

SC Dolphin Tagging Study

October - November 2004

Tagging Action Slows But Competition Keen

Tagging activity proceeded at a record pace during April, May and June of 2004. Almost twice the number of dolphin were tagged during these months in 2004 compared with the same period in 2003. However, the tagging activity slowed in July, with 24 percent fewer fish tagged compared with July of 2003.

In August, September and October of 2004, tagging all but skidded to a stop with only 76 dolphin tagged during these three months. The 76 dolphin tagged represents only one-fourth the number tagged during the same months in 2003.

As of the end of October, sports fishermen have tagged a total of 1,392 dolphin in 2004. Over 88 percent of these fish were tagged in just five zones stretching from the Florida Keys (zone 2) to the southern section of South Carolina (zone 6). Only 35 dolphin have been tagged north of 33° N Latitude so far in 2004, even though anglers reported an outstanding run of dolphin in the northern mid-Atlantic this year.

Tagging in the Bahamas has improved in 2004 with 94 fish having been tagged so far. This increase in the number of fish tagged in the Bahamas is largely due to the efforts of one angler, Forrest Engle of Andros Island.

This year, anglers in Texas began tagging dolphin for the study, and eight have been reported so far. Some serious tagging will need to take place in the western Gulf next spring in order to get meaningful data on Gulf of Mexico dolphin movements in 2005.

So far in 2004, 111 private sportfishing vessels and eight charter boats, along with 297 anglers, have participated in tagging dolphin for the study. Over 70 of the anglers tagged five or more dolphin to earn a project T-shirt. Over 30 private boats tagged 10 or more dolphin to earn the boat's captain a T-shirt. There were three charter boats that tagged over 20 fish each.

During the three years in which the study has been operated, a total of 495 anglers and 226 sports fishing vessels have tagged dolphin for the project.

In spite of extended periods of high winds and very localized abundance of dolphin along the US east coast, sports fishermen managed to tag a record number of dolphin for the study. This has led to some keen competition among participating boats and anglers.

Chester Kalb, II, of Key West, Florida continues to fight to keep his title as top dolphin tagger, which he earned in 2002 and 2003. He is the leader in 2004 with 95 tagged fish so far. Bill Baugh of Ramrod Key, Florida currently holds second place in the individual category, with 46 dolphin tagged aboard his boat *Ballyhoo*. currently in third place is Eddie Caba of Miami, Florida, who fishes with Kalb and has tagged 40 dolphin for the study. Justin Brown, a Pembroke Pines, Florida resident who fishes aboard Don Brown's (his father) boat called *Druggin' Dreams*, is in fourth place with 39 dolphin tagged. Currently in fifth place is Bob DeLizza of Weston, Florida with 33 tagged dolphin to his credit. DeLizza fishes with his brother Richard aboard their boat, *Rock Boat*.



Competition has also been keen in the private boat category. For the third year in a row, Chester Kalb's unnamed outboard out of Key West leads the private boat category with 194 tagged dolphin. *Summer Girl*, of Charleston, South Carolina, which is owned by John Smith, Steve Leasure and Dean Kelly, is currently in second place having tagged 111 dolphin. Rob Harris' boat, *Got Ta Go*, based in Cudjoe Key, Florida is holding third place having tagged 57 dolphin. In fourth place is *Ballyhoo* with 54 tagged dolphin, and this boat is owned by Bill Baugh and home ported in Ramrod Key, Florida. Another Charleston-based boat, *Prowess*, owned by Rit Ritter, currently holds fifth place having tagged 44 dolphin for the study so far in 2004.

While Florida anglers and boats dominate the angler and private boat categories, South Carolina based anglers and boats there are leading in the charter boat category. Capt. Howard Moseley's appropriately named charter boat of Charleston, South Carolina, *Tag Team*, is setting a new record by which to judge other charter vessels. Using paying clients from numerous charters, Capt. Moseley has managed to tag 80 dolphin so far in 2004 to lead the charter boat category so far. Capt. Charlene Brown's charter boat out of Marathon, Florida, *Keeper*, currently holds second place with 25 tagged dolphin. Third place is held by the Charleston, South Carolina based charter vessel, *Castaway*, captained by Randy Ragland with 22 tagged fish. Grady William's Charleston, South Carolina based charter boat, *Plumb Crazy*, is in fourth place having tagged five dolphin. Fifth place in the charter boat category is currently held by *Special Lady*, based out of Mt. Pleasant, South Carolina and captained by John Thomas, with four tagged dolphin so far in 2004.

Fishermen are reminded that tag reporting cards must be received at project headquarters by January 17, 2005 to count toward the 2004 rod and reel competition.

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Tagging Progress by Zone as of October 31, 2004.

Zone	Area	Southern Limit	Northern Limit	Number Tagged
1	E. Bahamas	22N	28N	94
2	FL Straits	23N	25N	488
3	South Florida	25N	27N	101
4	Central Florida	27N	30N	43
5	North FL & GA	30N	32N	74
6	Southern SC	32N	33N	520
7	N. SC - S. NC	33N	35N	14
8	Northern NC	35N	36.5N	10
9	Virginia	36.5N	38N	1
10	N. Mid-Atlantic	38N		3
11	Gulf of Mexico			8

Tag Recoveries Span US East Coast

Reports of tagged dolphin being recovered were received from Miami, Florida; Oregon Inlet, North Carolina; and Martha's Vineyard, Massachusetts during September and October. These reports bring the number of tagged dolphin being reported to 37 so far in 2004.

The first recapture of a tagged dolphin was reported by Sean Broaddus of Manteo, North Carolina, a mate aboard the charter boat *Wave Runner* based out of Oregon Inlet, North Carolina. Broaddus recovered a tagged dolphin in July that had been tagged in late May off Charleston, South Carolina by *Summer Girl*. This fish had traveled 302 miles during its 53 days of freedom.

Capt. Brett Dudas of Ft. Lauderdale, Florida reported the second tag recovery. Dudas caught the tagged dolphin on a fishing trip in late August aboard *Jumping Juniper* southeast of Miami, Florida. The fish had traveled 92 miles northeast from the site in the Florida Straits where Bob DeLizza fishing aboard *Rock Boat* had originally released it only two days prior. This is the first dolphin to be recovered that was tagged in the Florida Straits after July 1 of a calendar year.

The Atlantis Canyon, located south of Martha's Vineyard, Massachusetts, yielded the third tag recovery. Capt. Scott Clay of Foxboro, Massachusetts recaptured the tagged dolphin during an August fishing trip aboard his boat, *Ripdog*. The fish was originally tagged by Tom Shannon in April off Charleston, South Carolina while fishing aboard his brother Jim's boat *Houdini*. The fish had traveled 706 miles northeast during its 110 days of liberty. This fish was recovered north of 40° Latitude making it the most northern recovery of a tagged dolphin in this study.

While 2004 has proven to be a banner year for tagged dolphin recoveries, it could still be better. Past S.C. Department of Natural Resources tagging studies have shown varying levels of non-reporting of tagged fish recoveries by fishermen. It is never too late to report a tag recovery! If you know someone who has a dolphin tag, encourage them to send it in along with as much information about the catch as possible.

Shimano



Year End Awards Promote Tagging

Star Rods

Shimano Reels and Star Rod Company are providing strong incentives for fishermen to support the research project on dolphin. These premier fishing tackle companies have shown their commitment to the conservation of our valuable fisheries resources by donating top quality equipment as incentive awards to encourage fishermen to participate in the study.

At the end of the year, three fishermen who participate in the SC Dolphin Tagging Study will receive a Shimano Tiagra 50 on a top-of-the-line Star Standup rod for their contributions to the study. These outfits will be given to the private boat owner, charter boat owner and individual angler tagging the most dolphin during 2004.

The SC Dolphin Tagging Study was designed to utilize private sports fishermen as the backbone of the project. Fishery managers recognize that anglers along the US east coast are concerned about the future health of the dolphin stocks, and would be interested in getting involved. The project was designed to capitalize on this army of volunteers to carry out the tagging of dolphin over 1,300 miles of US coastline. A project of such magnitude would have been cost-prohibitive without the willingness of volunteers.

For more information on the project, visit <http://dolphintagging.homestead.com> or contact

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