

Acoustic Tagging of Tripletail (*Lobotes surinamensis*) in the Gulf of Mexico and Florida Keys



The Commission's IJF Program has been working on Tripletail since the completion of the species profile in 2017. Until recently, this has been a fish with very little active research but with huge potential as an aquaculture candidate. It has also become a very sought after sportfish species in recent years.

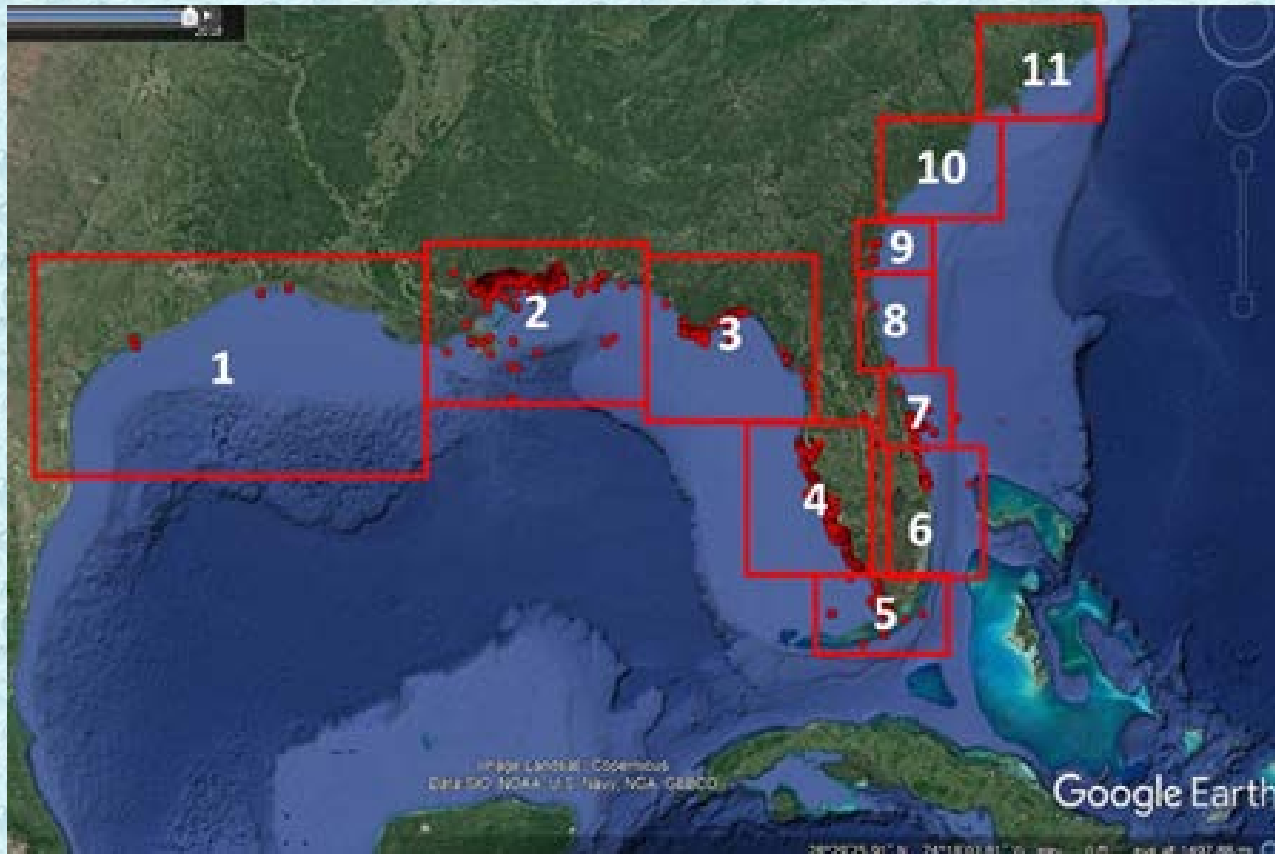




A Tripletail genetics project was begun prior to completion of the Profile which includes the Commission, USM/GCRL, and the USA/Dauphin Island Sea Lab investigating the population genetics of Tripletail from around the world.

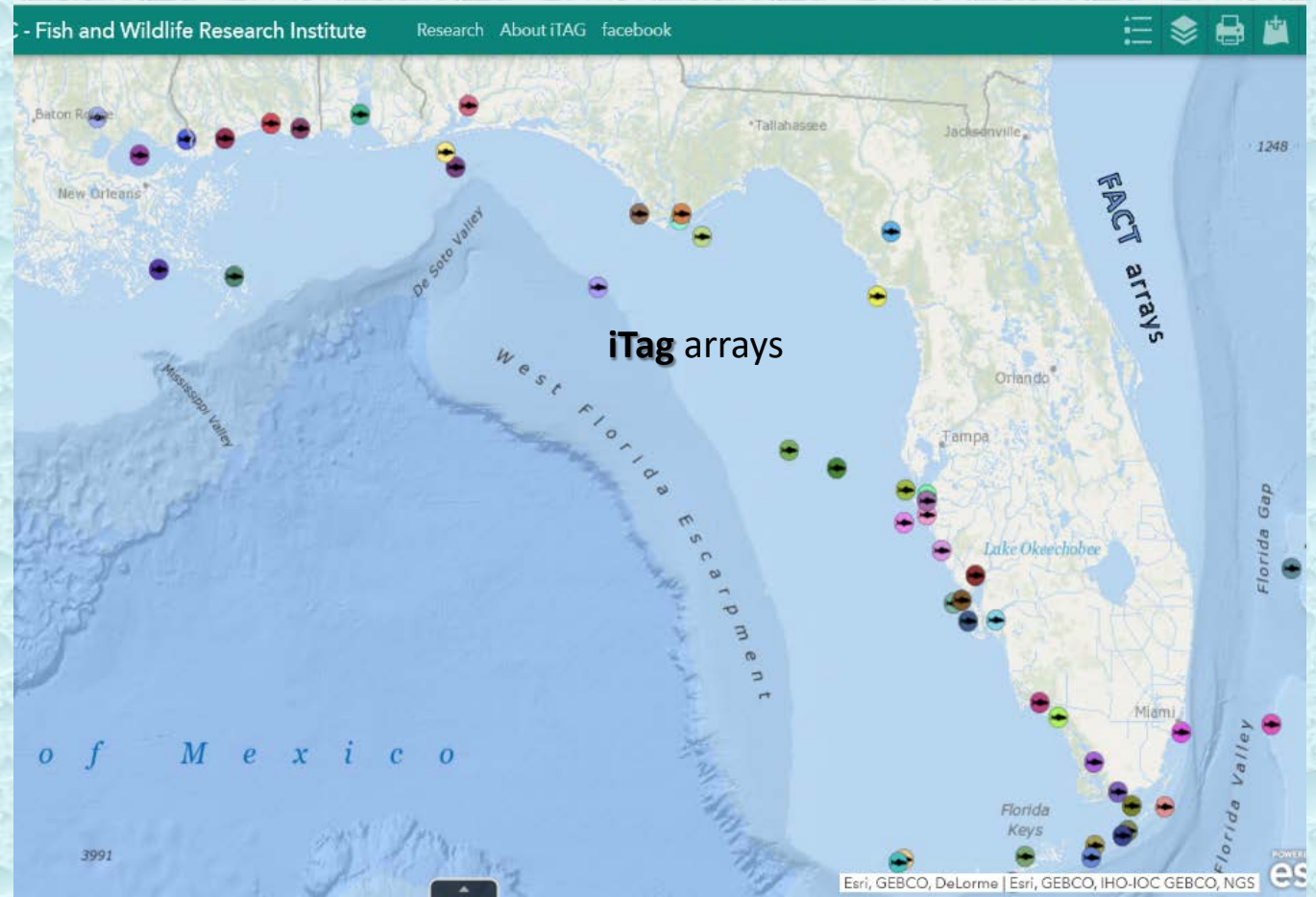
To date, we've collected nearly 500 individual Tripletail fin clips from throughout the Gulf of Mexico and South Atlantic as well as from Brazil, Peru, Panama, and Australia.

A second project includes data from the Georgia DNR, NASA, and Jim Franks at GCRL on Tripletail migration. Franks has extensive external tagging data from fish in the Gulf of Mexico from Texas to the Florida Keys. In addition, the Georgia DNR has an extensive tagging program from the South Atlantic.



We are currently exploring the combined GCRL and Georgia DNR conventional tag datasets to elicit any significant migration signals from the tag/returns. Strong site fidelity by Tripletail results in conventional tags being recaptured near or exactly at the same location they were tagged unfortunately.

A third project has begun to look at movement of Tripletail using acoustic telemetry. There is believed to be a strong north/south migration seasonally in fish tagged in the northern Gulf with conventional tags being recaptured in the Florida Keys but not up the Atlantic coast. Making use of existing acoustic receiver arrays in the nearshore regions of the Gulf should provide better resolution as to the population structure of Tripletail and determine if a single or multiple stocks exist.



Beginning October 1, the GSMFC and GCRL set out to tag up to 35 Tripletail in Mississippi Sound with VEMCO V13 acoustic tags. In three days, 31 tags were deployed in fish ranging from 11-21 inches. The tags have a life expectancy of around 600 days.



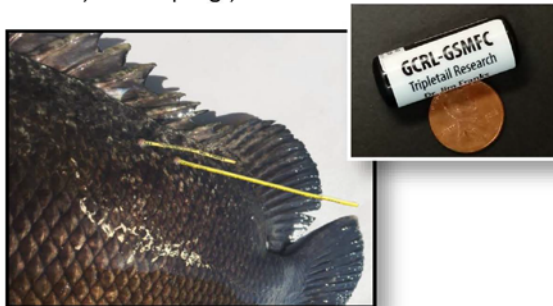


Tripletail Acoustic Tagging

Anglers, be on the lookout and please release tagged fish

The Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission and The University of Southern Mississippi Center for Fisheries Research and Development located at the Gulf Coast Research Laboratory (GCRL) in Ocean Springs, MS are collaborating in the deployment of acoustically tagged Tripletail across the northern Gulf of Mexico. The tags have a life span of up to two years and are surgically implanted into the fish. The project will use underwater receivers to listen for (detect and record) acoustic transmissions from the fish that swim past as they migrate from the summer grounds here in the northern Gulf to their winter grounds. Using the information downloaded from the receivers, we hope to determine where our Tripletail go during the winter and learn more about their migration patterns.

These research fish are double tagged with a yellow dart tag from the GCRL and a second dart tag indicating it is carrying an internal acoustic tag. There is **no reward** for capturing one of these fish so we ask that you please release them but report the capture through the information printed on the Lab's dart tag. Your information should include the tag number, capture date, capture location, and the fish's length. **Call in the information to the GCRL at (228) 818-8818 or report by email to tagging@usm.edu.** Please return any internal acoustic tags from kept fish to the Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission at 2404 Government St., Ocean Springs, MS 39564.



Up to 19 additional acoustic tags will be deployed in the Florida Keys in December to determine the migration patterns from those fish leaving the overwintering grounds. It is anticipated that they will move into the northern Gulf next spring to early summer.

Through social media, numerous sportfishing groups were targeted for outreach regarding the tagged fish. Anglers responded positively and many indicated that they would release these fish if encountered.

