



Gamefish Tagging News December 2014

2013-14 overview

There were 2,263 fish tagged in the 2013–14 season including 647 kingfish, 346 mako sharks and 116 blue sharks. It was a poor season for billfish, both landed and tagged totals were down. There were 468 striped marlin tagged, down from 745 in 2012–13, 4 black marlin and just 9 blue marlin tagged and released.

We are hopeful for a better season in 2015. The blue water is moving in after a cool spring and the first marlin of the season was caught on 6 December 2014. This fish was caught by Kyle Riding wide of the Poor Knights and was tagged and released.

Information supplied on tag cards can provide useful summaries of where and when fish are caught during the season. 2013–14 was a poor season especially off East Northland and the west coast of the North Island (Figure 1). Fishing effort at the Three Kings has declined but the fishery still performs well at times.

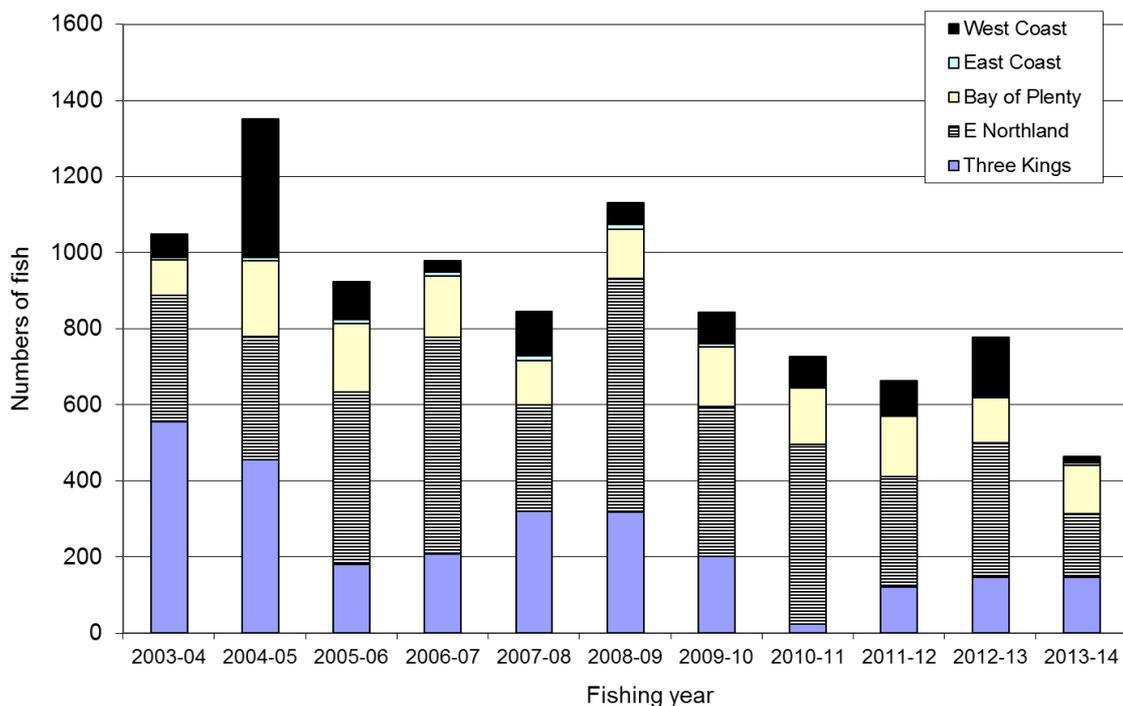


Figure 1: The number of striped marlin tagged by fishing year and region since 2003–04.

What is not included in Figure 1 are the 267 striped marlin tagged by three New Zealand vessels at the Wanganella Banks in 2014. These fish were caught outside New Zealand fisheries waters.

In 2013–14 there were 31 tagged kingfish recaptured and 3 striped marlin, 5 mako sharks, 3 blue sharks, 1 broadbill swordfish, 1 southern bluefin tuna, 1 hammerhead shark and 1 bronze whaler shark. 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.

Billfish recapture locations for all years combined show a wide spread for striped marlin tagged in New Zealand, from Australia to French Polynesia (Figure 2). Blue marlin tagged in the Islands have all been recaptured north of 20° S. A shortbilled spearfish was recaptured near New Caledonia but no tag card with release information has been found.

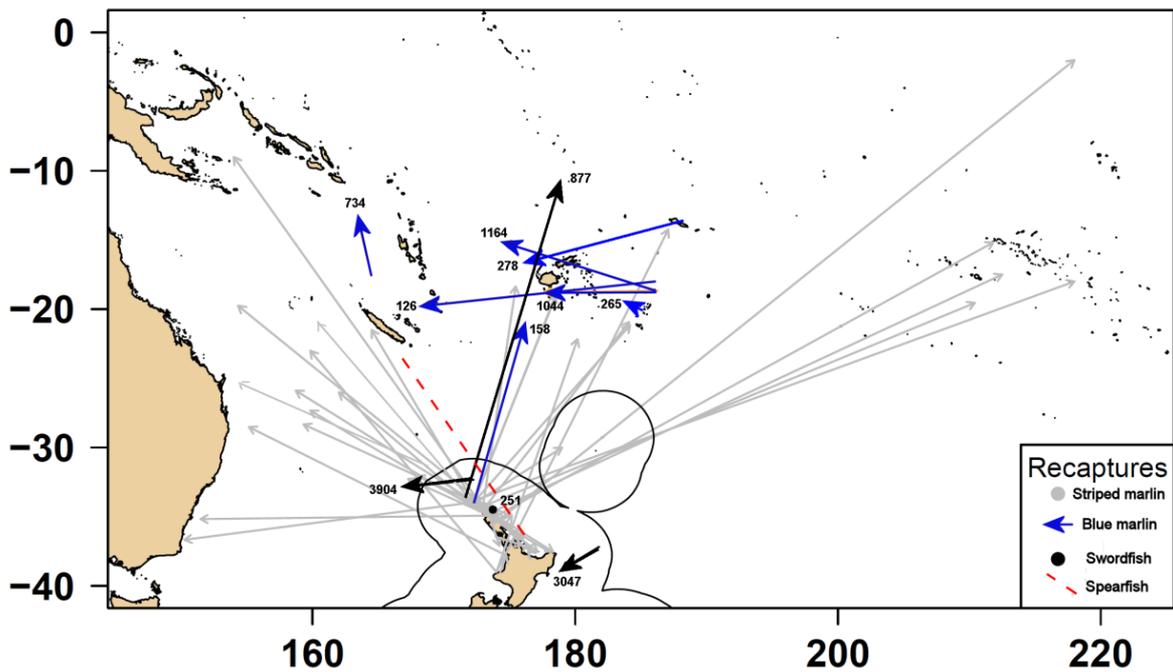


Figure 2: Long distance recaptures for billfish tagged with New Zealand gamefish tags with the days at liberty near the recapture location for some fish.

As more broadbill are tagged and released some interesting recaptures are starting to come in. A broadbill swordfish estimated at 150 kg tagged on the Middlesex Bank, north of the Three Kings Islands in April 2011 was recaptured by a Chinese fishing vessel near Tuvalu in September 2013 (2 years 5 months later). This broadbill was caught 1360 nautical miles north of where it was tagged and was the fourth broadbill tag recovery to date. One of these was just 12 kg when tagged by a New Zealand longliner and estimated to be 160 kg when recaptured 10 yrs 8 months later at the Wanganella Bank by an Australian longliner

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.

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. Hand your completed tagging cards into your fishing club or post them to:

Gamefish Tagging

Ministry for Primary Industries

PO Box 19747

Auckland 1746.

New Zealand

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.