

SC Dolphin Tagging Study

October 2003

Amazing Movements

Two tagged fish were reported recovered during September. Both of these fish displayed strong desires to see northern waters even though they had very different origins. This time it was fishermen from Pennsylvania and West Virginia that contributed significantly to our knowledge of these great gamefish.

The first fish started its recorded travel on May 16, 2003 southeast of Charleston, SC when H. White tagged and released the fish during a trip aboard the *Summer Girl*. The fish was recovered 121 days later by M. Baniewicz, Jr. of Media, PA during a fishing trip out of Ocean City, MD to the Baltimore Canyon. The fish had travel 529 miles from the release site before it was recaptured. This is the second longest liberty period noted in the study overall and longest for 2003 so far. No growth information was gained because it was not measured at time of its original release.

As amazing as this fish's movement is, it is overshadowed by the second dolphin recovery. This saga begins on June 20 down off Key Largo, FL at the northern tip of the Keys. J. Brown (pictured below) was fishing aboard his father's boat, *Draggin Dreams*, when he tagged 19 dolphin that day with 12 of them belonging to the same school. One of the school members was caught 93 days later by A. Whittington of Ranson, WV during a charter fishing trip aboard *Atlantic Hunter* out of Indian River Bay, Delaware. The tagged dolphin was captured north of the Baltimore Canyon after traveling 995 miles. This recovery documents the link between south Florida dolphin and those found in the Mid-Atlantic Bight.



Justin Brown of Pembroke Pines, FL prepares to release a schoolie dolphin off south Florida. Three of brown's fish have been recaptured including one that traveled 995 miles.



These two recoveries bring the number of reported recaptures to 23 so far in 2003. This is roughly a two percent recovery rate, which is double the one percent that was expected.

Project Status

The number of fishermen volunteering to tag dolphin has now reached 633 individuals. Many of the volunteers have been anglers fishing the dolphin's northern summering grounds north of Hatteras, NC.

Over 100 anglers residing in nine states bordering the Mid-Atlantic Bight have volunteered to tag dolphin for the study. Anglers from North Carolina, Virginia, Maryland, Delaware, Pennsylvania, New Jersey, New York, Rhode Island and Massachusetts have stepped forward to assist the research project. Fish tagged in these northern waters hold the greatest potential for identify the fall migration route(s).

Anglers reported tagging 53 fish during September bringing the number of dolphin tagged in 2003 to 1,133. This has been accomplished through the efforts of only 115 boats and 244 anglers. The most noteworthy activity was that 11 more dolphin were tagged in the northern most waters, Zone 10.

[Check Out the Newly Revised 2003
Tag Tracking Chart](http://dolphintagging.homestead.com/map.html)
<http://dolphintagging.homestead.com/map.html>

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Dolphin Study Tagging Progress by Zone

Zone	Area	Southern Limit	Northern Limit	Number Tagged
1	E. Bahamas	22N	28N	9
2	FL Straits	23N	25N	492
3	South Florida	25N	27N	160
4	Central Florida	27N	30N	37
5	North FL & GA	30N	32N	68
6	Southern SC	32N	33N	294
7	N. SC - S. NC	33N	35N	52
8	Northern NC	35N	36.5N	0
9	Virginia	36.5N	38N	2
10	N. Mid-Atlantic	38N		19

How is your fishing zone doing? Have you contributed to the tagging effort in your zone?

Dolphin Tagging Tee Shirt Proves Popular

The project Tee shirt featuring an original painting by artist Chris Sommer of Coral Springs, FL, has become extremely popular among offshore fishermen. In fact, it is so popular that numerous anglers have asked to purchase one and several marine supply and tackle shops have inquired about selling the shirts. But the shirt is not for sale. Anglers must earn the shirt by either tagging dolphin or reporting the recovery of a tagged dolphin.



Over 100 shirts have been distributed to fishermen so far this year. A total of 72 anglers who tagged five or more dolphin received shirts. Another 24 offshore enthusiasts qualified for the shirt as the captain of a vessel that had tagged 10 or more fish. Fishermen who reported the recovery of a tagged fish earned an additional 23 shirts.

When you see someone sporting the project's shirt, you will know that they have actively supported the dolphin tagging study and fisheries conservation.



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 important fisheries resources by donating top quality equipment for incentive awards to encourage fishermen to assist the study.

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

At the end of the year, three fishermen who participated in 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, charter boat and individual angler tagging the most dolphin during 2003.

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