



Ministry for Primary Industries
Manatū Ahu Matua



Gamefish Tagging News

Collecting tag cards for 2011–12

It seems that the winter weather has arrived and we will soon be on the couch watching the Olympics. We would like clubs and anglers to send in all tag cards that remain for the 2011–12 season (1 July 2011 to 30 June 2012). Please copy this newsletter to your records officer and pass on our thanks for the great job they do for their members.

Please report recaptures

While the release information is a useful record of catch the really interesting part of the tagging programme comes from recaptures. Record all the information you would on a tag card for a recapture and give it to your club, post direct to Gamefish Tagging, MPI, PO Box 19747, Auckland or email John@Bluewatermarine.co.nz Apart from your own curiosity there are other great incentives to report recaptures. These include:

- **\$1000 lucky draw for a fisher who returns a tag and information in 2011-12**
- **A reward T-shirt or cap for each angler who tagged a fish that gets recaptured**
- **A polo shirt with GameTag logo for the angler who reports a tag recapture**
- **Recapture letter to anglers and skippers involved with release and recapture**
- **More tagging information on the NZ Sport Fishing Council website**

Thanks to the Ministry for Primary Industries who fund data management and reporting; the New Zealand Sport Fishing Council who purchase and distribute the tags, and Blue Water Marine Research who are contracted to manage the database.

2012 overview

As at 1 June 2012, we have been advised of a total of 50 tagged fish recaptured since July 1, 2011. Tag cards received and added to the Game Tag database at that time were 1929 in total, with late arrivals expected to boost the eventual total for the season to well in excess of 2000.

The recaptured fish to date comprise 40 kingfish, 6 mako sharks, 3 blue sharks and 1 swordfish. Five of the recaptured fish have no release details at this time because the release cards have not yet been received. The fish in this category include 2 kingfish, 2 blue sharks and 1 mako shark. Details of the missing tag cards are listed at the end of this report.

Of the 50 recaptures, 42 were made by recreational fishers and 8 by commercial fishers. The methods used for the commercial recaptures were tuna longline (3 blue sharks and 1 mako); set net (2 kingfish); single trawl net (1 kingfish); with one commercial recapture of a mako shark near Fiji being unspecified, but most likely tuna longline.

Some notable recaptures this season.

The longest distance recorded this season was covered by a 42.8 kg **mako shark** caught by an Australian angler west of Melbourne after 399 days, 1520 nautical miles west of where it was tagged off New Plymouth in March, 2011. This is further west than any mako previously recaptured in the tagging programme.

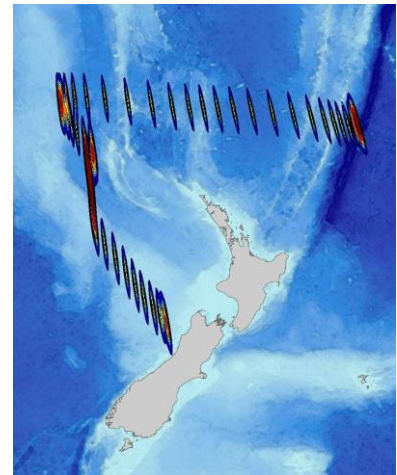
A notable **swordfish** recapture was made this season, and it was unusual for a couple of reasons. Not only was it recaptured off the same boat at almost the same location after 251 days, but it was also caught by the same angler both times, then re-released to fight again. Jim Gigger, deckhand on the charter boat “Primetime” caught the tagged swordfish off Cape Karikari on February 20, 2012. It was released again, estimated at 130 kg in weight. Jim later went on to capture the world record claim 404 kg swordfish not far away just a couple of months later, after a charter party cancelled at late notice and Captain John Gregory decided not to waste a good spell of weather.

Of the 50 tagged fish recaptured in 2011-12, over 40% (21 fish) were released again. In some cases the tag was left on the fish after the number was recorded, while in other cases the tag was replaced with a new one. A small number of fish were re-released without any tag at all.

Pacific Bluefin recapture after 4 years

Many of the bluefin tuna caught off the West Coast by recreational anglers are tagged and released. This also offers a unique opportunity to tag and track large Pacific bluefin using pop-off satellite tags. A fish tagged on 18 August 2007 was tracked for 57 days before the tag released from the fish prematurely (track on right). It was recaptured on 26 August 2011, 60 nmiles south of where it was released from the same vessel, after 1469 days at liberty.

This fish was estimated to weigh 260 kg on release and was 303 kg and 272 cm long on recapture. This is the third, and most spectacular, recapture of a Pacific bluefin in a subsequent season. This clearly shows that some of the same fish are returning each year. However, none of the conventional or satellite tagging has shown a link to their known spawning grounds in the north Pacific.



Track of a Pacific bluefin tuna from 57 days of electronic tag data. Uncertain latitude estimates.

Kingfish

Four kingfish were recaptured by divers using spear guns, while the remaining 38 recreational recaptures were caught using rod and reel. Recreational fishers recaptured 37 kingfish in total.

A kingfish recaptured at the Rangatira Reef in the Bay of Plenty set a new record for the longest time at liberty for a kingfish carrying a single tag of twelve years 2 months. Tagged in the same place 4450 days previously, this kingfish measured 126 cm on release on 14 Feb 2000. It was estimated to weigh 35 kg. On recapture, it measured 141 cm and weighed 45 kg. It was tagged by Richard Hart (left fish on release) from “Pursuit” and recaptured by Aaron Jones (right same fish on recapture) on “Miss Fleur”.



Some fish move. Two more record breakers for kingfish recaptured off the east coast of the South Island were both caught in commercial set nets. Kingfish G 126808 was tagged off the Ranfurly Bank, where it measured 78 cm in length. When it was caught off Oamaru on 18 Dec 2012 after 1428 days, it measured 91 cm and weighed 10.6 kg. This is the most southern recapture of a New Zealand kingfish to date, and it had moved a minimum distance of 560 nautical miles southwest. Kingfish G 126808 was tagged at French Pass and recaptured off Otago Heads after 242 days, 360 nautical miles south from its release point. This is the first of many kingfish tagged in Marlborough to be recaptured.

Missing Tag cards

The following cards were missing at the time of writing. Please check that all your cards have been properly completed and returned to your club or to the addresses below:

Ministry for Primary Industries, PO Box 19747, Auckland

G 113597 blue shark, recaptured 1/7/11 off Portland Island

G 118070 kingfish, recaptured 7/7/11 in the Bay of Islands

G 95061 mako shark, recaptured 2/3/12 off Ocean Beach, Whangarei

G 123435 kingfish, recaptured 27/4/12 at the Three Kings

G 114202 blue shark, recaptured in March 2012 near Vanuatu

Incomplete tag cards

Another frustration for the tagging project coordinators is that many people do not fully complete their cards. It is important to fill out as much of the requested information as possible. For example, we really want to know if the length you have written down for any tagged kingfish is estimated or measured. Please specify which it is.

Many anglers only enter a street name and address but not a town. If your address is incomplete and your fish is recaptured, you may miss out on both the information and your tagging shirt. Remember, if your fish is recaptured you will also get a reward, so it is in your own interest to give us the information we want. And, while entering the information, please try and make it readable! We fully understand the elation involved, and the fact that you might be celebrating, but try and make it easy for us to understand if you can.

Thanks

Pete Saul and

John Holdsworth