

The monthly update on the Genetag Research Project

The Genetag Rag



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Our first recapture of a genetagged fish: A world first for the project.

Everyone associated with the Genetag Research Project has a good reason to feel very proud and excited this month; the eagerly anticipated recapture of a 'genetagged' fish has just been confirmed. The recapture of a genetically tagged fish, which is believed to be a world first, resulted in a frenzy of local and international media attention focussing on the project. In all, 20 articles have recently reviewed the project.

The project's coordinator, Dr Rik Buckworth, explained that the recapture highlights the important role fishers are contributing to the success of the project. This particular fish was tagged on both occasions aboard the commercial vessel 'Taroona II'. The match in our genetic database revealed the fish had moved about 100 nautical miles over three weeks.



The owner of 'Taroona II', Norm Hedditch (left), with Northern Territory Seafood Council representative Neville Gill, Spanish Mackerel Fishery representative Milton Miller, and Fisheries Minister Kon Vatskalis. The photo was taken during the mid-year Genetag Research Project workshop, which was attended by fishers and project staff from the NT and Qld.

Genetag research project snippet: A special lure for a special job.

Project staff have developed a lure to allow Spanish mackerel to be genetagged without even having to bring the fish to the vessel (see picture above). The hooks on these lures have hollow stainless steel tips that collect a small amount of tissue as the fish strikes. The shafts of the hooks are made from copper and bend easily to ensure the safe release of the fish.

Over 600 Spanish mackerel have been genetagged using these lures. This is in addition to the 300 plus fish genetagged in the double tagging component of the project (see next article). A further 7,000 fin tip samples have also been collected for screening for recaptures. Screening has only just commenced, and should result in many more matches in our rapidly expanding database.

And the success continues: Our first conventional tag returns.

In order to establish how the novel concept of genetagging compares to conventional tagging practices, project staff are coordinating a unique double tagging trial. A group of dedicated recreational fishers are assisting, and over 300 Spanish mackerel have now been both genetagged and conventionally tagged. Already, three Spanish mackerel recaptures have been reported.

One Spaniard was tagged and then recaptured the following day at the same location by project staff. Another was tagged at Lorna Shoals, and recaptured six weeks later at Loe Shoals. The third fish was tagged at Roche Reef and recaptured ten weeks later at Fish Reef.

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www.fisheries.nt.gov.au

Results of the Inaugural Spanish Mackerel Tagging Tournament Competition.

Thanks to the overwhelming support of the tournament's sponsors, some fantastic prizes were up for grabs in this year's Spanish Mackerel Tagging Tournament. This year's winners include:

Door prizes from the information night

- Rod and reel donated by **Happy Micks** and **Shimano Reels** (valued at \$500) won by Russell Fry.
- Plus barbless hooks donated by **Mustad** (valued at \$300) and lures donated by **Helco Lures** (valued at \$200) and **Reidy's Lures** (\$100) were given away.

Daily prizes from the 1st weekend

- 105lt esky donated by **Aussie Outback Supplies** (valued at \$300) won by Keith Valentine.
- Assorted fishing gear from **In and Outboard Marine** (valued at \$100) won by Byran Dowling.
- One nights accommodation at the **Marina View** (valued at \$216) won by Adam Dowling.
- Gift voucher donated by **Seafood on Cullen** (valued at \$80) won by Wayne Baldwin.

Door prizes from the 1st weekend

- Canvas swag donated by **Aussie Outback Supplies** (valued at \$250) won by Peter Fisher.
- Plus movie passes donated by **Birch Carrol and Coyle** (valued at \$100) and stubby coolers donated by **Aussie Outback Supplies** (valued at \$200) were given away.

Daily prizes from the 2nd weekend

- One nights accommodation, with breakfast, at the **Novotel Atrium** (valued at \$283) won by Trevor Reibelt.
- Gift voucher donated by **The Jetty** restaurant (valued at \$100) won by John Cooper.
- Gerber multi-tool donated by **Aussie Outback Supplies** and **Gerber** (valued at \$220) won by Peter Fisher.
- Gift voucher donated by **Hanuman** restaurant (valued at \$80) won by Julie Fisher.
- **Arafura Fishing Charter** (valued at \$185) won by Phil Clarke.
- Assorted fishing gear from **In and Outboard Marine** (valued at \$100) won by Darren Crawley.

Door prizes from the 2nd weekend

- Equinox Fishing Charter (valued at \$185), and one nights accommodation at the **Marina View Service Apartments** (valued at \$216) won by Tom Donati.
- Plus movie passes donated by Birch Carrol and Coyle (valued at \$100) were given away.

Prizes for the most Spanish mackerel tagged

- Sonoma binoculars donated by **Tasco** (valued at \$90) won by Peter and Julie Fisher.
- Sonoma binoculars donated by **Tasco** (valued at \$90) won by Kerry Brand.

Thanks to everyone involved, over 150 Spaniards were double tagged over the two weekends.

The people behind the project

Each month we will be presenting a short snippet on one the many people contributing to the success of this project. This week's feature focuses on John Harrison, who has volunteered to oversee the collection of recapture details from the double tagging component of the project.



John Harrison fishing Roche Reef during the Inaugural Spanish Mackerel Tagging Tournament

John is employed by the Amateur Fisherman's Association of the Northern Territory, and is an avid fisher himself. He is keen to ensure that there is a coordinated approach to collecting all of the information that is being produced from the growing interest in tagging and releasing fish in the Northern Territory.



With the assistance of Mel Pain from AFANT, John is overseeing the collection of recapture details for a number of species. Fishers who provide information on recaptured Spanish mackerel are provided with a certificate that contains details of the fish's movement, as well as a \$20 scratchie provided as a token of our appreciation.

The project's new vessel

As mentioned in the last edition, the Northern Territory's Fisheries Group has launched a new vessel. Named the 'Gene Genie', the vessel will be used extensively by the Genetag Research Project as well as a variety of other projects.



Designed and built by GS Marine in Palmerston, the 5.5m 'Xtreme' plate hull provides a stable work platform and a smooth ride. The vessel is fitted with a 115 hp Suzuki four stroke, providing plenty of speed and range. The vessel has already notched up over 100 hrs.

This month's fishing photo

Got any great fishing photos? Send them in and we will include them in the next edition.



Quentin Allsop (Fisheries Group) hooks up off Roche Reef. Who said we don't work hard?



David McKey, looking above for answers as his son Justin lands three fish for every one of his. David administers the Spanish mackerel fishery, as well as several other offshore fisheries.

The next edition

Former Australian Rugby League winger Andrew "ET" Ettinghausen is set to visit the Northern Territory for a week of filming for his show 'Escape with ET'. Find out more in the next edition how the Genetag Research Project will be showcased in the television series.



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