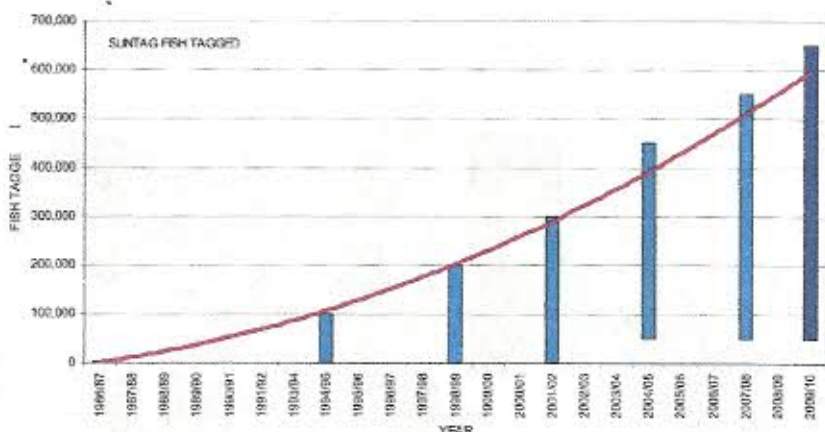


TAGGING ARTICLES:

SUNTAG program based in Queensland

SUNTAG

In April 2010 Suntag reached another significant milestone with the 600,000th tagged fish being entered into the database. Over the years the time to reach each 100,000 milestone has shortened as shown below. Tagging the last 100,000 fish was achieved in just 2.5 years while it took 8 years to tag the first 100,000.



Suntag tagging highlights for the year were:

- ❑ Over 8,480 taggers have now participated in Suntag and over 15,250 fishers have reported the recapture of a tagged fish
- ❑ Total tagged fish and crabs in the database now exceeds 612,500 and 49,000 recaptures
- ❑ Barramundi is the most tagged species with over 194,500 tagged and over 15,800 recaptures
- ❑ The overall recapture rate for all fish is 8.0% and a 5.2% recapture rate for the year
- ❑ The release rate of recaptured fish was over 70% for the 3rd year in a row indicating a high proportion of fish caught being released

Total fish tagged under Austag now exceed 549,000 with over 40,000 recaptures.

The recapture rate of tagged fish in Suntag in Queensland is used as a surrogate to monitor fishing effort, and in turn participation in recreational fishing. Over the past 8 years from 1998/99 the recapture rate per year has steadily fallen from around 9.5% to 4.8% in 2004/05 however increased to 6.5%. This indicates that recreational fishing effort in Queensland has fallen over the past 6 years but has recovered slightly in 2005/06. Data on this is not monitored in the other States.

In Queensland the catch rate is for those involved in tagging under Suntag only. The average Suntag trip is 5.6 hours in duration with 1.7 fishers taking part in each trip. On each trip there is an average of 9.6 fish caught of which one (1.1) fish is kept. In 2005/06 it required 0.77 hours of fishing effort to catch a fish compared to 0.95 hours in 1999/00. The trend has been a slow increase in the time taken to catch a fish to 2003/04 with a reduction over the past 2 years. It is likely that there is a connection between participation and catch rates with participation increasing when catch rates are improving.

The catch rate for ANSA NSW members is not available for 2005/06. Some improvement was recorded in 2003/04 in the catch rate with it requiring 0.63 hours of effort to catch a fish and 2.6 hours to catch a keeper. This is a significant improvement on the effort required in the previous year where it took 0.78 hours to catch a fish and 3.9 hours to catch a keeper.

Data on hooking locations continues to be collected, particularly in support of Flathead survival research. Hooking locations for Flathead are being collected by Suntag, Newtag and Victag. Deep hooking of fish (hooks lodged in the throat or gut) is known to be a major cause of mortality of fish that are released so knowledge of the rate of deep hooking will assist in assessing overall survival.

Hooking locations on a broader range of species is being collected by Suntag in Queensland where over 30,000 records have now been obtained, but is now also happening in WA, Victoria and NSW. In Suntag a total of 8.0% of fish caught on bait are hooked in the throat or gut while 0.8% of fish caught on lures were hooked in the throat and 0% were gut hooked.

The range of research projects being supported by Austag programs continues to grow and demonstrates that involvement of fishers in research is not only beneficial in data collection but also in the extension of research results and the ultimate uptake of that by recreational fishers.