

# School kids make an interesting discovery

Three eight-year-old boys were exploring the dunes at Island Beach State Park, New Jersey on Saturday, September 27, when something at the base of the dune at Marker 21 caught their eye. It was a dead sea turtle. But what was that mysterious object beside the carcass? It was black and cylindrical with an antenna—they'd never seen anything like it! The return label on the device led them to Dr. Molly Lutcavage (Department of Zoology, University of New Hampshire) who explained that they had found an Archival Pop-up Tag that she had deployed in her bluefin tuna project.

The recovery near the sea turtle carcass was just a curious coincidence.

The discovery of the tag became a source of fascination to the boys. With the enthusiastic help of their parents, they researched and printed out anything related to the bluefin tuna project and the tag. They read everything they could find about Dr. Lutcavage's project and boasted about their discovery to their friends and classmates.

Before returning the pop-up tag, the boys took turns bringing it to school for show and tell. Their teachers declared it the most interesting presentation they had seen in ages. After a week of sharing the tag with each other and their classmates, the boys finally allowed the tag to be shipped back to Dr. Lutcavage's lab.

We were happy to hear that one of our tags provoked so much interest and curiosity among schoolchildren—the biologists of tomorrow! To further their interest, we sent the boys a dummy tag.



Aerial photo showing the area of the New Jersey shore where the boys found the tag



Michael, Brandon and Kevin holding our Archival Pop-up Tag on the beach where they made their discovery

Photos courtesy of Kenneth Comnaughton

## You need to know...

### Constant depth explained

Each Microwave Telemetry Archival Pop-up Tag is equipped with an automatic release feature whereby the tag pops off and begins to transmit to Argos if it senses that it has been at a constant depth for four days. Depth variations less than twenty meters are regarded as constant depth by the tag.

This pressure release mechanism is standard on Archival tags for good reason—it indicates when a fish is dead or a tag is detached. Tags that detach and float around for months before the programmed data transmission time have a poorer reporting rate; the opportunities for the tag to be eaten, covered in growth, washed up on a beach or otherwise damaged reduce the chances of getting the archived data.

**This spring, look for the second special edition of our newsletter. The continued focus will be on research around the globe—featuring projects in Africa, North and South America, and more...**

The automatic release feature may initiate pop off from a live fish if the fish being tracked remains in shallow water or within a narrow depth range for four days. Although it is possible to disable the automatic release feature, this is not something we recommend in most cases.

Contact us to discuss your project if it is possible that the fish you are tracking may remain at a constant depth for four days in the course of its normal behavior.

