

SC Dolphin Tagging Study

January/February 2005

2004: Making Lemonade from the Lemons

Very few fishermen along the entire eastern seaboard reported 2004 as a normal dolphin fishing year. In some areas fish showed up later and in reduced numbers. Other areas saw dolphin show up in good numbers for a short period but with big fish noticeably absent. There were areas, like the Florida Keys, where small craft/gale advisory flags remained posted virtually all spring. Only in the northern sector of the Mid-Atlantic Bight did fishermen report unusually good dolphin fishing.

As poor as this dolphin season may have been in various areas, fishermen from all over gathered the lemons they could find and collectively made an outstanding batch of lemonade! That cooperative effort yielded a pot of golden information for the South Carolina Dolphin Tagging Study in 2004.

A total of 1,446 dolphin were tagged by the 310 participating anglers fishing on 119 boats in 2004. Dolphin were tagged off Texas and the Bahamas, and from Key West to Nantucket. It was off South Carolina in zone 6 that saw the largest number of fish tagged with 528. This number barely edged out zone 2, the Florida Keys, which saw 506 dolphin tagged. Florida fishermen tagged a total of 699 dolphin (zones 2,3,and 4), while anglers out of South Carolina (zones 5 and 6) tagged 604 dolphin.

Only 19 dolphin were tagged in zone 7 off North Carolina, which is one of the most heavily fished offshore areas along the east coast. This area is primarily fished by anglers out Wilmington and Beaufort, North Carolina, and those going south out of Hatteras.

Tagging in the Mid-Atlantic Bight fared no better. From Cape Hatteras northward to Nantucket (zones 8, 9 and 10), only 19 dolphin were tagged by fishermen in 2004. Tagging in this area will have to increase in 2005 if we are to learn where dolphin go when they leave the Mid-Atlantic Bight.

The Bahama Islands (zone 1) had a big improvement in the tagging effort, with 94 fish tagged and three reported recaptures. This tagging effort was largely due to two boats, *Tongue Tide* owned by Forrest Engle out of Andros Island, and *Rock Boat* owned by Richard and Bob Delizza of Weston, Florida, who collectively tagged 70 of the 94 fish.

The tagging study's expansion into the Gulf of Mexico in 2004 has been slow to catch on. Only two boats in Texas, *Blue'n Brew* owned by Chance Stone of Bay City, and *China Girl* owned by John Swanson of Sugar Land, were the first boats to tag dolphin in the Gulf.

The 2004 Dolphin Tagging Study consisted of 119 boats from 11 states and one from the Bahamas. The break down by area is as follows:

Bahamas – 1	Colorado – 1
Florida – 108	Georgia – 1
Massachusetts – 3	Maryland – 3
North Carolina – 12	New Jersey – 2
Pennsylvania – 1	South Carolina – 99
Texas – 2	Virginia – 2



Tagging in 2004 by Zone thru December 31, 2004.

Zone	Area	Southern Limit	Northern Limit	Number Tagged
1	E. Bahamas	22N	28N	94
2	FL Straits	23N	25N	506
3	South Florida	25N	27N	139
4	Central Florida	27N	30N	54
5	North FL & GA	30N	32N	76
6	Southern SC	32N	33N	528
7	N. SC - S. NC	33N	35N	19
8	Northern NC	35N	36.5N	10
9	Virginia	36.5N	38N	3
10	N. Mid-Atlantic	38N		6
11	Gulf of Mexico			11

Fishermen Needed

Entering its fourth year in 2005, the dolphin study is in need of experienced offshore boat owners who are concerned enough about the future of dolphin to tag and release their smaller catches for science. Boat owners who fish in the **Mid-Atlantic Bight, Gulf of Mexico and eastern Bahamas** are needed to tag dolphin to help answer questions about the movement of dolphin from their regions.

This project offers offshore fishermen the chance to actively participate in scientific research. Anglers have voiced their concerns that no research is being done on popular gamefish in their areas. Here is the opportunity! Anglers who want to know more about dolphin in their area should sign up to participate in this project. The more dolphin tagged in an area, the greater the opportunity to learn about the fish in that area.

Anglers interested in participating in this study can register at <http://dolphintagging.homestead.com> or should contact the project leader listed at the end of the newsletter.

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2004 Winners and Top Finishers

2004 saw a slight decrease (5.5%) in the number of boats tagging dolphin from 2003 but this was offset by a significant increase (20.2%) in the number of anglers participating. There were 35 boats and 19 anglers who tagged 10 fish or more, while 16 boats and 7 individuals tagged 20 fish or more.

For the third consecutive year Chester Kalb, II of Key West, Florida finished first in both the individual angler and top private boat categories. Chester once again chose to be recognized in the top private boat category. Therefore, Justin Brown of Pembroke Pines, Florida, who fishes on his father's boat *Draggin Dreams*, has subsequently earned the top angler award for the second year straight. The top charter boat award goes to Howard Moseley's *Tag Team* based in Charleston, South Carolina.

The Final standings for the year are:

Top Individual Anglers

1. Chester Kalb, II of Key West, FL: 95 fish.
2. Justin Brown of Pembroke Pines, FL: 57 fish.
3. Bill Baugh of Ramrod Key, FL: 46 fish.
4. Eddie Caba of Miami, FL: 40 fish.
5. Bob Delizza of Weston, FL: 34 fish.
6. Forrest Engle of Andros Island, BA: 26 fish.
7. Tony Smoak of Charleston, SC: 21 fish.
8. Steve Leasure of Charleston, SC: 17 fish.
9. Dean Kelley of Folly Beach, SC: 15 fish.
10. Dave Wilson of Satellte Beach, FL: 15 fish.
11. Jose Hernandez of Homestead, FL: 15 fish.

Top Private Boats

1. (no boat name) owned by Chester Kalb, II of Key West, FL: 194 fish.
2. *Summer Girl* of Charleston owned by John Smith, Steve Leasure and Dean Kelly: 111 fish.
3. *Got Ta Go* owned by Rob Harris of Cudjoe Key, FL: 57 fish.
4. *Draggin Dreams* owned by Don Brown of Pembroke Pines, FL: 57 fish.
5. *Ballyhoo* owned by Bill Baugh of Ramrod Key, FL: 54 fish.
6. *Prowess* owned by Rit Ritter of Charleston, SC: 44 Fish.
7. *Tongue Tide* owned by Forrest Engle of Andros Isl., BA: 39 fish.
8. *Suzannah* owned by Phillip Davis of Johns Island, SC: 36 fish.
9. *Rock Boat* owned by Richard and Bob Delizza of Weston, FL: 34 fish.
10. *Petrel IV* owned by Harry Johnson, Jr. of Mt. Pleasant, SC: 33 fish.

Top Charter Boats

1. *Tag Team* of Charleston, SC, Capt. Howard Moseley: 80 fish.
2. *2 Keepers* of Marathon, FL, Capt. Charlene brown: 25 fish.

3. *Castaway* of Charleston, SC Capt. Randy Ragland: 22 fish.
4. *Tiger Shark* of Hatfield, MA Capt. Gary Savard: 4 fish
5. *Second to None* of Swansboro, NC, Capt. Shane Brafford: 4 fish.
6. *Special Lady* of Mt. Pleasant, SC, Capt. John Thomas: 4 fish.
7. *Mistress* of Mt. Pleasant, SC, Capt. Richard Brackett: 3 fish.
8. *Hungry Bear* of Palm City, FL, Capt. Larry Lafler: 3 fish.

Shimano



**Year End
Awards
Promote
Tagging**

**Star
Rods**

The South Carolina Department of Natural Resources extends sincere gratitude to **Shimano Corporation** and the **Don Coffee Company** of Olafee, Kansas and to **Sea Striker Corporation** and **Star Rods** of Morehead City, North Carolina for their generous support of the SC Dolphin Tagging Study. These companies have demonstrated strong commitment to the conservation of our valuable fisheries resources through the generous donation of the annual incentive awards.

Chester Kalb, II, Justin Brown and Howard Mosely will each receive a Shimano Tiagra 50W on a top quality Star Standup rod for their contributions to the study. These outfits are given in recognition of their outstanding contribution to the study of dolphin through tagging these fish during 2004.

The SC Dolphin Tagging Study was designed to utilize private sports fishermen as the backbone of the project. Fishery managers recognize that anglers along the U.S. east coast are concerned about the future health of the dolphin stocks, and would be interested in getting involved. The project was designed to capitalize on this army of volunteers to carry out the tagging of dolphin over 1,300 miles of U.S. coastline. A project of such magnitude would have been cost-prohibitive without the willingness of volunteers and their concern for our valuable resources.

For more information on the project, visit
<http://dolphintagging.homestead.com> or contact

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