



Gamefish Tagging News April 2014

2014 overview

Since the 2013–14 season began on 1 July, 2013 there have been 26 recoveries advised. In the same period another 1400 tagged fish have been added to the database. The recaptured fish comprised 17 kingfish, 2 striped marlin, 3 mako sharks, 1 broadbill swordfish, 1 southern bluefin tuna, 1 hammerhead shark and 1 bronze whaler shark. Many more tag cards are expected to arrive over the next month or so.

Of the 26 recaptures, 17 were made by recreational fishers and 9 by commercial fishers. Commercial methods included tuna longline (1 hammerhead, 2 mako and 1 striped marlin); set net (1 mako and 1 bronze whaler shark); trawl net (1 southern bluefin tuna); while the exact method was not specified for one kingfish and the broadbill swordfish. All of the recreational catches were made using rod and reel.

The time at liberty for tagged fish ranged from one day to more than 12 years, and the distance between release and recapture ranged from 0 to 1360 nautical miles.

Notable recaptures

The longest distance covered by a tagged fish so far this season was a broadbill swordfish estimated at 150 kg tagged on the Middlesex Bank, north of the Three Kings Islands in April 2011, and recaptured by a Chinese fishing vessel near Tuvalu in September 2013 (2 years 5 months later). This was the fourth broadbill tag recovery to date, with two others recaptured in NZ waters and one at the Wanganella Bank in the Tasman Sea. This broadbill was caught 1360 nautical miles north of where it was tagged.

The first southern bluefin tuna tagged by a recreational angler in New Zealand and then recaptured was reported by an observer on a trawler working off Hokitika in July, 2013. This was an excellent recapture. The 130 kg tuna was tagged off the charter vessel “Oracle” in the same area in July, 2007 and was at liberty for just over six years. It measured 200 cm on recapture.

The first long term recapture of a tagged hammerhead shark tagged in New Zealand was reported by a Taiwanese tuna longline vessel in the Fiji basin in September 2013.

The shark had been tagged near Cuvier Island in April 2011, was free for 884 days, and recaptured 1060 nautical miles north from where it was tagged.

A 50 kg mako shark tagged off Farewell Spit was recaptured off Fraser Island, Queensland in October 2013. It was caught on a tuna longline after 208 days at liberty, 1258 nautical miles north-west of its release location.

The longest-term recapture of a striped marlin in the NZ tagging programme was made in March 2014. The tag was found deep in the shoulder of the fish as it was being processed for smoking. Although only part of the tag remained, it was possible to track down the release details from the remaining portion. The marlin had been tagged 3 years and 1 month previously, just a short distance up the coast from where it was recaptured, off Rocky Point, Bay of Islands. It was estimated at 125 kg on release and was in good condition, weighing in at 139.4 kg on recapture.

A kingfish tagged at the Volkner Rocks in January 2002 was recaptured 2 nautical miles away after 12 years and 1 month (4411 days). It was measured by Rick Pollock at 116cm on release and 136cm on recapture, when it was estimated to weigh 33 kg.

At the other extreme, a kingfish tagged from the charter vessel "Pursuit" at Volkner Rocks was recaptured and released the very next day from the same vessel at the same place. It was obviously not affected by its experience of the day before.

Reporting releases

Every year we have recaptures where the tag report card is missing. This is frustrating and a waste of effort all round. Tagging is of no value unless the card is filled in and returned. Many cards are only partly filled in or illegible. If your fish is recaptured but you have not provided enough information, including your full address, you might miss out on finding out about your fish, and the reward.

Reporting recaptures

If you recapture a fish with a tag, provide all the same information you record when filling out a tag card on release. If possible, measure kingfish by laying them flat on a measuring board. There is a strong possibility that they were accurately measured before release, so we need an accurate measurement on recapture as well. There are incentives to report tag recaptures. These include:

- 1. \$1000 lucky draw each year for a fisher who returns a tag and all information**
- 2. A reward shirt for each angler who tags a fish that gets recaptured**
- 3. A polo shirt with GameTag logo for the angler who reports each tag recapture**
- 4. Recapture letter to anglers and skippers involved with release and recapture**

More information is available on the NZ Sport Fishing Council website.

Thanks to the Ministry for Primary Industries who fund data management and reporting; the NZ Sport Fishing Council which purchases and distributes the tags; and Blue Water Marine Research who are contracted to manage the database.