

# Cooperative Science Services, LLC Dolphin Tagging Research Project

July 2006



## Recoveries Pour In

A total of 27 tagged dolphin have been reported recaptured as of the end of June 2006. This is the second highest number of recaptures recorded for the first half of the year during the study. These recoveries have followed the basic northward movements exhibited in previous years.

Fish tagged in Florida were involved in 23 of the recoveries. Two of the recoveries were fish tagged in 2005 which were recovered off Antigua and Puerto Rico in 2006. Of the remaining 21 Florida tag recaptures, only one came from waters outside the Sunshine State. The out-of-state fish, which started from Marathon, Florida, traveled a distance of 900 miles to Oregon Inlet, North Carolina, during a liberty of 26 days.

Ten of the Florida instate recoveries came from the same zone as the fish were tagged in. This high level of in-zone recoveries had never been observed. Eight of the tagged fish were recaptured within two days with the two remaining fish at liberty for 8 and 20 days respectively. These fish had moved distances ranging from 4 to 74 miles from their release sites.

Four of the recovery reports involved dolphin tagged off South Carolina. One of the tagged fish was recovered in-zone, 28 miles from where it was released following a liberty of six days. The other three tags were reported by anglers fishing off Cape Lookout and Cape Hatteras, North Carolina.

2006 tag recoveries have exhibited significantly different travel behavior. The overall average liberty has been only 8 days which is just 20% of the four-year average of 40.5 days. The average distance traveled, 123 miles, is 56% below the four-year average of 281 miles. However, the speed at which the fish traveled, 15.2 miles per day, was 120% faster than the four-year average and 28% faster than the highest year. Seven recoveries exhibited travel speeds in excess of 30 miles per day with three of these traveling in excess of 60 miles per day. The highest rate of travel observed, 79 miles per day, was well below the record of 130 miles per day observed previously.

Another big change has occurred in the reporting of tagged fish recoveries. This study was one of the first tagging projects, if not the first, to use the internet for anglers to report tag recoveries. In previous years 10 to 15% of the recovery reports came by way of the internet. With the study's Web site address shown on the tags, almost 90 percent of the 2006 recaptures have been reported via the internet. This has cut the time lapse between when a tagged fish is caught and when the project receives notification from eight or nine days to one day. This is very important if the angler needs to recall particular facts about the recovery.

For a complete listing of recoveries of 2006 fish go to the "Study Results" page on [www.dolphintagging.com](http://www.dolphintagging.com).

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# CSS Dolphin Tagging Newsletter

July 2006

Page 2.

Boats that have had their tagged dolphin recovered in 2006.

Number Recapt.	Boat	Captain or Tagger	Home/ Port
5	Sunrise	Buddy Bouknight	W. Columbia, SC
4	Draggin Dreams	Don Brown	Pembroke Pines, FL
3	Snookums	Marc Anderson	Marathon, FL
2	Thomas Flyer	Jimbo Thomas	Miami, FL
1	Hammerhead	Bob Stull	Hollywood Bch, FL
1	Top Priority	Les Frazer	Plantation, FL
1	Sweet Marie II	Chuck DeBevac	Marathon, FL
1	Bill Collector	Carlos Camps	Miami, FL
1	Tire Less	Tony Gonzalez	Miami, FL
1	Caramba	Dale Lackey, Jr.	Mt. Pleasant, SC
1	Special Lady	John Thomas	Mt. Pleasant, SC
1	Land Escaper	Bryan Osterling	Melbourne, FL
1	Rock Boat	Richard DeLizza	Weston, FL
1	Seasonal Affair	Kenneth Nelson	Mt. Pleasant, SC
1	Sea Witch	Mark Mitchell	Orlando, FL
1	Houdini	Wayne Skinner	Isle of Palms, SC

## Two Satellite Tags Deployed

On June 9 the crew of the *Rock Boat* from Weston, Florida, deployed the third archival pop-off satellite tag to ever be placed on a dolphinfish. Captain Richard DeLizza reported that the bull dolphin estimated to weigh 30 pounds was captured off Bimini, Bahamas. Jim Darrah, who implanted the tag, reported that the fish was in good shape when it swam away with the micro computer in tow.

In the meantime the first satellite tag that the *Rock Boat* crew attached to a dolphin off Islamorada in May has surfaced. It popped up 130 miles east of Daytona Beach, Florida, and is currently downloading its data via the ARGOS Satellite System.

The fourth satellite tag to be attached to a dolphin was deployed June 21 off Charleston, South Carolina. The fish was tagged by the project biologist and the crew of Richard Rakovich's boat *Jenny Lynn*, home ported in Charleston. The fish estimated to weigh 28 pounds was brought aboard the vessel using a large landing net so the tag could be attached. This is the second satellite tag deployed on a dolphin off South Carolina.

Built by Microwave Telemetry Inc., the high-tech monitoring instrument is designed to record time-specific environmental conditions along with geographical position for 30 days. At the end of its recording period, the tag releases from the fish and floats to the surface where it transmits its data via the ARGOS satellite network back to the manufacturer who in turn relays it the project's office.



Crew of the *Rock Boat* out of Weston, Florida, attach an archival pop-off satellite tag to a bull dolphin off Bimini, Bahamas. Photo courtesy of Dino Barone.

## 2006 Tagging Setting Records

Dolphin Study Tagging Progress by Zones, July 1, 2006

Zone	Area	Southern Limit	Northern Limit	Number Tagged
1	Bahamas	22N	28N	69
2	FL Straits	23N	25N	590
3	South Florida	25N	27N	275
4	Central Florida	27N	30N	47
5	North FL & GA	30N	32N	9
6	South Carolina	32N	33N	117
7	N. SC - S. NC	33N	35N	23
8	Northern NC	35N	36.5N	0
9	Virginia	36.5N	38N	1
10	N. Mid-Atlantic	38N		0
11	Gulf of Mexico			0

Anglers fishing on 66 different boats have reported tagging more than 1,100 dolphin this year, a new record for the period. Tagging activity has been heaviest off the Florida Keys and South Florida. Since this area is suspected to be one of the primary origins of East Coast dolphin, having large numbers of dolphin marked in this region will help to map the full East Coast migratory route(s) as they travel north.

While tagging activity has been slow in other zones, there is growing interest among anglers in two important areas. A number of offshore anglers in North Carolina and in Texas have been signing up to tag dolphin for the study. These anglers say they are very impressed with the results of the study and would like to help gather information on the dolphin occurring off their coast.

If this study is to learn about the behavior and movements of domestic dolphin stocks, it will require

# CSS Dolphin Tagging Newsletter

July 2006

Page 3.

that large numbers of fish are tagged throughout their range along the East Coast and the Gulf of Mexico. It is up to local anglers to provide data on their dolphin fishery for inclusion in this study.

Boats tagging 20 fish or more in 2006.

Name	Captain	City	2006
Draggin Dreams	Don Brown	Pembroke Pines, FL	206
Thomas Flyer	Jimbo Thomas	Miami, FL	165
Killin' Time	Don Gates	Chuluota, FL	129
Rock Boat	Richard DeLizza	Weston, FL	54
Sea Witch	Mark Mitchell	Orlando, FL	41
Houdini	Wayne Skinner	Isle of Palms, SC	32
Makara	Tom McMurray	N. Palm Beach, FL	32
Sun Rise	Buddy Bouknight	West Columbia, SC	32
Special Lady	John Thomas	Mt. Pleasant, SC	28
Colorado Magic	Ron Teke	Silverthorne, CO	26
Ballyhoo	Bill Baugh	Ramrod Key, FL	25
Sweet Marie	Chuck Debevec	Marathon, FL	22
Bill Collector	Aris Angelo	Coral Gables, FL	21
Hammerhead	Bob Stull	Hollywood, FL	20
Reel Gator	Tony Zara	Orlando, FL	20
Tireless	Tony Gonzales	Miami, FL	20

## Do High Water Temperatures Kill?

Data collected during the first four years of the Dolphin Tagging Study showed a marked decline in the rate at which tagged dolphin were recovered based on the month in which the fish was tagged. Fish tagged from January through June exhibited a 3.5% recovery rate while only 0.6% of the fish tagged in the second half of a year were recaptured.

This is almost a 6-fold decline in the rate at which the fish are recovered. There has to be outside factor(s) influencing such a precipitous decline. Rises in water temperature have been shown to reduce many species of fish's resilience to the stress of capture. The primary factor: lower oxygen levels present in the warmer water may not be sufficient to allow for their recovery.

The emphasis placed on collecting water temperature at time of release in 2006 will help to answer this issue.

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