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U.S. DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
POSTAGE AND FEES PAID



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THE SHARK TAGGER spring 1987



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
NATIONAL OCEANIC AND ATMOSPHERIC ADMINISTRATION
National Marine Fisheries Service
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OFFICIAL BUSINESS
PENALTY FOR PRIVATE USE, \$300

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TAG AND RECAPTURE UPDATE

In the first five months of 1987, approximately 500 sharks were tagged and 43 recaptured. Returns have come from sandbar (21), blue (8), nurse (4), lemon (3) and one each from blacktip, reef, night, dusky, silky, and mako sharks, and a swordfish. Sandbar shark recaptures were from fish at liberty from 4 months to 21.8 years. The 21+ year return (tagged off Virginia in 1965 and recaptured off Sarasota, Florida, in 1987) is the longest time at liberty for any shark tagged in our study. At tagging, the shark measured 46" (TL) and weighed approximately 20 lbs. At recapture it was estimated at 100 lbs. Movements and times at liberty for blue sharks recaptured during the past few months include: two blues tagged off Georges Bank in 1985 that were recaptured off Colombia, S.A. (1600 miles in 16-19 months); another blue tagged off Georges Bank was recaptured 700 miles west of the Canary Is. (1900 miles in 23 mo), and a fourth "long distance" blue was tagged off Montauk, NY and recaptured east of Barbados, W.I. (1700 miles in 19 mo). The night shark was tagged off Pascagoula, MI and recaptured off Key West, FL (400+ miles after 9 years). Additional details on these and other returns will be covered in our annual newsletter. The tagging effort and returns to date suggest 1987 will be another excellent year for the program.

The Tag Supply Paradox

Every spring we hear from a large number of new fishermen who wish to participate in the program. We also receive many requests for additional tagging supplies from you "old taggers". WE WOULD NOT HAVE IT ANY OTHER WAY! We try to send as many tags as possible to those of you who will use them. Please do not be discouraged if we sometimes seem to neglect your requests for assistance or tags. Call us if you have to. If you have demonstrated the ability to tag 100 sharks...we will try to send you 100 tags during the season. But we do not send large numbers of tags to new taggers, nor can we supply tags to all participants in the growing number of shark tournaments along the Atlantic coast. Although we usually work with individual fishermen who concentrate on fishing for sharks; we will do what we can to assist tournament and club officials who promote tagging. We do not want to miss any opportunity to have sharks tagged nor do we want to discourage people who are offering to cooperate in our studies. But the simple fact is that the supply of tags is limited. We ask for your understanding in our attempt to deal with the economic realities that are inherent in any research program. If you need tags let us know. If you have more than 10 tags that you will never use, send them back.

"Nuts and Bolts"

We computerize the release data you record on the tag cards. When you record latitude and longitude in the "LOCATION" space, it really simplifies entering the data into the computer. We can convert loran bearings by computer, but only if you include the chains and avoid using chain 7980. Otherwise, location information should be recorded by distance, direction and/or depth from a major land point (e.g. 35 miles South of Cape Hatteras, 30 miles S Montauk, 40 fath, etc.). 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 and, when a shark is recaptured, it is no small order to have to reconstruct data with someone who forgot to write down information at the time the shark was tagged.

REQUEST FOR BACKBONES OF RECAPTURED SHARKS

The high numbers of sharks currently being recaptured by taggers offers a unique opportunity for you to assist us with age studies.

IF YOU CATCH A TAGGED SHARK



1. Measure fork length.
2. Record tag number and recapture details (date, location, sex, etc.).
3. Remove a 6 to 10 inch piece of backbone from over gills.
4. Freeze backbone overnight or pickle in rubbing alcohol.
5. Double wrap in plastic bags and airmail.

Attention Shark Project
Open Immediately

6. Telephone if you have any questions
(401-782-3200)

Age and Growth Studies

Please remember, as we mentioned in previous newsletters, some of the tagged sharks have been given an antibiotic that marks their vertebrae. Save the vertebrae from any tagged shark (see figure), freeze them and call us collect at 401-782-3200.

If you have any comments, complaints or suggestions please let us hear from you.

*With best personal regards
and thanks for all
your help -
Jack Casey*