

For more information on the project, visit

<http://dolphintagging.homestead.com> or contact

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