

2004 HOLIDAY BUYER'S GUIDE

Check out the latest gear
for the new year! **pg.43**

BIG GAME FISHING

THE EDGE
big game
FISHING JOURNAL

November/December 2004[®]

MEET TODAY'S

**TUNA
LEGENDS**

**SWITCH & PITCH
STRIPED
MARLIN**

**WINTERTIME
BLUEFIN**

**MASTERS OF THE
MID-ATLANTIC
\$500,000**

\$4.99US \$6.99CAN



0 09281 03104 8



SOUTH CAROLINA DOLPHIN TAGGING STUDY



It's a big ocean out there, and we know very little about many of its inhabitants. One specie we have always relied on to make a fishing trip successful when the billfish and tuna are on sabbatical is the dolphin fish. These beautiful creatures and exquisite fighters are usually available to entertain our crew and keep paying customers happy and coming back, our fish box full, and our egos out of the "dumper" back at the dock.

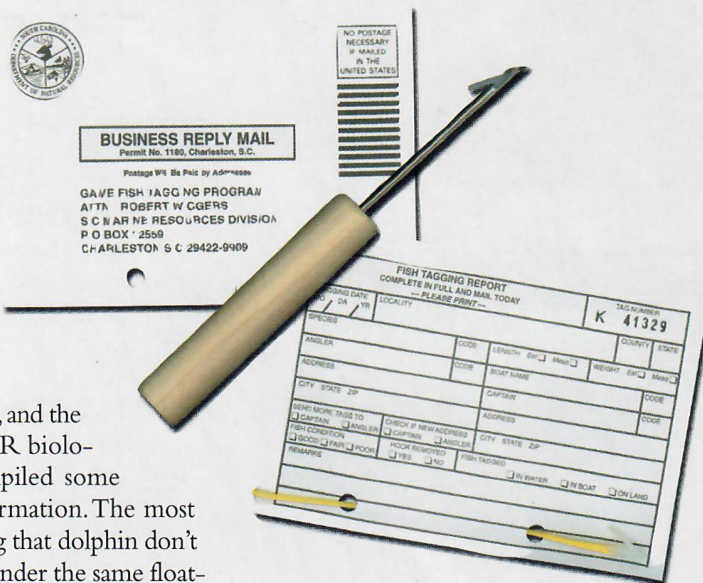
Let's see, what do we know about these critters? We know they can be found under debris, under weedlines, and around buoys out in the deep. Let's also not forget the great tablefare they provide. Well, that's about the limit of my knowledge.

Several years ago, Don Hammond and the South Carolina Department of Natural Resources (SCDNR) decided to grab the bull by the horns and fill this gap with information to help us better understand this specie we have always taken for granted. Don began putting together a network of conservation-minded fishermen that will gladly toss a few of these beautiful fish back into the deep with a tag carefully planted to further our knowledge. Through the years, his net-

work has grown, and as of August 31, 2004, anglers have tagged and released 1,352 dolphin to aid Don in his plight for information.

In the past two years, Don, his anglers, and the team of SCDNR biologists have compiled some impressive information. The most important being that dolphin don't live their lives under the same floating board—quite the contrary. They discovered that they are a highly migratory specie that extensively travels the open ocean, and in some instances, very rapidly. The longest distance a tagged dolphin has traveled was 995 miles. The fish was first captured in the Straits of Florida off Islamorada and 93 days later it was recaptured in the Baltimore Canyon east of Ocean City, Md. Another dolphin was tagged on June 20, off Key West, Fla., and recaptured off Oregon Inlet, N.C., a distance of 902 miles, 27 days later.

Recently, Don expanded his study to include the mid-Atlantic region, and even more recently the Gulf of Mexico. There is much to be learned about dolphin migration in these regions. No self-respecting dolphin will hang around the cold waters of the mid-Atlantic during winter. Where do these fish migrate? Do they swim east toward the Gulf Stream? Do they swim south toward snowbird country? Do they work offshore toward the Loop Current or maybe beyond? Do they migrate from the Gulf



through the Straits of Florida then north in the Gulf Stream. There are so many question that can be answered with a little of our help. Just glance at the chart, it is apparent that Don and his team sure could use our support in these areas.

Give Don Hammond a call at 843-953-9847 or checkout his website at <http://dolphintagging.homestead.com> for a tagging packet, that includes tags and a hand-held tagger, and to also be placed on Don's bi-monthly e-mail newsletter list.

One more thing, tag five dolphin and Don and his team will send you an official dolphin tagging t-shirt (one per customer per year).

Think about it a minute. Placing "your name" on a dolphin is akin to putting a note in a bottle and setting it adrift—you never know where it will wind up. And when it does, you'll be the first to know.

Capt. Len Belcaro

Zone	Area	Southern Limit	Northern Limit	Number Tagged
1	E. Bahamas	22 North	28 North	94
2	FL Straits	23 North	25 North	488
3	South Florida	25 North	27 North	101
4	Central Florida	27 North	30 North	41
5	North FLA & GA	30 North	32 North	74
6	Southern SC	32 North	33 North	520
7	Northern South Carolina Southern North Carolina	33 North	35 North	14
8	Northern North Carolina	35 North	36.5 North	10
9	Virginia	36.5 North	38 North	1
10	North Mid-Atlantic	38 North		3
11	Gulf of Mexico			6