

Cooperative Science Services, LLC Dolphinfish Research Program

October 2010



Tagging Numbers Up in 2010

Tagging activity in 2010 enjoyed a marked increase from last year. With a sluggish economy, it is surprising that the number of fish tagged in 2010 may possibly reach the second-highest point in the program's history. With the charter boat business way down and most anglers making fewer offshore trips, this is a testimony to the importance of dolphinfish to these recreational fishermen.

Tagging activity was up in many areas. The number of fish already tagged along the east coast of Florida, 1,064, is well above the eight-year average of 912 fish. Tagging in the Bahama Islands is 72 percent above the eight-year average of 118 dolphin.

Increases in tagging in several areas of special importance were mainly resulted from individual efforts. Thanks largely to the effort of Manuel Botello of San Juan, Puerto Rico, a record number of dolphin (57 fish) have been tagged off this Caribbean island this year. Dr. Will Cathy of Greensboro, North Carolina, having tagged 50 fish off Oregon Inlet, North Carolina, pushed the number of dolphin tagged there to a new record of 75 fish for the year. Also, Don Gates of Conroe, Texas, who normally does his tagging in the Florida Keys, managed to tag 37 dolphin this year off Texas, setting a new record for the Gulf of Mexico.

Not all regions saw increases in the number of fish tagged. Tagging off the South Carolina coast is down by 40 percent from the eight-year average of 308 fish. Mid-Atlantic Bight anglers, fishing north of North Carolina, continue to tag very few fish. Tagging in this area is extremely important to aid in identifying routes used by dolphin when they exit U.S. territorial waters.

Dolphin Tagging Progress by Zones, September 30, 2010.

Zone	Area	Southern Limit	Northern Limit	Number Tagged
1	Bahamas	22° N	28° N	209
2	FL Straits	23° N	25° N	538
3	South Florida	25° N	27° N	445
4	Central Florida	27° N	30° N	81
5	North FL & GA	30° N	32° N	76
6	Southern SC	32° N	33° N	107
7	N. SC - S. NC	33° N	35° N	9
8	Northern NC	35° N	36.5° N	75
9	Virginia	36.5° N	38° N	7
10	N. Mid-Atlantic	38° N		7
11	Gulf of Mexico			37
12	W Central Atlantic			57
13	Caribbean Sea			3
	Total			1,651

Heroes of Dolphin Tagging

The amazing movements and migration patterns that have been documented by the Dolphin Tagging Study have been possible only because of the dedication of a select group of private fishermen. It is these anglers who take the time to tag dolphin and record the necessary information. They set the stage for learning about dolphin travels. Tagged fish cannot be recovered if they do not exist.

A pronounced change took place in 2010 in who was tagging fish. Several former major tagging contributors have not been heard from while some formerly casual taggers, ten to 15 fish per year, have ramped-up their activity, tagging five to seven times their normal number of fish. Then there is the father and son team of Russell and Philip Brownell who have tagged more than 90 dolphin in their first year participating.

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Dolphinfish Research Newsletter

October 2010

Page 2.

A total of 18 boats have tagged 20 or more dolphin in 2010 which is slightly higher than normal. When you total up the number of fish tagged by the crews aboard these vessels, you find that they are responsible for tagging 74 percent of the fish tagged this year. So the crews of these boats are truly heroes from my perspective in putting forth the effort to tag this many fish for science.

Boats tagging 20 fish or more in 2010.

Boat	Owner/Captain	Number
Thomas Flyer	Jimbo Thomas, Miami, FL	330
Killin' Time	Don Gates, Conroe, TX	181
Bouncer's Dusky	Bouncer Smith, Miami, FL	95
Mad Fin	Russell Brownell, Coconut Creek, FL	91
Scungilli	William Pomenti, Islamorada, FL	79
Missing Angel	Manuel Botello, San Juan, PR	56
Will Power	Will Cathey, Greensboro, NC	50
Tireless	Antonio Gonzales, Miami, FL	46
Timber	Bob Frevert, Jupiter, FL	43
Hooked UP	Zehntner Gay, Islamorada, FL	39
Colorado Magic	Ron Teke, Silverthorne, CO	37
Rock Boat	Richard DeLizza, Weston, FL	33
Caramba	Dale Lackey, Charleston, SC	28
Got Ta Go	Rob Harris, Key West, FL	26
Irish Wake	Tim Heiser, Ft. Lauderdale, FL	24
Prowess	Ritt Ritter, Charleston, SC	23
Patriot	Chip Davis, Wadmalaw, SC	20
Sea Witch	Mark Mitchell, Orlando, FL	20

Top Achievers

Sports fishermen have been tagging dolphin for almost nine years for this study. During this time many fishermen have come and gone. It is normal that fishermen will enter tagging and then drift away because of any number of reasons from dropping out of offshore fishing to simply not wanting to do the paperwork. But there are many anglers have graced the program with their help for long periods.

The crews of only three boats have had the dedication to tag dolphin in all nine years the program has operated. Ritt Ritter and his crew aboard his boat *Prowess* based in Charleston, South Carolina, have tagged 190 fish in support of the program. Richard DeLizza of Weston,

Florida, and the crew aboard his *Rock Boat* have tagged 369 fish during nine years of participation. Don Gates of Conroe, Texas, and his crew aboard his boat *Killin Time* have contributed an amazing 1,187 tagged fish in their nine years of support.

Four boats have the distinction of having tagged dolphin in eight of the nine years. The crew of the Charleston, South Carolina, based *Summer Girl* captained by Steve Leasure have marked 306 dolphin in their eight years of tagging. The crew of Robert Waite's boat *Getting Jiggy* of Delray Beach, Florida, have tagged 55 fish in their eight years of participation. Larry Laffler of Palm City, Florida, and the crew of his boat *Hungry Bear* have tagged 86 fish during their eight years of involvement. Bill Baugh of Ramrod Key, Florida, and his crew aboard his boat *Ballyhoo* have tagged 281 dolphin over eight years.

These boat owners and their crews are true heroes when it comes to working for a better tomorrow for dolphinfish. These anglers have committed hundreds of hours striving for better knowledge of the life history of this great game fish.



Teach them young. Beau Benson becomes the third generation in Don Gates' family to tag dolphin for science.

Ultimate Tagging Club

When you start looking at long-term participation, you cannot help but think about, okay, so who has tagged the most dolphin over the course of the research. While many anglers and boats have left their mark on the growth of the program, like Chester Kalb of Key West, Florida, who was the first to tag 100 fish in one year and wound up tagging 559 fish in his five-year career. But the crews of three boats have worked long and hard to become the first crews and boats to have tagged 1,000 dolphin each.

The Dolphinfish Research Program needs your financial support. No federal funds support this important research. This program exists because of private donations.

Dolphinfish Research Newsletter

October 2010

Page 3.

The first boat crew to reach the 1,000-fish mark was the father and son team of Don and Justin Brown of Pembroke Pines, Florida, who reached the mark in 2007. Fishing aboard their boat the *Draggin Dreams*, the Browns have tagged a total of 1,261 fish in their six years of tagging.

In 2009 the Miami, Florida, charter boat *Thomas Flyer* owned by Capt. Jimbo Thomas, with brother Rick working as mate, broke the 1,000-fish mark. In their six years of tagging dolphin the Thomas brothers have tagged 1,338 fish.

Don Gates of Conroe, Texas, and the crew aboard his boat *Killin Time* reached the 1,000-fish milestone in 2009. His crew of family and friends has managed to mark and release 1,187 dolphin in their nine years of tagging dolphin. This crew also holds the record for having the most fish reported recaptured 66 fish. This calculates out to an amazing recovery rate of 5.6 percent which is more than double the study's overall rate.

The crews of these three boats become the first members in the Grander Club of Dolphin Tagging. These fishermen have shown outstanding commitment to the conservation of the dolphinfish stock and made significant contributions to our understanding of the movements and behavior of this magnificent game fish.

New 2010 Financial Contributors

Sebastian Inlet Sportfishing Association, Inc.,
Melbourne, FL
William J. Pomenti, Islamorada, FL



Year End Awards

Four participating boats will receive a new rod and reel valued at more than \$500 courtesy of the Dolphin Tagging Study. These awards are possible thanks to the generosity of **Haddrell's Point Tackle and Supply** of Mt. Pleasant and Charleston, South Carolina and **Star Rods of Sea Striker Tackle** of Morehead City, North Carolina. The private boat, charter boat, boat tagging in areas other than the Florida east coast and the individual angler that tag the most dolphin in the 2010 will receive one of these top quality outfits.

For More Information, Contact

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2010 Financial Supporters

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