

Virginia Game Fish Tagging Program

Celebrates 22 Years of Tagging!

Since 1995, the Virginia Game Fish Tagging Program (VGFTP) has tagged recreationally important finfish with the help of volunteer anglers. A cooperative effort between the Marine Advisory Program at the Virginia Institute of Marine Science (VIMS) and Saltwater Tournament at the Virginia Marine Resources Commission (VMRC), the program's funding is from state saltwater license funds and VIMS.

The program's goals are:

1. to train and maintain a group of experienced anglers in effective tagging and catch and release techniques and
2. use angler-collected data to learn more about life history patterns of selected recreationally important marine fish.

The VGFTP provides important information to the angling community about the value of Virginia's marine recreational fisheries, including the benefits of effective catch and release fishing.

VGFTP DATA for Management

VGFTP data have been used for updating fishery management plans by state, regional and federal management groups:

VMRC-Virginia Marine Resources Commission: Used VGFTP data to describe habitat use and seasonal migratory patterns of red drum

ASMFC-Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission: VGFTP data were used for evaluating tautog harvest rates.

SEDAR-Southeast Data Assessment and Review: Examined VGFTP cobia data for patterns in long-range movements.

ASMFC Interstate Tagging Committee: certified the VGFTP in 2013. The VGFTP is one of only 5 programs to earn this recognition.

THE TAGGING PROGRAM SUCCEEDS BECAUSE OF ANGLERS.

As of February 2017, >280,000 fish have been tagged with a recapture rate of 11%. These data provided movement and site-fidelity patterns of fish captured and released in the Chesapeake Bay and Atlantic coastal waters.

- VGFTP recaptures have been reported from RI to FL
- More than 300 taggers trained since 1995
- >900 locations have been registered as tagging or recapture sites
- The VGFTP has been recognized for improving communication between fisheries scientists, managers and anglers.

In 2016, VGFTP anglers tagged more than 15,890 fishes and had 1,652 recaptures. Cobia, sheepshead, speckled trout and tautog all had an increase in tagging. The top tagged species in 2016 was speckled trout, making up 53% of tagging effort. Speckled trout have led tagging effort for the past six years (except 2012, when red drum ruled). Although tagging effort was dominated by juveniles, the fact that speckled trout was the top tagged species was positive after winter cold stuns at the beginning of the year. The VGFTP continues to provide valuable data describing fish habitat use & movement patterns for key recreational species.

www.vims.edu/vgftp/

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TWENTY+ YEARS OF TAGGING BY THE NUMBERS:

- **283,025:** More than 280,000 tags and 31,000 recaptures have been reported for the program since 1995 (an ~11 percent recapture rate)!
- **10:** The VGFTP targets ten species: black drum, black sea bass, cobia, summer flounder, red drum, sheepshead, spadefish, speckled trout, tautog and grey triggerfish.
- **3,411:** This is the longest “days at large” for a VGFTP tagged fish. A tautog that was originally tagged on November 6, 2006, at the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel was recaptured on March 9, 2013, at the Santore Wreck.
- **337:** a flounder originally tagged at the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel on November 18, 2007 was recaptured off Rhode Island on January 10, 2008, traveling an estimated 337 nautical miles in 53 days!
- **2779:** This is the tag number for a cobia that was tagged in VA and recaptured in the Gulf of Mexico. It was originally tagged in the York Spit on August 22, 2000 and was recaptured (and harvested) off Mississippi in the Gulf of Mexico on May 20, 2004
- **18,457:** This is the highest ever annual tagging effort for a single species in the VGFTP. In 2012, more than 18,000 red drum were tagged, making it the top-tagged species for the VGFTP that year.
- **350:** More than 300 taggers have participated in the program.



VGFTP RECAPTURES & TAGS, 1995-2017

Year	Black Drum	Black Sea Bass	Cobia	Flounder	Red Drum	Sheeps Head	Spade Fish	Speckled Trout	Tautog	Trigger Fish	Total
2017	0 / 0	0 / 3	0 / 0	0 / 0	4 / 21	0 / 0	0 / 0	2 / 73	19 / 34	0 / 0	25 / 131
2016	7 / 96	1124 / 2949	67 / 471	122 / 1213	96 / 1802	0 / 20	7 / 131	55 / 8434	168 / 760	6 / 22	1652 / 15898
2015	7 / 115	1080 / 2150	70 / 361	198 / 1364	23 / 283	0 / 37	8 / 229	75 / 7548	84 / 676	7 / 50	1552 / 12813
2014	6 / 133	1171 / 2673	19 / 321	273 / 1640	498 / 3028	1 / 18	33 / 287	111 / 5666	88 / 536	4 / 53	2204 / 14355
2013	3 / 203	608 / 1884	16 / 224	128 / 904	868 / 5945	0 / 28	12 / 108	273 / 6535	125 / 1066	2 / 24	2035 / 16921
2012	14 / 146	188 / 1382	12 / 457	103 / 1779	619 / 18457	0 / 33	37 / 505	289 / 7937	100 / 1056	17 / 89	2379 / 31841
2011	10 / 214	482 / 1590	8 / 158	200 / 2693	282 / 1231	0 / 18	2 / 28	889 / 12740	79 / 701	3 / 13	1955 / 19386
2010	2 / 87	374 / 1003	15 / 108	464 / 5259	294 / 1890	1 / 21	12 / 87	178 / 7293	78 / 683	17 / 95	1435 / 16526
2009	5 / 172	1012 / 3274	8 / 36	1265 / 9348	544 / 3133	8 / 225	20 / 391	99 / 3204	110 / 541	46 / 176	3117 / 20500
2008	6 / 192	332 / 2688	8 / 66	866 / 7896	509 / 4925	2 / 40	41 / 300	215 / 3520	145 / 746	76 / 212	2200 / 20585
2007	36 / 546	292 / 1875	13 / 71	1060 / 8615	511 / 3364	41 / 229	73 / 433	60 / 2929	238 / 955	47 / 262	2371 / 19280
2006	28 / 288	260 / 1269	26 / 187	793 / 6218	361 / 4153	0 / 176	28 / 221	51 / 1952	309 / 2081	32 / 79	1925 / 16627
2005	4 / 205	107 / 686	4 / 98	621 / 6123	42 / 794	3 / 185	21 / 173	29 / 1149	133 / 822	4 / 23	973 / 10258
2004	5 / 232	70 / 1012	5 / 184	648 / 7286	23 / 502	27 / 274	43 / 299	26 / 990	119 / 1221	41 / 193	1016 / 12193
2003	5 / 176	88 / 922	11 / 14	397 / 3704	339 / 2270	0 / 6	26 / 236	8 / 361	59 / 497	12 / 31	963 / 8219
2002	15 / 188	231 / 1732	15 / 63	317 / 3566	193 / 2758	1 / 10	55 / 470	23 / 1249	129 / 653	23 / 56	1053 / 10749
2001	4 / 395	280 / 1913	19 / 87	636 / 6880	27 / 295	1 / 7	49 / 553	13 / 486	149 / 951	2 / 14	1215 / 11599
2000	5 / 109	294 / 2008	10 / 65	161 / 2603	173 / 1124	1 / 12	60 / 523	11 / 362	156 / 713	0 / 0	912 / 7519
1999	7 / 90	384 / 2139	16 / 59	4 / 4	135 / 1073	0 / 0	25 / 233	16 / 521	356 / 1923	0 / 0	973 / 6049
1998	8 / 196	455 / 2655	13 / 73	3 / 28	92 / 551	0 / 0	38 / 476	29 / 495	226 / 1347	0 / 0	881 / 5824
1997	2 / 72	48 / 592	9 / 108	2 / 38	44 / 438	0 / 0	36 / 547	12 / 440	77 / 914	0 / 0	233 / 3150
1996	3 / 85	0 / 0	9 / 75	0 / 6	4 / 92	0 / 0	8 / 189	4 / 409	74 / 543	0 / 0	102 / 1400
1995	37 / 200	0 / 0	2 / 50	0 / 3	2 / 66	0 / 0	25 / 193	14 / 601	30 / 260	0 / 0	110 / 1374

Recaptures are the first, smaller number. Tags are the second, larger number. This table includes multiple recaptures of the same fish. Data from February 2017



REPORT A TAGGED FISH:

www.vasaltwaterjournal.com/report_tagged_fish.php

WE TAG:

black drum, black sea bass, cobia, gray triggerfish, red drum, spadefish, sheepshead, speckled trout, summer flounder & tautog.

