

Fisherman helps scientists gain better angle on swordfish travels

By Steve Waters | South Florida Sun-Sentinel
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Kevin Mahfood did something unusual this past Saturday. He released a swordfish that he caught during the day.

Even better, the fish was tagged with a pop-up archival tag, so fisheries biologists will be able to see where the swordfish travels. A standard tag also was placed in the fish.

Daytime swordfishing is the hottest thing going in South Florida. Most recreational anglers use electric fishing reels to put a bait on the bottom and bring up the fish.

Mahfood was at a recent meeting of the Southeast Swordfish Club when a student at the University of Miami said he was looking to tag a swordfish caught during the day. Mahfood, of Lighthouse Point, volunteered.

"Everybody's out here killing these fish, including myself, but I want to know what these fish we catch during the day are doing," he said.



Mahfood went out on Skirt Chaser, his 35-foot Jersey Devil, with his sons, Zack, 14, and Max, 10, and his neighbor, Michael Fishman, 16. They were joined by Derke Snodgrass of the National Marine Fisheries Service and Dave Kerstetter of Nova Southeastern University.

They put a dead skipjack tuna on the bottom in 1,650 feet off Port Everglades on Saturday morning and caught a fish that Mahfood estimated at 160 pounds.

"He was very cooperative at the boat," Mahfood said. "We let him go and he was purple from his bill to his tail all the way."

In other words, in great shape. The archival tag will record the depths and distances that the fish swims. After 150 days, it will pop up to the surface and transmit data on the fish's travels to a satellite.

"I hope it pops up somewhere in New York," Mahfood said.

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