

## Southeastern Bahamas Bash

Visit the outermost of the Out Islands for spectacular bluewater bites.

**T**he attack was savage and swift. Like a pack of hungry dogs, dolphin were mauling our skirted ballyhoo. Almost simultaneously, both outriggers were knocked down and deeply curved rods pointed to the fleeing fish. Before either rod could be removed from its holder in the fighting chair, line started peeling off a third reel, this one on a bent-but rod used as a flatline.

Somehow, we had to retrieve the daisy chain of cedar plugs trailing far behind the boat or it would become hopelessly entangled. The remaining flatline was going to be in the way and had to be quickly reeled in, as well. And there were the three dolphin that still had to be brought boatside.

Capt. Trey Rhyne was piloting the 55-foot *Low Profile* now under siege and would take care of the cedar plugs being trolled from a rod at the helm. Our mate, Joe Trainor, would take care of the unmolested flatline and then assist the three charter anglers with their fish. Chip Romp, Bob McConnell and Rich Tartaglia were now passing rods over and under one another trying to land their dolphin. I grabbed my camera thinking I was about to audition as a combat photographer.

Rich was first to bring his dolphin to the boat and our mate decided to leave the 20-pound fish, the smallest of the three, in the water swimming close by. While the remaining two dolphin were being landed, Rich went into the galley and retrieved his 12-weight fly rod. By now, several dolphin were streaking by just behind the transom looking for more to eat. A 40-pound bull came alongside the boat and sat there, sniffing at the big plastic teaser meant for marlin. Rich pitched his yellow Deceiver into the water and made a hurried roll cast to get it away from the boat. The next fluorescent blur seized the fly and almost immediately snapped the leader because the fly line had wrapped around the handle of the fly reel.

We left Fort Lauderdale early that

morning aboard one of Over Under Aviation's twin-engine planes. After a two-hour direct flight to San Salvador and quickly clearing customs, we headed to Riding Rock Marina about a mile away. The *Low Profile*, a 55-foot Gwaltney custom Carolina sportfisher, was ready to cast off when we arrived and so were we.



**A 30-pound dolphin spoils the fun off San Salvador. This tiny island, seen from the air, top, is homebase for incredible winter action.**

By LARRY E. KINDER

It was early March and when we planned the trip several weeks before, large wahoo were our intended quarry. The 'hoos in the southeastern Bahamas can exceed 150 pounds, with 80-pounders being, at times, common. Trey suggested we make San Salvador our base and fish to Rum Cay and back. If the winds cooperated, we'd extend our 3-day trip by one day and fish on up to Cat Island.

We would be fishing along steep ledges where the Atlantic Ocean rapidly rises from depths exceeding 12,000 feet to a series of 700 or so islands that make up the Bahamas archipelago. The very outermost islands in the southeastern Bahamas are like the tops of mountains rising from the deep. Dropoffs into the depths occur very close to an island's coastline with the distance from land to the abyss measured in yards or at most, small portions of a mile.

"If fish migrate into and out of The Bahamas, they will pass through this area," Trey told me as we headed out of the marina. "We have a fantastic wahoo fishery from November through April. In April and May, we target yellowfin tuna and dolphin, as well as early-arriving blue marlin. During summer months, we concentrate on blue marlin and tuna."

Water temps were unseasonably warm at 83 degrees and a couple of blue marlin had risen to trolled lures the week before. With deep water just outside the entrance to the marina, we quickly set out our lines. Our spread was a testament to the area's variety of spe-

cies. The right 'rigger had a small, plastic blue-and-white skirted lure for dolphin. The right flatline was set up for wahoo, with a purple-and-black skirted ballyhoo on wire leader behind a 4-pound cigar-shaped trolling sinker. The shotgun line from the helm pulled a daisy chain of cedar plugs far behind the boat for yellowfin tuna. The left flatline had a purple Yo-Zuri Bonita rigged on cable behind a 4-pound trolling sinker, also for wahoo. On the left short 'rigger was a large plastic lure riding just behind the second wake for marlin, and bouncing in the first wake was an even larger plastic teaser. A small ballyhoo was rigged with a chin-sinker and waited in a cooler ready to toss to dolphin that might follow a hooked brethren to the boat.

Rhyme started by trolling at 9 knots, between 100 and 1,000 feet of water, hoping to entice a wahoo. Wahoo patrol these steep ledges, waiting for currents and tide changes to move bait onto and off the narrow reef. If wahoo had been our only target, the spread would have been limited to wahoo-specific lures, and Trey would have bumped up the trolling speed between 10 and 12 knots.



This wahoo is actually on the small side for the region. Not hard to guess what's been gnawing on that trolling plug.



When we reached one of the three corners of San Salvador where currents converge, Trey swung away from the island in order to stay at the desired depth. The three corners are Northeast Point, Sandy Point and Southeast Point. These bait-rich intersections turned out to be the best producers, yielding yellowfin tuna, dolphin and wahoo over the three days we fished.

Come late afternoon of the first day, Trey headed toward Rum Cay by way of the ridge running between the two islands. He moved out to water between 500 and 1,500 feet, hoping to pick up a blue marlin along the way. We did find several diving birds and added a 30-pound yellowfin to the fish box after it smashed the cedar plug bringing up the rear of our spread. We arrived at Sumner Point Marina in Rum Cay as the sun was setting.

We left Rum Cay early the second morning and again zigzagged along the sheer wall surrounding the island. We picked up a couple of wahoo in the 40-pound class and when we reached Northeast Point, we were attacked by the pack of dolphin. Three dolphin, each weighing between 30 and 40 pounds, were added to the fish box. On the return to San Salvador that afternoon, the cedar plug was again hit by a



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## TROPICAL continued



Always pull at least one cedar plug long. Many days you'll run across school yellowfins.

yellowfin. This time a 40-pound yellowfin fought for all he was worth on the long line.

Upon our return to San Salvador, our mate cleaned and bagged one of the wahoo at the marina. We commandeered a couple of golf carts and Trey, our mate and we four anglers headed to a local restaurant where a tasty meal with several sides was prepared for us.

On the third day, the winds had

picked up considerably. We decided to forgo a fourth day up to Cat Island and make this our last day of fishing. Trey's favorite fishing haunts on the island, Tartar Bank, Columbus Point and Devils Point, would have to wait for another trip.

We were reminded just how rough the open sea can get, even in a 55-foot boat, when we ventured out to deeper water to take a final shot at raising a

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## About the Islands

### SAN SALVADOR

Columbus is believed to have made his first landfall in the New World at San Salvador in 1492. Located about 350 miles southeast of Fort Lauderdale, the island is about 5 miles wide and 12 miles long. The remote outer island has a 4,400-foot paved airstrip and an official Bahamas Port of Entry is located at the airport to take care of all customs formalities. Most of the 450 or so residents make their living by fishing and farming. In addition to fishing, the island offers superb diving and wind-surfing opportunities.

For anglers arriving by boat, Riding Rock Inn & Marina ([www.ridingrock.com](http://www.ridingrock.com)) is a full-service marina with 6½ feet draft at low tide and capable of accommodating boats up to 140 feet in length. Eleven slips are available, each with water and electrical hookup. The fuel dock has diesel, gasoline and ice available all year. Fishing guides and private charters are also available for hire. From the marina, a 42-room hotel and restaurant are within easy walking distance.

### RUM CAY

Rum Cay is about 25 miles southwest of San Salvador and slightly smaller in size. Fewer than 100 people live on the island, which has a recently paved 4,500-foot runway. Customs facilities are not available, however.

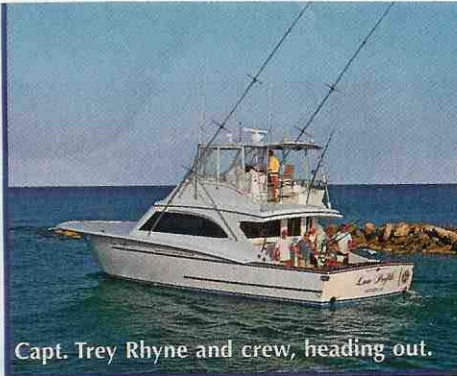
Sumner Point Marina ([www.rumcaymarina.com](http://www.rumcaymarina.com)) has 30 slips, 15 of which are back-in slips, and can accommodate boats up to 180 feet in length. All slips have electrical and water hookup. At low tide, the entrance channel is 6½ feet deep. Fuel, gasoline and diesel, and ice are dependably available. Five colorful, air-conditioned beach cottages and a restaurant are within a few minutes' walk. In addition, several private homes are available for rent.

### CAT ISLAND

Cat Island lies about 45 miles north of Rum Cay. The 48-mile-long boot-shaped island averages between one and four miles in width and has 1,700 residents. The island has the highest elevation in all of The Bahamas—Mount Alvernia at 206 feet. New Bight Airstrip is the island's official Port of Entry. However, Hawk's Nest Resort and Marina has a newly paved 4,600-foot private airstrip 13 miles to the south.

Hawk's Nest Marina ([www.hawksnest.com](http://www.hawksnest.com)) is on the southwest corner of Cat Island. The marina has 28 slips with fuel (gasoline and diesel), electricity, water and ice available. Depth at low tide is 6½ feet. The resort's private airstrip is less than a quarter of a mile from the marina.

—L.K.




Capt. Trey Rhyne and crew, heading out.

## All-Inclusive Fishing Packages

blue marlin. We had hoped to head north from Riding Rock Marina for about eight miles to the Hump, a huge seamount rising from 2,500 feet to within 80 feet of the surface. Trey likes to troll all the way around the pinnacle, weaving S-turns in 100 to 1,000 feet as he goes. However, conditions prevented us from reaching the Hump and we were forced to troll along the ledge on the leeward side of San Salvador. Nonetheless, we again caught yellowfin and wahoo.

We were unable to raise a marlin but far exceeded seasonal expectations with our catch of yellowfin, dolphin and wahoo in the 40- to 60-pound class.

It's about 300 miles by air to the southeastern Bahamas and a bit farther if you are charting a course by boat. When you go to these outermost islands, you will in all likelihood want to spend several days...perhaps weeks. 

Over Under Adventures ([www.overundercharters.com](http://www.overundercharters.com)) specializes in long-range fishing packages from November through June in the southeastern Bahamas. From November to April, wahoo are targeted around Crooked Island, San Salvador and Rum Cay. In May, fishing concentrates on billfish, tuna and dolphin in the vicinity of Cat Island. In June, it is blue marlin and tuna near Crooked Island, Diana Ban and the Acklins. Custom-designed packages include a direct flight from Fort Lauderdale aboard Over Under Aviation, lodging and meals. Package prices depend upon the number of days fishing aboard the 55-foot *Low Profile* and the number of anglers on the trip. (Last season, for instance, four anglers could fish four days for wahoo in February 2007 for \$2,750 each, all-inclusive.) For more info, visit the Web site above or call (866) 682-8862.

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