

# South Carolina Dolphin Tagging Study

July 2002

## Four Tag Recoveries Reported

Recoveries of four dolphin tags were received. A dolphin tagged by charter Captain Scott Goodwin 20nm SE of Cape Canaveral was recaptured 18 days later 50nm E of Jeckyl Island, GA by E. L. Thompson. A fish tagged May 17 by James Moore 65nm SE of Charleston, SC was recovered June 21 by Margaret Suppler 55 miles NE of Oregon Inlet, NC while fishing aboard the charter vessel "Propagator." Two additional tagged dolphin have been reported observed captured by anglers fishing out of Swansboro, NC and Beaufort, NC. No information has been received on either fish.

## Southeastern Anglers Support Project

With the recent donations from the Charlotte Offshore Sportfishing Club and the Georgia Governor's Cup Billfishing Series, sportfishing clubs and organizations from Florida to North Carolina have joined in providing financial support to the dolphin tagging study. The following organizations have provided financial support for the study in 2002.

Beaufort Sportfishing and Diving Club  
Central Florida Offshore Anglers, Inc.  
Charlotte Offshore Sportfishing Club  
Coastal Conservation Association of SC  
Georgia Governor's Cup Billfishing Series  
Greenville Saltwater Sportfishing Club  
Hilton Head Island Sportfishing Club  
Murrells Inlet Saltwater Fishing Club  
Sebastian Inlet Sportfishing Association, Inc.  
SC Saltwater Sportfishing Association

## Tagging Effort Grows

Over 300 sport fishermen from Key West to New York have volunteered to assist in tagging dolphin. Over 95 percent of these anglers own their own boats. Florida leads the field with 174 volunteers followed by South Carolina with 112 signed up to tag. Interest in the program is growing in North Carolina with 26 vessels signed up to tag. A high level of tagging in NC is considered important to the study and hopefully more anglers will step forward. New Jersey and New York are represented by a single individual each.



## Fishermen Earn T-shirts

Over 80 anglers have provided dolphin to be tagged for this study. Eleven anglers and three boat captains have earned the right to wear the SC Dolphin Tagging Study t-shirt. Eight anglers have tagged five or more fish to qualify for their shirts while three others earned tees by recovering a tagged fish. Additionally, three captains have earned t-shirts by having ten or more fish tagged by anglers aboard their boats.

## Tag Application Problems

Recently information surfaced that some anglers were tagging dolphin while the fish was in the water or dangling from the hook. This is not a good practice.

Attempting to implant the nylon dart tag into a fish not fully under control could result in poor tag placement. Proper insertion of the tag into the fish's back muscle requires the fish to be against a solid surface. This provides the needed resistance to implant the tag in the correct position. Proper tag placement cannot be accomplished on small fish without the fish being immobilized. Tags are also easily lost out of the applicator under these conditions.

We urge anglers to immobilize these fish and place against a solid surface to ensure a successful tag implant.



The first step toward correctly tagging dolphin is to have the tag in the applicator, a wet towel and a measuring device ready before the fish is brought into the boat. Place the wet towel over the fish's eyes while it is still hanging from the hook. Lay the fish on a wet, smooth, flat surface with the measuring device under it or immediately adjacent. The smooth, wet surface reduces slime loss and the measuring device allows for a quick, accurate length assessment. The tag should be placed about 1/3<sup>rd</sup> of the length of the fish behind the fish's head. The barb should be inserted at a 45° angle toward the head with the tag barb pointing toward the fish's tail about 1 to 1½ inches from the top of the back (see photo). The tag should be inserted deep enough so that the barb passes between the spines coming off the backbone. Care should be taken not to hit the spine itself. The hook should be removed and the fish immediately returned to the water. The last and most important step is to record the data related to the fish on the proper card.

**NOTE:** It is very important to the study that we receive precise data on each fish to maximize the value of each recapture. We need Lat/Long. or LORAN TDs for positioning along with water temperature, depth and a measured fork length for the fish. Please print clearly on the card. (I will not know where to send your t-shirt if I cannot read your name and address.) If you tag several fish at one time in one location, complete one card with location, depth and temperature and reference this tag card number on each subsequent card (example: see # K027773).

**This research study is sponsored in part by:**

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**Dolphin Tagging Study:**

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