

National Marine Fisheries Service
Narragansett Laboratory - South Ferry Road
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AN EQUAL OPPORTUNITY EMPLOYER

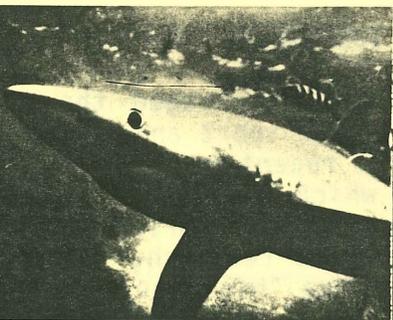


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THE SHARK TAGGER spring 1989



June 19, 1989

TAG AND RECAPTURE UPDATE

During the past six months, approximately 2,500 sharks representing over 20 different species were tagged through the combined efforts of sport and commercial fishermen and staff biologists. The number of sharks tagged (mostly sandbar, blue, and hammerheads) in the first half of 1989 is nearly three times higher than for the same period in the previous five years. The increase was due primarily to: (1) additional tagging by Florida commercial shark fishermen, (2) increased tagging of blue sharks in recent weeks by sport fishermen in the northeast, and (3) tagging by NMFS biologists during a research cruise aboard the NOAA ship *Delaware II*. The most obvious difference between 1988 and 1989 was the increase in the abundance of blue sharks on the continental shelf off the northeast coast during June of this year. You will recall last year very few blue sharks were caught off New Jersey and western Long Is., NY. Reports from fishermen and tagging results in the past three weeks suggest 1989 will be remembered as "a good blue shark year."

From January to mid-June a total of 85 tag returns were received, primarily from blue, sandbar, lemon, tiger, and mako sharks. Some of the more interesting returns included: a blue shark tagged near Munson Canyon (40°30'N, 67°00'W) was recaptured off French Guiana (2,000+ mi in 13 months), another tagged off Cape Elizabeth Maine was recaptured off Venezuela (2,000 mi in 7 months), and another blue tagged off Munson Canyon was recaptured off Cuba (1,300 mi after 3 years). Returns from mako sharks included one tagged near Hydrographer Canyon (40°00'N, 69°00'W) that was recaptured off

Islamorada, Florida, (1,000 mi after 5.5 years), and another mako tagged off Block Canyon (38°50'N, 71°15'W) was recaptured by a Portuguese longliner off Senegal, Africa (3,600 mi in 1.5 years). More detailed information on these and other returns will be covered in our annual newsletter.

RV DELAWARE CRUISE

From April 18 to June 1, 1989, we conducted a longline survey of sharks along the U.S. east coast from off Tampa, Florida, to southern Massachusetts. A total of 137 longline sets (generally 100 hooks fished for 2-3 hours), yielded 723 fish (32 species) of which 88% were sharks (primarily sandbar, scalloped hammerhead, and blue sharks). Of the total catch, 588 fish (81%) representing 17 species were tagged and released. The remainder were brought aboard for dissection, or were lost prior to tagging. The lowest catch rates were in the Gulf of Mexico (0.6 fish per 100 hooks) and the highest rates were between North Carolina and Southern New England (10.5 fish per 100 hooks). A more complete summary of the cruise, showing longline locations and results of biological collections will be provided in our annual newsletter.

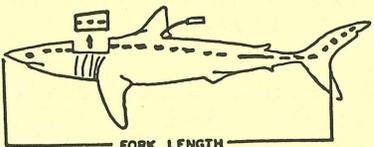
TOURNAMENT TAGGING

For over 25 years we have encouraged the tagging and releasing of sharks. As you are well aware, the sport and commercial fisheries for sharks have increased dramatically in recent years. So have the number of shark fishing tournaments, some of which involve thousands of dollars in prizes. Fortunately, these tournaments provide opportunities for biologists to examine sharks and to have sharks tagged for research. Unfortunately, the intense activity and competition surrounding "big money" tournaments can make it difficult for participants to focus on tagging, particularly when it is their first shark fishing experience. Consequently, we cannot afford to routinely send tags to all tournament organizers, or provide tags to all participants. We ask that tournament directors contact us well in advance of their tournament and we will do whatever we can to be of assistance. We will gladly discuss how we might help to make the tournaments more satisfying for participants and more useful for research purposes.

GENTLE REMINDER

We computerize the information you record on the tag cards. PLEASE record LATITUDE and LONGITUDE in the "LOCATION" space, it greatly simplifies entering the data into the computer. We can convert Loran bearings by computer, but only if you include the complete series of numbers. Also: (1) do not write in the parenthesis; (2) the space for "FISH CONDITION" refers to whether the shark was in GOOD or POOR shape when released; and (3) fork length is the distance from the tip of the snout to the fork in the tail. PLEASE FILL OUT THE RELEASE CARD COMPLETELY, INCLUDING YOUR NAME. We are dealing with several thousand releases every year. When a shark is recaptured, it is difficult to reconstruct data when someone has simply forgotten to write down valuable information at the time the shark was tagged.

IF YOU CATCH A TAGGED SHARK



FORK LENGTH

1. MEASURE FORK LENGTH.
2. RECORD TAG NUMBER AND RECAPTURE DETAILS (DATE, LOCATION, LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE OR LORAN, SEX, METHOD OF CAPTURE, ETC.).
3. REMOVE A 6 TO 10 INCH PIECE OF BACKBONE FROM OVER GILLS.
4. FREEZE BACKBONE.
5. TELEPHONE COLLECT FOR POSTAGE-PAID MAILERS (401-782-3320 WEEKDAYS).

*With my best regards
and thanks,
Jack Casey*