



Gamefish tagging 2023

The 2022-23 season saw a repeat of the last two years in the North, with periods of persistent easterlies and warm, wet tropical lows, limiting fishable days. The South Island benefitted from warm water and calm weather, with great summer bluefin tuna fishing and striped marlin as far south as Fiordland.

Tagged Billfish Recaptures

There have been four New Zealand tagged **striped marlin** recaptured this season. One tagged in January 2022 in the Bay of Islands was recaptured by a Japanese longliner in the Coral Sea in July or August 2022. The processed weight was 66.4 kg. It is good to get a report from the Japanese Billfish, Shark and Bycatch Group although the tag was recovered when landed and more details are unavailable.

The second **striped marlin** was tagged off Te Kaha, Bay of Plenty on 4 February 2023 after a 30-minute fight. This fish was estimated to weigh 110 kg. It was recaptured from the vessel *Madgestic* north of the Poor Knights on 1 March 2023. Therefore, the fish was recaptured about 190 nautical miles northwest from its tagging location after 25 days at liberty and was retagged and released.

Two striped marlin were retagged and **released without retrieving the existing tag**. Marlin recaptures are an important component of the GameTag project's conservation and research objectives. If you see a tag, please make every effort to retrieve it before releasing the fish. The tag may pull out or better still cut it in half with a knife to leave some of the tag in the fish and the rest with you. Both parts have the tag number on them.

The fifth striped marlin recapture was not from New Zealand. It was **tagged off Port McQuarie, Australia** in December 2022 and recaptured off Hokianga in April 2023. The 105 kg fish had travelled a minimum distance of 1028 nautical miles in 113 days. This is only the second striped marlin tagged in Australian waters to be recaptured here in the 50 years the Australian gamefish tagging programme has been operating.

A **broadbill swordfish** estimated to be 65 kg was tagged off Whangaroa on 12 March 2022 from the vessel *Go Deep*. This fish was recaptured between White Island and Cape Runaway on 6 March 2023. Therefore, the tag had been attached for almost a year (359 days) and it was caught about 230 nautical miles southeast from where it was released.

A **blue marlin** was recaptured with an Australian gamefish tag by *Rustler* northeast of the Alderman Islands on 16 March 2023. It was estimated to weigh 140 kg and was retagged and released. This is notable as it is the first tagged blue marlin recaptured and reported in New Zealand waters.

This fish was tagged from Steve Campbell's *Blue Marlin Magic* off Vau'a'u on 20 July 2018. It was estimated to be 80 kg and was released in good condition. Therefore, the tag had been attached for 4 years and 8 months (1700 days) with the fish travelling 1096 nautical miles south-west before recapture.



Recaptured blue marlin off the Alderman Islands

A **southern bluefin tuna** tagged off Coorabie, Great Australian Bight in December 2005 was recaptured by a recreational fisher on the Hokitika Trench in 2023, 17 and a half years later. It was tagged by a research vessel when it was just 73 cm long (about 8kg) and was 185 cm and 100 plus kg on recapture.

Another Australian tagged **southern bluefin tuna** was caught in New Zealand waters. It was tagged off Recherche Bay, Southern Tasmania on 22 May 2021, estimated at 15kg, and was recaptured by a surface longline vessel off Dunedin on 8 April 2023 measuring 113cm and estimated to weigh 30kg. Therefore, it had been at liberty for 686 days and was 1086 nautical miles (straight line) from where it was tagged.