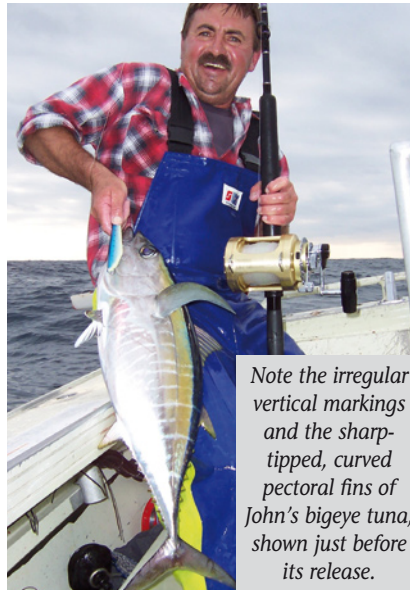
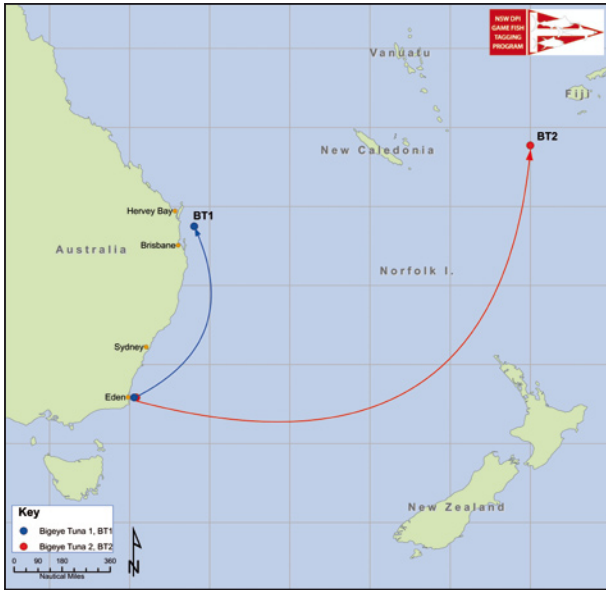


Another case of a bigeye 'yellowfin'



A NUMBER of interesting recaptures have been reported to the NSW DPI Game Fish Tagging Program (GFTP) over the past few months. The most unusual relates to the recapture of a bigeye tuna. This is the fourth recorded by the GFTP and is related to the last bigeye recapture (detailed in *BlueWater* Issue 69).

The recapture was made on August 28th, 2008, by a commercial fisherman operating in Fijian waters, approximately 290 nautical miles southwest of Suva. The bigeye was reported to be 130cm long, estimated at 45kg (tag number D002951).

The fish was tagged as a yellowfin tuna, released on March 9th, 2005, by Eden Sport & Game Fishing Club member John Rankin, pictured. John was fishing off the continental shelf, wide of Eden, on *Mighty Dragon*, along with fellow member Brian Schofield. Brian was the angler responsible for tagging the last recaptured bigeye, a fish that was released on the very same day in 2005 and recaptured wide of Noosa in March 2008.

John and Brian have tagged large numbers of fish for the program, but both remembered the March day well. On that day

they caught a number of fish after having spent a quiet day cubing for tuna, with nothing until 5.30pm. Between 5.30pm and 10pm there was a flurry of activity and they tagged tuna up to 80cm. They recalled that the fish they caught that day were unusually rotund.

Identification of bigeye tuna under 10kg is difficult. However, bigeye are more easily identified when they are mature, due to their rotund shape, dusky-edged finlets and lack of sickles. The photo of the fish tagged by Brian was provided at the time of recapture, validating the

identification as a bigeye tuna. Brian has subsequently provided photos of two other fish caught that evening, again supporting their identification as juvenile bigeye tuna.

Bigeye tuna are known to spawn in tropical waters. The juveniles tend to regularly associate with floating objects and only move to temperate waters as they grow. The presence of these juvenile fish in southern NSW is, therefore, considered unusual and noteworthy. Please keep a look out for others.

NSW DPI is currently working with Lowdown Ink to produce a tuna and billfish guide, which will include tagging tips. *BlueWater* readers will be kept informed of the progress.

The program continues to issue tags free of charge to participants and is 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. ■

– Phil Bolton
NSW DPI, Manager,
Recreational Fisheries

Release Weight saves gamefish lives – get the free DVD



THE healthy release of deep-water gamefish is important to recreational anglers. Unfortunately, barotraumas – the term describing the effects of rising quickly through several atmospheres of pressure – can distort some species, and the expanding gases can make it difficult for them to resubmerge and get down to where they can repressurise themselves.

It's a problem that commonly affects demersal reef species, as well as large predators such as dogtooth tuna and Samson fish.

Invented in Western Australia, the 'Release Weight' was developed to minimise the affects of barotrauma. The Release Weight has been subsequently proven in tagging studies to be the best practice for releasing demersal species to ensure their post-release survival.

Recfishwest, with funding from the Australian Government Recreational Fishing Community Grants Program, has produced a DVD and brochure to increase awareness among anglers of this best practice.

The DVD highlights the importance of using a Release Weight and portrays a short, but informative, message on the importance of good fish-handling and release techniques.

It's hoped that, in the future, the Release Weight will become such an essential piece of fishing equipment that every recreational fishing boat will carry one.

Release Weights can be ordered from Sunset Sinker Supplies: phone (08) 9306 8889 or email sunsetsinkersupplies@westnet.com.au

The *Release Weight* DVD can be downloaded free from the Recfishwest website: www.recfishwest.org.au ■