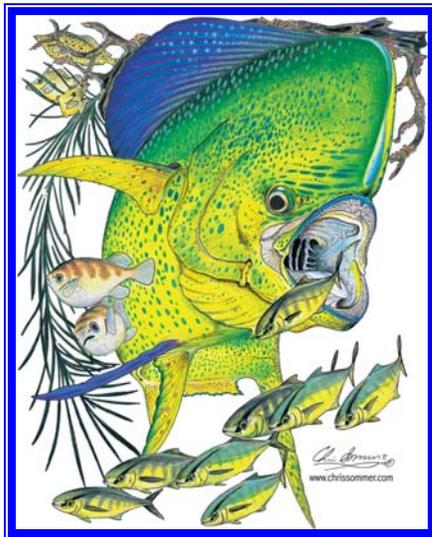


Cooperative Science Services, LLC Dolphin Tagging Research Project

August 2007



Central Florida Fishing Clubs Jointly Sponsor Satellite Tag

Two Central Florida sport fishing organizations have joined forces to become the first private sponsors of a pop-off satellite archival tag (PSAT) for use in the 2008 CSS Dolphinfish Research Program. In a cooperative effort, the Florida Sport Fishing Association (FSFA) out of Cape Canaveral, Florida, and the Central Florida Offshore Anglers (CFOA) based in Orlando, Florida, have formed a partnership to fund the purchase and deployment of a PSAT to study the movement patterns of dolphinfish off the coast of Port Canaveral, Florida.

In a joint statement provided by Dale Badgett, president of the FSFA, and Walt Eismann, president of the CFOA, the group said, "We are excited that we have been able to form a partnership to provide support to this valuable research program. It shows that through cooperation we will be able to provide insight into one of our most valuable and least understood recreational fisheries on a local level." (To see the full CFOA/FSFA news release visit <http://www.centralfloridaoffshoreanglers.com/>)

This research program is the first to use these high-tech instruments to study the behavior and movements of dolphin. A pilot study conducted by CSS in 2006 and 2007 revealed a deep diving behavior (as deep as 400 feet) and use of lower water temperatures (as low as 61°F) than previously suspected. The preliminary study

also indicated that dolphinfish may behave differently from one area to the next. These first behavior tracks also are suggesting a possible major nighttime feeding activity that has never before been documented.

Representing the latest in technology for the study of marine animals, these miniature computers come at a high cost to purchase and use: \$6,000 each. These instruments can record time-specific depth, temperature and light intensity every minute and can monitor a fish for up to a year's time. The real value of these devices comes at the end of the scheduled monitoring period. The tag releases itself from the fish, floats to the surface and transmits its data via the ARGOS satellite system back to the home office. The fish does not have to be recovered to get the data.

The 2008 CSS Dolphinfish Research Project has set a goal of deploying 10 of these high-tech instruments on dolphin in 2008. A small grant from the South Carolina Sea Grant Consortium in cooperation with the SC Department of Natural Resources allowed for the purchase of three PSATs for dolphin. With four tags now acquired, the CSS study is in need of six additional private organizations or businesses to sponsor tags.

Dale Badgett, president of the FSFA, and Walt Eismann, president of the CFOA, have issued a challenge to other offshore fishing clubs on the East and Gulf coasts to step forward in supporting this important research on this valuable game fish by sponsoring a tag.

For more information about the study or to sponsor a tag, contact the CSS office shown on page 3.

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Officers of the Florida Sport Fishing Association and the Central Florida Offshore Anglers present a check for \$6,000 to purchase a satellite tag for the spring 2008 project. (Left to right; Steve Collins, Vice President FSFA, Dale Badgett, president FSFA, Terry Winn, vice president CFOA, Don Hammond, president CSS, and Walt Eismann, president CFOA)

A Record-Setting Year

2007 has proven to be the year of records. As of the end of July 40% more dolphinfish had been tagged than in the previous best year, 2005, when 1,600 fish were marked and released. This high level of tagging is most likely a result of the high abundance of dolphin present in the South Atlantic Bight this year.

Number of Dolphin Tagged in 2007 by Zone.

As of July 31, 2007

Zone	Area	Southern Limit	Northern Limit	Number Tagged
1	Bahamas	22N	28N	348
2	FL Straits	23N	25N	749
3	South Florida	25N	27N	458
4	Central Florida	27N	30N	44
5	North FL & GA	30N	32N	80
6	South Carolina	32N	33N	408
7	Southern NC	33N	35N	17
8	Northern NC	35N	36.5N	0
9	Virginia	36.5N	38N	0
10	N. Mid-Atlantic	38N		0
11	Gulf of Mexico			0
12	W C Atlantic			0
13	Caribbean			134
	Total			2,238

Recaptures had followed a similar trail. A total of 66 tag recoveries have been reported for 2007 as of the end of July. The previous record was 49 for an entire year in 2006. These recoveries have ranged from Cuba to New York. With the large pool of tagged fish that are still in

the water, more long distance recoveries should come later this year.

For more information on the 2007 tag recoveries, visit www.dolphintagging.com and click on "Map of Tags and Recaptures."

Improve the Chance for a Recovery

The successful tagging of dolphin requires planning and a commitment of time. Deciding to tag a fish after it is on the deck normally results in the release of a fish near death with little hope of recovery. Also, fish that are gut hooked or hooked in the gills or an eye should not be tagged.

The tag kit should be placed in an easily accessible place on the boat with a tag in the applicator and a pen or pencil in the bag ready to go. Everyone on the boat should know where it is kept. The overall goal should be to return the fish to the water in less than one minute.

It is best to use a dipnet to lift dolphin out of the water to minimize damage by the hook but also as a way to control the fish once it is in the boat. An alternative is to clamp a wet towel over the fish's eyes as it is lifted into the boat before laying it on deck. This normally will stop the fish from thrashing and will allow for a quicker tag implant and easier hook removal. Have a yardstick on the deck where the fish will be tagged to allow a quick fork length measurement to be taken before releasing the fish.

The tag should be inserted into the back muscle ahead of the midpoint of the fish's body. The tag should be inserted at a 45° angle toward the head with the plastic barb of the tag pointing toward the tail. It should be implanted deep enough to allow the barb to pass between the spines that extend off the backbone. This will permit the tag's barb to hook around the spine locking it in place.

Immediately upon releasing the fish, anglers should record the primary data (date, GPS position, water temperature, fork length of fish and presence of sargassum). Without this information to describe the tagging event, the act of releasing a fish with a scientific tag has little value. The information on the initial capture of the fish is almost as important as that generated from a recapture. This information will be used to help define dolphinfish habitat and occurrence. Taggers are also reminded to send in their completed tag cards promptly.

Tagging fish for science is not for everyone. An angler must be willing to commit the time needed to record accurate data and most anglers are not ready to take the time away from fishing. However, everyone can and should take time to report any tagged fish that is recovered. Fishermen should record the date, GPS location, fish's fork length, and the water temperature for any tagged fish that is recovered.

Supporting Dolphin Tagging Research
Hilton Head Reef Foundation

www.reeffoundation.com

A registered 501 (c) 3 non-profit organization.
Donations are fully tax deductible.

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New 2007 Contributors

**South Carolina Coastal Conservation
Association, Columbia, SC
Florida Coastal Conservation Association,
Orlando, FL**

Your Financial Support Is Needed

The CSS Dolphin Tagging Study operates on private donations and small grants. Contributions from individuals, organizations and businesses in the private sector make this research possible.

I hope that you will consider donating to the Dolphin Research Program to ensure this important work continues. Donations are fully tax-deductible, thanks to the help of the Hilton Head Reef Foundation. Checks should be made out to the H H Reef Foundation /Dolphin Study and sent to the address at right.



The first time a fisherman sees the brilliant colors, power and majesty of a bull dolphin, the scene will be permanently etched in his mind to be enjoyed throughout his life.

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