

Cooperative Science Services, LLC Dolphinfish Research Program

Made possible by a grant from Costa Del Mar

October 2011



The Northward Migration Continues

Since the last report on tag recoveries, five tagged dolphinfish have been reported recovered. All of the fish had traveled northward, with four of the reports coming from anglers fishing off North Carolina and one from a Virginia-based fisherman. This brings the number of reported recaptures to 37 in 2011 for a 3.7 percent recovery rate.

The tag recovery from Virginia was made by Jere Humphrey of Norfolk, Virginia, during an August 14, 2011, fishing trip to the Norfolk Canyon aboard the *Bone Daddy*. The fish had been tagged on July 2, 2011, by Wes Covington of Summerville, South Carolina, on a day of fishing off Charleston, South Carolina, aboard his boat *Tigress*. This fish had moved 421 miles to the northeast during its 43 days of liberty, resulting in an average daily travel of 9.8 miles. This is the second tagged fish to be recovered off Virginia in 2011. Including this fish, only six tagged dolphinfish have been reported recovered off Virginia in this study. Three of the fish came from south Florida, while two of the fish came from South Carolina and one was originally tagged off Virginia.

Three of the fish recovered off North Carolina were tagged off south Florida. The first of these was tagged on June 3, 2011, by Capt. Zehntner Gay during a charter trip out of Islamorada, Florida, aboard his boat *Hooked Up*. The fish was at liberty for 47 days before Darren Hollingsworth of Denton, Maryland, recaptured it during a fishing trip off Hatteras aboard the charter boat *Nancy K*. The fish was recovered 781 miles north northeast of its release site, indicating an average travel speed of 16.6 miles per day. The second fish to be recovered was

tagged on June 23, 2011, by Nick Askey of St. Cloud, Florida, while fishing on his boat *Stik'em* off Islamorada, Florida. The fish was recaptured 54 days later by Randy Phillips of Raleigh, North Carolina, while fishing off Beaufort Inlet aboard the *Illusion*. The fish had traveled 724 miles from its release point, averaging 13.4 miles per day. The third tagged dolphinfish was recovered July 30, 2011, off Cape Hatteras by Philip Crist of Yorktown, Virginia, during a fishing trip aboard the *Poor Boy's Toy*. The information on the release of this fish has not been received.

The other North Carolina recapture was a fish tagged off Charleston, South Carolina, on July 7, 2011. It was tagged by David Byers during a fishing trip aboard his boat *Reel Patience*. The fish was at liberty for 14 days before Capt. Rom Whitaker's charter boat *Release* recovered the 23.5 inch dolphinfish off Cape Hatteras. During its two weeks of liberty, the fish had moved 334 miles to the northeast, averaging 23.9 miles per day which is exceptionally fast for a Palmetto State fish.

The shift of recaptures in late June from Florida to the Carolinas and points northward, is a clear indicator that the dolphinfish population found in the lower latitudes of the South Atlantic Bight in spring have shifted northward. However, more dolphinfish are continually streaming into the Florida Straits in August, September and the remainder of the year so that south Florida is never without some dolphinfish. Unfortunately, very little tagging occurs on these fish, and we do not know if they travel the same routes as used by fish in the spring and early summer. More tagging is needed off south Florida in the late summer and fall to answer this question.

Sponsored In Part By:



Marine Ventures
Foundation



Dolphinfish Research Newsletter

October 2011

Page 2.

North Carolina Second in Recaptures

A total of 14 tagged dolphinfish have been recovered off the Tar Heel State in 2011. This is the fourth highest number reported recovered in a single year (see table). Anglers fishing off North Carolina have reported recovering 28 percent of all tagged dolphin recovered in this study. While this is a high percentage, it is still just over half of what Florida anglers are responsible for; 52 percent.

Typically, dolphin tagged off South Carolina begin entering the catch of Tar Heel anglers in the first half of June. The earliest a South Carolina tag has shown up off North Carolina is May 16. Fish tagged off Florida normally begin showing up off North Carolina in late June. This year a Florida Keys' fish became the earliest arrival from the Sunshine State when it was recovered on May 14.

Tagged Dolphin Recovered off North Carolina

Year Recovered	Total Reported	Origin of fish Recaptured				
		FL	SC	BA	NJ	NC
2002	4		4			
2003	7	2	4		1	
2004	15	3	10	1		1
2005	8	6	2			
2006	15	9	5	1		
2007	19	9	9	1		
2008	4	3	1			
2009	3	2		1		
2010	9	7	2			
2011	14	6	4			4
Total	98	47	41	4	1	5

Securely Anchor Tags in the Fish

Several photos sent in by participating anglers suggest that some taggers could use more guidance on how to properly tag dolphin. Normally, the first the hint of a problem usually shows up in the numbers. When I see that an individual who has tagged 75 or more fish in a region known to generate a high level of recaptures, such as the Florida Keys, but none of his tagged fish are recovered, I suspect there is a problem.

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

Dolphin Tagging Progress by Zones, August 31, 2011.

Zone	Area	Southern Limit	Northern Limit	Number Tagged
1	Bahamas	22° N	28° N	62
2	FL Straits	23° N	25° N	346
3	South Florida	25° N	27° N	258
4	Central Florida	27° N	30° N	48
5	North FL & GA	30° N	32° N	30
6	Southern SC	32° N	33° N	105
7	N. SC - S. NC	33° N	35° N	27
8	Northern NC	35° N	36.5° N	7
9	Virginia	36.5° N	38° N	0
10	N. Mid-Atlantic	38° N		2
11	Gulf of Mexico			94
12	W Central Atlantic			20
13	Caribbean Sea			32
	Total			1031



The part of this tag's white nylon dart head is visible in the photo, indicating that the tag anchor is barely under the skin. Tags placed in this manner will likely fall out within a week or two.

Several factors that can reduce a fish's potential for recovery. The most common are keeping the fish out of water too long (never more than 60 seconds), injury to the fish in handling (do not put fingers in their eyes or gills or squeeze their internal organs) or not inserting the tag properly.

Simple preparation and planning before the fish is lifted from the water can prevent the first two issues. Implanting the tag properly is easy. It just requires a little thought and attention. The barb of the tag should turn down toward the fish so that the free end of the barb points toward the fish's tail. Insert the tag into the fish's



A tag should be implanted at a 45° angle toward the fish's head with at least 1 ¼ to 1 ½ inches of the tag (to the end of the serial number) embedded in the fish.

Dolphinfish Research Newsletter

October 2011

Page 3.



When properly implanted, the tag will stream alongside the fish as it swims with minimal drag and will remain with the fish for more than a year.

dorsal muscle about one-third the fish's length behind the head. The tag should be inserted at a 45° angle and embedded deep enough to allow the free end of the barb to pass between the spines that radiate off the backbone. This permits the barb to lock around one of these spines, making the tag virtually impossible to pull out.



Bouncer Smith, operator of the Miami, Florida, charter boat Bouncer's Dusky, has to be one of the most conservation-minded charter captains fishing today. Few other captains would put a tag in a 48-inch dolphin instead of a gaff, even when their charter says they do not want the fish. This proves that you do not have to kill fish to please all charter customers.

New 2011 Financial Contributors

Thomas Driver, Summerville, SC

William and Lynn Masters, Ft. Lauderdale, FL

2011 Financial Supporters

Leon and Linda Tomczyk, Boca Raton, FL
Capt. Bill Parker, Hilton Head, SC
Jim Rose, Shelby, NC
Tim & Michelle Heiser, Plantation, FL
Costa Del Mar, Daytona Beach, FL
Marine Ventures Foundation, Jackson Hole, WY
FL Coastal Conservation Association, Orlando, FL
Antonio Gonzalez, Miami, FL
Island Hopper Charters, LLC, Raleigh, NC
Ryan McMahon, N. Palm Beach, FL
Dr. Al Fernandez, Miami, FL
Frederick W. Kinard, Charleston, SC
Georgetown Landing Marina, Georgetown, SC
Six Mile Creek, LLC, Charleston, SC
Robert Frevert, Jupiter, FL
Harry Johnson, Jr., Mt. Pleasant, SC
Franklin O. Hendley, Cheraw, SC
Wood Brothers Inc., Green Pond, SC
B. C. Chickadee, Inc., Key Colony Beach, FL
Bailey Smith, George Town, Exuma BA
Belle Isle Marina Wahoo Tournament, Georgetown, SC
Getting Jiggy Fishing Team, Delray Beach, FL
The Rock Boat Fishing Team, Weston, FL
Greg and Susan Griffith, Holland, MI
Tom and Susan Urban, Cudjoe Key, FL
John Buckman, Tequesta, FL
Mitchell E. Collette, Julian, NC
Treasure Coast Construction, Inc, Delray Beach, FL
Grady-White Boats, Inc., Greenville, NC
John Stalder, Merritt Island, FL
Piedmont Offshore Fishing Club, Greensboro, NC
Dave Wamer, Taylors, SC
Capt. Larry Harvey, Georgetown, SC
Russell and Philip Brownell, Coconut Creek, FL
Blue Water Fishing Club, Florence, SC
Michael Smith, Florence, SC
Larry Deal, Winter Park, FL
Bill & Jeanette Baugh, Ramrod Key, FL
Bailey Smith, George Town, Exuma, BA
SC Saltwater Sportfishing Association, Charleston, SC
William Pomenti, Islamorada, FL
Tailwalker Marine, Georgetown, SC
Milliken's Reef Restaurant, Port Canaveral, FL
Martin Bowers, Jupiter, FL
West Palm Beach Fishing Club, West Palm Beach, FL
Florida Sports Fishing Association, Cocoa Beach, FL
Central Florida Offshore Anglers, Orlando, FL
Sebastian Inlet Sportfishing Association, Inc.,
Melbourne, FL
Capt. Rom Whitaker, Hatteras, NC

Donations are Fully Tax-Deductible

Make checks out to:

HH Reef Foundation/Dolphin Study

Mail checks to the address below.

For More Information, Contact

Don Hammond

Cooperative Science Services, LLC
961 Anchor Rd., Charleston, SC 29412
Telephone – FAX (843) 795-7524
Email CSLLC@bellsouth.net
Web site www.dolphintagging.com