

The monthly update on the Genetag Research Project

# The Genetag Rag



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### National and international press show a keen interest in the Genetag Research Project.

The national and international press have shown a massive interest in the progress of the Genetag Research Project, with over thirty articles focussing on the project in the last sixth months alone.

The project achieved many important milestones in 2004, providing plenty of opportunities for media stories. Highlights include the first recapture of a genetically tagged fish, and the inaugural Spanish Mackerel Tagging Tournament.

The media coverage is set to continue in 2005. An article on the project will be published in this years Northern Australian Fishing Annual, and the project will be featured in the next series of Channel Nine's 'Escape with ET'.



*Andrew "ET" Ettinghausen aboard the Genetag Research Project's vessel 'Gene Genie' during a week of filming for his show 'Escape with ET'.*

The Northern Territory's Fisheries Minister, Kon Vatskalis, claims that the media coverage has helped promote the world leading science being produced in northern Australia. He noted that the project represents a partnership between the Northern Territory, Queensland and the Australian Governments.

### Genetag research project snippet: Extracting DNA from the tissue samples

In previous issues of the Genetag Rag we introduced the concept behind genetic tagging, and the methods we have adopted in this project to collect the tissue samples. In this article, Dr Jenny Ovenden explains how the DNA in each sample is extracted.



*Damien Broderick in the lab preparing fins for DNA extraction.*

The fin samples are collected by commercial fishers while they process their harvest. For their effort, we pay them the nominal reward of 25c per fin. The fins are transported on dry ice to the Molecular Fisheries Lab in Brisbane, where they are defrosted and washed. A small piece about 2x2 mm is snipped from each fin and placed in solution containing an enzyme that removes the protein from the sample. The DNA is released into the solution and stored at -20°C. In the next edition, Jenny discusses the next phase in the lab process.

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[www.fisheries.nt.gov.au](http://www.fisheries.nt.gov.au)

## The people behind the project

In each edition we profile a member of the Genetag team. Today we focus on Dr Jenny Ovenden. Jenny leads the team of geneticists in Brisbane where the mackerel are genotyped and recaptures are identified.



Jenny was among the first to use molecular methods in Australia to examine naturally occurring animal populations. She worked on birds during her Ph.D. at the University of New South Wales before moving to the University of Tasmania where she was introduced to the world of freshwater and marine fish.

"I was fortunate to be able to re-enter the field of competitive research after resigning to care for my young family. The University of Queensland offered me one of several post-doctoral positions specifically for women who had had a break in their careers", Jenny said.

In 1998, Jenny established the Molecular Fisheries Laboratory to apply molecular and population genetics in innovative ways to problems facing fisheries stock assessment. The lab is now involved in a wide variety of projects, several of which span across the country.

## This month's fishing photo

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



*Andrew "ET" Ettinghausen's new Haines Hunter. The vessel is powered by twin 150hp Yamahas, and will feature in the next series of Channel Nine's 'Escape with ET'.*



*Kerry (Badger) Brand's Black Arrow and Andrew "ET" Ettinghausen's Haines Hunter, travelling out to the Tiwi Islands to film a feature for 'Escape with ET'.*

## The next edition

In the next edition of the Genetag Rag, we will continue our stories from the lab, with Dr Jenny Ovenden explaining how the DNA is genotyped.

**Also, find out how you can be involved in the Second Annual Spanish Mackerel Tagging Tournament.** The tagging tournament is tentatively planned for two weekends in June.

Riding on the success of the inaugural event, this year's tagging tournament is set to be bigger and better than before. Find out more in the next edition.

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