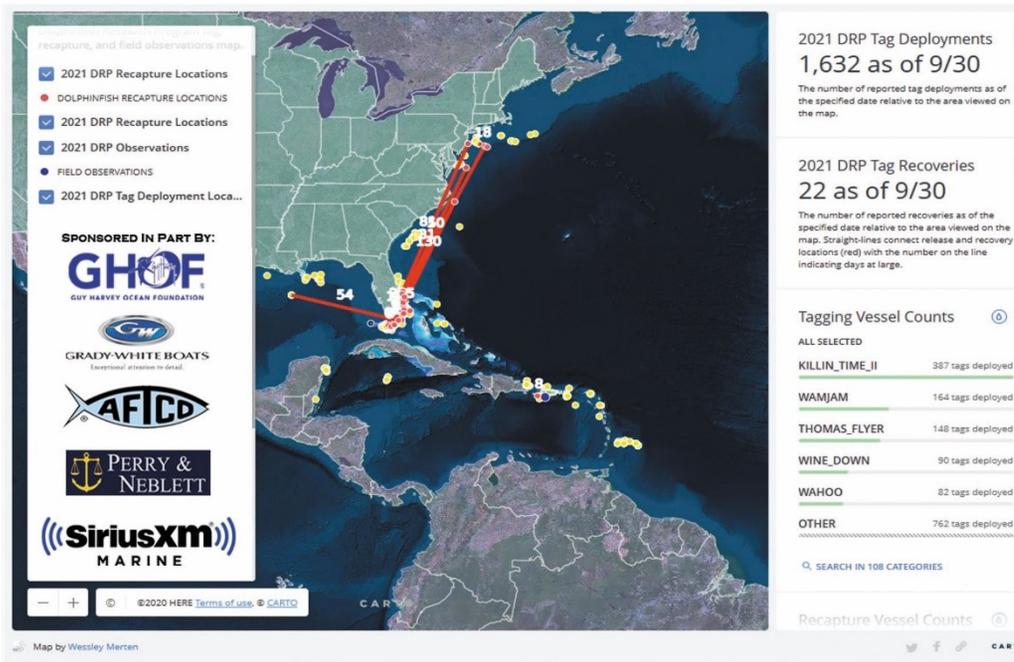


Dolphinfish Research Program™

Made possible by a grant from the Guy Harvey Ocean Foundation

September 2021



Reported and Received Tagging Progress from 8/30/2021-9/30/2021:

Jeffrey Liderman (Sandman) 25	Tim Heiser (Irish Wake) 23
Don Gates (Killin' Time II) 15	Charles Brooks (Perfect Circle) 14
Dane Dellenbach (Knotty Seacrets) 11	Pete Bacon (Big Game Fishing Charters) 7
Scott Frost (Lightning Strike) 5	Wigg One (Robert Clarke) 5
Robi Birriel (Nuri) 4	David Neblett (Hit That!) 3
Colt Cook (Hook n' Cook) 2	Josh Flynn (El Gato) 1
Will Cooksey (MG) 1	Willie Howard (Captain Willie's Charters) 1
Sean Jackson (Sholess) 1	Wilmer Sanchez (The Big Deal) 1

With the U.S. East Coast summer large tropical pelagics tournament season over we shift our focus to gathering data on catch and effort to vessels that participate in our program with solar powered vessel tracking devices or through tagging reports throughout the Caribbean Sea. With several trips logged from Captain Robi Birriel aboard *Nuri* based out of the north coast of Puerto Rico over the past month his trips have indicated that the fall run in the Greater Antilles has begun but it is not in full force. Further to the west off the northeast coast of the Dominican Republic, Vessel *Sandman* tagged 25 dolphinfish around fish aggregating devices, ranging from 5 to 15 miles offshore. Both vessels logged tagging data with fish ranging in size from 23" to 30" fork-length but larger gaffer sized fish being landed for table fare. As we head further into Fall the abundance of dolphin will increase along the northern portion of the Greater Antilles while abundance decreases from north to south along the East Coast as sea surface temperatures begin to drop and the season's first cold fronts and Nor'easters move into the northwest Atlantic Ocean. The cyclical (clockwise) nature of dolphin movements in the western central Atlantic Ocean, driven largely in part due to the strength and trajectory of the Gulf Stream current, is truly unique when compared to other parts of the world. In less than 6 weeks we will embark on our third research expedition to the eastern tropical Pacific Ocean where current dynamics are starkly different than the WCA with preliminary movement patterns indicating movements

Year to 9/30/2021 for Reported Releases:
1,632 tagged & released for conservation and science by
107 different vessels

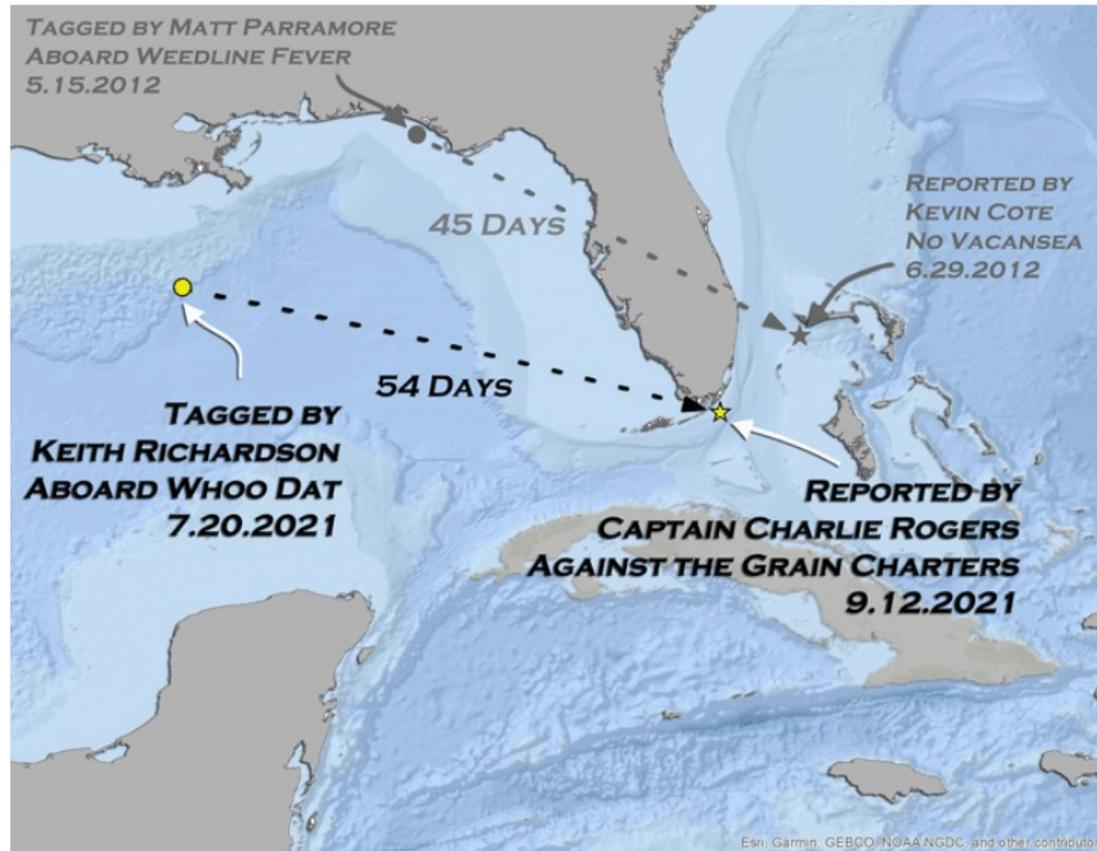
21 Recaptures to date in 2021 15 verified
1 PSAT movements
3 PSAT Deployments 0 Acoustic Tag
431 Kits Distributed

of the species are not cyclical in nature but driven by the expansion (poleward) and contraction (equatorial) of sea surface temperatures within the ETP. However, it remains to be determined how far west into the central Pacific ETP dorado could range and be influenced by counter-current equatorial pacific flow to and from the ETP region. Deployment of 16 PSATs in November could help elucidate these patterns.

Reported Recaptures Since 8/30/2021

David Pereira reported a Irish Wake tagged fish by Tim and Michelle Heiser
Erik Dahl reported a Killin' Time II tagged fish by Don Gates
Charlie Rogers reported a Whoo Dat tagged fish by Keith Richardson
Mark LaRocca reported a Fortuna tagged fish by Kevin McDermott
Tony Simmons reported a Dorado tagged fish by Chase Benedict
Christian Bernard reported a Killin' Time II tagged fish by Don Gates
Landon Murray reported a Killin' Time II tagged fish by Don Gates

Gulf of Mexico - Upper Florida Keys Recovery



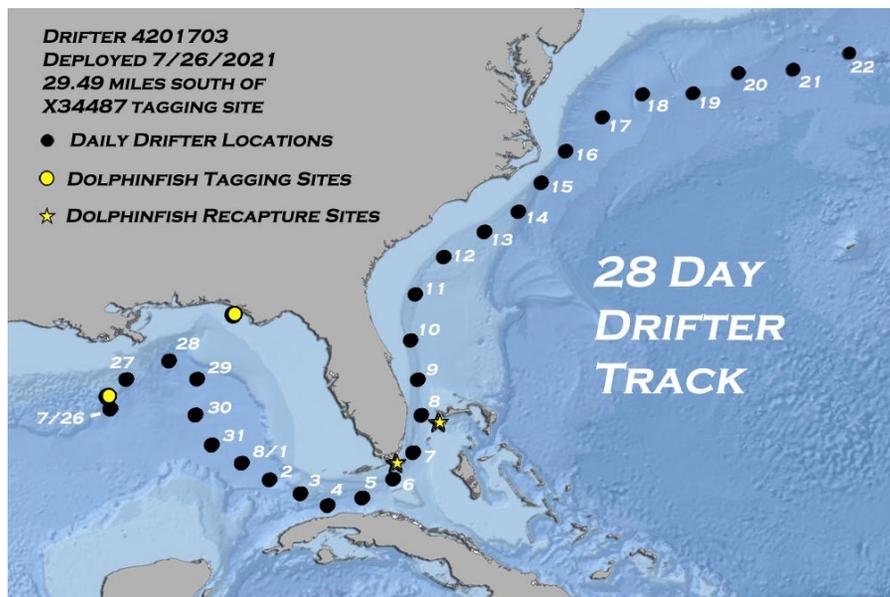
Black text = 2021 recovery. Grey text = 2012 recovery

Each year, recoveries of dolphinfish tags follow a somewhat predictable pattern given the number of tag deployments per location and the fishing effort in those areas. A primary example are dolphins tagged in the Florida Keys and recovered off South Florida. This year, 41% of tag recoveries fall into this category, and over the history of our program, 15% of all recoveries pertain to short-term movements between these areas. This data is useful for a host of scientific and fishery management uses ([click here](#) for articles on that) but beyond the scope of this article, each year, rare tag recoveries occur whose details unlock a multitude of new comparisons, analyses, thoughts, and theories about the movements of this epic

gamefish. With an annual average of only 32 dolphin tagged in the Gulf of Mexico (GOM) over the past two decades, recoveries generated from the GOM are statistically low (now 3 of 561 fish) but the revered *Whoo Dat* fishing team beat the odds this year. Recently, **Captain Charlie Rogers** of [Against the Grain](#) fishing charters based out of Key Largo, Florida, reported *Whoo Dat's* tag number for a fish they tagged 95 miles south of Grand Isle, Louisiana, on July 20th, 2021. Coincidentally, a surface drifter (4201703) was deployed six days after and only 30 miles south of where *Whoo Dat* tagged the 24" dolphin, which provides a potential route this fish may have taken to swim to the Florida Keys (and possibly beyond if it had not been recovered). A swift surface drifter movement from the Loop Current to the North Atlantic in just 28 days raises the question of whether dolphin swim through the system at the same pace. We do not have an example of that type of movement, but our fastest single day movement is 120 miles, fastest movement between south Florida and North Carolina is 7 days, and fastest movement from the Florida Keys to the Mid-Atlantic Bight in 10 days suggest that it is possible. What this recovery does show is that a 24" fish tagged south of Grand Isle, Louisiana, grew 6" in 54 days when it was recovered off the Upper Keys. This supports our position that management for dolphin along the U.S. East Coast should both include dolphin that occur in the U.S. GOM,



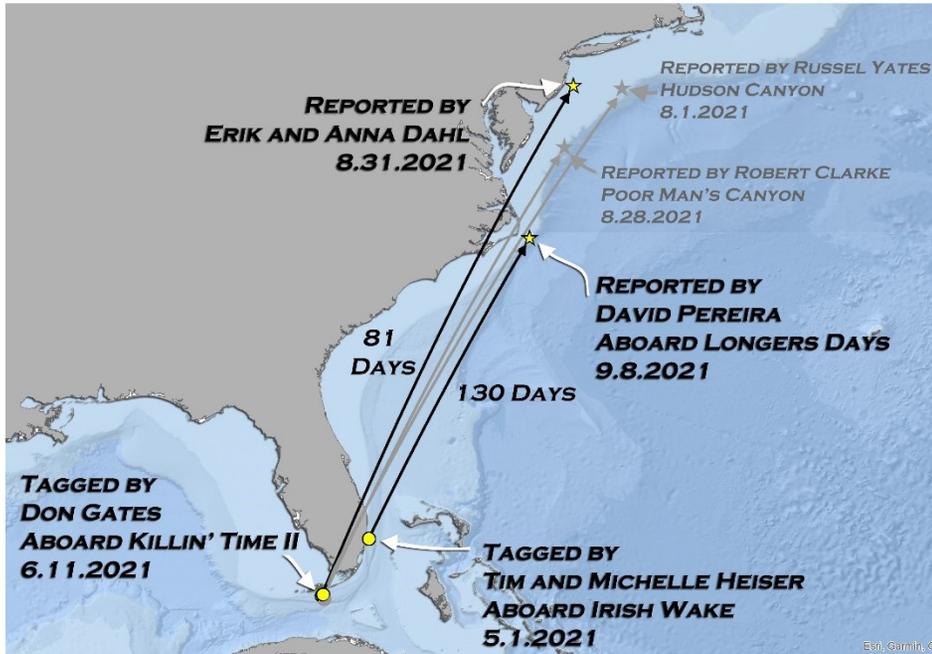
Against the Grain client catch on 9.12.2021 that included the fish tagged by *Whoo Dat*. Pic: C. Rogers



Surface drifter track July 26th, 2021, to August, 22nd, 2021

which are connected on very short time-scales, and establish an increase in fish reproduction and biomass by extending the SAFMC's 20" minimum size to the GOM, so that dolphin either remain within the GOM and grow to the size of **Tessa's** first dolphin (pictured below) or toward the East Coast for anglers like [Against the Grain's](#) clients to catch like they did in early September. And, with three new recoveries in the MAB since our August newsletter, these examples provide further evidence of how small fish tagged off the Keys can grow to larger sizes before being caught in northern areas along the eastern seaboard. **Captains Mark LaRocca, Erik Dahl**, and angler **David Pereira** are the latest to recapture tagged dolphin in the MAB. **Captain LaRocca's** fish was tagged by **Captain Kevin McDermott** 18 days before it was recovered. The 20" fish was tagged at a lobster pot 25 miles northwest of the mouth of Hudson Canyon and recaptured at another lobster pot after growing 3"

NEW MID-ATLANTIC BIGHT RECOVERIES



in an area known as the 100 square in Hudson Canyon, 42 miles southeast from where it was tagged. **Captain Dahl's** fish was caught with his family only 9 miles east of Barnegat Inlet, NJ, 81 days after **Captain Don Gates** and the *Killin' Time II* fishing team tagged the fish. After 81 days at liberty, the fish grew from 17" to 32". Lastly, **Captain Tim Heiser** and his wife **Michelle** tagged and released a 15" fish off Ft. Lauderdale on May 1st, 2021, that angler **David Pereira**

Recapture Location	Tagged By	Reported By	DAL	Straight-Line	
				Distance (miles)	Movement Rate (mpd)
off Cape Hatteras, NC	Tim Heiser	David Pereira	130	686.31	5.27
off Barnegat Inlet, NJ	Don Gates	Erik Dahl	81	1,141.46	14.09
off Tavernier/Plantation Key	Keith Richardson	Charlie Rogers	54	700*	12.96
Hudson Canyon, NJ/NY	Kevin McDermott	Mark LaRocca	18	44.75	2.48
off Jupiter Inlet, FL	Chase Benedict	Tony Simmons	11	215.33	19.57
off Fowey Rocks Light, FL	Don Gates	Christian Bernard	2	132.57	66.28
off Marathon, FL	Don Gates	Landon Murray	19.03 ^x	42.51	2.23 ^x

*= approximate path distance
^x= hours / miles per hour

Dolphin recoveries since our August newsletter.

recaptured as a 28" fish aboard **Captain Tom Randall's** charter vessel *Longer Days* 20 miles out of Cape Hatteras, NC, on September 8th. Average daily growth for all fish reported in this article equates to .13"/day (.91"/week; 3.64"/month) and in three of the four examples show small young-of-the-year fish (<20" FL) growing 3" to 15" in the same calendar fishing season within the Loop-Gulf Stream current system. [Click here](#) to read more about this year's recoveries on our regional movements page.



Captain Bob Felinski poses with Tessa Clague after she caught her first dolphin in the GOM off Texas this past summer. Pic. T. Felinski

Dolphinfish Management Update



Dolphinfish Research Program Newsletter September 2021

Recently, the **South Atlantic Fishery Management Council (SAFMC)** that leads the most extensive dolphinfish management and conservation plan in the western central Atlantic Ocean (WCA), has lowered their priority relative to dolphinfish and removed the species as an agenda topic at their upcoming December meeting, a move that could stymie progress made toward revising the U.S. Atlantic dolphinfish fishery management plan and eliminate necessary policies to be set in place to ensure better management and conservation for dolphinfish in the WCA. While online public comments to the SAFMC are currently closed with regard to dolphinfish management, you can still write a letter to the Executive Director of SAFMC. View our recent letter to SAFMC by [clicking here](#) and get further informed so you can take action to protect your dolphinfish fishery.

Buy Tees! Support Mahi Tagging.



With over 30,000 fish tagged since 2002, our tagging program has become a leader in public engagement in compiling scientific data on the

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species. Shop in our store to get a fresh supply of threads or tags for fishing while supporting our tagging program that works to compile scientific data on mahi. [Click here](#) to shop and support us. [Shop](#) in our online store

Fall Fundraising Campaign Begins!



We would like to thank the **173** individuals and fishing industry entities and partners for their support of our work in 2021. As we enter the last fiscal quarter of 2021, our **501(c)(3)**, the **Beyond Our Shores Foundation (BOSF)**, created to support and expand the DRP, is beginning our work to raise funds for our 2022 effort. Below are ways

you can help support our work in 2022:

- [Buy a kit](#) and give it as a Holiday present
- [Make a tax-deductible donation](#) to support program operations
- Make a tax-deductible donation to our DRP Investment Fund. Please [contact us](#) for details.
- Select Beyond Our Shores, Inc., as your preferred charitable organization to receive contributions from [Amazon Smile](#) when you shop on Amazon.
- [Click here](#) to support our work and thank you!

To Donate by Check [click here](#), Make Checks out to:

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