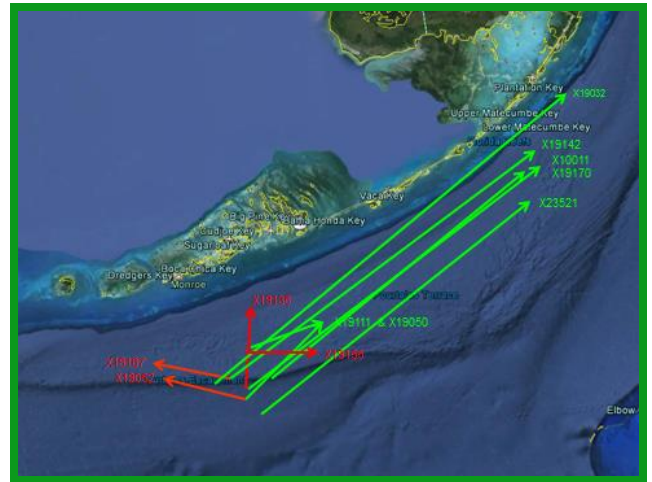


# Cooperative Science Services, LLC Dolphinfish Research Program

September 2013



Seven of the 11 Florida Keys recoveries whose complete data were available, exhibited the normal movement pattern up the coast, but four fish had different ideas.

## Wow, the Tag Returns

The 2013 tagged fish recovery reports have increased over those reported in 2012, even though the number of fish being tagged is about the same. During 2012 a total of 23 tags were reported recovered. In 2013 there have already been 30 tags reported recovered. Two of these were found washed ashore. A tag deployed in a dolphin by Enrique Gomez aboard the *On-The-Rocks* off Key West, Florida, was found on an Islamorada beach 67 miles to the northwest just two days later. The other tag was deployed off Ft. Lauderdale, Florida, by the crew of Jeff Salters' boat *Lady Helen* 60 days prior to its discovery on a beach in North Myrtle Beach, South Carolina, more than 500 miles from where the fish was released. Another tag reported recovered is missing the release information and efforts to contact the angler issued those tags has been unsuccessful.

The remaining 25 recaptures can be grouped into four different movement categories. Five recoveries occurred in the Caribbean region, 11 recaptures took place off the Florida Keys, and four tags came from south Florida, while the Carolinas yielded five recoveries. These recaptures will be examined by region.

A record number of tag recoveries have been reported from the Florida Keys, setting a new recovery rate for the area of 2.34 percent. With 512 dolphin tagged off the Florida Keys this year, a record number of 12 tagged fish have been reported recovered, but release information is not available on one fish.

The crew of the boat *Killin Time II* owned by Don Gates of Conroe, Texas, tagged ten of the fish recaptured off the Keys. The five member crew (Don Gates, Darryl Williams, Allen Lewis, and Cynetha and Brandon Lee) tagged 265 dolphin off the Keys from June 3 to June 15, accounting for half of the

dolphin tagged in the area this year. Six of their recaptured fish exhibited normal northeasterly travel, with two caught off Summerland Key by Robert Ames and Harry Beatty aboard the *Three Sticks*, three off Islamorada (one each by Brandon Hopper aboard the *Keys To Happiness*, David Harris on the *Mixed Bag*, Ed Loeber aboard the *Sea Horse*) and one off Key Largo by Chris Molnar fishing aboard the *On The Line*.

The *Killin Time*'s fish that traveled northeast up the coast were at liberty from one to seven days. Five recaptures exhibited normal travel speeds of 7.9 to 16.6 miles per day, but the sixth fish must have had someplace it needed to be, covering 69 miles from one day to the next. A fish tagged by John Hoover aboard the *Reef Raider* off Key West and recovered by David Accursio fishing on the *Pickle Power III* off Islamorada exhibited an intermediate travel speed of 33.5 miles per day.

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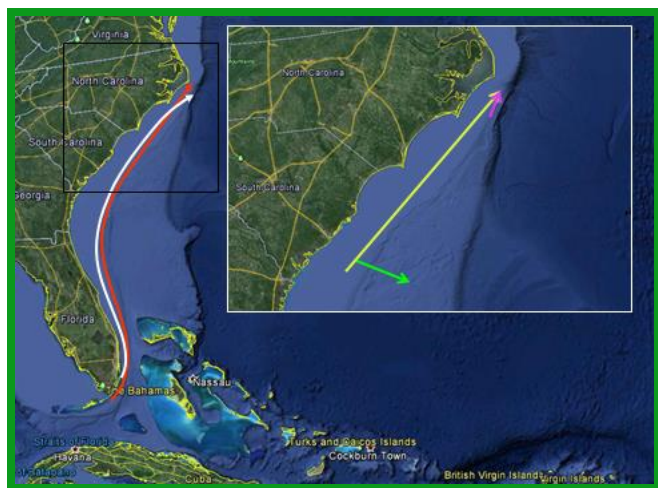
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Four of the *Killin Time's* fish exhibited different movements, with two traveling west, one going north and the fourth moving east. All involved movements of less than 15 miles during liberties of one to three days. The fish were tagged over three consecutive days. This pattern could indicate the presence of an eddy whose rotating water mass would account for these aberrant travelers. The presence of an eddy is also supported by the tagging vessel's report of a westward drift during this period.

Four fish tagged off the Florida Keys traveled a little farther up the Florida coast and succumbed to temptingly baited hooks off Miami and Key Largo. The fish recovered off Key Largo were tagged off Islamorada by Chris Hotz, fishing aboard Dave Wamer's boat *Wam Jam*, and by Norm Brown, fishing aboard Bill Pomenti's boat *Scungilli*. The *Wam Jam's* fish was at liberty for six days before being recovered by Todd McLean, fishing on the *Good Life*, and the *Scungilli's* fish enjoyed four days of liberty before being caught by David Celentano, fishing on the *Dead Cat Bounce*. The fish had traveled at speeds of 15.3 and 10.8 miles per day respectively.

The recoveries from the Miami area were released off Islamorada by Norm Brown on the *Scungilli* and off Tavernier Key by Ryan Kypke fishing aboard his father's boat *T's Addiction*. Travis Clair recovered the *Scungilli* fish while fishing on the *L&H* two days following its release. It had averaged 35 miles per day during its travel. Jesus Mancha recaptured the *T's Addiction* fish the day after it was released, indicating the fish had sped along, covering 72 miles in its brief freedom.

The fish recovered off the Carolinas involved dolphin that were at liberty from seven days to more than nine months. These movements showed local travel of as little as 10 miles to long-distance migrations of at least 860 miles.



Five tagged fish were recaptured off the Carolinas this year. Two originated in southern Florida while the other three were tagged off the Carolinas.

Dolphin Tagging Progress by Zones, July 31, 2013.

Zone	Area	Southern Limit	Northern Limit	Number Tagged
1	Bahamas	22° N	28° N	16
2	FL Straits	23° N	25° N	516
3	South Florida	25° N	27° N	183
4	Central Florida	27° N	30° N	19
5	North FL & GA	30° N	32° N	9
6	Southern SC	32° N	33° N	76
7	N. SC - S. NC	33° N	35° N	31
8	Northern NC	35° N	36.5° N	3
9	Virginia	36.5° N	38° N	0
10	N. Mid-Atlantic	38° N		0
11	Gulf of Mexico			2
12	W Central Atlantic			3
13	Caribbean Sea			32
	Total			890

Localized movements were indicated by one recapture off each of the Carolinas. A fish tagged by Carl Copeland during a trip off Charleston, South Carolina, aboard the *Show Time* was recovered 24 days later by Bill McIntire aboard the *Shady Lady* 66 miles east of where the fish had been released. The fish had moved from the edge of the continental shelf eastward to waters more than 2,000 feet deep in the Sargasso Sea on the eastern side of the Gulf Stream current. It is possible that this fish was caught up in the semi-permanent gyre that exists off the South Carolina coast. The crew of Charles Cabell's *Tag-N-Stick* tagged the second fish to exhibit localized travel, this off Cape Hatteras, North Carolina. It was recovered by the Hatteras-based charter boat *Marlin Mania* seven days later and ten miles from its release site.

A third Carolina recovery displayed the typical dispersal of dolphin exiting the waters off South Carolina. The fish was tagged southeast of Charleston just beyond the 100-fathom curve by Adam Padgett during a fishing trip aboard Gregg Combos' boat *Fin Allie*. Kyle Shepard recaptured it 48 days later off Ocracoke Inlet, North Carolina, in roughly 100 feet of water. The fish had moved 257 miles from its release site averaging 5.4 miles per day.

The dolphin involved in the remaining two Carolina recoveries had their start in southeastern Florida and are representative of normal annual travel and repeat migration movements. The fish in the annual movement started out off Marathon, Florida, where it was tagged and released by Jack Conroy, fishing aboard the *It's a Keeper*. It was recovered 30 days later by Philip Kunkel off Hatteras Inlet, North Carolina, 863 miles from its release site. The fish had averaged traveling 28.8 miles per day during its liberty.

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



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The dolphin that exhibited the return migration started out off Miami, Florida, on August 7, 2012, when it was tagged by Bouncer Smith during a charter trip aboard his boat *Bouncer's Dusky*. It was recaptured 285 days (9.5 months) later, May 19, 2013, off Hatteras Inlet by Daniel Roberts during a charter trip aboard the *Runaway*. The fish was recovered 745 miles from its release site, but it most likely had traveled much farther. It probably had traveled up the Eastern Seaboard in 2012 following its release and had visited the warm tropical waters around the Caribbean during the winter before returning to the U.S. Atlantic seaboard. Under this scenario, it likely had traveled from 2,000 to 6,000 miles during its liberty. The fish was estimated to have grown from 19 inches to 37 inches in fork length.

The final region of recoveries for discussion is the Caribbean and the tropical western North Atlantic. Thanks largely to the efforts of two individuals, Manuel Botello of San Juan, Puerto Rico, and Wessley Merten, a doctoral student at the University of Puerto Rico, the movement patterns of dolphin in the northeast region of the Caribbean are being revealed. With five new documented movements in 2013, we now have recorded 16 tagged-fish movements in this region. The one constant in all of the noted movements has been the westerly direction they have taken.

The one recovery reported for the north coast of Puerto Rico indicated the slowest movement record for dolphin in this region. Tagged off San Juan by Manuel Fernandez, Jr. during a fishing trip aboard Manuel Botello's boat *Missing Angel*, the fish was at liberty for 63 days before being recaptured. It was recovered by Hector Morales off Arecibo, Puerto Rico, while fishing aboard the *Mostro*. The fish had traveled only 38.8 miles, averaging 0.6 miles per day. While half of the other eight recaptures from the north coast have averaged traveling less than two miles per day, this is by far the slowest movement noted for this area.

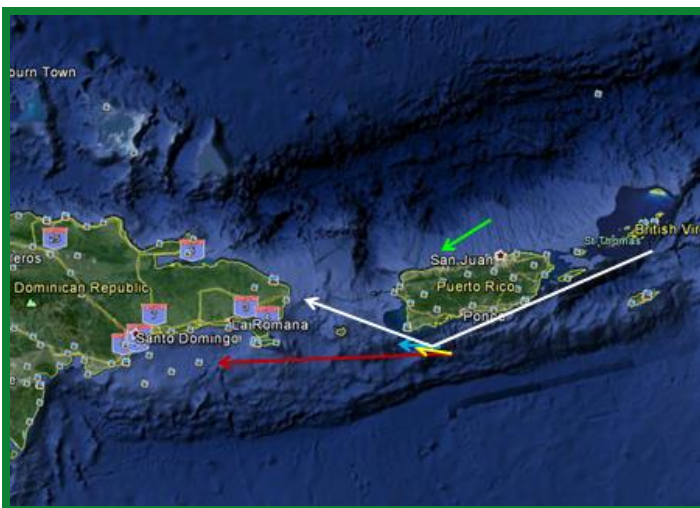


*Circle hooks are one of the best tools a fisherman has to ensure a healthier fish for release and to increase its chances for survival.*

Two of the recoveries from the south coast of Puerto Rico involved fish that were at liberty for just one day. These fish were tagged by Wessley Merten and Anibal Santiago off Guanica, Puerto Rico. One was recovered 11 miles from its release site off La Parguera, Puerto Rico, by the crew aboard the *Coral* while the other was recaptured by Carlos Gonzalez off Cabo Rojo, Puerto Rico, 21 miles from its release site. These one-day recoveries attest to the sizeable fishing effort being placed on the offshore stocks in this region.

The third recovery of a fish tagged off Guanica comes from the Dominican Republic. Tagged by Milton Carlo during a trip with Wessley Merten, the fish was recaptured 12 days later by Carlos Peralta Solsa while fishing off San Pedro Macoris, 167 miles from where the fish had been released. This is the second record of a dolphin tagged off the south coast of Puerto Rico moving to the Caribbean coast of the Dominican Republic. There have been two similar recoveries of fish moving from the north coast of Puerto Rico to the north shore of the Dominican Republic.

The final recovery report for this region represents a first for the U.S. Virgin Islands. In February 2013 Josh Slayton tagged a dolphin south of St. Johns, Virgin Island, during a trip aboard the vessel *World Class Anglers*. Matthew Bierley, mate aboard the sports fishing vessel *Big Dog*, recovered the tag while fishing off Punta Cana, Dominican Republic. The fish had traveled 242 miles during 120 days of liberty. Not only is this fish the first tagged off the Virgin Islands to be recaptured it represents the first documentation of dolphin moving from the Caribbean into the Atlantic through the Mona passage. With a travel rate of two miles per day, this fish clearly maintained the leisurely approach to life for which the Caribbean is known.



*Whether tagged on the north (Atlantic) or the south (Caribbean) coast of the islands in this region of the West Indies, recaptured dolphin exhibit a westerly track in their movements.*

**Your donations to the Dolphin Study are Fully Tax-Deductible**

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## Send in Your Dolphinfish Photos

During the ten years that this program has operated, anglers have sent in pictures of dolphin that they have caught, tagged or recaptured. Many shots are of trophy fish or amazing aerial displays. Some photos have featured prominent injuries while others have shown unusual parasites and stomach contents. Many depict the beauty and awesome power of these amazing game fish.

The purpose of the Photo Gallery page is to show the world-wide interest that anglers have in dolphin and some of the amazing aspects of this impressive animal that many fishermen never get to see. The faces of the many anglers displayed there reflect the great enjoyment fishermen derive from catching dolphin.

The best of these photos are assembled into a gallery on a new page on the Web site entitled "Photos." Visit [WWW.DOLPHINTAGGING.COM](http://WWW.DOLPHINTAGGING.COM) and click on the "Photos" page to see some interesting fish and the people who pursue them.

You are invited to send in your favorite digital pictures of dolphinfish showing an interesting or unusual aspect about the fish. These could be injuries the fish survived, color patterns, unusual items that the fish ate, or anything else out of the ordinary. I would also like to have pictures of fish you have tagged. Photos must be sharply in focus and clearly depict the subject with a preferred file size of at least 1MB. E-mail your pictures to [CSSLLC@BELLSOUTH.NET](mailto:CSSLLC@BELLSOUTH.NET) along with information about where and when the fish was caught and what is unusual about it.

*The delicate pastel colors shown by this cow dolphin off Charleston, South Carolina, had gone unnoticed by the crew during the excitement of boating the fish and would have been missed, if not for a camera capturing them.*



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