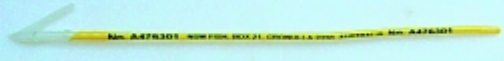




How to tag game fish

Types of tags

Pelagic tag (A series) - Over 60cm for Tuna, Mackerel, Dolphinfish and Wahoo, and over 70cm for Kingfish.



Steel Head Shark tag (S series) - Sharks only.

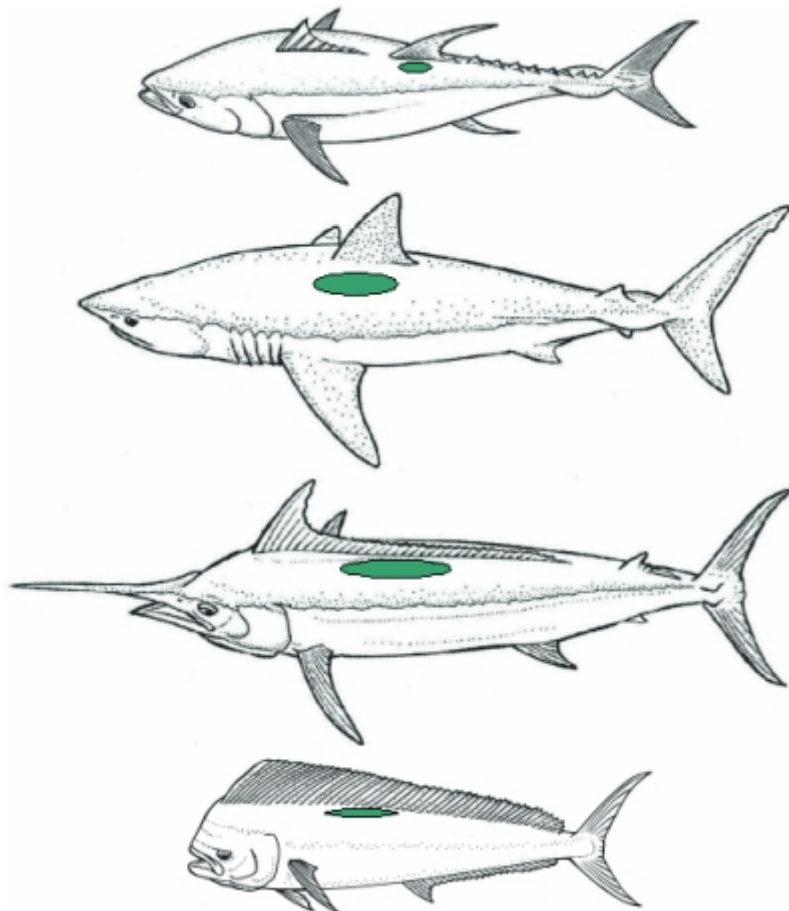


Billfish tag (B series) - Marlin, Sailfish, Swordfish and Spearfish only.



Recommended tagging areas

The images below show the recommended tagging areas on game fish:



How to tag game fish using the pelagic tag



Correctly located and locked pelagic tag.



Correct pelagic tag location on a Yellowtail Kingfish.



When tagging with the pelagic tag, the majority of fish should be removed from the water before tagging. This enables improved accuracy of tagging, may simplify hook removal and allow more accurate recording of the length and weight. For larger fish a short hand tagger can be used for tagging boat side. Try to prevent the fish damaging itself on hard, hot, or dry surfaces. A wet foam mat or similar is ideal (a wet towel will suffice) for on-boat tagging.

Pelagic tags should be inserted by hand tagger or short pole, as they are designed to lock behind the bony structures of the dorsal fin or second dorsal fin in order to stay in position. Carefully insert the tag into the fish's back, close to the base of the fin and angled in so that it passes through the bony structures that radiate off the fin. Try to insert the tag at an angle of at least 45° to reduce water friction and then twist the tag pole before removing it. In effect, you should be trying to hook the barb of the tag around one of these spines, which then locks the tag in place.

With all tagging, fill out the tag card immediately and return to NSW DPI (or your fishing club recorder) as soon as possible, otherwise tagging is of no value.

Remember – successful tagging is a team effort.

Estimating the size of the fish

This may be done by estimating the weight of the fish or by measuring the fish when it is in, or alongside the boat. If the fish is up to a metre in length it may be carefully brought on board and measured using a standard measuring tape. However, large fish should remain in the water.

If you estimate the size of the fish, especially the weight, get a consensus from all the crew immediately after release, and record immediately.

For measuring length of fish in the water, it is best to rig up a simple tape measure. It helps if it is flexible, and at least 4 metres long. Attach a tennis ball to the zero end and when a fish is alongside, or being held at the back of the boat, float the tennis ball to the tail fork and get a measurement to the fish's snout, or to the tip of the lower jaw for billfish. For billfish, it is important that the recorded measurement should state where the fish was measured from and to (i.e. lower jaw to tail fork length or total length - tip of bill to end of tail).

Giving both the length and the weight for every tag and release will allow the recording of the most complete information and result in the best comparison should the fish be recaptured, or the data used in a scientific analysis.

What to do if you catch a tagged fish

Whenever you catch a fish, examine the dorsal area of both sides of the fish to see if a tag is present. The tags may only be just showing or may be obscured by marine growth if they have been in the fish for a long time.

If you catch a billfish, shark, tuna or other listed sportfish that is already tagged, carefully record the tag number or cut off the old tag and re-tag the fish with a new tag. Tags that look old may indicate that the fish have been at large for a long time and these long-term recaptures are particularly valuable.

Record all recovery information on the new tag card, if you don't have a new tag, you may release the fish again with the same tag. Please ensure that you record the tag number, species, date, location and GPS co-ordinates, estimated size (or actual size if landed) and condition of fish on release. If you decide to take the fish, record the capture details on the attached tear-off slip.

One other point regarding reporting recaptures of tagged fish should be kept in mind. In these days of nearly 100% release of game fish, previously tagged fish are quite often caught and re-released without being able to retrieve the earlier tag. If you do hook and release a fish which has a tag in place, and you are not able to retrieve the tag, you should still record the details (even though the tag number is unknown) and report the release to NSW DPI as a genuine recapture. In this way, better statistics on actual recapture rates of game fish will be able to be maintained.