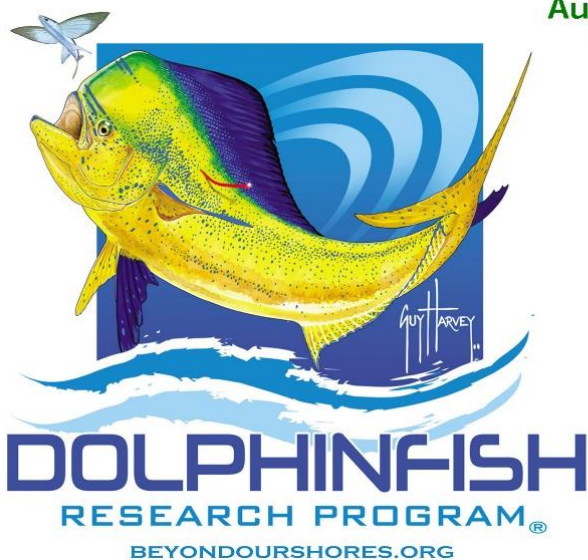


# Dolphinfish Research Program™

Made possible by a grant from Costa Del Mar

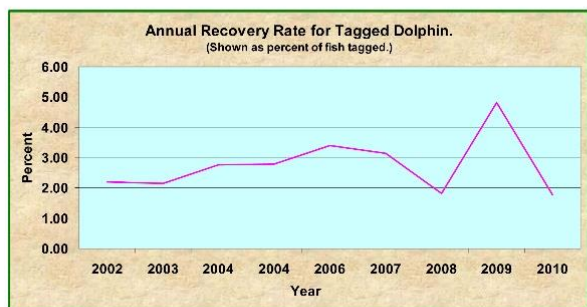
August 2011



By: Don Hammond

## Tag Recoveries Shift Northward

Nine tagged fish recaptures have been reported since the last newsletter, bringing the total number of tags reported in 2011 to 31. A total of 831 dolphin have been tagged this year, indicating a recovery rate of 3.64 percent for fish tagged this year. This is well above the overall recovery rate of 2.76 percent. Interestingly enough, the highest recovery rate came in 2009, a year when fishermen reported a below-average dolphin season much like this year's.



This recovery rate is good news, because we are getting the important information for fewer fish tagged. This does make you wonder: could a decrease in the abundance of dolphin result in recreational anglers catching a higher percentage of the available fish? Here is another question to be answered.

This month's tag recoveries involve five fish tagged off Florida, one tagged off South Carolina and three off North Carolina. These fish were recaptured off Florida, South Carolina, North Carolina and Virginia. In June the

recoveries began to shift northward out of Florida: the July recaptures center heavily off North Carolina into the Mid-Atlantic Bight. This is the normal progression for dolphin tag recoveries as the summer progresses.

The first two tag recoveries to be discussed are what I have come to call "instant" recaptures, those fish recovered by the same boat that tagged them shortly after their release. Philip Brownell, fishing in the Florida Keys with his father Russell, recovered dolphin he had tagged just a few minutes earlier on two separate days. They were fishing dolphin schools over the same shipwreck on both days where on June 20, 2011, they tagged 54 dolphin and on June 24, 2011, they tagged another 30 fish. With so many tags in the water around them, it is not surprising that they would recover their own fish. Food is everything to a dolphinfish.

The next group of recaptures are three fish tagged off Florida that traveled northward out-of-state to be caught off the Carolinas and Virginia. The first of these recoveries was a fast-moving fish first caught and tagged by Steve Wroblewski during a fishing trip June 18, 2011, off Deerfield Beach, Florida, aboard his boat *My Rules II*. Ten days following its release and 830 miles north of its release site, the fish was recaptured by Trust Brower of New Orleans, Louisiana, about 100 miles off the middle of the Virginia coast. He was part of the crew sailing the private sailboat *Condor* from Hilton Head, South Carolina, to New York. This fish traveled northward at an average rate of 83 miles per day which is one of the faster rates noted over an extended period. It is also one of the most distant recoveries made off the U.S. East Coast.

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Capt. Jimbo Thomas and his brother Rick tagged the next fish to be recaptured on April 26, 2011, off Miami, Florida, aboard their charter boat *Thomas Flyer*. The fish was recaptured 67 days later and 433 miles north of its release site off Charleston, South Carolina, by Trey Zeigler. This fish exhibited a rather leisurely travel pace for a south Florida fish, moving 6.5 miles per day. This is the third consecutive year that a dolphin from south Florida has been recovered off South Carolina. In the first seven years of this study, 2002 through 2008 the only connection between Florida dolphin and those off the Palmetto State was a tag placed in a Florida fish and found in the stomach of a dolphin caught off South Carolina.

The third fish traveling north from Florida was tagged on May 3, 2011, off Islamorada by the crew of Richard DeLizza's boat *The Rock Boat*. This fish was recovered 844 miles north of its release site off Oregon Inlet, North Carolina, by the charter boat *Bi-Op-Sea* captained by Jesse Granitzki with Chris Stine working as mate. At liberty for 63 days, the fish traveled northward at an average of 13.4 miles per day, which is 38 percent below the average speed for Florida fish making this trek. This is the second tagged dolphin reported in 2011 by this crew. Excellent job.

This period's next category of tag recoveries includes a fish tagged off South Carolina that traveled to North Carolina. The Palmetto State fish was tagged off Charleston on July 2, 2011, by the crew of Ritt Ritter's boat *Prowess*. Just 16 days later the fish was caught 306 miles north of its release point off Oregon Inlet. It was recovered by anglers aboard the charter boat *Sea Breeze* and reported by the boat's mate, George Cecil. Averaging 19.1 miles per day during its 16 days of liberty, this fish exhibited a travel rate 2.5 times faster than the average speed for such travel.

The final group of three recoveries involves a rare look at dolphin tagged and recovered off North Carolina. The first recapture originated from a tagging effort sponsored by the Piedmont Offshore Sportfishing Club of Greensboro, North Carolina. On June 4, 2011, the crew of Bobby Mendez's charter boat *Sandra D*, based in Pirates Cove Marina, tagged a dolphin caught by Mark Rodgers off Oregon Inlet. Four days later Wallace Johnson was fishing off Oregon Inlet on the charter boat *Point Runner* when he recovered the tagged fish. The fish had moved only 11 miles to the southwest indicating a leisurely travel rate of 2.8 miles per day.

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, July 31, 2011.

| Zone | Area               | Southern Limit | Northern Limit | Number Tagged |
|------|--------------------|----------------|----------------|---------------|
| 1    | Bahamas            | 22° N          | 28° N          | 44            |
| 2    | FL Straits         | 23° N          | 25° N          | 274           |
| 3    | South Florida      | 25° N          | 27° N          | 231           |
| 4    | Central Florida    | 27° N          | 30° N          | 46            |
| 5    | North FL & GA      | 30° N          | 32° N          | 30            |
| 6    | Southern SC        | 32° N          | 33° N          | 101           |
| 7    | N. SC - S. NC      | 33° N          | 35° N          | 24            |
| 8    | Northern NC        | 35° N          | 36.5° N        | 6             |
| 9    | Virginia           | 36.5° N        | 38° N          | 0             |
| 10   | N. Mid-Atlantic    | 38° N          |                | 1             |
| 11   | Gulf of Mexico     |                |                | 30            |
| 12   | W Central Atlantic |                |                | 20            |
| 13   | Caribbean Sea      |                |                | 24            |
|      | Total              |                |                | 831           |

The next two Tar Heel recoveries came from the same batch of ten tags placed in fish on the same day off Morehead City. On June 6, 2011, the crew of Mitchell Collette's boat *Still Drip-N* tagged ten dolphin from a batch of fish found in 135 feet of water. Thirteen days later one of the fish was recovered just south of Diamond Shoals at Cape Hatteras by Joseph Branin during a fishing trip aboard the charter boat *Nancy K*. The fish had moved 76.8 miles to the northeast, averaging 5.9 miles per day. The next recovery of one of the *Still Drip-N*'s fish came after 27 days of liberty and was made by Katie Flannagin, who was fishing off Oregon Inlet on the charter boat *Point Runner*. This fish had moved 123 miles to the northeast, traveling at a rate of 4.6 miles per day. It should be noted that another of the *Still Drip-N*'s fish was recovered after only three days near where it was released and reported on in the last newsletter. This is *Point Runner*'s second tagged dolphin recovery for the year. Another excellent job.



This 22.5 inch schoolie caught off North Carolina already shows the distinctive vertical profile of the forehead that indicates that this fish is a young male.

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## Dolphinfish Photo Gallery Established

During the nine 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 main theme of this 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 here reflect the great enjoyment fishermen derive from catching dolphin.

The best of these photos have been assembled into a gallery on a new page on the Web site entitled "Photos." Visit <http://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, odd 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 1MB. Email your pictures to [CSSLIC@BELLSOUTH.NET](mailto:CSSLIC@BELLSOUTH.NET) along with information about where and when the fish was caught and what is unusual about it.



*Most people who own retrievers have dogs that retrieve waterfowl, but Tim and Michelle Heiser of Plantation, Florida, have a dolphin retriever.*

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