

**Huffing and Puffing . . .**  
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November sure came in like a lion. High winds, lightning storms and driving rain, oh my! Windy days are pretty common this time of year but if history repeats itself, we should be out of the rainy season. Despite the crappy weather fish were to be had for the courageous (or stupid) souls that braved the elements.

What can you do when the weather is not perfect but you still want to go fishing? Locals have the option to “pick their days,” opting to go out only when the weather suits them. Guides and visitors however don’t always have the luxury of waiting until the all-clear signal sounds. Even worse, as in my case, guides with guests staying at their house *really* don’t have the option to stay home. The answer might not be what you expect. Go bonefishing! Not bonefishing in the classic poling quietly through the flats in search of signs of fish— I’m talking about dead boating.

Dead boating for bonefish has many colorful names but they all mean the same thing. Get about six-dozen shrimp, as many rods as you can handle (two per person seems about right), some 2/0 hooks and you’re in business. Find an area where bonefish are known to travel and anchor up. Oceanside shorelines in about three to four feet of water are a good place to start. Points are especially desirable because the fish have to go around them as they travel and it narrows the lane in which they move. Look for anything that will create a highway for fish to travel. Edges of flats are also a good place to look.

Here are a few guidelines to help you successfully dead boat for bonefish. If possible, find areas that aren’t too grassy or near rocks. The reason is because the biggest nemesis to dead boaters are “pickers.” Pickers are undesirable fish (usually small) that “pick” apart your bait leaving you with an empty hook and no fun. Pinfish, grunts, mojarras and even snapper are all known pickers and they live in the grass and around rocks. Try not to chum. Some might disagree with this, but chumming can ruin a good dead boat spot by permanently attracting pickers. You can put two or three shrimp on a hook and with half a dozen rods out you’ll attract any bonefish that is passing by without chumming. Also look for water with a little tint to it. Crystal clear water is for sight fishing, look for the dirty stuff if you’re dead boating. Current isn’t as important as hitting the right tide. Of course, different spots are more productive at certain tide stages than others. Try an area for an hour. If nothing happens move on. Trial and error is all I can say about that, but just because a good looking place didn’t produce, doesn’t mean you should write it off. Try it on different tides until you’ve seen an entire cycle, then make your judgment. Finally, make sure your rods are up to the task of catching a bonefish. Use 10 to 12-pound test line and at least 125 yards of line on a reel with a smooth drag. Split shot and very small egg sinkers can help keep your bait in place on very windy days. Use as little as you can get away with.

One of the down sides of dead boating is the occasional feeling of helplessness. Shallow water fishermen have a tendency to be proactive. Soaking shrimp on the bottom doesn’t exactly fill the void. On the other hand, there are other fish that will fall for this trick that are kind of fun. Permit will eat a shrimp off the bottom in a heartbeat. Bonnethead sharks, barracuda, stingrays even cowfish can peel some line and give some temporary entertainment while waiting out your quarry. It is probably the most effective way to catch bonefish yet it requires very little skill. You can even dead boat without a boat. Shoreline or dock fisherman can do this with a few rod

holders and some patience. So the next time it's too windy to pole the flats, but you still want to wet a line for something sporty, try dead boating. It has saved many days.