

School Girls Discover Tag, Gain a Lesson in Marine Science

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I had picked up my mail in the faculty boxes and walked down the long hall to our lab. This was a routine I looked forward to: checking in with my three grad students to catch up on any news. My right hand clutched a simple manila envelope that had been forwarded to me from the New England Aquarium, where I'd spent ten years as the head of the bluefin tuna research program. As the students and I talked, unconsciously my hand picked up the familiar shape of a Pop-Up satellite archival tag. Within an inner envelope, along with a used Pop-Up tag, we found a letter reading:

*"Found on Crossapol Beach on the Isle of Coll,
Argyll, Scotland following Storm Force 12.*

Date Wed. Jan 12th 2005.

Please write & let us know more about it.

*Bridget & Helena, Age 11
and their sister Luisadh, Age 2*

Carolyn"



Bridget and Helena suited up.

The tag bore our return label, but we didn't know if the tag the sisters had found on the Isle of Coll had been deployed on a giant bluefin tuna or leatherback sea turtle, since over the past few years we had tagged both. Both of these highly migratory marine species regularly cross the Atlantic. To solve the mystery, we consulted Microwave Telemetry. Once we returned the tag to them, they were able to identify it from its internal serial number. From there, we could trace the tag's history.

It seemed the girls had discovered a Pop-Up tag we deployed two years earlier on a 240 lb bluefin tuna. We tagged that fish on January 13, 2003, off Morehead City, NC. It was a day of high seas and horrendous weather, but despite that we managed to tag two bluefin tuna from the fishing vessel Striker of Yorktown, VA, lead by Captain Paul Evans and first mate Buzz Evans. The tag's data revealed that it had detached from the tuna on August 4, 2003.

Over 17 months had passed between the tag's release from the fish in the area known as the Flemish Cap and

its drift to the Isle of Coll, Hebrides. Although we have had other tags returned to us, this one



11 year old twins, Bridget and Helena, discover and return a Pop-Up satellite archival tag.

was special. The discovery of this tag created a lovely link joining the curious schoolchildren on Coll, the crew of the Striker, and my graduate students and I, uniting us in our shared interest in and abiding love of the sea and the magnificent creatures that swim past our shores.



Route of the Bluefin Tuna Tag 14656— North Carolina to Scotland