

# SC Dolphin Tagging Study

October 2005

## Sports Fishermen Top Previous Year's Tagging

### 2005 Tagging Results By Zone as of October 14

Zone	Area	Southern Limit	Northern Limit	Number Tagged
1	E. Bahamas	22N	28N	64
2	FL Straits	23N	25N	796
3	South Florida	25N	27N	429
4	Central Florida	27N	30N	43
5	North FL & GA	30N	32N	36
6	SC	32N	33N	262
7	N. SC - S. NC	33N	35N	19
8	Northern NC	35N	36.5N	4
9	Virginia	36.5N	38N	9
10	N. Mid-Atlantic	38N		10
11	Gulf of Mexico			10
	<b>Total</b>			<b>1,682</b>

The low level of tagging activity that occurred in the spring cast a less-than-optimistic outlook for the remainder of 2005. However, South Florida anglers rallied in a summer tagging blitz. The 2005 summer activity resulted in the project's highest number of dolphinfish being tagged in July and August during the four years of the study. This tagging effort was sufficient to not only catch up with the previous year's tagging level, but to exceed the number of dolphin tagged the previous year by 15%.

Evidence would suggest that there was a high incidence of small school dolphinfish off south Florida and the Florida Straits during July and August. The 330 fish that were tagged off the Florida Keys in July were the most dolphinfish tagged during a single month in one area for the study. Additionally, the 796 fish that were tagged this year in the Florida Straits, Zone 2, were the most tagged in one year in a single zone. Similarly, the 429 dolphinfish tagged in Zone 3, south Florida, were more than had been tagged in that area during the previous three years combined. This tagging effort resulted in over 1,200 dolphinfish being tagged in these southern-most waters of the US in 2005.

It is very apparent from the tagging activity during the four years of this study that annual movement of dolphinfish along the US east coast is highly variable. It varies not only in the number and size of fish involved but also in their temporal occurrence as well. In 2005, the summer run of small school dolphinfish was later than normal, but the fish were very abundant.

Tagging in 2005 clearly showed the value of involving many anglers over a large geographical area when attempting to study such a highly migratory species as the dolphinfish. When you have to contend with both unpredictable weather and an unpredictable supply of fish, it is prudent to spread your study over a wide area. This approach improves the odds that at least one area will enjoy both good weather and



an abundance of fish at the same time, which improves the likelihood of the study being successful.

### Top Taggers for 2005

While many participants in the Dolphin Tagging Study are interested in who wins the Star Rods with the Shimano Tiagra 50 reels in 2005, it is very clear in my mind who is the big winner. Not just in this year but throughout the study, the winner has been the dolphinfish and those who seek to catch it.

This has been a very different year from the standpoint of the behavior of the dolphinfish, when and where they occurred. Participation in tagging fish for the study changed also. Seven of the top 20 vessels in tagging dolphinfish for the study during 2005 were charter boats. Charter trips were responsible for 25% of the fish tagged in 2005. In previous years charter trips provided less than 10% of the fish tagged for the study.

### 2005 Top Charter Boats with Number of Fish Tagged

Boat	Captain	Port	State	No.
Temporary Insanity	Bob Norris	Cocoa	FL	4
Hungry Bear	Larry Laffler	Palm City	FL	10
Low Bidder	Ed Yannetty	Islamorada	FL	10
Archelle	Greg Daniels	Key West	FL	12
Keeper	Charlene Brown	Marathon	FL	14
Bouncer's Dusky	Bouncer Smith	Miami	FL	19
Sun Rise	Buddy Bouknight	West Columbia	SC	21
Special Lady	John Thomas	Mt. Pleasant	SC	47
Got Ta Go	Rob Harris	Cudjoe Key	FL	60
Tag Team	Howard Moseley	Charleston	SC	76
Thomas Flyer	Jimbo Thomas	Miami	FL	85

Captain Jimbo Thomas who bases his charter boat *Thomas Flyer* out of Miami, FL, became involved with the

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dolphinfish study in the spring of 2005 when a client recovered a tagged fish. He immediately volunteered to tag fish for the study as soon as he learned about its goals. He steadily tagged dolphinfish throughout the summer right up to the end, tagging his 85<sup>th</sup> fish on the last day of tagging, August 31.

It was this last little effort that placed him just 9 fish ahead of last year's winner of the charter boat category, Captain Howard Moseley's *Tag Team* home ported in Charleston, SC. Captain Moseley, like many other charter boat operators in South Carolina, had a poor dolphin-year and had a hard time finding fish to tag.

## 2005 Top Anglers and Number of Fish Tagged

Angler	City	State	Number
Ed Bolliger	Davie	FL	13
Bob Lee	Tucson	AZ	13
Bill DeVierno	Davie	FL	16
Linda Vaughan	Casselberry	FL	18
Jim Carling	Casselberry	FL	20
Mark Mitchell	Orlando	FL	26
Jimbo Smoak	Charleston	SC	29
Bill Baugh	Ramrod Key	FL	35
Forrest Engle	Andros Island	BA	37
Chester Kalb II	Key West	FL	111
Justin Brown	Pembroke Pines	FL	415

The top individual angler for 2005, Justin Brown of Pembroke Pines, FL, has been active in the study for the past two years tagging a total of 157 dolphinfish during that time. Teaming up with his father, Don Brown, aboard their boat *Draggin Dreams*, Justin made a phenomenal, record-setting contribution to the Dolphinfish Study in 2005, capturing 415 fish for tagging. This is 2.3 times more dolphinfish than any other angler has provided in any year. The Browns' tagging efforts have resulted in 8 tagged fish recoveries ranging from Elliot Key, FL, to Cape Hatteras, NC.

Chester Kalb II, who finished second with a most impressive 111 fish captured and tagged, should be commended for a truly outstanding commitment to the study. He tagged these fish while chartering Captain Jim Sharp's boat, *Sea Boots*, out of Big Pine Key, FL. For the previous three years, Mr. Kalb had been the top individual angler and had the top private boat for tagging the most dolphin. Mr. Kalb's 2005 efforts have resulted in 7 tagged fish recoveries this year ranging from Big Pine Key to Stuart, FL.

## 2005 Top Private Boats and Number of Fish Tagged

Boat	Owner	City	State	NO.
Reel Rowdy	Don Reynolds	Miramar	FL	28
Sea Witch	Mark Mitchell	Orlando	FL	30
Hammerhead	Bob Stull	Hollywood	FL	31
Petrel IV	Harry Johnson	Mt. Pleasant	SC	35
Ballyhoo	Bill Baugh	Ramrod Key	FL	36
Tongue Tide	Forrest Engle	Andros Island	BA	37
Ocean Commotion	Jim Carling	Casselberry	FL	38
Rock Doc	Bob Wiggins	Charleston	SC	43
Killin' Time	Don Gates	Chuluota	FL	55
Draggin Dreams	Don Brown	Pembroke Pines	FL	415

Don Brown's boat, *Draggin Dreams*, set an all-time record of 415 dolphinfish tagged by one vessel in a year. With the exception of Chester Kalb's un-named boat out of Key West, FL, *Draggin Dreams* tagged more fish in 2005 than any other participating boat managed to tagged in four years. This is truly an outstanding contribution to the SC Dolphin Tagging Study. However, it is the policy of this program to allow only one annual award (rod and reel) per boat each year and the Browns chose to be recognized for the outstanding angler award.

Don Gates' boat *Killin' Time* of Chuluota, FL, was the beneficiary of the Browns' award selection. *Killin' Time* has participated every year of the study, tagging a total of 67 dolphinfish during the first three years. In 2005 the crew of the *Killin' Time* managed to tag 55 fish, which placed them 12 fish ahead of their nearest competitor, Bob Wiggins' boat *Rock Doc* of Charleston, SC.

## The 2005 Winners are:

Through the generosity of the Shimano Corporation, Don Coffee Company, Star Rod Company and Sea Striker Corporation, the SC Dolphin Tagging Study is pleased to once again reward the top taggers of 2005. Because of their commitment to conservation, these companies have donated three Shimano Tiagra 50W reels and three handcrafted Star standup offshore rods for presentation to the angler, private boat and charter boat tagging the most dolphinfish during the year.

This year's winners are;

**Top Angler** – Justin Brown – Pembroke Pines, FL

**Top Private Boat** – *Killin' Time* – Don Gates – Chuluota, FL

**Top Charter Boat** – *Thomas Flyer* – Jimbo Thomas – Miami, FL

Congratulations and a sincere thank you to these fishermen and the anglers who fish with them for their support.

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## Don't Get Rid of Your Dolphin Tag Applicator

While the South Carolina Department of Natural Resources' involvement with the Dolphinfish Tagging Study will end this year, the study may still continue.

Two research proposals to continue the Dolphinfish Tagging Study have been submitted to the NOAA Fisheries seeking federal funding through two of their research grants programs. These proposals seek to continue the movement and migration study of the dolphinfish under a private research consulting company, Cooperative Science Services, LLC of Charleston, SC.

The new study will emphasize tagging fish off the southeastern coast of Florida, off the Carolinas and in the Gulf of Mexico. It will also feature a new segment to collect data on the presence of Sargassum and its role in the dolphinfish's life history. Both proposals will seek to continue the support and involvement of the fishermen who have been active in tagging fish for the current study.

This study would begin in April 2006 and continue into 2008. A tag that will fit the current tag applicator will be employed, so save your tag applicators for use in the next study.

A decision on whether the project will be funded is not expected until late November or early December.

*Thanks to our corporate sponsors for supporting fisheries conservation and this research effort.*

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Photo Courtesy of Banco de Imagens Projeto Tamar-IBAMA, Salvador, Brazil.

## Flash Dancer

Fishermen are amazed at the brilliance of the dolphinfish's color the first time they see one. Anglers are awed by the fish's ability to rapidly change its entire color pattern in mere seconds. The two most familiar color patterns are the yellow-green (normal) phase and the silver body-blue spotting phase. This latter color pattern is probably used in open water as a predator avoidance behavior. A third, little-known color pattern will be highlighted in a future newsletter.

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

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