Fish Tagging
Manasquan Fishing Club
February 7, 2025

Tagging is a Priority in 2025 for MFC

- We want to encourage our members to focus on conservation/tagging, especially since size and bag limits are making it harder to bring home a fish dinner. It's even more difficult for shore-based anglers
  - We build partnerships through supporting research efforts and citizen science
  - We gain purpose on the water, support the sustainability of the fish, and help preserve the ability not only for us, but for future generations to have access to fish
- MFC will provide tags and needles/ guns **at no charge** to members who want to tag
- We have an initial goal of tagging 100 fish in 2025

Tagging is Purely Voluntary

- No member is obligated to participate, and there is no “pressure” to participate. This is a fully voluntary endeavor.
- If a member chooses to tag, but to tag as an individual rather than as a member of the MFC, that is perfectly fine.
- It is our goal to simply encourage tagging efforts, and provide the tools, training, and the support process to simplify the activity.
- Tagging is fun, and after you tag a few fish…it’s really easy too!
- We will have a special drawing with a gift certificate prize at the end of the year. Every fish reported to Bill Pollock will qualify for a ticket. (1 ticket per tag)

We Support Two Quality Organizations

- In order to have the greatest impact from our contributions, we will support two tagging organizations:
    - **Monmouth University:** We would like to direct our **STRIPER** tagging data to MU.
        - Individual members have supported MU's striper tagging efforts for a few years
        - Dr. John Tiedemann has been a regular speaker for our club
        - Eric Wasnesky and the MHSFC have also assisted with other MU research efforts
        - MU's research on striped bass is broad and extensive, and they focus mainly on this species
    - **American Littoral Society:** We would like to direct our **FLUKE** tagging data to ALS
        - Individual Members have supported ALS's fluke tagging for a number of years
        - The MFC has a "Tagging Membership" with ALS
        - Emily McGuckin (and her predecessor Jeff Dement) have spoken at our club many times over a long period of years
        - While they accept tagging data for any species of fish, they primarily focus on fluke and stripers. Since we want to submit striper data to MU, we will submit fluke data to ALS.

AMERICAN LITTORAL SOCIETY

Caring for the Coast

American Littoral Society

- ALS is headquartered on Sandy Hook and is a conservation, research, and education organization focused on the intertidal zone and coastal habitats. It was founded in 1961 and has been tagging for 60 years.
- Their data is provided to Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution for further analysis and insights
- They have just released on-line interactive tagging maps showing both tag and recapture data since their tagging efforts began. New maps are released every two weeks. E.g. Fluke maps re not out yet, but will be released shortly.

ALS Interactive Tagging Maps: www.littoralsociety.org/fish-tagging.htmlALS

AMERICAN LITTORAL SOCIETY
Caring for the Coast

Home | What We Do | Where We Work | Who We Are | Newsroom | Blog | Join Us

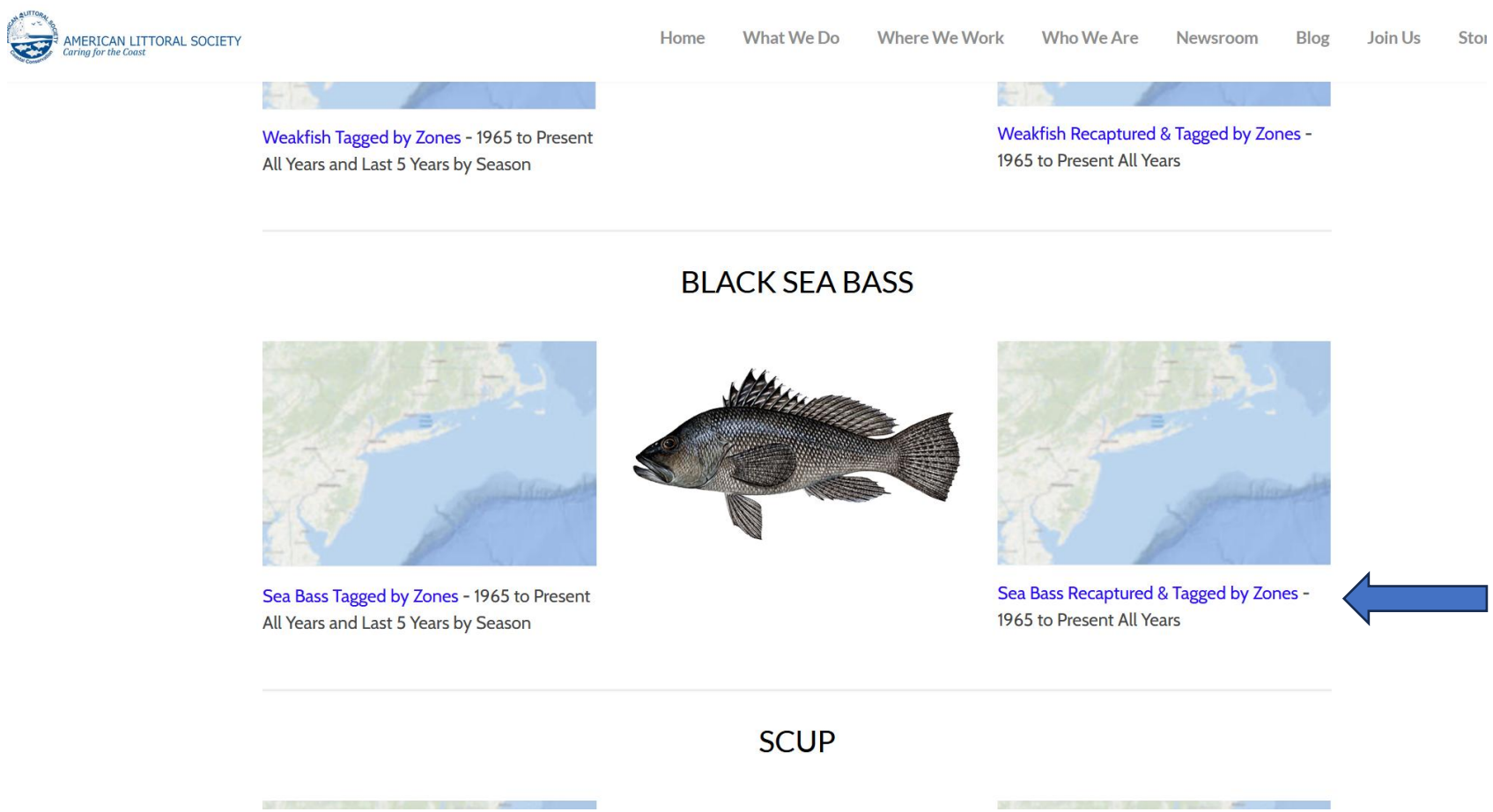
SINCE THE INCEPTION OF THE SOCIETY'S FISH TAGGING PROGRAM IN 1965, MORE THAN 970,000 FISH HAVE BEEN TAGGED BY OUR VOLUNTEER TAGGERS.

More than 5% of those tagged fish have been recaptured. Every April, the data that has been gathered over the previous 12 months is sent to the National Marine Fisheries Service, at Woods Hole Oceanographic Institute, MA, and the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission.

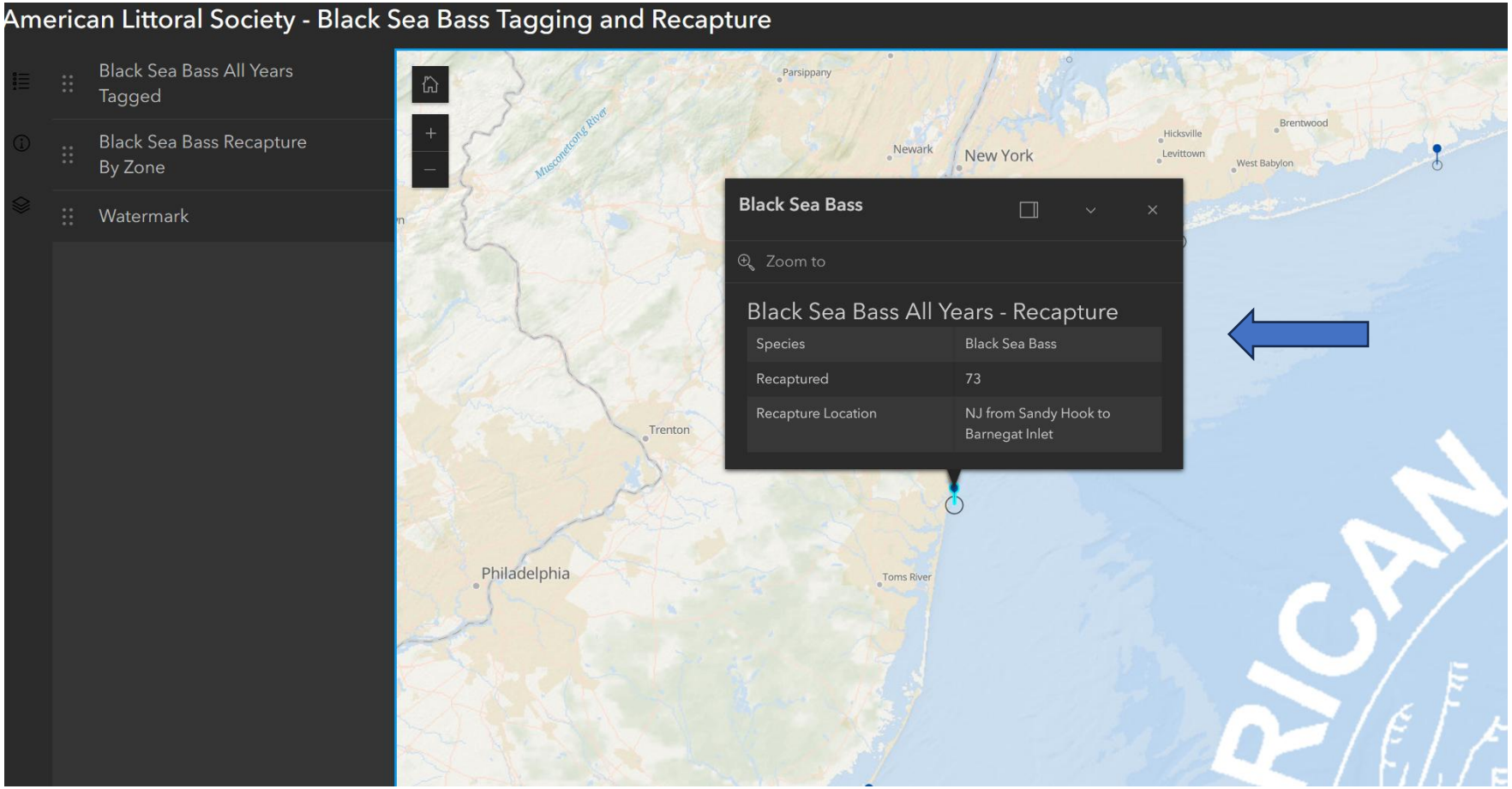
Originally, the Society focused its tagging efforts towards coastal Atlantic sharks. During the early 1970's, in response to a precipitous decline in striped bass stocks, the Society's Fish Tagging

- Report a Tagged Fish
- Why Tag Fish?
- Become a Tagger
- Order Tagging Supplies
- Interactive Tagging Maps
- Remembering Jeff Dement

ALS Interactive Tagging Maps



ALS Interactive Tagging Maps



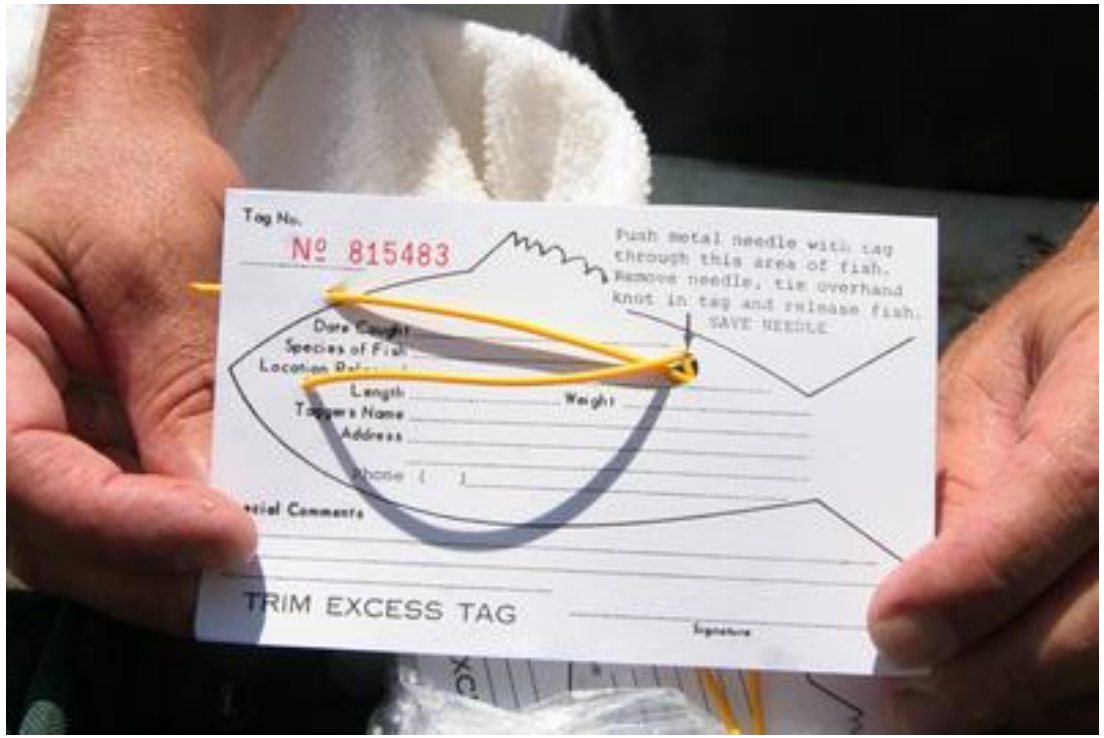
How to Tag a Fluke for ALS

- It’s not difficult, but we would like to suggest certain guidelines:
  - You can tag fluke caught in the ocean, river, or bay from a boat or from the surf
  - While technically you can tag fluke anytime, you should not be targeting fluke out-of-season.
  - We recommend tagging fluke @ 12 inches or larger. While there is no restriction on tagging smaller fluke, putting a hole in a small fish makes a relatively “bigger” wound.
  - Most fluke over 18 inches are kept, and therefore not released. However, if you are over your limit, or you catch a doormat that you choose to release…there is no restriction on tagging these larger fluke.
  - Weighing a fluke is desirable, but not necessary…especially for fish under 16”. Measuring the length of the fish is essential, however.
  - A fluke is measured from the tip of the closed mouth, to the tip of the tail.
  - If a fluke is exhausted, or you had trouble unhooking it, or it has been out of the water for over a minute while you take a photo…it is best to release it untagged and wait to tag a different fish.

How to Tag a Fluke for ALS

- Specific Steps:
  - You will need to match the number on the yellow “string” tag with the number on the data card. It’s best to have these handy before you land the fish, so that you don’t spend extra time while the fish is flapping on the deck.
  - Place the fish dark side up on the deck. (So, the fluke will be facing left.)
  - Measure the length of the fish. (Weigh the fish, if possible, with a digital scale)
  - Optional: cover the fish’s eyes with a wet rag to help keep it calm. Sometimes, I wedge the mouth of the fish up against a gunnel or against a hard object to prevent the fish from sliding around.
  - Insert the thin end of the tag into the blunt end of the needle about 1- 2 inches
  - Insert the sharp point of the needle through the fluke 2-3 inches from the base of the tail and about ¾ - 1 inch below the dorsal fin. I find it helpful to hold the fish with my left hand, and push the needle with my right. I put the 4 fingers of my left hand under the fish to support it. The needle passes between my middle and ring fingers.
  - Slide the needle off the tag, and lock the two ends of the tag together
  - Release the fish gently into the water. Do not toss it. There is no need to trim the lock-on tag
  - Write down the fish’s length, location, and other information on the data card that matches the tag

Tagging Photos



The data card has a hole that provides an approximate location to insert the needle through the fluke. The mailing address is on the back of this card. Length is critical, but weight is optional.

Tagging is easier with two people, but one person can tag the fish by wedging the tip of its mouth against a gunnel or solid object so it doesn’t slip around .

A Finished Spaghetti Tag

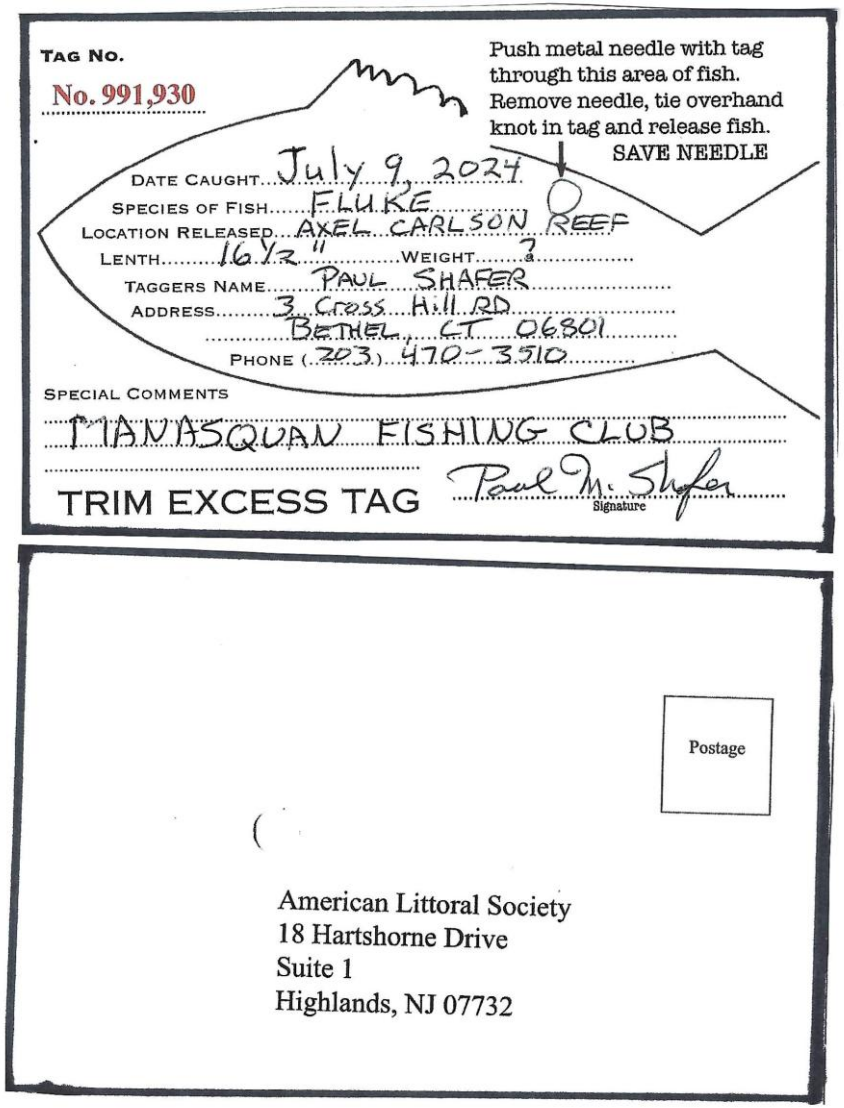
This is a picture of a properly placed tag. This is an older style “spaghetti “tag. It needs to be knotted and trimmed as shown. There are numbers, needles, and cards just like with the “lock-on” tag, but the process is otherwise the same. (Note: ALS is discontinuing the use of spaghetti tags in 2025 since it takes slightly longer to place these tags onto the fish.)

After the Fish is Tagged and Released

- Mail the data card to the address shown on the back of the card. You can either stamp the card or mail the card(s) in an envelope addressed to ALS. Note: You are responsible for sending the tagging results to ALS. If you do not want to mail the data cards, it is acceptable to take a picture and email them to Emily.McGuckin@littoralsociety.org
- Also please send/text a copy or picture of the data card to Bill Pollock. Bill is our tagging data coordinator and will be keeping track of our tagging progress. Bill's email is: wjp08527@mac.com. (732)616-0826. You can also give Bill the information at a regular club meeting.

Demo of inserting an ALS Tag into a Fluke

Sample Completed ALS Data Card


TAG No.
No. 991,930

Push metal needle with tag through this area of fish. Remove needle, tie overhand knot in tag and release fish.
SAVE NEEDLE

DATE CAUGHT July 9, 2024
SPECIES OF FISH FLUKE
LOCATION RELEASED AXEL CARLSON REEF
LENTH 16 1/2 11 WEIGHT ?
TAGGERS NAME PAUL SHAFER
ADDRESS 3 Cross Hill RD
BETHEL, CT 06801
PHONE (203) 470-3510

SPECIAL COMMENTS
MANASQUAN FISHING CLUB

TRIM EXCESS TAG

Paul M. Shafer
Signature

Postage

American Littoral Society
18 Hartshorne Drive
Suite 1
Highlands, NJ 07732

Please complete the data card as shown. Weight is optional, but desirable if you have a digital scale and the fish will not be stressed. Please make sure that "Manasquan Fishing Club" is written on the card along with your name. **The card No. must match the number printed on the tag!**

Additional ALS Comments

- If you really want to tag another fish species such as bluefish, tog, or black sea bass, etc.…it's OK. Just be sure to send it to ALS, not MU.
- You must be a "tagging member" to purchase tags from ALS. However, since MFC has a group tagging membership, we are all eligible to tag. Be sure to write "Manasquan Fishing Club" with your name too, on the data card.
- If you run out of tags, please contact Paul Shafer at shafer.paul@att.net; or text to (203) 470-3510. You can also see me at the next meeting and I'll either have tags or will purchase them for you.
- If you have tags (and or a needle) and have decided that you won't need them, please return them to Paul or Bill so that others can use them.

MONMOUTH
UNIVERSITY

Monmouth University Research Efforts

- MU has conducted numerous research studies focusing on the life and biology of stripers, tracking them through tagging, acoustic telemetry studies, and environmental eDNA analysis taken via water samples.
- “Stripers for the Future” is a research and educational campaign initiated in 2011 by John Tiedemann with a goal of reducing release mortality.
- John retired in the fall of 2024, and **Dr. Keith Dunton** has assumed responsibility for the striper research programs at MU.

How to Tag a Striper for MU

- Stripers can be caught in the ocean river or bay, from a boat or from surf or shore
- While technically you can tag stripers anytime, you should not be targeting stripers out of season in estuary waters.
- You can tag any stripers from about 14 + inches. While there is no restriction on tagging smaller fish, it would be unlikely to catch a local schoolie under this size.
- Many stripers between 28 and 31 inches are kept, and therefore not released. However, if you are at or over your limit, or simply don't keep stripers…there is no restriction on tagging these "keeper-sized" fish. Fish over 31 inches, including trophies at 45" – 50"+ can certainly be tagged.
- MU does NOT request the weight of a tagged fish. Thus, only weigh the fish for your own purposes. The weight of large stripers should be calculated using their length and girth and not "hung" from a scale as that can harm their organs.
- If a striper is exhausted, or you had trouble unhooking it, or it has been out of the water for over a minute while you take a photo…it is best to release it untagged and wait to tag a different fish.

How to Tag a Striper with a Floy T-Bar Tag

Bill Pollock tagging a striper on his boat

How to Tag a Striper for MU

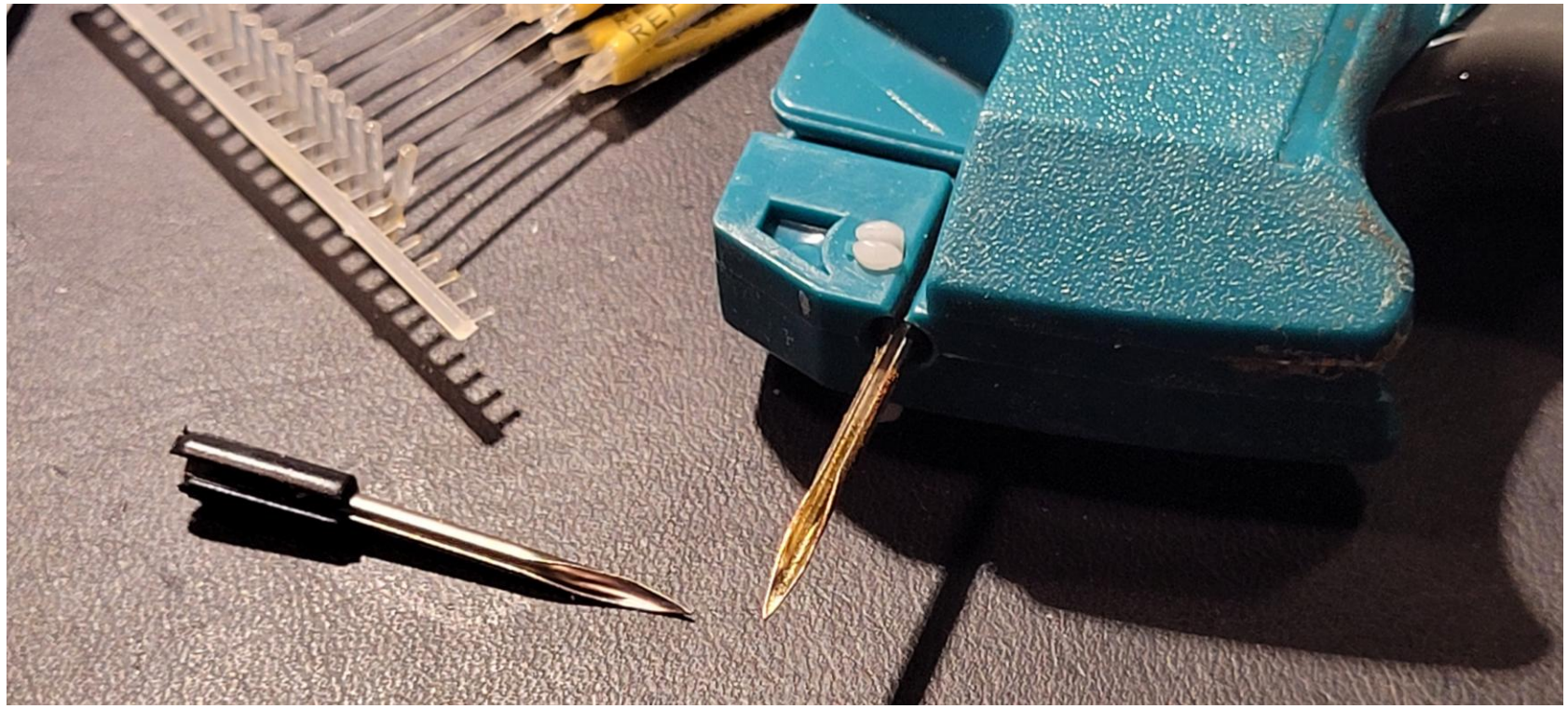
- Specifics:
  - MU uses Floy T-Bar tagging guns to tag stripers
  - These “guns” have a needle that is inserted into the fish and a tag similar to a garment tag is “shot” into the back of the fish.

How to Tag a Striper for MU

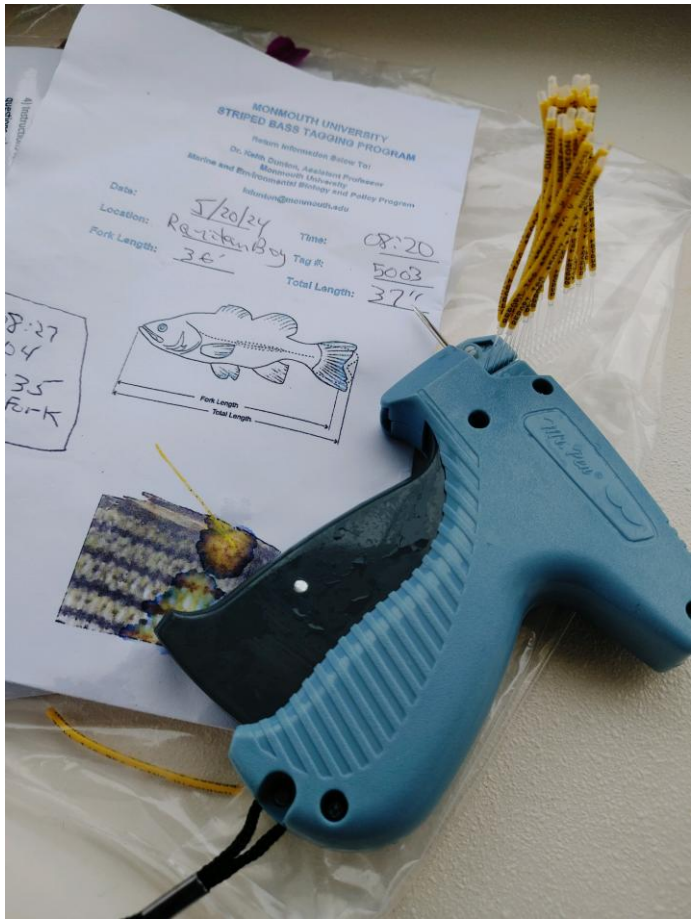
- Floy T-Bar Tags come connected with 25 tags per strand
- They are loaded into the slot at the top of the gun until there is a “click”.
- Each tag has a unique number that must be written on the data sheet for tracking purposes.
- As each tag is inserted (triggered) into a fish, the next tag drops into place

How to Tag a Striper with a Floy T-Bar Tag

- Each gun has a needle that has sharp point and a slot that runs the length of the needle.
- If the needle is rusty or if it dulls or get bent after use, replace the needle with another one from the kit.
- Do not use a rusty or bent needle as that may harm the fish.



Assemble Your Gear Before Tagging the Fish



Left: it's important to be sure that the tags are properly loaded into the gun.
You will hear a "click" when the strand is inserted correctly.
Right: It helps to partially complete the form with the date, time, location, and to measure the fish before sticking the fish with the tagging needle. That helps ensure a quicker release.

How to Tag a Striper with a Floy T-Bar Tag

Specifics:

- MU does NOT require the weight of the tagged fish. Thus, only weigh the fish if you want this for your own information.
- MU does request two measurements. A) fork length and B) total length
- A) **Fork length** is the straight distance (under the fish, not along the curve of the back) from the tip of the closed mouth to the notch of the “V” at the tail (Caudal fin.)
- B) **Total length** is measured from the tip of the closed mouth to the end of the “pinched” tail. Pinch the tail by moving the top and bottom caudal fins together to determine the “longest” point.

How to Tag a Striper with a Floy T-Bar Tag

Specifics:

- As I'm right-handed, I like to position the fish looking left so that I can tag more easily holding the gun in my right hand.
- Position the fish with its head wedged against the gunnel or a solid object so that it can't squirm around easily
- Cover the head and eye with a wet towel, if possible, to calm the fish
- The process is easier if a second person can help hold the fish still , but this isn't necessary.
- Measure the fish before tagging it, so that it can be released immediately after tagging.

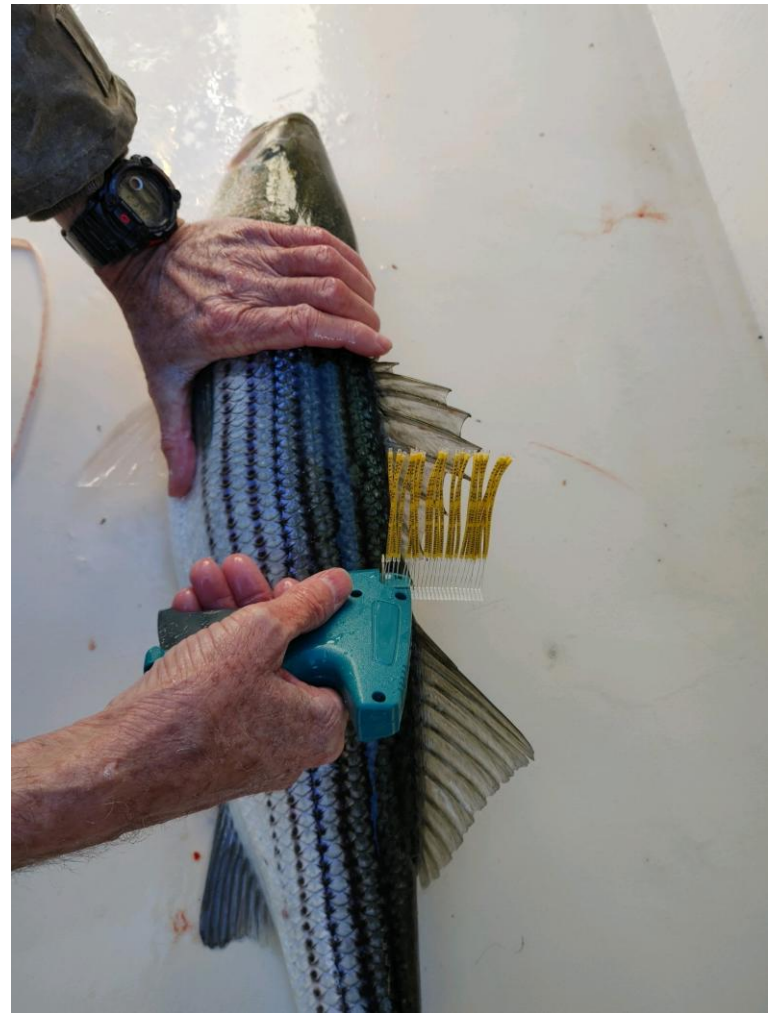
How to Tag a Striper With a Floy T-Bar Tag

Specifics:

- Position the needle along the “shoulder” of the striper about an inch forward of the rear edge of the main (large) dorsal fin and about ½ - ¾ of an inch down from the base of the dorsal fin.
- Insert the needle underneath a scale and pointing slightly forward towards the head of the fish so that the tag will trail toward the tail.
- The needle should pass between the ray bones to the “other side” of the dorsal fin.
- The needle should be fully inserted into the fish so the gun is pressing against the fish before you pull the trigger.

Paul Tagging a Striper (photos courtesy of Capt. Jim Freda)

Left: I have measured the fish before I tagged it so that it can be released more quickly.
Right: I am positioning the tagging gun so that the tag will trail towards the tail. It is also more protected if it is near the rear of the front dorsal fin and the ray bones are slightly closer together than in the middle of the dorsal fin.



How to Tag a Striper with a Floy T-Bar Tag

- **Specifics:**
  - Pull the trigger.
  - Rotate the gun 90 degrees so that the “T” tag is positioned at a right angle to the hole that it entered in.
  - Release the trigger and pull the gun back withdrawing the needle from the fish.
  - Pull **gently** on the tag. It should catch between the ray bones and the “T” should not pull out to the skin. If it pulls out, you will need to insert another tag.
  - It sounds complicated, but it is not difficult.

Paul Tagging a Striper

If the striper is small, it is easy to get a firm grip on it. The tagging gun is pointing towards the front of the fish and very close to the base of the dorsal fin. This helps ensure that the “T” is lodged between the ray bones.

Notice that I twist the gun after pulling the trigger and then gently pull the tag to be sure that it has gripped inside the fish.

(Video Courtesy of Capt. Jim Freda)

Demo of Inserting a Floy T-Bar Tag

Releasing the Tagged Fish

- Return the fish immediately and gently back into the water
- If the fish starts to turn belly-up, it is NOT ready for release and must be revived. **(Big fish are more likely to be in need of being revived!)**
- Revive the fish by holding the caudal peduncle with one hand and supporting the belly of the fish with the other. Water should be passing over the gills.
- When the fish starts to shake or flap its tail, and tries to wiggle and swim free, it is safe to let it go
- Wipe the needle of the tagging gun, and replace the protective cover over the needle
- Be sure to complete the data sheet before you forget the details

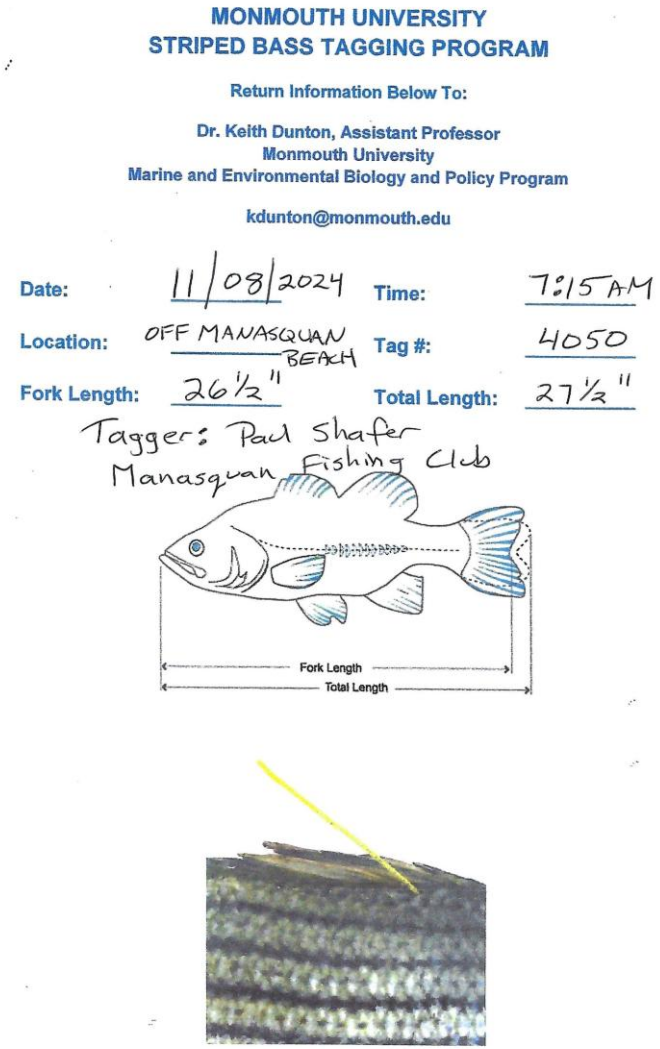
After the Fish is Tagged and Released

- Return the data sheet to Dr. Keith Dunton at Monmouth University.
- Note: You are responsible for sending the tagging results to MU
- You may email an attached scan or picture of the data sheet to kdunton@monmouth.edu
- Also send/text a copy or picture of the data sheet to Bill Pollock. Bill is our tagging data coordinator and will be keeping track of our tagging progress. Bill's email is: wjp08527@mac.com. (732)616-0826. You can also give Bill the information at a regular club meeting.

Additional MU Comments

- If you really want to tag another fish species such as bluefish, tog, or black sea bass, etc.…it's OK. Just be sure to use the ALS tags and send the results to ALS, not MU.
- Be sure to write "Manasquan Fishing Club" with your name too, on the data sheet. There is no line for this information, but please add it anyway.
- If you run out of tags, please contact Paul Shafer at shafer.paul@att.net; or text to (203) 470-3510. You can also see me at the next meeting and I'll either have tags or will purchase them for you.
- If you have a gun or tags and have decided that you won't need them, please return them to Paul or Bill so that others can use them.

Sample Completed MU Data sheet



MONMOUTH UNIVERSITY
STRIPED BASS TAGGING PROGRAM

Return Information Below To:

Dr. Keith Dunton, Assistant Professor
Monmouth University
Marine and Environmental Biology and Policy Program

kdunton@monmouth.edu

Date: 11/08/2024 Time: 7:15 AM

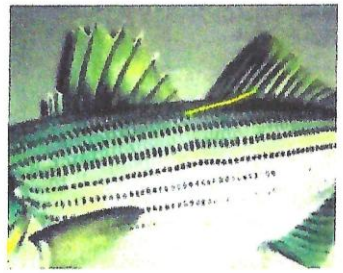
Location: OFF MANASQUAN BEACH Tag #: 4050

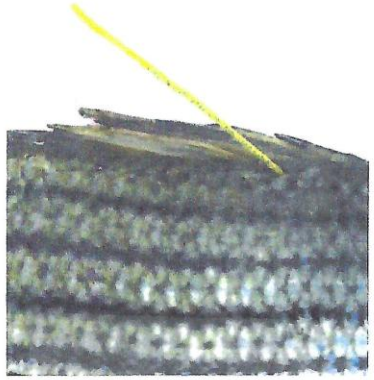
Fork Length: 26½" Total Length: 27½"

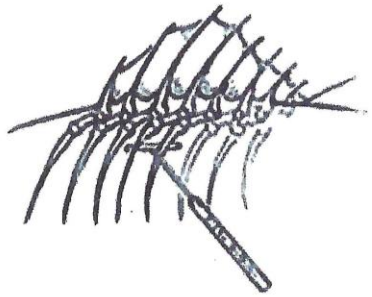
Tagger: Paul Shafer
Manasquan Fishing Club

- Please complete the data sheet as shown.
- Please make sure that “Manasquan Fishing Club” is written on the sheet along with your name.
- The time of the catch/tagging can be approximate
- Weight is not needed but fork length and total length are requested
- **Be sure to document the tag number too!**

MU Tagging Aids







fishinjersey.com

"NEW JERSEY'S PREMIER ONLINE FISHING RESOURCE"

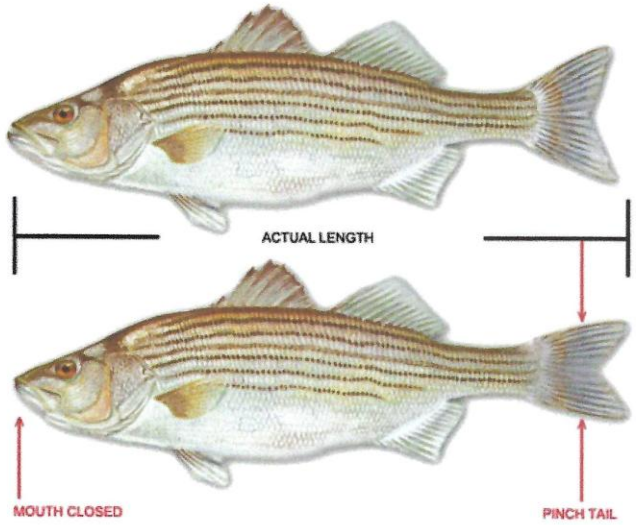
HOME | FEATURES | FISH REPORT | NJ REEFS | NJ FISH ID | NJ FISH REGS | CUSTOMS | TACKLE SHOPS | GUIDES | CHART

NJ Fish Measurements

The New Jersey Division of Fish and Wildlife requires that gamefish be measured in a specific manner. To be certain your fish meets or exceeds the minimum measurements, please follow the guidelines in the graphic below.

However, it is always safest to check the NJ Division of Fish & Wildlife web site as well. You can find that information by clicking on the following link:

http://www.njfishandwildlife.com/pdf/2013/maregsum13.pdf



HOW TO MEASURE FISH IN NEW JERSEY:

1. Lay fish flat on top of, or alongside a measuring rule, not measured over the body.
2. Fish are measured from the tip of the snout (mouth closed) to the longest part of the tail.

What if You Catch a Fish with a Tag?

- The simple answer is to follow the instructions on the tag!
- If it is an ALS tag, be sure to measure and weigh (if possible) the fish
  - Do NOT remove the tag if you are going to release the fish
- If it is a MU tag, be sure to take fork and total length measurements.
  - Do NOT remove the tag if you are going to release the fish
- If the fish is a “keeper” size, then it is OK to keep the fish…but you are encouraged to release the fish with the tag attached. Sometimes a tagged fish is caught more than once!

1)**M**easure
2)**T**ag
3)**R**elease

Thanks, and Good Luck Tagging!