Top taggers honored at Game Fish Tagger Awards

By Janet Krenn

(March 23, 2011) The angler's adage "It's called fishin', not catchin' " doesn't apply to the nearly 150 taggers that caught and tagged a collective 16,451 fish in 2010. Those who tagged the most fish were recognized at the Virginia Game Fish Tagging Program's Tagger Awards on March 3, held at Bass Pro Shop in Hampton, VA.

The Awards honor those volunteer anglers who out-tagged their colleagues in any of 12 categories, including most tagged fish overall, most recaptured fish, and most tagged fish of a single species. First place taggers in each category received a plaque, and runners-up received a tackle bucket with fishing gear provided by the Bass Pro Shop.

The Virginia Game Fish Tagging Program has been a cooperative project of the Virginia Marine Resources Commission (VMRC) and the Virginia Institute of Marine Science (VIMS) for 16 years. The Program helps fisheries resource managers by providing data on migration and population of 10 species of finish. Volunteer anglers undergo training and tag-and-release the fish. When other anglers catch a tagged fish, they report the recaptured fish.

Top Taggers: Several taggers were honored during the 2010 Tagger Awards. Standing (L-R): Lewis Gillingham (Virginia Saltwater Fishing Tournament Director and Game Fish Tagging Program coordinator with VMRC), John Dunn (Norfolk), Susan Harrell (Chesapeake), Ed Shepherd (Yorktown), Carl Stover (Yorktown). Seated (L-R): Sheldon Arey (VA Beach), Jim Robinson (VA Beach), Doug Wehner (VA Beach). Photo by Janet Krenn.

"We're pleased to recognize the dedication of our outstanding group of volunteer anglers who make the Tagging Program possible," said Susanna Musick, Tagging Program coordinator at VIMS and Virginia Sea Grant Marine Extension Agent.

This year's Tagger Awards winners were:

Most Tagged Fish Overall

- First Place: Ed Shepherd (Yorktown), 2,221
- Runner-up: Sheldon Arey (Virginia Beach), 1,934

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Virginia Institute of Marine Science
School of Marine Science
College of William and Mary
Gloucester Point, VA 23062
(804) 684-7000

Most Recaptured Fish

- First Place: Ed Shepherd (Yorktown), 553
- Runner-up: Jim Robinson (Virginia Beach), 93

Most Tagged Black Drum

- First Place: Dave Griffith (Cape Charles), 11
- Runner-up: Doug Wehner (Virginia Beach), 8

Most Tagged Black Sea Bass

- First Place: Ed Shepherd (Yorktown), 599
- Runner-up: Susan Harrell (Chesapeake), 122

Most Tagged Cobia

- First Place: Jorj Head (Seaford), 82
- Runner-up: Wes Blow, 7

Most Tagged Flounder

- First Place: Ed Shepherd (Yorktown), 1,232
- Runner-up: Jay Duel (Smithfield), 273

Most Tagged Red Drum

- First Place: Jim Robinson (Virginia Beach), 381
- Runner-up (TIE): John Dunn (Norfolk) and Jay Duel (Smithfield), 109

Most Tagged Sheepshead

- First Place: Kevin Whitley (Norfolk), 10
- Runner-up (TIE): Bill Knapp (Virginia Beach) and Jim Robinson (Virginia Beach), 3

Most Tagged Spadefish

- First Place: Carl Stover (Yorktown), 34
- Runner-up: Rob Collins (Norfolk), 12

Most Tagged Speckled Trout

- First Place: Sheldon Arey (Virginia Beach), 1,748
- Runner-up: Jim Robinson (Virginia Beach), 1,237

Most Tagged Tautog

- First Place: Rob Collins (Norfolk), 145
- Runner-up: Bill Knapp (Virginia Beach), 121

Most Tagged Triggerfish

- First Place: Rob Collins (Norfolk), 79
- Runner-up: Lance Stitcher (Greenbackville), 9

For more information about the Virginia Game Fish Tagging Program, visit www.vims.edu/vgftp

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