

## **Let it Rain . . .**

**By: Captain Ted Wilson**

I love September. Fishing is outstanding, football season is back and Mother Nature takes the edge off of the heat index. Not to say it's sweater weather, but at least you won't burst into flames when walking to your car at lunch time. It is the rainy season, however, and armed with some disposable time and a sense of adventure, you can turn rain clouds into some of the best fishing days of the year.

Let me start by saying that strong storms should be given proper respect. With strong storms comes strong lightning--something no smart angler should ever tempt. Many anglers who have been struck by lightning were gambling that they could outrun approaching clouds. Here's the unfortunate truth. Lightning can arc from the edge of a storm into a blue sky and sunny area. Don't get fooled into thinking that sunny areas adjacent to storms are safe havens to fish and "watch and see what happens." You might recall a man in Miami who was struck recently "out of the blue" while working outside over 10 miles away from the closest storm. If you see dark skies and hear thunder, head for shelter. Many lives lost from lightning strikes every year in Florida could have been saved by following this simple advice.

With that said, let's get to the fishing. Once a storm passes, the water temperature on the flats and in the passes cools considerably. This temperature drop usually results in increased feeding activity, as fish that have endured the oppressive heat are suddenly revitalized. If you can time your trips after a storm and match them with good tides and a setting sun, you've really upped your odds. Bonefish are suckers for this tactic. There is nothing more beautiful in fishing than the sight of a tailing bonefish with the setting sun as a backdrop. Of course, save enough light to get home safely unless you are comfortable running in the dark.

Tarpon and snook are friskier after a good downpour as well. Both of these fish are creatures of the night anyways, so the gray skies that accompany showers just serves as mood lighting. Around the mainland, after a good drenching, the flow of rain water running off the banks and around drainage pipes makes a perfect feeding station for baby tarpon and snook. In addition to the cooler water, the extra flow will bring extra food for predators. In addition to shrimp, fish and crabs, tarpon and snook get conditioned to eat terrestrial critters that get swept their way after a heavy rain. Frogs, crickets, even mice and rats are all on the menu if they come flooding into the predators territory. So dust off your old bass lures and have a ball. Flyfishermen can really benefit from this situation. Use the same popping bugs that you might use for largemouth bass, the "buggier" the better. Cast the imitation up current and gently pop them as they get swept by the current.

If you don't get a chance to fish during the day, then go at night. More big snook are caught at night than any other time. Why? Because they are more bold once the sun goes down and they are energized by the cooler water. Lights around bridges and docks are always a good place to start. Of course, always be respectful of people's property when fishing private dock lights. A cast net thrown around the same lights can usually provide enough bait to keep you going. The nice thing about catching bait around lights is that you know what you catch is most likely what the predators have gathered there to eat in the first place. Night-light fish are amazingly tolerant of what I call "jackassery". Net throwing, motor running, hatch slamming, spotlights and anchor dropping are typically huge "no-no's" when fishing an isolated area. These activities will spook fish temporarily, but give them some rest and they will come right back to

the scene of the crime. Of course, minimizing these faux pas from the start is the better plan. If net throwing isn't an option, try Yo-Zu-Ri Crystal Minnows, four-inch Bomber lures in dark colors or large bucktails.

So forget about the calm before the storm, look for the calm after the storm. If you have a flexible schedule and keep an eye on the skies, there's no reason you can't find some fabulous fishing this time of year. Be safe, be courteous and catch some nice fish.