

## GRAY FISHTAG RESEARCH

Bridging the gap between Professional Fishermen and Science

## 2022 IN REVIEW



@GrayFishTag #GFR, #TagAFish, #SatTag



## The Mission of Gray FishTag Research

Our continued mission is to support the charter sportfishing industry and overall fishing community while producing valuable data to marine science research. Gray FishTag Research is bridging the gap between professional charter fishermen and the science community, in an effort to sustain our fisheries for our future generations.

The program is collecting information in real-time directly from anglers in every part of the world. The research and studies are shared to the public at no cost. Results are providing biologists and managers with valuable information on migration patterns, fish stocks, growth rates, habitat depths and much more. **GFR's continued pledge is to offer all tags, applicators, data cards, hands-on training and support to the professional fishermen for free as the path to accurate data and the success of the program.**



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## 2022 Fish Tagging Expeditions

<b>February 5<sup>th</sup></b>	Marina Pez Vela (MPV) - <b>Rooster Rodeo Satellite Tagging</b> – Costa Rica
<b>February 22<sup>nd</sup></b>	Pescadora Billfish Championship – Costa Rica
<b>April 6<sup>th</sup></b>	2021 SwordQuest – Swordfish Data Reveal – South Florida
<b>April 22<sup>nd</sup></b>	<b>Roosterfish Satellite Tagging</b> at MPV with The Fisherman Magazine
<b>May 11<sup>th</sup> /12<sup>th</sup></b>	<b>Striped Bass Satellite Tagging</b> “Kick Off” – New Jersey
<b>May 25<sup>th</sup></b>	Fish & Wildlife Foundation of Florida / Main Attraction Charters – <b>Amberjack Satellite Tagging</b> – Florida Keys
<b>June 15/17<sup>th</sup></b>	SwordQuest – <b>Swordfish Satellite Tagging</b> in South Florida
<b>June 25<sup>th</sup></b>	Roosterfish – mrPAT Tagging “Good Day Sportfishing” – Costa Rica
<b>August 4<sup>th</sup>/5<sup>th</sup></b>	<b>Black and Blue Marlin Satellite Tagging</b> – Costa Rica
<b>August 18<sup>th</sup></b>	<b>Wildlife Computers Field Test Deployments</b> Jim Hutchinson & Captain Guy Krunch Sportfishing – Hudson River, NY
<b>September 5<sup>th</sup></b>	Chris and Jake Scanzillo – Massachusetts
<b>September 22<sup>nd</sup></b>	The Fisherman’s Magazine Seminar – New Jersey
<b>October 5<sup>th</sup></b>	Pisces Sportfishing - <b>Black Marlin Satellite Tagging</b> – Mexico
<b>October 9<sup>th</sup></b>	Full of Bull Redfish Catch and Release Tagging Tournament – N. Florida
<b>October 25<sup>th</sup></b>	Fall Run <b>Striped Bass Satellite Tagging</b> – New Jersey
<b>November 1<sup>st</sup></b>	Western Outdoor News / Pisces Sportfishing – Mexico <b>Yellowfin Tuna Satellite Tagging</b>
<b>December 9<sup>th</sup></b>	<b>Striped Bass Satellite Tagging</b> – Chesapeake Bay, Virginia Chuck Many and Dave Nova

Thanking our Sponsors for their continued support



# Welcoming our new supporters to the GFR program

## New Sponsors

- CAT Marine
- Fin - Nor Recovery Reward Program



## New Research Center

**Montauk Surfcasters Association** - The Montauk Surfcasters Association is a non-profit organization, founded in 1980 that:

- Preserves and protects the privilege to fish on Long Island.
- Represents it's membership to the Fishing Advisory Board, which advises New York State on matters affecting surf fishermen such as permit regulations, beach access, fees, habitat & use of State Parks on Long Island.
- Represents fishermen on matters affecting the use of Suffolk County & Local Parks.
- Advocates for fishermen to elected officials regarding regulations affecting the fishery, habitat protection and other environmental matters.
- Monitors state and local candidates for office and informs membership on issues affecting fishermen and fishing access.
- Collaborates with other fishing organizations throughout coastal areas to help preserve surf fishing.

## We appreciate our individual tagging study contributors

Many Family

Glassberg Family

Nova Family

Captain Frank Crescitelli

Captain Gary Caputi

Captain Guy Buono

Captain Hans Kaspersetz

Captain Frank Wagenhoffer

Berkeley Striper Club

Jackpot Sport Fishing Costa Rica

Ross Brewery

New York Sportfishing Federation

Hudson River Fisherman's Association

Long Beach Island Surf Fishing Classic

Raritan Bay Anglers Association

Carey Chen



## Thanking our Research Centers

Gray FishTag Research would like to recognize our Research Centers for their commitment to tagging and releasing fish with GFR tags. The combined efforts from the Research Centers continue to pave the foundation for the GFR program by providing us with ongoing relevant and accurate data.



WHERE THE WORLD COMES TO FISH™



## Tagged Species Data (Jan 1, 2022 - Nov 20, 2022)

Species	Tagged 2022	Recovered 2022	Tagged 2021	Recovered 2021
<b>Amberjack, greater</b> ( <i>Seriola dumerili</i> )	40	1	44	8
<b>Barracuda, great</b> ( <i>Sphyræna barracuda</i> )	90	9	95	3
<b>Bass, largemouth</b> ( <i>Micropterus salmoides</i> )	3			
<b>Bass, peacock</b> ( <i>Cichla ocellaris</i> )	4	1		
<b>Bass, striped</b> ( <i>Morone saxatilis</i> )	<b>1394</b>	<b>74</b>	<b>1182</b>	23
<b>Bluefish</b> ( <i>Pomatomus saltatrix</i> )	19		2	3
<b>Blue runner</b> ( <i>Caranx crysos</i> )	1			
<b>Bonefish</b> ( <i>Albula vulpes</i> )	2		6	
<b>Bonito, Atlantic</b> ( <i>Sarda sarda</i> )			1	
<b>Bream, yellowfin</b> , ( <i>Acanthopagrus australis</i> )	2			
<b>Cabezón</b> , ( <i>Scorpaenichthys marmoratus</i> )	1			
<b>Clownknife</b> , ( <i>Chitala ornata</i> )				
<b>Cobia</b> ( <i>Rachycentron canadum</i> )	79	2	16	
<b>Dolphinfish, Common</b> ( <i>Coryphaena hippurus</i> )	15		6	
<b>Drum, black</b> ( <i>Pogonias cromis</i> )	4		1	1
<b>Catfish, blue</b> ( <i>Ictalurus furcatus</i> )	102	5		
<b>Catfish, Gafftopsail</b> ( <i>Bagre marinus</i> )	2			
<b>Flathead catfish</b> ( <i>Pylodictis olivaris</i> )	48	4		
<b>Flounder, summer</b> ( <i>Paralichthys dentatus</i> )	1			
<b>Drum, red</b> ( <i>Sciaenops ocellatus</i> )	64	3	66	7
<b>Grouper, black</b> ( <i>Mycteroperca bonaci</i> )	20	4	4	1
<b>Grouper, gag</b> ( <i>Mycteroperca microlepis</i> )	3		3	
<b>Grouper, goliath</b> ( <i>Epinephelus itajara</i> )	1		2	1



Species	Tagged 2022	Recovered 2022	Tagged 2021	Recovered 2021
<b>Grouper, red</b> ( <i>Epinephelus morio</i> )	6	2	3	5
<b>Grouper, scamp</b> ( <i>Mycteroperca phenax</i> )	2	1		
<b>Halibut, atlantic</b> ( <i>Hippoglossus hippoglossus</i> )				
<b>Hind, rock</b> ( <i>Epinephelus adscensionis</i> )			1	
<b>Hogfish</b> ( <i>Lachnolaimus maximus</i> )				
<b>Jack, almaco</b> ( <i>Seriola rivoliana</i> )	2		2	
<b>Jack, crevalle</b> ( <i>Caranx hippos</i> )	7	1	4	
<b>Jack, yellow</b> ( <i>Caranx bartholomaei</i> )	1			
<b>Longfin yellowtail</b> ( <i>Seriola rivoliana</i> )				
<b>Mackerel, king</b> ( <i>Scomberomorus cavalla</i> )	1			1
<b>Mackerel, spanish</b> ( <i>Scomberomorus maculatus</i> )	1			1
<b>Margate, black</b> ( <i>Anisotremus surinamensis</i> )	2			
<b>Marlin, black</b> ( <i>Istiompax indica</i> )	2		1	
<b>Marlin, blue</b> ( <i>Makaira nigricans</i> )	95	1	57	1
<b>Marlin, striped</b> ( <i>Kajikia audax</i> )	198		105	1
<b>Marlin, white</b> ( <i>Kajikia albidus</i> )	2		1	
<b>Needlefish, pacific agujon</b> ( <i>Tylosurus pacificus</i> )				
<b>Permit</b> ( <i>Trachinotus falcatus</i> )	4		2	
<b>Pompano, african</b> ( <i>Alectis ciliaris</i> )	2			
<b>Ray, bullnose</b> ( <i>Myliobatis freminvillii</i> )	1			
<b>Roosterfish</b> ( <i>Nematistius pectoralis</i> )	63	2	24	
<b>Sailfish, atlantic</b> ( <i>Istiophorus albicans</i> )	180	11	129	8
<b>Sailfish, pacific</b> ( <i>Istiophorus Platypterus</i> )	402	1	381	

Species	Tagged 2022	Recovered 2022	Tagged 2021	Recovered 2021
<b>Sawfish, small tooth</b> ( <i>Pristis pectinata</i> )	1			
<b>Sea Bass, black</b> ( <i>Centropristis striata</i> )	27			
<b>Sea Robin, northern</b> ( <i>Prionotus carolinus</i> )	1		1	
<b>Seatrout, spotted</b> ( <i>Cynoscion nebulosus</i> )	7			1
<b>Shark, atlantic sharpnose</b> ( <i>Rhizoprionodon terraenovae</i> )	24	1	17	1
<b>Shark, blacknose</b> ( <i>Carcharhinus acronotus</i> )	13		9	
<b>Shark, blacktip</b> ( <i>Carcharhinus limbatus</i> )	24		28	
<b>Shark, blue</b> ( <i>Prionace glauca</i> )				
<b>Shark, bonnethead</b> ( <i>Sphyrna tiburo</i> )	1	1	5	
<b>Shark, bull</b> ( <i>Carcharhinus leucas</i> )	142	6	115	7
<b>Shark, caribbean reef</b> ( <i>Carcharhinus perezi</i> )	2	1		
<b>Shark, dusky</b> ( <i>Carcharhinus obscurus</i> )	86	2	132	3
<b>Shark, great white</b> ( <i>Carcharodon carcharias</i> )				
<b>Shark, hammerhead great</b> ( <i>Sphyrna mokarran</i> )	77		72	2
<b>Shark, hammerhead scalloped</b> ( <i>Sphyrna lewini</i> )	33		93	2
<b>Shark, hammerhead smalleye</b> ( <i>Sphyrna tudes</i> )	1		1	
<b>Shark, hammerhead smooth</b> ( <i>Sphyrna zygaena</i> )	9		6	
<b>Shark, lemon</b> ( <i>Negaprion brevirostris</i> )	56	1	17	1
<b>Shark, mako shortfin</b> ( <i>Isurus oxyrinchus</i> )	1		1	
<b>Shark, night</b> ( <i>Carcharhinus signatus</i> )	1		1	
<b>Shark, nurse</b> ( <i>Ginglymostoma cirratum</i> )	103	2	63	3
<b>Shark, sandbar</b> ( <i>Carcharhinus plumbeus</i> )	26	7	42	2
<b>Shark, silky</b> ( <i>Carcharhinus falciformis</i> )	11		19	

Species	Tagged 2022	Recovered 2022	Tagged 2021	Recovered 2021
<b>Shark, spinner</b> (Carcharhinus brevipinna)			3	
<b>Shark, thresher bigeye</b> (Alopias superciliosus)	2		5	
<b>Shark, tiger</b> (Galeocerdo cuvier)	31		18	
<b>Sheepshead</b> (Archosargus probatocephalus)				
<b>Snapper, cubera</b> (Lutjanus cyanopterus)	7			
<b>Snapper grey</b> (Lutjanus griseus)	3			
<b>Snapper, mutton</b> (Lutjanus analis)	7		1	
<b>Snapper, pacific cubera</b> (Lutjanus novemfasciatus)	1		1	
<b>Snapper, red</b> (Lutjanus campechanus)	26	2	66	19
<b>Snapper, rock</b> (Hoplopagrus guentherii)				
<b>Snapper, white</b> (Macolor niger)				
<b>Snapper, yellowtail</b> (Ocyurus chrysurus)	1		2	
<b>Snook, atlantic</b> (Centropomus undecimalis)	6	1	12	4
<b>Spearfish, shortbill</b> (Tetrapturus angustirostris)				
<b>Swordfish</b> (Xiphias gladius)	3		7	
<b>Tarpon</b> (Megalops atlanticus)	6		2	
<b>Tautog</b> (Tautoga onitis)	44	2	1	
<b>Tuna, blackfin</b> (Thunnus atlanticus)	2			
<b>Tuna, bluefin</b> (Thunnus thynnus)	4		2	
<b>Tuna, skipjack</b> (Katsuwonus pelamis)	2		2	
<b>Tuna, yellowfin</b> (Thunnus albacares)	12		2	
<b>Tunny, littile</b> (Euthynnus alletteratus)			3	
<b>Wrasse, pudding wife</b> (Halichoeres radiatus)	1			
<b>Species</b>	<b>Tagged 3670</b>	<b>Recovered 148</b>	<b>Tagged 2887</b>	<b>Recovered 109</b>

## TOP TAGGING CHARTER VESSELS OF 2022

Charter Vessel	Region	Total Fish Tagged 2021
<b><i>Andreas Toy</i></b>	New Jersey	<b>293</b>
<b><i>Lady Pamela</i></b>	Florida	<b>263</b>
<b><i>Reel Cast Charters</i></b>	Connecticut	<b>241</b>
<b><i>Tyman</i></b>	New Jersey	<b>186</b>
<b><i>Good Day</i></b>	Quepos, Costa Rica	<b>145</b>
<b><i>Therapy IV</i></b>	Florida	<b>128</b>
<b><i>Muy Caliente</i></b>	Quepos, Costa Rica	<b>115</b>
<b><i>Out Of The Blue</i></b>	Florida	<b>100</b>
<b><i>Salt Life</i></b>	Florida	<b>82</b>
<b><i>Bliss</i></b>	Florida	<b>73</b>
<b><i>Good Hit</i></b>	Florida	<b>66</b>
<b><i>Sho Nuf</i></b>	Virginia	<b>64</b>



## 2022 Marina Pez Vela "Rooster Rodeo"



On Saturday, February 5, 2022, in conjunction with the catch and release "Rooster Rodeo" tournament hosted by GFR Research Center, Marina Pez Vela, in Quepos, Costa Rica, our GFR team joined the excitement as we fished for trophy Roosterfish.

As we continue our research efforts to track the movement and behavior of the finest inshore gamefish in the world, we had the goal of GFR green spaghetti tagging as many Roosterfish as possible and deploying MiniPAT satellite tags in choice Roosterfish. Once again, the Marina Pez Vela Group and the Ortiz Family sponsored the research expedition satellite tags.

The Roosterfish is named for its comb-like, seven-spined dorsal fin, zebra-striped body, and iridescent hue. The Roosterfish can reach weights on excess of 100 lbs., but the average is 15-25 lbs. Roosterfish are also very unique in that their swim bladder makes contact with their inner ear, which enhances their ability to hear. They are the only known fish to have this feature.

Anglers who fish Costa Rica will find Roosterfish is as little as five feet of water along shorelines and beaches, and at depths of 150 feet around deep reefs. Many anglers believe they are territorial fish and do not migrate. While other believe they use the open ocean for migration and are not necessarily restricted to the mainland shorelines. But how will we truly know unless our GFR team is there at the forefront of these types of research efforts?

After "Team Gray FishTag Research" were successful in the deployment of the satellite tag in a trophy 40-inch

Roosterfish candidate named "Ortiz," they continued to fish and ended up taking the first-place win!





Below are the results of the satellite tag deployment "ORTIZ" The satellite tag was deployed south of Quepos, Costa Rica (9.90 / -83.47) on a 40-inch/35-pound Roosterfish and remained intact for 8 weeks.



Our team would like to extend a special thank you to the Ortiz Family, the Marina Pez Vela Group, as well as Benn Gilmour, and Captain Manuel aboard the "Good Day" for their ongoing support to our program and this research expedition.

As in all our research expeditions, our GFR team relies on the experience and knowledge of our local captains, mates, GFR research centers and sponsors. As we collaborate and include the local fishing community, we can engage, educate, bring awareness, and support fishing through science.



## 2022 Pescadora Billfish Championship

We would like to congratulate GFR advisory board member, Samantha Mumford, for hosting another incredible event. Gray FishTag Research was proud to take part in the fourth annual Pescadora Billfish Championship which took place out of GFR Research Center, Marina Pez Vela, in Quepos, Costa Rica on February 17th - 18th, 2022.

The Pescadora Billfish Championship was recently named a Top 20 Offshore Tournament winner for all the Americas.

In this two-day catch and release billfish tournament, there were 323 billfish (305 Sailfish and 18 Marlin) released by 40 teams and 11 countries were represented by 170 anglers.

This year drew a record number of new teams (16) to the tournament. Many rookie anglers caught their very first billfish, confirming that women represent the largest emerging market in the fishing industry. A new tournament category encouraged 40-foot-and-under boats to the competition, allowing anglers to participate regardless of the boat size or experience level.

- **2022 Female Angler of the Year - IGFA Division** went to Jennifer Fields
- **2022 Female Angler of the Year - Hook and Hand** went to Kourtney Duffie

We were in great company as many of our GFR sponsors, research centers, advisory board members and contributors were there participating and supporting Samantha. Steve Hargett, President of the IGFTO, was there with his full team of observers. Dick Tanner was there supporting IGFTO as an observer.





**Team PENN** had a rock star team of anglers led by Jenny Gordillo with Pure Fishing. The team included Rebecca Ehrenberg from GFR research center, Pisces Sportfishing in Cabo San Lucas, Mexico, as well as GFR advisory board member, Kristen Salazar from GFR research center, Casa Vieja Lodge in Guatemala. Team PENN fished aboard GFR tagging partner Pacific Fly.

Our GFR team was there to offer tagging supplies and assistance to all participating boats. We continued to offer the coveted awards for "Top Lady Tagger" and "Top Tagging Boat." GFR awarded the top tagging team and angler with full size sailfish mounts provided by Gray Taxidermy.





The ladies fought hard for these prizes, and we would like to congratulate:

**Team Kelly Dawn - Top Tagging Boat**

**Jill Yates - Top Lady Tagger** aboard the **Eight Eights**







As with each year there were many firsts – Megan Bisasky and Dawn Jernigan were introduced to tagging and tagged and released their first sailfish aboard the Good Day (GFR "Top Tagging Boat in Costa Rica" in 2021) with Captain Manuel and Benn Gilmour.

This year, in an effort to support our ongoing research efforts we created an exclusive raffle we offered to the teams during the Pescadora. The prize was a chance to fish the epicenter of the Swordfish migration and the hottest fishery in South Florida plus two replica mounts.

We are pleased to announce the winner of the all ladies Swordfish research expedition went to our new friends "Team Vaquero"... "Team Vaquero" immediately took a chance on the raffle as they have been supporting our research efforts and have tagged their released billfish for the past four years while participating in the Pescadora. In 2021, they took the Top Tagging Boat and Top Tagging Angler awards.

Also in attendance was GFR sponsor, FECOP, to highlight and bring awareness to their most recent campaign "**Operation Sailfish**" <https://fishcostarica.org/operation-sailfish-2/>



A quote from Samantha - "I am overwhelmingly impressed each year to see these incredible women bond and hone their angling skills. Each year these women surpass expectations and raise the bar. This year 41% of all fish released were by IGFA rules and regulations. I could not be prouder." "You only live once, you might as well be a BADASS!!

## Swordfish Data Reveal

One of the many reasons the Gray FishTag Research program is like no other is our mission to share our research efforts and the data collected with fishermen and the public for FREE. We will always look for ways to collaborate, engage and inform those eager for more information on the fisheries they love.

On April 6, 2022, our GFR team along with Eric Orbesen from NOAA Fisheries were joined by the "best of the best Sword fisherman" at RJ Boyle Studio in Lighthouse Point, Florida. Eric presented the satellite tag data collected during our 2021 SwordQuest research expedition and our Islamorada satellite tagging event.





What an interesting and informative night we had. The room was engaged asking questions and taking in all the data that was shared. Some of the behavior patterns that Eric provided was first time information to many who have fished this fishery for 30 years!

Swordfish satellite tag deployed with Captain Nick Stanczyk aboard the Broad-Minded offshore Islamorada, Florida on February 9, 2021, released about 69 nautical miles off Fernandina Beach, Florida after spending time offshore North Carolina. The tag released on September 10, 2021. The 53 inch / 65-pound fish was at large for **213 days**.

The first of the two satellite tags deployed on May 1, 2021, during SwordQuest aboard "Mines Bigger" with Captain Chris offshore Fort Lauderdale, Florida released near Grand Cayman Islands. This tag released on December 29, 2021. The 80 inch / 240-pound fish was at large for **242 days**.

The second tag of the two satellite tags deployed on May 1, 2021, during SwordQuest aboard "Forever Dusky" with Captain Baron and Captain Bouncer offshore Fort Lauderdale, Florida released offshore Nova Scotia. The furthest point traveled was over 2600 miles away from it's deployment location. This tag released on November 3, 2021. The 72 inch / 120-pound fish was at large for **180 days**.

Our team would like to extend a special **THANK YOU** to Mike Lund and Mike Lardini with **Outboard Specialties of Pompano Beach** and **Suzuki Marine** for sponsoring such an incredible event.



# Rooster Satellite Tagging in Costa Rica

The Roosterfish has been our most challenging species for our program to study. We have struggled to collect long term deployment data. Prematurely releasing of the tags for unknown reasons, have made the Roosterfish a difficult species to collect data. However, these challenges motivate and make our team want to do the research needed and study this fish even more.

To date, our research efforts have included many different types of technology and tags to include satellite tags and implantable. We have adjusted the tether lengths and styles to assist us and still we have not had overwhelming success with this study.

## Why are they shedding the satellite tags?

- **Is it because they are known to be among the rock formations, and they get caught up?**
- **Is it predatory?**
- **Possibly angler involvement and lack of awareness to the technology?**
- **Are the tags too offensive to the fish and too big?**

## How will we truly know unless our GFR team continues these types of research efforts?

We headed back to Costa Rica with a mission to continue our research efforts to track the movement and behavior of one of the finest inshore gamefish in the world, Roosterfish. On Friday, April 22, 2022, with the support of GFR Research Center, Marina Pez Vela, the Ortiz Family, and the Los Gatos Foundation our GFR team was back in Quepos, Costa Rica.

In addition to deploying a MiniPAT satellite tag (We have had great success with on a similar size species - Striped Bass) our goal was to introduce a lighter weight mrPAT (Mark Report Pop Up Archival Tag) tag offered by Wildlife Computers.

The mrPAT is the smallest tag in the Wildlife Computers pop up family. The tag releases at a programmed time (in our case 100 days) and the GPS release location is provided. The tag will not provide the geolocation tracking map like the other satellite tag we use however it will give us the beginning and ending locations. The MrPAT is a fraction of the cost associated with the MiniPAT and we are expecting it to be great addition to our efforts.



As we arrived, we were greeted by the amazing team at Marina Pez Vela. The MPV group extended us the most gracious hospitality which began with a welcome dinner and all our accommodations; as always, they made our stay first class. The other exciting surprise was GFR Advisory Board Member, Jim Hutchinson and Tim Smith from The Fisherman Magazine flew in to cover the event and both were rigged and ready to cover the details of the trip. It was nice to see GFR Advisory Board Member, Samantha Mumford, when she came to say hello to everyone.

Marina Pez Vela arranged two boats as well and early the next morning we would be ready to go. We would be fishing with Benn Gilmour and Captain Manuel aboard the Good Day and the Roosterfish Specialist, Captain Roy Zapata, aboard the Skye.

Bill had the pleasure of fishing aboard the Good Day with Jeff Duchesneau, Jim Hutchinson, and Tim Smith and as always, the pressure of this type of research expedition was on! The second boat was led by GFR Advisory Board Member, Carter Takacs, and accompanied by Gray Taxidermy representative, Christian Bolanos, (an avid Rooster fisherman as well).





We learned early on that there was an algae bloom effecting the fishing close by, so our teams made the trek 40 miles south to maybe the most beautiful place on earth, Dominical. It is where the rainforest meets the sea.

Lines were in and we were in search for the right candidates for our satellite tags. We pounded out the day with difficult fishing. Both boats fished close together to try to find our target species and by 3 o'clock things were looking bad. We did not have one bite on either boat. It was at that time that we began a meeting aboard the Good Day, Jeff and Bill started discussing what Plan B would be.

We were making plans on how we would get the tags placed at a later date and just as we were finalizing the details of our plan, Bill mentioned "that in the past when making these types of plans we were often saved by a late afternoon bite" Well, no sooner did he finish those words, the rod was hit and within 20 minutes a 41 inch Roosterfish was caught, tagged and released. We had no choice but to name this fish "Plan B"

The fish did not cooperate, and our team was unable to deploy the mrPAT tag. However, on June 25, Benn and the crew aboard Good Day took the responsibility and went offshore to deploy our new innovative technology tag. We were confident that we entrusted the right guy, with his skills and expertise, we know he will get the job done and he did! A 52-inch Roosterfish was tagged.





While there we shared the data from the February 2022 satellite tag "ORTIZ" with the fishermen and the public. We printed our tracking information and were distributing it with the fishermen in the area. One of the many reasons the GFR program is like no other is our promise to always share full data access to ALL. The guys who we count on and take us fishing, were discussing the surprise to where this fish went and the excitement from them motivates us to want to do more.



We are so thankful to the partnerships we have with our advisory board members, research centers, and our local captains and mates who all make this dream a reality. Throughout the day as we overheard ideas being shared in the group and everyone speaking about each other's involvement with Gray FishTag Research, it amazed us at how our program has grown.

We had just successfully completed a collaboration and were in the company of study partners and advisory board members from one of our hottest studies in New Jersey while doing the continuation of one of the hottest gamefish research studies in Costa Rica. It is truly astonishing how our Gray FishTag Research is able to unite our partners all in the name of science and new relationships and friendships are developed. It is very humbling to see these relationships to grow. We cannot thank all of you enough for the continued support.

Marina Pez Vela expressed interest in a joint tagging mission with Pisces Sportfishing in Cabo San Lucas, Mexico for Roosterfish and “the boys” from Quepos are ready to go and take part in that project. So, please standby as we put that project together.



**Our research work does not happen without the generosity of our GFR family of sponsors** – On behalf of our team: **THANK YOU;** *CR Primo Tackle, FECOP, American Fishing Wire AFW, AFTCO, Berkley, CAT Marine, Fin-Nor, The Fisherman Magazine, Fish & Wildlife Foundation of Florida, IGFTO, PENN, Seaguar, Shadow Graphics, Simrad, Southernmost Apparel, Van Staal, Western Outdoor News.*

Our team would like to extend a special thank you to the Ortiz Family, the Marina Pez Vela Group, Los Gatos Foundation as well as Benn Gilmour, and Captain Manuel aboard the “Good Day” and Captain Roy Zapata aboard “Skye” for their support to this research expedition. We are grateful for your commitment to Gray FishTag Research.

# 2022 Northeast Striped Bass Research Expedition

## New Jersey

**Once again, it was an epic Striped Bass research expedition; seven boats and seven teams loaded with excitement to take part in our largest Striped Bass research expedition to date.**

After months of planning and communications with our sponsors and captains, we landed in New Jersey and hit the ground running. That night, GFR advisory board member, Jim Hutchinson, was already scheduled as a guest speaker at the Hudson River Fisherman's Association meeting. For the past couple of years, the HRFA has been a sponsor of our Striped Bass research efforts.

We were looking forward to joining Jim and to meet their members. It was a great night sharing our past study results, discussing future efforts, and having an open Q&A with the group. One question asked was "How do you expect to go out and catch three qualifying 40 plus inch Striped Bass to carry the satellite tags when many of us have never seen a fish that size in all our years of fishing!?" For us that was an easy answer – "There is always pressure when we are conducting these types of research expeditions; however, as always, we count on the professionals to help us. We partner with local captains and mates who have perfected their Striped Bass game. Their local knowledge and expertise guarantee us success in the work we do."

By early afternoon the next day, the calls began to come in from GFR advisory board members, sponsors and contributors who traveled to take part in this year research study. Our team members traveled from New York, New Jersey, Maryland, Oregon, Virginia, and Florida.

Later that night we held our captains meeting at GFR contributor, David Glassberg's, ROSS Brewery in Port Monmouth, New Jersey. It was a great night as we saw old friends and supporters, as well as meeting supporters and captains who we have only had the privilege of speaking with throughout the





past year by phone. We discussed our study findings to date, plans for this year research efforts and the team assignments. All participants received a custom made 2022 study shirt from Southernmost Apparel along with GFR hats and tagging supplies. Of course, we had to have a little competition among the teams and Gray Taxidermy offered a Striped Bass mount for the team that tagged the most fish.

Once again, AFW and Seaguar provided us with “loads” of incredible fishing products to present to our captains. As we mentioned earlier, we could not be successful in our research efforts without the expertise and generosity of our captains. We are grateful to our sponsors as we show appreciation to the captains that help us make it all happen.

At sunrise on Thursday, May 12, the teams met at Bahr's Landing in Highland, New Jersey and we all loaded quickly and shot out of the marina with excitement. It was going to be a day filled with industry leaders fishing with other great industry leaders all in the name of science. Once again, our GFR team surrounded ourselves with only the best. We were in the company of seven of the “best of the best” captains: Guy Buono, Gary Caputi, Frank Crescitelli, David Glassberg, Hans Kaspersetz, Chuck Many, Frank “Wags” Wagenhoffer. As well as study partners and sponsors: Mike Caruso, Jim Hutchinson and Matt Broderick with The Fisherman Magazine, Shawn Carpenter with AFW, Craig Cantelmo with Van Staal, Frank Garcia and Tyler Brinks representing Seaguar, Joe Albanese and Jerry Crean with the Hudson River Fishermen's Association, Greg Cudnik with The Fisherman's Headquarters, Stu Webber, Dave Nova, Andree Sanquini with Travelzoo, Johnnie Ennis and Brian Miller.

Our goal was to deploy three satellite tags and as many GFR green spaghetti tags as possible. Unlike last year, Team Tyman with captain Chuck Many stayed in the Shrewsbury River just a short distance from the dock the teams left from instead of heading offshore. Aboard his boat was: Bill, Mike, Shawn, and Bob Bowden. Their goal of the day was to locate a qualifying candidate and before long they did. With Bill on the rod



"Pappy Jim" was caught, tagged, and released. She was a healthy 40-inch candidate, and they equipped her with a MiniPAT and GFR green tag.

Team Fin-Chaser with captain Frank "Wags" Wagenhoffer had a different technology satellite tag to deploy. The mrPAT (Mark Report) is an innovative technology tag that we have not used in the past. This tag unlike the MiniPAT only records the deployment location and the release location without the collection of the geolocation/tracking. The mrPAT tag is less expensive and would be a terrific addition to our research efforts as we overlay its data along with our MiniPAT data and green tagging data.

Team Fin-Chaser headed to Raritan Bay where the bite was reported to be "ON" with Roxanne, Frank Garcia, Tyler, and Dave onboard. Shortly after receiving the call that Team Tyman completed the mission of deploying their satellite tag, Frank Garcia was on the rod and just before 8:30 a.m. he boated a qualifying candidate to carrying the new technology tag. The tag along with a GFR green tag was deployed in a 40-inch Striped Bass named "Seaguar Striper." Team Critter Catcher with Captain David Glassberg was carrying the other MiniPAT tag with Jim, Matt, Craig, and Dave Nova onboard. They fished Shrewsbury River, Raritan Bay and offshore New Jersey catching and releasing fish with GFR green tags but never caught a qualifying candidate to carry the satellite tag.

Once the pressure of the satellite tag deployments was over, the focus for the rest of the day was to GFR green spaghetti tag and as many Striped Bass and to win the coveted mount. At the end of the day, there were 75 green tags deployed with Team Tyman as the "Top Tagging Team" with 15 tagged fish. Everyone on all seven boats caught Striped Bass, with some fish being their personal best! It was another successful day with great data collected. There is immense value to the green spaghetti tagging to support our satellite tagging data.

**This year our program has received so many remarkable recoveries from our green tagging efforts.**





Still having one more tag to deploy for our spring migration study, on May 15, aboard the Tyman, Chuck Many and Bob Bowden went offshore Long Branch, New Jersey in search of the right fish to carry the tag. The mission was accomplished as they tagged a 48 inch/42-pound candidate named "Van Staal"

**Let's see what Chuck had to say:**

*Sunday, May 15: I decided to meet Bob Bowden at the Tyman at 9 am in hopes that the extremely dense fog we had the last few days would lift a bit. We got to the boat and had decent visibility, so headed out the Shrewsbury River towards Sandy Hook Bay. We decided to pass on looking for live bunker, trusting that our live well full of large eels would do the trick.*

*Based on my logbook, jumbo Stripers should be right off of Sandy Hook, but we hadn't been able to get there the 7 days due to the East/Northeast blow and then another 3 days of extremely dense fog (crazy thing is only really decent window was our Thursday Gray FishTag Day, so we were lucky there.)*

*We turned the hook into an east swell, but not much wind on top of it, so we were feeling good. We steamed out between the channels (between Sandy Hook Channel and Ambrose Channel) looking for life. Quickly we read scattered bunker schools and as we got to the end of Sandy Hook Channel marked a few large hooks. We decided to deploy some eels under the planer boards and see what would happen. Before we got our spread out, BAM! long planer board goes off, peels drag, pop, it's off. Ugh! A minute later, I see the eel behind the close planer board jumping out of the water, Oh Boy! Explosion, line starts peeling, off again. Damn! I am feeling a little unlucky, so I started resetting the line and lower the eel into the water, put it out about 20' and Wham! it takes the eel right out of my hand, and we are on. I control the boat and Bob works the rod. After about a 10-min. battle we land a beautiful 43" Striper. Is this the one to put the tag in? Hmm, circle hook is actually deep in its throat. We decide to take no chances and release her with just a GFR spaghetti tag. We put lines back out and get two more hits without coming tight.*



We need a change of scenery. We steam south to one my favorite rock piles off Elberon, NJ. We set the rods out and as the long rod is being deployed in the upper rocket launcher, in free spool with clicker on, we hear line scream. Bob reaches up and locks up reel and it doubles over screaming with a good one. With only a couple rods out, I quickly put boat in neutral and some reverse to shorten the battle. We net a beautiful bass. Definitely a good candidate. We measure her, 48-inches, SAT Tag deployed, GFR spaghetti tag, one photo, but wait, she has another tag in her. We clip the completely moss covered tag off and send her on her way. As I look at the tag, I say **Holy Sh\*t!** I know this tag.



Taking a step back in time, I have tried to learn as much as about Striped Bass over the years as I can. I have followed and deployed ALS tags, followed Monmouth University study of Hudson River Bass, participate in the NYS Dept. of Environmental Conservation Fish Scale and Log study. In addition, through a good friend, Max King, I got to participate in the US Fish and Wildlife Winter Striped Bass Tagging Program.



This program takes place every year off the coast of Virginia and Maryland tagging hundreds of stripers. The tagging takes place on a boat named Midnight Sun with Captain Ryan Rogers as volunteers join for a day of tagging. I was lucky enough to be one of those volunteers.



Getting back to our 48-inch striper and her tag. I quickly text Roxanne and she finds out that our Striped Bass was tagged at 40.6-inches on 2/5/17. Did I tag her and hold her twice, once in February 2017, 25 miles off the coast of Virginia and then our paths crossed at a single moment on 5/15/2022 about a mile and half off Elberon, NJ. Sorry for the language, but no F'in Way!! Although I did go with Midnight Sun on tagging trips, I did not participate on that 2/5/17 trip. Still amazing that my quest to understand the Striped Bass put me that close to this fish. It's definitely a special connection to her and hope we find out even more about her amazing journey.





This study is truly astonishing, and we are so privileged to be in the forefront of such intriguing work. As this study gains increased interest, Gray FishTag Research will continue to look for opportunities to gather additional data collection, partner and build relationships with other industry leaders and share the amazing results with the public for FREE.

These expedition trips are a true collaboration and is a model for the future of our research work. The feedback we received from those who take part is very humbling as they share their excitement to be a part of it as they see first-hand the effort it takes to collect such incredible data. Being together, doing the work and sharing in the success is a winning combination.

The goal of coordinating boats, captain, sponsors and deploying multiple satellite tags in a one-day event is a challenge; but, once again, our crew made it happen! As in all our Striped Bass satellite tagging research efforts, we now patiently wait to see where the fish we tagged go.

It is often said,  
**"The work we are able to do is a direct result of YOU."**  
*On behalf of our team "THANK YOU"*





# Let's Get JACKED!

## 2022 Amberjack Research Expedition

We were just back from our largest northeast Striped Bass research expedition in New Jersey when our team was committed to be in Marathon, Florida, for the first ever satellite tagging of Greater Amberjack (*Seriola dumerili*). The weather for the weeks prior was blowing and sea conditions were not looking good.

The week of our scheduled trip was no different, however, we were losing our window of opportunity and we made the commitment to follow through and deploy the first ever satellite tag on the Greater Amberjack species. Once again, we are proud to be in the forefront of so many research efforts like this one. In partnership with the Fish & Wildlife Foundation of Florida, we hosted this one-of-a-kind expedition.

The Florida Keys are known as a top fishing destination with Amberjack as a popular game fish. They can be found inshore and offshore and range from depths of 15 feet to over 600 feet of water. They frequent heavy structure such as large shipwrecks and sea mounts. Even though the Greater Amberjack species is a popular gamefish among recreational anglers and charter boats there is limited information on this fish.

Each week we receive tag data cards primarily from Miami and Fort Lauderdale, Florida, with Amberjacks being tagged with our GFR tags. We receive calls on recovered Amberjacks and we are finding that they are not as resident as many believe with some migrating out of Florida. Our program had an Amberjack that was originally tagged offshore Miami, Florida, and was at large for 818 days before being recaptured offshore North Carolina. Marty and Katie Lewis, owners of Main Attraction Sportfishing Charters, in Marathon, Florida, generously donated their boat, crew and expertise to assist us in achieving our mission.



On Wednesday, May 25, 2022, our team boarded the vessel *Main Attraction*. The winds were blowing ESE 20/25 and the seas were tough (a consistent 3 to 5 feet with an occasional 8 foot in the mix) but our team was **tougher**. We were going to be about 10 miles offshore fishing the numerous Florida Keys shipwrecks.

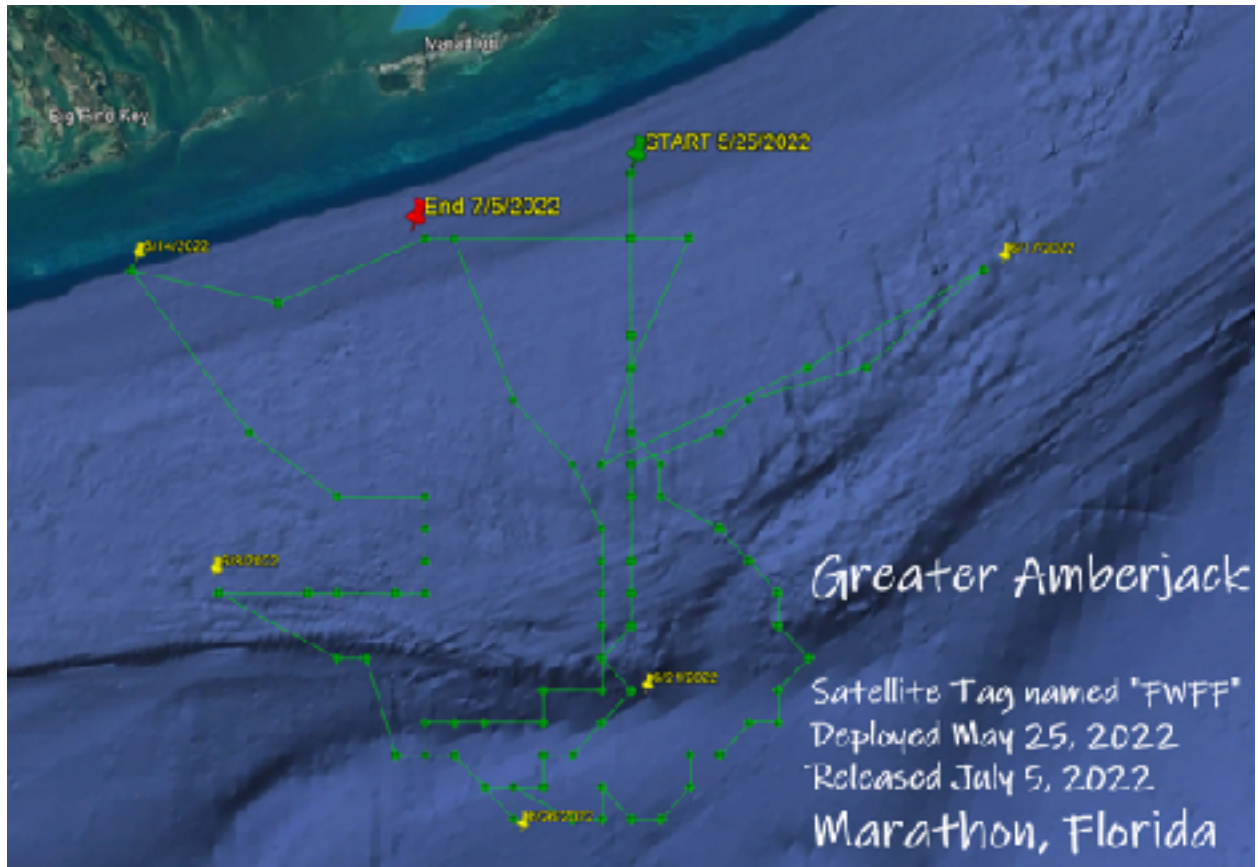
We made a rough trip to the first wreck and our first drop was made with an immediate bite. It was a Blackfin Tuna that we GFR tagged and released. Shortly after, Captain Marty headed to another location and same thing happened, a quick bite but this time it was a Mutton Snapper. The lines were up and onto the next location with another quick bite Mutton Snapper. We are now onto our next location, by this time it is late morning, and the pressure is on for Captain Marty. Amberjack is a species he has caught a thousand times in his career and today they just are not cooperating.

We take a long trip (or at least it felt like it due to the seas) and put the lines in and again within a matter of minutes we get a bite. Immediately, Bill said, "it is an Amberjack, look at the rod tip." Andrew Walker, CEO and President of the Fish and Wildlife Foundation of Florida, was taking a break from being up in the tower and the rod was given to him. After a quick fight, the tuna door was opened, the fish was onboard, and we satellite tagged a perfect 50-inch Greater Amberjack candidate with a MiniPAT sat tag and a GFR green spaghetti tag before releasing the fish in record time.

We decided to make another pass and see if we can tag a few more fish but the weather got worse. As a rainstorm approached, we headed back to the dock feeling a bit beat up but very pleased with the days results.



The satellite tag is programmed for four month and collected data by three sensors: light (geo-location), water temperature and depth during the tag's duration. The satellite tag was deployed on May 25, 2022 and released prematurely on July 5, 2022. The tag transmitted it's data to Argos satellite for 15 days. We learned that the fish traveled further offshore than where originally tagged and remained in the Florida Keys. The average depth during the 6-week period was 83 meters (272 feet) and our fish never went shallower than 37 meters (121 feet)



and it's deepest depth was 159 meters (521 feet.) It was an incredible opportunity to have both the Fish & Wildlife Foundation of Florida and Main Attraction take part. They have heard of the work we do but to see it first-hand and be a part of the day makes all the difference.

This was truly a group effort with Captain Marty Lewis at the helm and Ben Zdan in the cockpit with Main Attraction Sportfishing Charters, Andrew Walker and Danielle Cummings on the rod with Fish & Wildlife Foundation of Florida, Chef and GFR contributor Stu Webber, Captain Lee Kerbel and Captain Billy Springer with Gray Taxidermy and Bill Dobbelaer and Roxanne Willmer with Gray FishTag Research.





## 2022 SwordQuest

**Our second annual SwordQuest event was once again a tremendous success.**

SwordQuest brings together the best of the best sword fishermen in South Florida for a day of competition with GFR green spaghetti tagging and the deployment of satellite tags. We fished among the greats like GFR advisory board member, the legendary Captain Bouncer Smith, and our very own Bill Dobbelaer among other well recognized captains.

The goal of this competitive research expedition was to measure, tag and release as many broadbill Swordfish (*Xiphias Gladius*) as possible in this one-of-a-kind event. Last year the three satellite tags performed perfectly, as they stayed intact for 180 to 240 days providing us incredible information of the behavior and migration pattern of Swordfish during Spring migration in the Florida Straits.

On Wednesday, June 15, 2022, the teams met at RJ Boyle Studio in Lighthouse Point, Florida for our Captain's Meeting. Star brite loaded each captain's bucket with the best cleaning and maintenance products on the market, Seaguar offered every participating captain Fluorocarbon leader and line, as well as tackle, leader, line, mono cutters from AFW for each captain. Once again, our captain buckets were overloaded with products! GFR handed out tagging sticks and tagging supplies to each boat as well as our study shirts that were designed and supplied by Alex Henry from Southernmost Apparel.

No one has better sponsors than GFR. Our raffle prizes were amazing! Tim Pickett from Lindgren- Pitman generously donated a S-1200 LP electric reel valued at \$5,600.00 dollars! PENN donated two Limited Edition Liberty International reels, Simrad donated the latest NSX3009 chart plotter and fish finder, annual twin engine Suzuki service from Outboard Specialties and a Custom bent rod from RJ Boyle.



**Once again, our sponsors showed up in a big way to support us and we are so appreciative.**

At sunrise, on Friday, June 17th, we departed the Hillsboro Inlet with boats proudly displaying their Outboard Specialties / Suzuki flags. Check in was 6:30 am and no one was late to exit the inlet and head offshore to their fishing grounds.

In record time the first fish was called in by "Team Mines Bigger" (2021 first place winner) Their fish measured 42 inches; however, it had a scar on its side so the decision was made to not to deploy one of the satellite tags.

Within 30 minutes the next fish was called in by Bill aboard *Bill Collector 6* giving them the second-place win. Bill had the privilege of hosting Eric Orbesen from NOAA Fisheries aboard the *Bill Collector 6*. Their fish was satellite tagged. The next fish called in measured 64 inches and Kurt Bollmann aboard the *Mako Minded* took the third-place win. (2021 second place winner) That fish was also satellite tagged.

The rest of the day was slow for Swordfish bites but in the late afternoon another two fish were caught and satellite tagged. Title Sponsor, Outboard Specialties, Mike Lund, aboard *Parts and Labor* and a 42-inch fish by GFR contributor, Stu Webber, and crew aboard *Bill Collector 5*.

The Heaviest Dolphin category prize went to Kurt Bollmann and crew aboard *Mako Minded* with a 25-pound Dolphin.





**We offered three prizes for the Most Measured, Tagged and Released Swordfish.**

**1<sup>st</sup> Place "Mines Bigger"** – Cash 50%, Trophy and Swordfish Mount from Gray Taxidermy

**2<sup>nd</sup> Place "Bill Collector 6"** – Cash 30% and Trophy

**3<sup>rd</sup> Place "Mako Minded"** – Cash 20% and Trophy

**"Mako Minded"** - Dolphin Category winner - Cash 100% and Trophy for heaviest Dolphin weighed.

This expedition was in partnership with NOAA. Three of the four fish satellite tagged this day were sponsored by NOAA Fisheries. [Stay tuned for the tagging results!](#)

**These expeditions are not possible without the generosity of our sponsors, contributors and GFR advisory board members involvement.**

**THANK YOU!**

**SIMRAD**





# Black and Blue Marlin 2022, Los Suenos, Costa Rica

Gray FishTag Research is always looking for creative, never been done before research expeditions and our 2022 Black and Blue study trip was certainly a bucket list experience for everyone.

In an effort to continue our important work on Blue Marlin we headed to Costa Rica, but there was more...by popular demand we expanded our research efforts to include satellite tagging a Black Marlin!

The Black Marlin is an elusive fishery. They are known as the top predator of the seas. The world record for this highly prized game fish is over 1,500 lbs. Black Marlin are found in shallower waters than their cousin, the Blue Marlin. They are often encountered on the edge of deep waters.

We have said it before – “adversity causes some to break and others to break records!” Well, we had adversity for sure on this expedition. Our fearless leader, Bill, arrived in Costa Rica a few days early and the day of our captains meeting and when everyone was arriving, he tested positive for Covid. Yes, all the team planning for months, leaving nothing to chance; and now Covid!

As it is said, “the show must go on” our teams would be fishing on Wednesday, August 4<sup>th</sup> and Thursday, August 5<sup>th</sup>, aboard the Sea Fly and Open Fly from the Maverick Sportfishing fleet out of GFR Research center, Los Suenos Resort and Marina.

On Tuesday night, Christian Bolanos, led our captains meeting as our teams enjoyed a delicious, prepared meal that was hosted by the Mr. Bill Royster, Ashley Bretecher and the Los Suenos Resort and Marina. The teams as well and the captains and crews were at the meeting. We discussed our study goals, handed out our study shirts, GFR hats and assigned the team leaders who would identify the qualifying candidates to tag and deploy their teams’ satellite tags.



We take the deployment of satellite tagging very seriously. This type of research work comes with significant risk, expense, and to be honest, tremendous pressure for the tags to perform as we all expect.

We were now on a one-of-a-kind expedition that has never been done before in Costa Rica. We once again had assembled two great teams and we were confident in Bill's absence the study would be managed successfully.

We were in good hands to get our work completed. Captains Eduardo Espinoza "Macho" and Juan Carlos "Juanca" were up for the challenge. There were capable, experienced captains and crews on each boat.

### **Team Sea Fly-**

Captain: Captain Edward Espinoza "Macho"

Mate: Antonio Aguirre Aviles "Pato"

Dick Tanner - CR Primo Fishing Tackle

Alex Henry - Southernmost Apparel

Cindy Parra - Full Scale, Inc.

Jose Francisco "Pancho" - Maverick Sportfishing



### **Team Open Fly-**

Captain: Juan Carlos Fallas

Mate: Roberto Salinas "Chela"

Mate: Woody Porras

Marlon Jacobs - CR Primo Fishing Tackle

Carter Takacs - GFR Advisory Board Member,

GFR Research Center, Marina Paz Vela

Luis Basurto - GFR Research Center, Aquaworld

Eduardo Ojeda - GFR Research Center, Aquaworld

Chef Stu Webber- GFR contributor and GFR tagging advocate



On this multiple boat, two-day trip, the goal was to deploy a satellite tag on a Black Marlin and then head offshore and deploy another satellite tag on a Blue Marlin. There was pressure felt in deploying our two satellite tags, especially the Black Marlin tag. Once again, Gray FishTag Research finds ourselves in the forefront of this type of research work. There has never been a Black Marlin satellite tagged in Costa Rica and it was up to us to make it happen.

At sunrise, of August 4<sup>th</sup> our teams headed offshore. On day one the teams would work hard to find and tag a Black Marlin at the famous "26". The "26" is an area 18-miles offshore that consists of several large rock formations and attracts many fish species. Black Marlin can be found here year-round and often exceed 500 lbs. We would leave the "26" at dusk and chug to the seamounts and wake up to the most epic Blue Marlin fishing.

The sea mounts in Costa Rica are a world-renowned fishery with explosive Marlin fishing. The fishing and the location set the stage for some of the most epic fishing ever.

GFR Advisory Board Member, Carter Takacs, onboard Open Fly tells the story.

*The Black and Blue Marlin satellite tag study of 2022 created a foundation of information gathering expeditions to overlay the potential similarities and considered differences in the behavioral movements and migrations of these two amazing pelagic species.*

*With a morning departure and most of the day spent on the shallow waters presenting live baits under heavy skies and light rains, there were opportunities to catch non target fish such as dorado and large snapper as well as the Black Marlin. However, the suitable candidate for the satellite tag was not found until about 30 minutes after the originally planned hour of departure.*

*Through the hours of the day the crew aboard Open Fly had been discussing and presenting to the team what ways to change the plans that had been originally made, and the banter being shared boat to boat with the Sea Fly team as well.*

*Fortunately, not only did those pre-departure plans hold out from changes, but the discussions also revealed that there was a bit more time to be had that afternoon. We could stay though the sunset hours on the hunt for Black Marlin while then still be perfectly situated for the next morning's light on the offshore sea mounts for stage two and the Blue Marlin component.*

*With angler, Luis Basurto, in the chair and linesmen Woody and Chela, a nice and very healthy Black Marlin was tagged and released just as darkness was starting to fall.*

*The chugg overnight to the sea mounts offshore began as the celebrations of that "as the curtains fell" success settled down. Day two began before the first blush of sunrise with the crew out from the cabins straight to the cockpit for lines in. The sunrise opened to much clearer skies at the distance offshore and Blue*





*Marlin on the troll. As the satellite tag issued to Open Fly had been deployed on the Black Marlin, team Sea Fly was geared toward deployment of the satellite tag on the Blue, with Open Fly setting more "spaghetti tags." Our catch and release efforts brought fine fishing and jovial banter but as was with the day before, the best candidate for the satellite tag was not presented early in the day by either boat. Again, late on the plan with the time for planned departure approaching, our suitable candidate was hooked - but this time the hook up was on the boat that did not have the satellite tag aboard!*



*So, the challenge begins with the pressure of passing packages boat to boat while underway offshore. It is nail biting and entertaining all at the same time, so much more so when that package contains most valuable scientific equipment and one of the vessels has a feisty Blue Marlin on the line!*

*Successfully transferred and successfully deployed the satellite tagged Blue Marlin was released, more celebrations aboard and between the Fly boats and then - a slight deviation from our track home to target schooling yellowfin tuna and back to the docks with fillets aboard...*



***Truly a team effort and our MISSION was ACCOMPLISHED!!***

We would like to extend our sincere appreciation to Dick Tanner and Marlon Jacobs with CR Primo Fishing Tackle, GFR Research Center, Los Suenos Resort and Marina, the Maverick family and crew, FECOP, AFW, IGFTO, PENN, Pure Fishing, Seaguar, Simrad, Southernmost Apparel for their continued support to our tagging program and research efforts.

**Cindy Parra-** *"GFR is an amazing team and the camaraderie that is shown amongst its members to get the job done to the best of their ability, including passing their sat tags to another boat in the middle of the ocean, sharing their individual knowledge amongst their team is what makes these tagging trips so successful, not to mention the enthusiasm and dedication of the Maverick team to making the goal a reality. I feel honored to have the unique opportunity to be part of the GFR team and learn from the best!"*

# Striped Bass Satellite Tag Deployment and Recovery

By Chris Scanzillo

Thank you all for the kind words and encouragement. This was truly an amazing experience; not only the opportunity Bill and Roxanne gave us to place the tag on our own but also that I was able to catch a striper and place the tag with my son Jake, and further successfully search for and retrieve the tag- what a wild ride!



As Roxanne may have shared, we placed the tag on a 32-inch fish on September 4th just off Scituate's (Massachusetts) North River. I was a little nervous with taking on the task, as by that time in the season, the majority of large fish had moved out. Luckily, Bill charged us with targeting a 28-32 inch fish which eased my mind a bit. Nevertheless, knowing I would never hear the end of it if I did not get that tag out, the pressure was on.

We anchored on about 20 feet of water just off the beach (~150 yds) in a spot known for stripers where we have fished many times before. Using some chunk mackerel, we started chunking and let our (Mustad) circle hooks with mackerel chunks drift back (paired with Penn Squall 30's and Seagar fluoro leader). In no time, we were marking tens of fish and Jake was on. With the passion and grace that only a 13-year-old young man can demonstrate, Jake had the fish next to the boat in no time. Using a net we brought the fish onboard, did a quick visual check to make sure it appeared healthy and measured it to make sure it was within our targeted range. Once confirming it was the perfect size of 32 inches, we draped a wet towel over the fish, located our tag spot, scraped off a few scales and placed the tag.

This was the first time I had placed a tag like this myself and was struck with how much force was required to penetrate the flesh and seat the tag. I also had a concern how the size of the tag may affect the maneuverability and, consequently, lifespan of this fish as it seemed rather large in proportion. Nevertheless, the tag was successfully placed, and we swam the fish next to the boat for several seconds before it gave us a good tail kick and was off.

And for the next week I was just hoping I did not get a call from Roxanne saying the tag was transmitting and either dislodged or the fish expired.

So, no news was good news until October 11th when Roxanne let us know the tag was pinging. To our surprise it was up the North River a few miles from where we caught the fish and placed the tag. I was betting on this fish winding up in Maryland or somewhere in NY/NJ and David Glassberg tracking it down... but in line with most of the data we have seen come out of GFR it turned my assumption was wrong and I again thought how little we know about these fish.



On Thursday, the 13th (after school) Jake and I took our 18' Panga skiff upriver from our marina on the North River and set out to see what we could see. This is a tidal river which is navigable by small boats however the further you go upstream the water gets skinny and areas become rocky; you need to play the tide. You also must pass under two height restricted bridges, one of which you need to mind your head under at high tide. We are very familiar with this river and travel this area in all seasons; there is a great campground our family regularly cruise up to and roasts hot dogs over campfire on winter days. The stretch of river where the tag was pinging is pretty darn amazing, picturesque and probably my favorite stretch of that river. There are houses spotted around, tons of wildlife (bald eagles, deer, coyotes) and marsh grasses far as you can see.

The tag provided multiple pings in an area approximately 750 yards in diameter, with an accuracy of ~250yds (approximately 1250yds, or .71 miles). So, we felt like we had a pretty good general location, and the strategy was to simply slowly drive up/down the banks and look for the tag. With the sun setting a little after 6:30 pm



this time of year we only had about an hour and a half once we arrive on site to search. We passed the edges of the banks and poked and prodded through the grasses hoping to catch a glimpse of this tag and make it home in time for dinner. Not a chance.

I significantly underestimated the difficulty of visually locating a tag in a field of marsh grass. So, we gave it the best we had on Day 1 but went home empty handed.

We had a significant storm roll through the following day, so it was not until Saturday that we were able to get out there for Day 2. We connected with Roxanne for any update locations and to find out if the tag was still pinging. It was. Minding the tide again, we set out early afternoon with the incoming and rode it back to our spot, hoping yesterday's storm may have made the tag more visible.



This day we had about 4 hours of search time, however traveling .71 miles upriver looking at every blade of grass along the west bank and then another .71 miles down the river looking at the grass on the east bank proved challenging and makes you go cross eyed. After several hours of me shifting in and out of gear and Jake lying in his stomach on the bow with a boat hook in his hand poking at grass, we began to lose daylight and had to call it a night. It would be a few more days until we could get out there again as I had to travel for work and Jake had to get to school.

On Tuesday Roxanne reached out and let me know the tag was still pinging and that **Wildlife Computers** was willing to send us out a receiver to use and attempt and hone in on the tag. We were excited at the opportunity and the notion that some useful tool was on its way. The receiver (think walkie talkie) arrived Thursday morning along with an antenna and attenuation filter. Tides, weather, and sunset were not aligning so I was planning we would have another go at it Saturday when the tides and weather were perfect. Unfortunately, the battery in the satellite tag had other plans; Roxanne and I spoke, and the tag's voltage was dropping, indicating that there was not much time left when the tag would be transmitting or sending out a signal we could hear with our receiver.

Jake had homework to do that he "forgot about" so I had to leave him bemoaning at home while I scooted upriver again to try and locate this tag before it died, using our new tool. I pushed off the dock at about 4:30 pm and rode the tide upriver for about an hour to our spot; I now only had an hour of daylight to make it happen. I was thoroughly encouraged upon approach as I could already hear the tag pinging once every minute. The idea is that between pointing the antenna in a 360-degree circle to get a direction and considering the strength (loudness) of the signal/tone as an indication of your proximity, you can "walk right up to it."

Easier said than done. With daylight fading, I cruised up and down the banks with a bit more speed. Within about 30 minutes I felt as though I had the search area down to about a 100–150-foot distance.

The challenge was that I read in the instructions that when you get close to the tag you should also expect to hear a tone every 1-2 seconds; I was not hearing that. I reached out to Roxanne and left a message for the tech at Wildlife Computers hoping he could give me a tip to whittle down my search area. I struggled the last few minutes of daylight to make some more headway but was soon without light. My concern was that by the time I got back out there in the morning the battery within the tag would be dead and we would have no signal. Had that been the case we did not have any chance of finding that tag. It was a long dark ride home against the tide.



Once back to the dock I was able to connect with the Wildlife Computers tech, Devin Short, and learned that since this is an R&D tag, there was no 1-2 second beep; all I had was the 60 second. Side note: the learning curve on this receiver was steep. If anyone finds themselves in a position where they will be utilizing this setup to locate a tag, please feel free to call me for some info, I am happy to share the little I know.

The following day Jake and I got up at daybreak and linked up with Roxanne over text. The tag was still pinging, and we were ready to finally find this elusive thing.

Jake had school and I was supposed to work, but we made the collective decision we would both skip that day because 1) all lessons are not learned in the classroom 2) "this is literally more important than anything at school Dad," and 3) there's nothing more worthy of blowing off work than fishing (of sorts) with your kid. So, we headed out in the steam fog with a few snacks and our gear.



After a great ride upriver on a perfect fall morning, we heard our tone again upon approach. After tuning Jake into what I had recently learned about the receiver, we agreed that the signal was strongest in the same area I suspected the night before.

For the next three and a half hours we were on land, on the skiff, hand over hand pulling ourselves through marsh grass while lying on our bellies on the bow and raking the marsh with boat hooks in a search grid.



We both made sure to slip in the mud several times and at some point, Jake lost a sock; although he says he never took off his boot. We finally honed in on an area about 30' in diameter. We could not find this tag to save our lives. We knew we had to be on top of it, but we could not see it at all. As we were commiserating about our current problems, we decided that having some sort of flashing LED or tone that you could turn on with Bluetooth once you were in close proximity would sure be a useful improvement. Something I fed back to Devon in addition to the need for a more frequent tone.

At this point it was 11:30 am and we were running out of tide. I reluctantly texted Roxanne and told her we had about another 30 minutes before we had to call it, knowing that this would very likely be our last opportunity and the battery would soon be dead.

As a last effort I reached out to Devon at Wildlife Computers again. I brought Devon up to speed on the progress and we brainstormed about how to try and make our search area smaller to the point where we could get on our hands and knees to feel every square inch of ground. On the receiver our gain and attenuation settings were maxed out. We had removed the antenna and attenuation filter to even tighten our signal area. I asked about using the filter without the antenna and although Devon did not know of anyone trying that before, theoretically it should further filter the signal to get us even closer. Sounds like a reasonable tactic so we hang up with Devon and tried it out. Within about 10 minutes we get the area down to about a 15-foot diameter.

As I'm trying to further work down the area with the receiver and explaining to Jake that we are about to get muddy, Jake is starting to search through the grass again within our targeted area. After kicking away some dead grass that had clumped up at the high tide mark from (presumably) last Friday's storm he sees a little piece of black plastic, picks it up and what do you know- he found it!

After a few moments to high-five and admit that we both were losing faith at the end, we needed to get out of there and catch the tide down river otherwise we would be stuck until the next high.



**It was a great ride back, and a great feeling to think that Jake is probably one of a few, if any, people to both catch the fish that is tagged and retrieve the very same tag at a later date. Definitely a father/son memory for the record books.**

**Some final thoughts:**

1. I'm not sure why the tag came off. Interestingly, there are several patches of parallel marks on the tag. I'm not sure if this could be from the fish rubbing on the bottom or rocks, or perhaps indications of an attempted predation.
2. There is absolutely no way we could have located that tag without the receiver. This is not the easiest piece of technology to use either; I hope Wildlife Computers is able to integrate some improvements into future designs which make them easier to locate once you are in close proximity.
3. Once retrieved, we deliberately left the tag out under open sky to learn how long it would transmit for. Roxanne tells me that the tag continued to transmit until Saturday morning.
4. What really made this special for me was being able to do this with my son. Don't get me wrong, I like fishing with all of you, but it is so rewarding seeing a younger generation passionate about fishing. I had the pleasure of sitting next to Don Dingman at the GFR annual meeting last year and we talked a bit about his "take a kid fishing" concept. Don could not be more correct.



## Pisces Sportfishing – Black Marlin Satellite Tagging Study

For many years, GFR Research Center, Pisces Sportfishing, and GFR advisory board member, Tracy Ehrenberg, have been active in supporting the conservation efforts of the Marlin fishery in Cabo San Lucas, Mexico.

On a recent two-day research event, Tracy was joined by her daughter, Becca, and the owners and crews aboard the Friday Bank, Reels N' Dirt, Happy Endings and La Chingona as they went in search of Black Marlin to deploy MiniPAT satellite tags to track the migration and behavior of this elusive species.

Mission accomplished! On October 5, 2022, aboard Friday Bank, with Captain Alex Collins and mates Saul de La Pena and Roberto Davalos, angler Omar Contreras satellite and GFR tagged a 126 inch (total length) / 400-pound Black Marlin. A local scientist, Rogelio Gonzalez, collected larvae samples and phytoplankton in the area as well.

One tag was deployed, and the other tag will be deployed in the near future. The deployed tag is programmed for 5 months. Once the collected data is transmitted, we will be sure to share the data results with you.

With the support of the Ehrenberg family and the Pisces Sportfishing fleet and crew, we are once again in the forefront of very interesting Black Marlin research work.





**"Hook the Future"** revolves around fishing but it's about a lot more than landing fish. It's also about empowering our children and to help kids through fishing.

The show is hosted by Captain Don Dingman, an expert angler, who lost his 22-year-old son, Brian, in 2004. This inspired Don to produce this program to show other parents how important it is to spend quality time with their own children. Going out fishing three times a month with his own father, Don learned how precious that parent/child connection was, and how the best way to teach a kid to do something, was to simply let him do it.

Don says "when you take your kids fishing let them drive the boat and let them fight the fish. That's how they learn. When you teach them basketball or football, you don't watch TV all day. You let them get in there and play."

His goal is to help kids battling terminal illness to have an opportunity to go out on the water with their family and take a break from their daily fight, to supply rods, reels, and tackle to kids so that they have the tools they need to succeed in the sport of fishing.

As the host of the television show, Hook the Future, Captain Don shares the salt life experience with the next generation on a daily basis. Hook the Future takes kids fishing while instilling the values of being good stewards of our environment.





## Bull Red Drum

Captain Don Dingman is a Florida native of Jacksonville, Florida. Don grew up spending his life on the water fishing, surfing, diving, and a charter captain for over 30 years. Captain Don is a huge advocate of Bull Red Drum.

As a charter captain, Don takes anglers on the water daily to catch and release Bull Red Drum in the St. John's River in Jacksonville, Florida.

He is passionate about protecting and learning more about Bull Red Drum and has personally spaghetti tagged over 2500 Bull Red Drum in the St. John's River with the hopes of gathering much needed data on such a valuable stock of breeding fish.

In October 2019, Captain Don partnered with Gray FishTag Research to begin a tagging study of the well sought-after species.



Red Drum are the most sought after inshore saltwater species for anglers from North Carolina to the East Coast of Texas. They generate the most revenue for conservation, yet there is little known data available to the public regarding the Red Drum breeding stock.

### **By spaghetti tagging Bull Red Drum over the years, we have learned:**

- There are many more male Red Drum than female. (at least 100 to 1)
- They swim in huge schools circling the edge of the channel and the inlet
- We believe they return to the same river each year to spawn as a few fish have been recaptured almost a year to the day within a mile of where they were tagged

### **The successful recoveries of tagged fish have also delivered a few surprises:**

- One fish during the middle of the spawn was recaptured 33 days later, 28 miles offshore
- One fish swam 19.75 miles north to the St Mary's River in 11 days during the spawn run
- One fish swam 90 miles south along the coast in 30 days.

The Bull Red Drum population is healthy and huge. Successful catch and release efforts have resulted in huge numbers of breeders. In recent years, there has been a significantly higher numbers of recreational anglers targeting Bull Red Drum.

Each year more and more captains and anglers are tagging in producing valuable data on migration and growth of Red Drum because of his partnership with us. Since 2019, hundreds of Red Drum been tagged as a result of their efforts.





**The Full of Bull Redfish Tournament** was created by Captain Don Dingman as a tag and release tournament to gather much needed research on the Red Drum breeding stock. Captain Don shares videos and hands-on training to all anglers on the proper ways to vent, tag and release each fish. **2022 Full of Bull results...**

**1<sup>st</sup> Place:** Tyler Parker - 43 9/10 inches

**2<sup>nd</sup> Place:** Mike Arena - 41 inches

**3<sup>rd</sup> Place:** Jeremy Thurne - 41 inches

**4<sup>th</sup> Place:** Gregory Foxworth - 40 1/4 inches

**5<sup>th</sup> Place:** Blake Ginter - 39 1/2 inches

**Top Lady Angler:** Emily Meeks - 39 1/4 inches

**Top Junior Angler:** Wyatt Weiss- 38 1/2 inches

**Most Spots:** (on one side) Jill Carter - 55





## 2022 Yellowfin Tuna Tagging Expedition

### Western Outdoor News, Los Cabo Tuna Jackpot Tournament and Pisces Sportfishing – Mexico

We would like to extend our appreciation to Western Outdoor News and the Los Cabo Tuna Jackpot Tournament for including Gray FishTag Research in a tournament optional pay out. For the past few years, the Los Cabo Tuna Jackpot Tournament has donated a portion of one of their tournament options, which has resulted in a generous donation to our program and research efforts each year.

Thanks to Western Outdoor News, Los Cabo Tuna Jackpot Tournament, and our good friends, and GFR Research Center, Tracy and Rebecca Ehrenberg - Pisces Sportfishing, our team was super excited to be heading back to Cabo San Lucas, Mexico, for another FIRST in our Gray FishTag Research program.

We arrived on Monday, October 31, 2022, and met with Tracy to go over the details of the next day research expedition. Tracy prearranged for the donation of our boat, and donated our fishing licenses, food, and beverages. The plan was to meet aboard the 46-foot Viking "La Chingona" at 6:00 a.m. the next morning. We would be fishing with one of the best crews in Cabo, Tracy says "possibly in the world" - Captain Antonio and his two mates Luis and Luis. We were also pleased to hear that the boat owners, Jason and Mindy Smith, would be joining us as well.

We set out with the goal of deploying a satellite tag on a Yellowfin Tuna. This is a species that our program has not studied, and we were excited to learn more. We were optimistic for another successful project in Cabo and confident that the Pisces Sportfishing Crew would once again make it happen. As we prepared for this research expedition, we spoke with other programs who have studied Yellowfin Tuna and we were informed that it can be a challenging endeavor. Yellowfin Tuna swim in schools and the tag might pre-mature shed as a result. Also, this species is sought after from predator species such as Sharks and Marlin. Our team is fortunate to have the expertise and talent of the local professionals and we knew what we needed to do as a team for a successful satellite tag deployment.



On Tuesday morning, we boarded the La Chingona and set offshore with our team: Bill, Pam and Roxanne with Gray FishTag Research, Billy Egan–Western Outdoor News, Stu Webber-GFR contributor, Rebecca Ehrenberg- Pisces Sportfishing, Jason, Mindy, Captain Antonio, and mates Luis and Luis- La Chingona.

As in all our study expeditions we had our team meeting to discuss the goals of the day, the importance for qualifying the proper candidate to carry the tag, how the satellite tag technology works, and we assigned roles to the crew and anglers. We felt confident but also a bit apprehensive as we know this type of research work carries risk.

La Chingona is a first-class vessel, and its electronics and fishing gear is the finest on the market. The crew were using powerful magnification, stabilized binoculars, and their electronics to sight our fishing grounds. We would be fishing with top notch PENN fishing gear.

The day started off with multiple Yellowfin Tuna bites, all around thirty-two inch to thirty-six inch, however, Bill made the decision to GFR green tag and release them as they were not the size of fish we needed.

We went from fishing ground to fishing ground, releasing fish (and keeping a couple) but as mid-morning approached the bite slowed down. As our determined captain was searching, we had perfect Tuna fishing conditions, dolphin pods were in abundance and swimming with the boat and birds were in the sky. The team was committed as Luis was motioning the kite rod back and forth keeping the bait at the surface, Jason was throwing a plug while Bill, Stu and Billy were all watching the cockpit rods as hours went by without a single bite.

We are now sixty miles offshore of Cabo and it is getting late. As in previous trips, as a team we begin to plan out what do we do now, plan another trip offshore tomorrow or bring the satellite tag back home and try again in a couple of months? As it always does while making these types of plans, the rod goes off! This time it was not one rod, it was two. Stu grabs his rod while Jason grabs the other. Realizing the importance getting these fish to the boat, we instructed Stu to reel his fish in first.



His fish ended up being too small, however, once Jason began fighting his fish, he mentioned that "this might be the one."

The crew was so calm, listening to every instruction Bill shared as this fish was fought. They were methodical making sure that everything was handled perfectly. Jason worked hard and as the fish got closer to the boat our team was astonished. This was a large Tuna and would definitely be carrying our tag.

With Jason on the rod and the crew in the cockpit the fish was at the side of the boat and Bill determined the hook was in the right place, fish was healthy and that this fish was our candidate. He deployed the satellite tag. We now needed to get the hook removed. Both Luis and Luis were remarkable in their abilities and after a brief time the hook was removed and the GFR green tag was in too.

The cheers, hugs and high fives began as we realized this was a textbook deployment and we had just tagged a 63 inch / 150 lb. Yellowfin Tuna! I forgot to mention early that La Chingona in Spanish means "Bad Ass" and this crew certainly was.

It was such an honor to meet and fish with Jason and Mindy and to be a part of their generosity to our program. This was a new experience for them in seeing the work we do firsthand, and this fish released with a satellite tag was Jason's personal best!

Side Note- A few months earlier La Chingona was a part of the Black Marlin Study in Cabo and generously purchased a satellite tag to study this elusive fish too.

**We would like to extend a special thank you to Western Outdoor News, Los Cabo Tuna Jackpot Tournament, Tracy Ehrenberg and Pisces Sportfishing, Jason and Mindy Smith for their generosity and commitment to Gray FishTag Research.**

**Our team is so grateful for Rebecca Ehrenberg for her talent in capturing the day in video and photos. (Hence, no pictures of you Becca!)**







## We thrive on social media

#GrayFishTag #GrayFishTagResearch #FishTag #LiveTagFeed #SatTag

Our online presence keeps growing and we are truly humbled and excited about the participation and activity from anglers and fishing professionals, sharing their fishing and tagging experiences through all available Social Media. It is truly amazing to see how many people support and follow our initiative.

Our followers are repeatedly sharing and hash-tagging their own fishing and fish tagging activities. We are continuing to grow within the fishing community and the exposure we are getting is truly humbling. With the growing following we are always seeking new and innovative ways to capitalize on the opportunity presented from the online audience.

We constantly use targeted hashtags such as #OpenAccess, #GFR, #FishTagging, #TagandRelease, #FishingLife and many more in order to establish our own audience network.



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