

# NEW ZEALAND BILLFISH NEWS



December 2023

Roll on summer

I am sure many of us are looking forward to a better summer and game fishing season in 2024. There are several reports of good size yellowfin tuna around already and good water out wide.

The last time we had El Niño over summer and autumn was in 2016, which happened to be a warm and very good fishing year. NIWA predicts El Niño to persist and sea surface temperatures in northern NZ to be slightly above the long-term average, but El Niño effects are only part of the whole story.

## Billfish logbook 2023

Thanks to everyone who sent in their Billfish Logbooks. The results for the previous three years have been written up and have been published [Here](#). The data received for the 2023 season, mainly from the northeast coast, shows a poor start in January and picking up in late February after Cyclone Gabrielle. The fishing off the west coast of the North Island was much better.

## Logbook data being used

All the data from the billfish logbook project, and the East Northland charter boat survey that preceded it, have been sent to the stock assessment team at the Secretariat for the Pacific Community (SPC). They have started work on the 2024 Southwest Pacific striped marlin stock assessment that will be used to assess sustainability and management. They will also use the long time series of striped marlin weights from NZ club records which were important in the 2019 stock assessment.

The results will be published prior to Scientific Committee meeting in August 2024.

## Another striped marlin tag return

A striped marlin tagged off Mayor Island in early March 2023 from the vessel Vanavara was recaptured on 29 June 2023. This fish had travelled north 570 n.miles in 117 days and was caught by a surface longliner in international waters.

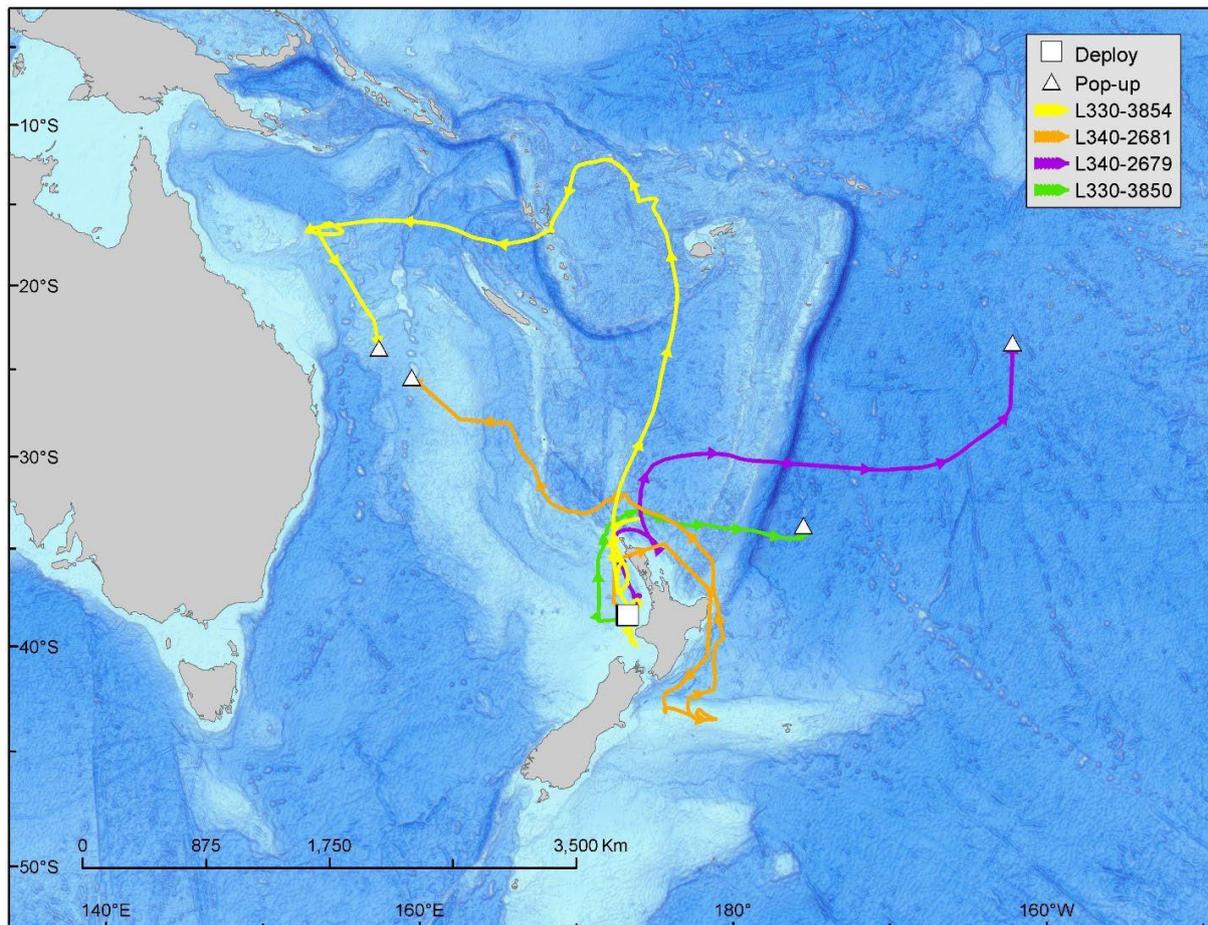


We are always keen to get more fishers in the Logbook Programme. If you have friends that are interested, ask them to get in touch or pass their details on to us. If you have a logbook still from 2023 keep using it and hand it in the coming year.

Members of the New Plymouth Sportfishing and Underwater Club deployed 6 pop-up satellite tags from 19 February to 1 March 2023. This was part of the IGFA's Great Marlin Race initiative, tracking billfish around the world and was supported by the NZ Marine Research Foundation.

It was a nervous wait to see if the two remaining tags programmed to release would report after 8 months on their fish. The track in yellow below was unique in a number of ways. The other tag did not report. Three of the four fish left New Zealand Waters in April. The Yellow fish stayed off Taranaki in February and March, much longer than ever seen for a New Zealand marlin track. It then headed north in April, looking like it would head east about the same time as the green and purple fish – but it turned around about 100 n.miles northeast of North Cape and went back down the North Island west coast for much of May. It then headed north and reached 25°C waters in early June, continuing north to about latitude 12°S before heading south, through Vanuatu in mid-August, and west into the Coral Sea.

The four successful deployments from the 2023 New Zealand IGMR accumulated 4,397 nm of straight line distance over 468 deployment days on striped marlin.



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