Fish tagging

Tagging is a fun way to contribute to collecting scientific data, and a great excuse to go fishing. We've had lots of OzFishers ask how they can be involved in fish tagging, so we've made this guide. Here, you will find information on how and where to get tags, how to apply the tags, how your data is used, and how to report catching a tagged fish.

How and where to get tags

Suntag is the second largest fish tagging organisation in the world. You can contribute by calling (1800 077 001) or sending an email (admin@suntag.org.au).

SCF Australia have a citizen science tagging program that you can get involved in here: **https://www.scfaustralia.com/tagging**.

Other sources for tags will depend on where you live.

In New South Wales, you need to email (gamefish.tagging@dpi.nsw.gov.au) or call (02 6691 9602) the Department of Primary Industries and request tags.

Anyone fishing for rock lobster in Victoria must register and get tags before heading out. Information on how and where to get these tags is here: **https://vfa.vic.gov.au/recreational-fishing/fisheries-management/tagging-of-recreationally-caught-rock-lobsters#Online-header**

Westag are your go to for tagging fish is Western Australia. You can request to be involved on their website: **https://westag.org.au/joining-a-group/**

Keen to be involved in fish tagging and live in the Northern Territory? Register with The Amateur Fishermen's Association of the Northern Territory: **http://afant.com.au/rec-fisher-research/register-your-interest/**

Queenslanders can apply for tags through the Australian National Sports Fishing Association, Queensland, here: **https://www.ansaqld.com.au/tag-register/**.

How to apply tags

When tags are applied correctly, they will cause little damage to the fish and last a long time. Suntag have made some easy to follow videos and guidelines (**http://suntag.org.au/tagging-basics/**). This is a great start on understanding tagging methods, however, make sure you follow any material or instructions given by whoever provides your tags.

How your data is used

Tagging data are used in a range of ways by scientists to help understand, manage, and conserve our fishes. The distance and direction fish travel can be looked at and compared to environmental factors. Movement can let scientist know if there is mixing among fish populations. Information on fish growth and stock status can also be gained.

Reporting capturing a tagged fish

When you catch a fish, look at the dorsal area (near the top fin). Have a decent look, as if the tag has been in the fish for a long time, it may only be just showing or covered by algae. Remember to be gentle with the fish, support its body weight and avoid touching its eyes and gills.

It can be difficult to know where to report the tag to. Some tags might have a phone number on them, or the name of the organisation they come from. Often, they will just be yellow with a tag number. In this case, contact your state fisheries or a nation-wide organisation such as suntag.

Generally, you will need to provide the tag number, species, length, weight, location of capture, and whether the fish was retained or released.

Report tagging to Suntag on their website: **http://crystalbowl.infofishaustralia.com.au/suntag/recaptures/recapture_form_1.html**

In New South Wales, if you catch a game fish with a tag, please report it here:
https://www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/fishing/recreational/resources/fish-tagging/game-fish-tagging/gamefish-recapture

For tagged fish in Victoria, call 1800 652 598. For rock lobster, call the Customer Contact Centre 136 186 or use the VicRLTag app. And for King George whiting carrying a yellow tag, please report it to whitingtag@gmail.com or call 03 5258 3686.

In Tasmania, you should report tagged fish to infish@ifs.tas.gov.au, call 1300 INFISH (463 474) or 0409 277 140, email fish.tag@utas.edu.au, or mail your report to Crustacean Research, Private Bag 49, Hobart TAS 7001.

In Western Australian, use the FishTagWA app or jump on the Westag website (**http://crystalbowl.infofishaustralia.com.au/westag/recaptures/recapture_form_1.html**) to report the capture of a tagged fish in Western Australia.

In the Northern Territory, the capture of tagged fish should be reported to Amateur Fishermen's Association of the Northern Territory by phone (1800 456 410) or email (research@afant.com.au).

Anyone who catches a tagged fish in Queensland should call 1800 077 001 or post the tag to Tagging Coordinator, Bill Sawynok, PO Box 9793, Frenchville, Queensland 4707.