

Cooperative Science Services, LLC

Dolphinfish Research Program

August 2010



Tag Recoveries from North Carolina

Over the years, North Carolina has yielded the second-highest number of tagged dolphin recoveries behind Florida. This is a reflection of the state's high level of offshore fishing effort, which typically harvests the second-largest portion of dolphinfish of any state in the U.S.

The recovery of a fish tagged south of the Tar Heel state has been as early as mid-May and as late as August. Typically, the first tag recovery each year occurs in June, with more than 80 percent of all North Carolina tag recoveries taking place in June and July.

Eight tagged fish have been reported recovered off North Carolina in 2010. Five of the fish started their journey off Florida while the other three began their travels off South Carolina. The first of these recoveries came June 11 when Ronald Ramos caught a tagged fish off Cape Hatteras during a fishing trip aboard a private boat. The fish had been released off Charleston, South Carolina, June 5, 2010, by the crew of the boat *Game On* out of Bennett's Point, South Carolina. During its six days of liberty the fish had moved north 314 miles, averaging an amazing 52.3 miles per day. At the time of the recovery, this was the fastest travel rate noted for a fish tagged off South Carolina.

On June 12 two tagged dolphin were recovered off the Tar Heel State. The first one was recaptured by Scott Armstrong while fishing off Carolina Beach Inlet, North Carolina, aboard the private boat *Slayer*. The fish had been tagged April 24, 2010, off Ft. Pierce, Florida, by Don Hammond during a special trip aboard Terry Winn's boat *T's Me* to deploy two satellite tags. David Conway, managing editor for *Florida Sportsman*

magazine, happened to be riding along that day to do a story on the Dolphinfish Research Program and photographed the fish at its release. The article appeared in the July 2010 issue of *Florida Sportsman*. This fish was recaptured 456 miles north of its release site following 49 days of freedom.

The second June 12 recovery came from Jim Lyons who runs a fish-cleaning service in Hatteras, North Carolina. He recovered the tag from a batch of dolphin caught by the charter boat *Capt. B* during a fishing trip to the rock pile southeast of Hatteras Inlet. This fish had been tagged on April 26, 2010, off Islamorada, Florida by Capt. Zehntner Gay aboard his charter boat *Hooked Up*. It had moved 777 miles northward in its 47 days of liberty, traveling at the rate of 16.5 miles per day.

The next two tag recaptures came from the Cape Lookout area of North Carolina. On June 18 the crew of Capt. Thomas Smith's boat *Flat Line* recovered a tagged dolphin while fishing north of Cape Lookout. The fish had been tagged off Jupiter Inlet, Florida, 19 days prior by John Buckman during a fishing trip aboard the boat *Great White*. This fish averaged moving 29.5 miles per day during its 561 miles of travel.

The second Cape Lookout tag recovery took place on June 20 just south of Cape Lookout. The fish was recovered by the charter boat *Sunrise* out of Atlantic Beach, North Carolina, captained by Bobby Freeman. The fish had been originally tagged on March 20, 2010 off Key Largo, Florida by Bill DeVierno on a fishing trip aboard Rick Bacco's boat *Dottom II*. During its 92 days of freedom, the fish had traveled 672 miles to the north, averaging 7.3 miles per day.

Oregon Inlet charter boats produced the next two tag recaptures from the eastern side of the Gulf Stream. Justin Boyd reported the catch of a tagged dolphin

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on June 24 while fishing aboard the charter boat *Citation*. The fish had been tagged on June 19 off Charleston, South Carolina, by William Dotterer a aboard the charter boat *Patriot*, captained by Chip Davis out of Seabrook Island, South Carolina. Traveling 396 miles during its five days of liberty, the fish had averaged an amazing 79.2 miles per day, breaking the recently established speed record of 52.3 miles per day for a dolphin tagged off South Carolina. This fish was tagged during the Bohicket Marina Dolphin Tag and Brag Tournament, which was held to promote tagging of dolphin and to raise money for the research program.

Oregon Inlet's other recovery was taken on June 25 by the charter boat *Waverunner* and reported by Jeff Golden, a crew member. Interestingly enough, this fish was also tagged by a charter boat, the *Thomas Flyer* captained by Jimbo Thomas off Miami, Florida, on June 4. The fish had traveled 755 miles during the 21 days of liberty, indicating it had averaged moving 36 miles per day.

The latest North Carolina tag recovery came from the waters off Cape Hatteras. Chris Whipple reported recovering the tagged dolphin on July 6 while fishing aboard the charter boat *Trophy Hunter*. The fish had been tagged off Charleston, South Carolina, on June 19, 2010, by Fran Gulski during a fishing trip aboard Ritt Ritter's boat *Prowess*. At liberty for 17 days, the fish had traveled northward 270 miles, covering an average of 16 miles per day.

Comparing the 2010 speeds of travel for the fish coming out of Florida versus those from South Carolina, there appears to be something odd going on with the fish from the Palmetto State. Historically, dolphin tagged off Florida sped along in their northward migration at an average of 21.6 miles per day. Fish migrating north from South Carolina have historically been more leisurely in their pace, traveling at an average rate of 7.6 miles per day.

In 2010 the Florida fish basically maintained their pace northward, averaging 21.0 miles per day, but the South Carolina fish must have caught racing fever. The slowest of the three fish recovered from the Palmetto State in 2010 traveled north at twice (15.9) the historical rate, while the average speed for the three fish, 49.1 miles per day, was more than six times higher than the historical average. This change in travel speed could indicate the absence of the semi-permanent Gulf Stream gyre off South Carolina or that the fish simply avoid the gyre in their departure from South Carolina.

For more information on the dolphin movements in 2010 visit the Dolphinfish Research program Web site at <http://dolphintagging.homestead.com/Map2010.html>.

Dolphin Tagging Progress by Zones, July 31, 2010.

Zone	Area	Southern Limit	Northern Limit	Number Tagged
1	Bahamas	22° N	28° N	204
2	FL Straits	23° N	25° N	481
3	South Florida	25° N	27° N	332
4	Central Florida	27° N	30° N	76
5	North FL & GA	30° N	32° N	72
6	Southern SC	32° N	33° N	105
7	N. SC - S. NC	33° N	35° N	8
8	Northern NC	35° N	36.5° N	70
9	Virginia	36.5° N	38° N	0
10	N. Mid-Atlantic	38° N		0
11	Gulf of Mexico			0
12	W Central Atlantic			45
13	Caribbean Sea			1
	Total			1,394



Tyler Sudbrink (right) of Greensboro, North Carolina, shows off the bull dolphin he caught off Panama that had a recent encounter with a billfish. The red arrow indicates the injury site. Photos by Craig Sudbrink.

Collision at Sea.

During a recent fishing excursion to the west coast of Panama, Craig Sudbrink and his son Tyler of Greensboro, North Carolina, caught what appeared to be a nice, healthy bull dolphin (above photo). When the fish was filleted out, much to their surprise, a four-inch-long section of a billfish's spear was found embedded in the fish (inset photo).

It is doubtful that this injury stemmed from an attempt by the billfish to eat the dolphin since the shape, size and dentition suggests a billfish too small to swallow the dolphin, such as a sailfish. Most likely the injury is the result of an accidental collision between the billfish and the dolphin during a mutual feeding frenzy on the same pod of baitfish. Competition for food is fierce in the open ocean.

The Dolphinfish Research Program needs your financial support. No federal funds support this important research. This program exists because of private donations.

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Web Site Updated

If you have not been to the Dolphinfish Research Program's Web Site

<http://dolphintagging.homestead.com/index.html>

recently, you need to visit it. You will find fresh information on the annual progress pages of the site.

Also, a new page has been added presenting a summary of the movement patterns observed for dolphin.

The page reporting on the 2010 tag recoveries has been updated to cover the recoveries reported by June 2010. A spread sheet is available that presents information on the 27 tagged fish reported recaptured while a map shows the hypothetical movements of the fish over the western North Atlantic Ocean.

The *Rewards and Sponsors* page has also been updated to reflect the 2010 financial contributors as of June 30, 2010. I encourage you look at the list of financial supporters to see who in your area is contributing. Without the support of these people, organizations and businesses, it would be impossible for this important research to continue. Let them know you appreciate what they are doing.

A new Web page, Preliminary Movements, has been added to summarize the findings of the first eight years of the study. This page represents the work of hundreds of fishermen who either tagged fish or reported the recovery of a tagged fish. It gives an overview of the movements of dolphinfish along the U.S. East Coast. It looks at the routes taken and variations in the speed of travel. The report also provides insight into the dispersal of fish once they leave U.S. territorial waters showing the international implications for management. This information represents the first look at the movement patterns of the highly migratory dolphinfish along the U.S. East Coast.

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For More Information, Contact

Don Hammond

Cooperative Science Services, LLC

961 Anchor Rd., Charleston, SC 29412-4902

Telephone – FAX (843) 795-7524

Email CSSLLC@bellsouth.net

Web site www.dolphintagging.com

