

## NOT SO DEPRESSING

By: Captain Ted Wilson, 06/06/06

Our first brush with hurricane season has come and gone. What eventually became tropical storm Alberto, grazed the keys as a depression, leaving us and the fish none for the worse. Conditions were difficult to say the least, with most captains taking a few unscheduled days off to lick the wounds of a now winding down season.



Offshore anglers who battled the rough seas have had mixed reports throughout the stormy weather. Dolphin are still the main event, with most anglers traveling up to 30 miles offshore to find weed lines and debris in hopes of catching a few of the tasty critters. The few who went out during the grey, windy weather found decent dolphin up to twenty pounds blind trolling skirted ballyhoo and the like, hoping to raise some fish. After locating schools, anglers threw “naked” ballyhoo or chunked squid and hoos to keep the schoolies around until the bite was over. Don’t forget, dolphin have to be twenty inches to the fork to keep.

Like I said, there were mixed reports offshore. For many captains, dolphin fishing was slow or the dolphin were small, so they switched gears. Blackfin tuna fishing has been nothing less than spectacular. Fish to thirty pounds have been commonplace. Live bait around “the humps” in addition to black and red or purple and red feathers trolled on light leaders way, way back have been the ticket to these tough battlers.

The reef report is pretty spectacular as well. With most anglers looking for dolphin and tuna, the reef species are appreciating the lack of pressure. Those anglers that are setting up on the reef have had good catches of yellowtail snapper, mutton snapper, grouper of all kinds as well as some leftover king mackerel. Lots of chum and a breeze are the ticket here. Lately the breeze hasn’t been an issue, just a stomach to weather the rocky seas. Sailfish have been showing up with some regularity along the reef and color change just beyond the reef to the point of almost fishable numbers. Being in the right place at the right time is the name of the game with sailfish in June. You just need to be prepared when you see that free jumper from three hundred yards away to take advantage of some of the last billfish of the year.



Backcountry fishing peaks this time of year. With dwindling numbers of recreational boat traffic, the fish seem to take a collective sigh of relief. Tarpon fishing is in full swing. Bait fisherman concentrating around the bridges are finding success drifting with live crabs early in the morning and late in the evening. Tarpon can be caught twenty-four hours a day, but low light or “no” light seems to be the most productive.

Bonefishing has been on the upswing the last few weeks compared to the dismal numbers of fish that showed

up (or didn't show up, rather) through most of the spring. Bonefishing has been increasingly more difficult the past few years for reasons that are still not known. Finally, we're starting to see bonefish where bonefish are "supposed" to be seen. Early morning anglers are finding good numbers of tailing fish on both oceanside and bayside flats. "Texas" rigged shrimp and dollar-sized crabs are the preferred bait. Permit are showing up more and more on the edges of flats and can still be found spawning over wrecks and patch reefs. Crabs, crabs, crabs for these guys.

Flamingo and other parts of Everglades National Park are producing good numbers of fish as well. Even though snook are out of season, it doesn't mean you can't catch them. Live pilchards and shrimp drifted in the cuts and runoffs are producing the occasional linesider. You might just catch a redfish or baby tarpon doing the same thing. Large muds created by schooling mullet in the backcountry are holding seatrout of all sizes, as well as ladyfish, jack crevalle and the occasional shark. If you don't mind slapping a few horse flies from time to time, the backcountry in June can be some of the best fishing of the year.

No matter what kind of fish you're looking for this time of year, you can probably find it somewhere in the Florida Keys. Bring your sunblock, plenty of water, a camera and mind the weather, because for the first time in months the fish far outnumber the fisherman. Catch 'em up.