

Aussie marlin travels to India

AN exciting recapture of a black marlin was reported to the NSW DPI Game Fish Tagging Program (GFTP) in August from the director of the Department of Fisheries and Fishermen Welfare, Pondicherry, in south India.

The fish was originally tagged and released off Exmouth in Western Australia on March 12th, 2008, by Perth GFC member Geoff Moyle. It was caught on a lure and estimated to weigh 30kg.

The marlin was recaptured on August 8th, 2008, by a traditional fisherman. He was fishing from a 7.5m boat using a 75m deep gill net off the coast of Pondicherry in the Bay of Bengal, India.

The fish was recorded at a length of 213cm and at an estimated weight of 45kg. The local fishery apparently catches many marlin using this method; however, this was the first tagged fish recorded.



The black marlin had been at liberty for 149 days and had travelled an impressive minimum distance of 2830 nautical miles

(5244km)! This comes in as the 11th-furthest distance travelled by a black marlin recaptured under the NSW DPI Program.

Black marlin are regularly recorded throughout the Indian Ocean. However, this is the first black marlin to have been recaptured after travelling a significant distance across the Indian Ocean from Australian waters.

This recapture further demonstrates the interconnectivity of Australian fish populations with distant worldwide populations and emphasises the importance of integrated management of pelagic fish species.

The NSW DPI Program continues to issue tags free of charge to participants. Funded by the NSW Recreational Fishing Trust, it operates throughout Australia and across many Pacific islands.

If you would like to participate in the program, please contact the NSW GFTP: write to NSW DPI, PO Box 21, Cronulla, NSW 2230, Australia; email gamefish.tagging@dpi.nsw.gov.au or phone (02) 9527 8411. ■

Request for assistance with billfish DNA sampling

AUSTRALIAN anglers can assist with two important international research projects on billfish. The first study, by geneticist Dr John Graves of the Virginia Institute of Marine Science, requires

tissue samples from blue marlin, striped marlin and sailfish from the Pacific and Indian oceans. The purpose of the study is to provide baseline genetic material to help in discriminating between

Atlantic and Indo-Pacific billfishes (blue marlin, white/striped marlin and sailfish).

Using DNA, the researchers are working to improve their ability to assign a fish to its ocean of origin. In the USA, there is suspicion that billfish from the Indian and Pacific oceans are being sold on the west coast as Atlantic billfish, which is illegal.

So the samples collected from western and eastern Australia will be invaluable in assisting this important study and, in so doing, help to conserve billfish stocks around the globe.

Billfish expert Dr Chi-lu Sun of the National Taiwan University is conducting the second project, which looks at the global genetics of black marlin. The aim of the study is to gain a better understanding of whether or not there is any structuring of black marlin populations throughout the Indian and Pacific oceans.

Tag results so far strongly indicate that black marlin mix fairly freely across the Pacific, but more work is required to determine if there is

constant mixing between northern and southern hemispheres, or any mixing between the Indian and Pacific basins.

Both researchers have asked me to assist in providing samples for their studies. As usual, I will be taking muscle samples from billfish landed at NSW tournaments.

However, to increase the sample size and geographic spread of sampling, we are keen to have anglers take small clippings from dorsal fins of as many black marlin, blue marlin and sailfish as possible.

The procedure is relatively simple. Participating boats will be supplied kits consisting of instructions and phials containing preservative. It would simply be a matter of cutting off a small piece of dorsal fin tissue prior to releasing the fish, popping the sample into a phial and carefully recording details.

Anyone interested in helping can contact me at julianp@internode.on.net or phone 0418 613 396. ■

– Dr Julian Pepperell

