



# the bahamas FALL FISHING FORECAST

By Capt. Kevin Kates

Summer is over and the light breezes we have experienced over the last few months should be ending with the arrival of Tropical storms or hurricanes. Fishing immediately after a Tropical storm or hurricane can be exceptional. The fall is a transition period in the Bahamas, as we get closer to the end of the year the action will really be heating up. You can expect grouper, snapper, tuna and dolphin in the beginning of fall and nonstop hot wahoo action toward the middle and end. Mix in some marlin or sailfish and you can have a great trip to the other side of the Gulf Stream before the bigger seas of winter roll in.

Yellowtail snapper should still be around in full force throughout the Bahamas in early fall. Chumming around structure in 50 to 120 feet will usually find the fish. Be careful not to over-chum, as you will also bring in the sharks. Big Grouper will be a real possibility in shallow water in late October and November.

My personal favorite in the early fall would be deep dropping. You can still count on tasty snapper and grouper action through the entire fall season. Fish structure in 600 to 1200 feet with cuda, squid or just about anything you can keep on the hook.

Starting North in the Abacos, offshore fishing around the Northwest and Northeast Humps and the Fingers north of Walkers Cay should produce dolphin and tuna action and the occasional blue marlin. Wahoo may show up early and you can look for them in the deep water, but more likely on the edge in the 200 to 400 foot range. Moving South in the Abacos, Captain Justin Sands out of Marsh Harbour ([JustFish@batelnet.bs](mailto:JustFish@batelnet.bs)) says October and November are good for Wahoo fishing. He suggests staying on the edge and working the 200 to 400 foot depths.

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Flats fishing turns back on for bonefish in October, and you can still look for the occasional permit. The Marles on the west side of Great Abaco Island is the hot spot, but be cautious. You need an experienced guide to help you navigate the area. Snake Key on the east side of the island sees fewer numbers of Bonefish, but they tend to be larger fish and it is much more accessible than The Marles.

Going West to Grand Bahama and the Bimini Islands, wahoo is the ticket. The wahoo action should really be going after mid-October. They spawn around the area in Bimini and Great Isaacs. You should definitely go if you can safely cross the Stream. The action is not as good as it will be in December or January, but it is very much worth the trip. Fishing

Caption here about  
wahoo



©Capt. Kevin Kates

Caption here about grouper/deep dropping



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around Isaacs, near Bimini and the Gingerbreads, can be good by high speed trolling the edge to find an early wahoo. Action should be spotty in the early fall, although last year there were some days with great action. As winter gets closer the action will get better and better. Fishing the same depths as mentioned above will keep your baits in the strike zone and away from the annoyingly common Barracudas (which are prevalent in the early part of the season).

Expect sporadic tuna and dolphin action in the same area, and you also have the possibility of hooking up with an out of season marlin or sailfish. You should be on the lookout for birds; they are the key to getting action, especially with tuna and dolphin.

Deep dropping is a great way to take a break from trolling and reel up some tasty filets. The key is to find good structure in 600 to 1200 feet. Another great way to catch a few tasty fish is to troll for grouper.

Trolling should be done in 30 to 70 feet; late October at the earliest is the best time to start grouper trolling. Troll lipped plugs or lures with heavy tackle to prevent the fish from quickly taking your 15 dollar lure into the rocks. You will be amazed how fast grouper can swim. Be cautious about consuming fish larger than 30 pounds because it is possible the meat may contain Ciguatera.

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Moving to the area known as the Tongue of the Ocean, you have Chub Cay and Andros. You should find plenty of tasty dolphin and tuna. You should find the tuna around the buoys off Nassau, as well as small wahoo. For the best wahoo action, the name of the game is fishing the edge and staying in the 200 to 400 foot depth.

The action on the flats should also be heating up as the weather cools off. The bonefish and permit will hold on the flats in the morning and move into the channels as the day progresses.

After August 1st, it is lobster season in the Bahamas. The lobster here can range in size from 6 to 7 pounds or more.



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Capt. Kevin Kates

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- Sailfish
- Swordfish
- Marlin
- Tuna
- Dolphin
- Wahoo
- Kingfish
- Tarpon
- Grouper
- Snapper

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Let's Go Fishing!

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In Eleuthera the action should be good around James Point. Look for the tuna birds and you will find the fish. Action won't be as good as it was in the spring, but you should still manage to catch some decent fish. Again, I would focus the majority of my attention on the edge for wahoo and dolphin. You have the possibility of seeing a stray marlin but I wouldn't go there just for that. There is great deep dropping off the shallow grounds in North Eleuthera; focus your attention in 600 to 1200 feet and you should catch beautiful Queen & Yelloweye snapper, snowy grouper and other delicious fish from the deep.

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Working our way south to Cat Island and San Salvador, the main attraction is BIG wahoo. These fish are absolutely huge. I spent a few days in San Salvador in February last year and there are two things you can count on; big seas and big wahoo. Our average fish was over 65 pounds and the largest one that was caught was 125 pounds. If you want big wahoo, Cat Island or San Salvador is the place to go. Fish the edge off San Salvador and also the Hump on the North side of the island where the depths creep from 12,000 feet to 250 feet. The water is alive with tuna and wahoo. There again you can find the late season blue marlin.



This year anglers have had a great year with the blues much later into the season than in most years. Brian, from Hawks Nest Resort (<http://www.hawks-nest.com>) in Cat Island, said that the wahoo start showing up in November and are around for the next 6 to 7 months. In the mean time, deep drop species are the main target of anglers.

Something that I haven't touched upon, and really isn't fishing in the sense that you use a rod and reel, is catching lobster and spear fishing. After August 1st it is lobster season in the Bahamas. Unlike South Florida, you do not have to catch the lobster by hand. You can shoot them with a Hawaiian Sling (no spear guns), but only if you are free diving without scuba gear. The lobster here can range in size from what is a legal crawfish here to 6 or 7 pounds or more. While scouting areas for lobster, you will find hog snapper and grouper among many other species of fish. They are not especially shy, so usually it is not too hard to get close enough to take a shot. There are numerous spots to lobster throughout the Bahamas, and most are in shallow water 15 feet or less. If you take your time and plan your dives you should have plenty of fish and lobster for a great meal or two. Please remember that there are laws for how much fish and lobster you may take, and only take what you need.

Following the rules in the Bahamas will make your trip safe and fun. Those that choose to break the laws make it tougher on all of us, and the penalties in the Bahamas can be stiff. Nobody wants to lose a boat or have a stay at the Nassau jail. Please remember that we are visitors to this island nation; follow their rules and keep safety first and you will have a fantastic time.



Alexis Leal proudly displays a 30" keeper-size mutton snapper



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About THE WRITER



Capt. Kevin Kates has been fishing the south Florida area for over 22 years. Kevin has run private yachts and fished most of the eastern coast of Florida as well as the Keys and Bahamas. His tournament rigged 31' Contender - Intrinsic Value – can take full advantage of all the east coast fishing opportunities. Whether it be making a day trip to the Bahamas, going offshore at night for swordfish, or staying in close for kingfish, blackfin tuna, sailfish, or whatever is biting, Capt. Kevin Kates ensures success.

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