

SC Dolphin Tagging Study

July 2003

Project Status

The number of fishermen volunteering to tag dolphin for the study has slowed. About one third of the new anglers signing up to tag fish the mid-Atlantic Bight Region. The majority of 2003 volunteers reside in Florida or South Carolina.

As of July 1, 627 dolphin have been tagged this year. 2003 tagging activity has already surpassed 2002. This was accomplished through the efforts of only 59 boats and 104 anglers, representing only 12 percent of the volunteer taggers. Just think about what can be achieved this year if all volunteers make good on their pledge to tag.

Anglers tagging in the Florida Straits, Zone 2, have already reached the project's initial goal of 200 fish tagged and are still going strong. Fishermen off the southern S.C. coast, Zone 6, have also achieved the 200 fish marked as well. Tagging in Zone 3, South Florida, has progressed steadily. Activity in Zone 4, Jupiter to St. Augustine area, continues to be lower than anticipated, considering the large number of volunteers fishing this area. Dolphin tagging in Zones 5 is picking up due largely to anglers from S.C. Zone 7 tagging is also improving due largely to three N.C. anglers.

Dolphin Study Tagging Progress by Zones

Zone	Area	Southern Limit	Northern Limit	Number Tagged
1	E. Bahamas	22N	28N	6
2	FL Straits	23N	25N	221
3	South Florida	25N	27N	109
4	Central Florida	27N	30N	26
5	North FL & GA	30N	32N	34
6	Southern SC	32N	33N	209
7	N. SC - S. NC	33N	35N	22
8	Northern NC	35N	36.5N	0
9	Virginia	36.5N	38N	0
10	N. Mid-Atlantic	38N		0

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

South Florida and Cape Hatteras Linked

Eight tag recoveries have been reported since the last newsletter. This is only 2 less than all of last year. These recoveries bring the number to 16 for the year and 26 since the start of the study.

Two recoveries are of particular interest since they not only exhibited the longest movements in the study but they also closed the remaining gap in the northward movement of dolphin in the spring. With these recoveries the study has



tracked dolphin along 1,200 miles of the eastern coast of the US.

The first recovery involved a fish tagged in zone 3 off Miami by J. Brown aboard his boat *Draggin Dreams*. Twenty-six days and 679 miles later it was recovered in Zone 7 off Cape Hatteras by J. Olney, Jr. aboard the *Runaway*. R. Howell of Hatteras reported the second "golden" recovery. As he cleaned the day's catch from a charter boat, he encountered the tag, which W. Baugh placed in the fish 34 days earlier, and 775 miles to the south off Ramrod Key, FL. This recovery is the longest documented movement of a dolphin along the US's east coast.

The remaining 6 recoveries all came from fish tagged off the Florida Keys in zone 2. Four fish were recovered in the same zone. Fish recovered in the same area were at liberty from 2 to 26 days and moved an average of 46 miles.

Two of the fish exhibited a strong desire to move north. A fish tagged by A. Lewis off Marathon aboard *Killin Time* was recovered off Port Everglades 4 days and 117 miles later by M. Jamison. One of five fish tagged by SC biologist aboard R. Harris's *Got Ta Go* off Cudjoe Key on June 7 was recovered six days later off St. Lucie Inlet (222 miles) by L. Cohen aboard the *Hook Shot*.

Now for the puzzler. Another one of the fish tagged June 7th by the biologist off Cudjoe Key was also recovered six days later. However, this fish had moved only 40 miles up to Marathon where it was recovered by R. Cain aboard the *Just Fishin*. Here is an instance where two fish tagged the same day about two miles apart display marked differences in behavior. One with strong needs to move north, the other just casually moving north. Why?

SC Dolphin Tagging Study

July 2003

Page 2

Nantucket Anglers Club to Support Study

The dolphin study has extended its tagging efforts to the northern side of the Mid-Atlantic Bight. With cooperation of the weather and the presence of dolphin, anglers fishing out of the famous old fishing port of Nantucket, MA will join in marking and releasing dolphin to support the study.

Michael and Marcia Kane with the Billfish Tournament Committee of the Nantucket club recognized that the club could offer a great deal to the study. The club is located on the northern edge of the dolphin's normal range and dolphins have never been tagged so far north. Fish tagged here would offer a unique opportunity to track the fish on their fall movement southward.

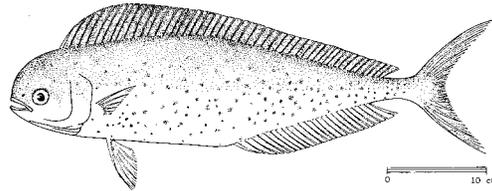
Mike and Marcia will be recruiting the area's conservation-minded sports fishermen to assist. By tagging dolphin through next fall, Nantucket anglers could provide important information on the species' behavior and movements in the northern section of their range.

Photos Requested

We would like to receive photos of your tagging activities. Pictures of anglers releasing tagged dolphin, recapturing tagged fish (including photos of fish with tags in place), or good action shots of dolphin in the water are wanted for use in the newsletter and on the web page. Digital images are preferred but color slides or prints will be accepted. Be sure to identify people appearing in the photo and include a statement giving the S.C. Dolphin Tagging Study authorization to publish the photo.



Jason Wilkinson displays a nice cow dolphin caught by Chris Starling aboard the *Good T'Go* while fishing off Morehead, N.C. The fish was tagged for the dolphin study. Photo by Chris Starling.



Pompano Dolphin Wanted

Pompano dolphins are a smaller cousin to the common dolphin and seldom reach 10 pounds in size. It is thought to be more oceanic in nature and is common in waters around Bermuda. This fish has been reported from Hatteras, NC southward to the Keys and throughout the Gulf of Mexico. But its relative abundance in the various areas is unknown.

It can be recognized by its deeper body with the greatest depth occurring just in front of the anal fin. Also the first rays of the anal fin behind the belly are shorter than the other rays in the fin, giving a rounded appearance. The first rays in the anal fin of common dolphin are longer than the remaining rays forming a small point found at the front of the fin.

Anglers with good quality photos of this fish are asked to share them along with information on where and when they were caught. If you have information on pompano dolphin please email, write or call the project leader listed below.

Check out the Dolphin Tagging Web Site!

<http://dolphintagging.homestead.com>

The website has been undergoing a major updating with new information and pages added. Now you will be able to access the project's newsletter archives along with viewing maps of 2002 and 2003 tag recoveries through the site.

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