



recfishwest

REEL NEWS

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Broome Sailfish Tagging Program – A World First!

The final phase of a study into the unique Broome Sailfish is now underway.

Funded by Woodside and supported by Recfishwest and the Broome Fishing Club, this sailfish tagging study seeks to answer a range of questions about the habits and movements of Broome's most famous fish.

The tagging programs involve different types of satellite tags, known as PSATs, and one type of 'transmitter tag', known as a SPOT tag deployed on the fish.

The PSAT tags log important environmental information such as depth, water temperature and light levels and when programmed will be able to detach themselves from the fish and begin transmitting this information to satellites for processing and analysis.

This data can be used to provide valuable information on not only the movements of sailfish, but also their use of the marine habitat during daylight and night-time hours.

This information will not only provide a more comprehensive understanding of the Broome Sailfish but could also shed light on the sailfish populations in Dampier, Onslow and Exmouth.

The program tagging team were privileged to be a part of some hot sail fishing action just north of Broome recently and all 10 SPOT tags were attached to sailfish in a world-first operation.

The SPOT tags work like a radio transmitter and are mounted to the tail of the fish rather than the shoulder.



When the fish are 'tailing' on the surface the aerial of the transmitter is able to broadcast information to a satellite which can provide real time information on the day to day location of the fish to the researchers. This information can even be put on a website for the public to see where the fish are moving.



This is very exciting given this is the first time this style of tag has been used on sailfish. Prior to this study they have only ever been used on striped marlin.

The first phase of the satellite tagging program where 10 pop-up tags were deployed has resulted with nine of the 10 tags popping off right on schedule after 30 days, with only one coming off early after only five days.

SPOT tag secured to the tail of a sailfish

The data from these tags is now being processed and should help reveal valuable information as to what our Broome Sailfish do and where they go.

The use of these revolutionary tags in Broome waters represents the most comprehensive study of Indian Ocean sailfish and this research is an opportunity to cast the international spotlight on what is a world class recreational fishery.

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