

## The lineup

Monday: Great escapes  
 Tuesday: Outdoors  
 Wednesday: Prep sports  
 Thursday: Getting out  
**Today: Outdoors**  
 Saturday: Golf  
 Sunday: Trivia



**Bill  
Sargent**

*Outdoors*

# Dolphin makes history

In a documented first, a dolphin that was tagged in the Atlantic Ocean off the coast of South Carolina was recovered almost a year later — more than 1,200 miles away, along Mexico's Caribbean coast.

Donald Hammond, who heads the South Carolina Dolphin Tagging Study for the South Carolina Department of Natural Resources, called it the "golden fish from Mexico."

It was the first time a tagged dolphin was known to move from Atlantic to Mexican waters, Hammond said.

The story starts on May 15, 2004, offshore Charleston, S.C., when an angler in the program tagged four fish.

One of the fish would be caught 69 days later, 150 miles to the north at Wilmington, N.C.

"The other three dolphin seemed to join the thousands of other tagged dolphin that just disappear into the ocean's vastness, never to be heard from again," Hammond said.

But not this time.

On April 10 of this year, an angler aboard a charter boat off Majahual, Mexico, an ocean resort area just north of the border with Belize, caught a 28-pound dolphin in 1,500 feet of water.

It was dolphin No. K035498, one of the four tagged by the Charleston angler 330 days before and 1,221 miles away.

The fish had grown 17 inches in fork length and gained 23½ pounds during nearly 11 months of freedom.

"If we estimate the fish's age at release at roughly five months, then this dolphin was only 16 months old when it was recaptured," Hammond noted on the tagging program's Website. "Thus you have a 28-pound fish that is 41 inches long and is only 1¼ years old. Dolphin are truly remarkable animals."

The dolphin, also known as mahi mahi in restaurants and dorado in some parts of the world, is easily recognizable by its bright mix of deep green, blue and yellow colors. The larger males have flat, almost grotesque-looking heads.

Hammond feels strongly this dolphin traveled more than the 1,221 miles during its freedom.

"It is more likely that this fish, like the other dolphin tagged (off Charleston) that same day, went north first," he said. "It may have only gone to North Carolina, or it may have gone up into the Mid-Atlantic Bight before turning south."

**Tarpon for science.** Last year's Florida Tech Tarpon Fishing-for-Science Tournament was so successful, it's running again this summer.

Anglers will be asked to clip a small portion of a fin from each fish caught and released. From that, DNA testing will reveal multiple facets about the fish. Also this year, a special tagging division will be offered for guides and other serious anglers.

The tournament's organizational meeting is today from 6 p.m. to 8 p.m. at the Lagoon House, 3275 Dixie Highway in Palm Bay. The entrance is the roadway immediately south of Southeastern Honda. Food and drinks will be available.

Gary Giles of Palm Bay, who released 136 of the 200-plus tarpon sampled last year, is acting as director for Jon Shenker, head of the Florida Tech Biological Sciences Department in Melbourne. Shenker is out of the country.

The tournament will run through Oct. 31, Giles said. Entry fee will be \$30 a person, \$60 for a family. Those involved in the tagging segment will pay \$50. Entries can be made at any time. Prizes will be awarded.

For more info, call Giles at 258-0041. ■

Contact Sargent at 242-3697  
 or bsargent@flatoday.net