


WILL WHITE MARLIN RETURN TO THE NORTHEAST?

Marlin

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RISE, FALL, REBIRTH

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BY DAVE FERRELL

Will White Marlin Return?

Hot bites come and go, but if last season was any indication, serious billfishermen who want to target white marlin should plan on heading to Ocean City, Maryland, in late August and early September. There's always been a late summer/early fall bite for whites in this area, but over the last several years, it's been nothing short of world-class.

The first real eye-opener came in 2008, when *Cerveza* broke the long-standing Ocean City record for a one-day catch with 27 white marlin releases. Then, in 2009, the month of September produced catches in excess of 20 whites a day. But that was nothing compared to the action we saw last year when the white marlin bite went completely off the hook. *Billfisher*, a 62-foot Spencer captained by Paul Duffie, set another new Ocean City, Maryland, record on Aug. 30, 2010, with an eye-watering 57 releases.

Nine boats fishing the area, all out of Ocean City marinas, caught a total of 267 whites. "There's been good white marlin fishing for the past five years," Duffie says, "but last year was just indescribable. At one point we had five whites on, and I could see a hundred marlin, maybe even more, on the surface all around us."

The question on everyone's mind: Could 2011 possibly be as hot for Ocean City anglers? Though the variables affecting the marlin's migration patterns are countless, there are some signs that hint at another big year. For one thing, the massive 2010 congregation of whites was originally thought by most anglers to be the result of a "perfect storm" of factors like temperature, clarity, bait location and currents. Yet after Hurricane Earl moved through the area, changing up the conditions and keeping most boats off the ocean

For the last three years, record numbers of white marlin have shown up offshore of Ocean City, Maryland.



RICHARD GIBSON

for an extended period of time, the marlin didn't leave. In fact, *Billfisher's* catch came shortly before the hurricane, and yet after it moved through, *Cerveza*, on a two-day overnight trip, released 69 white marlin. "It was wide open," says *Cerveza* mate Jon Meade. "There were so many bites happening so fast that it was literally impossible to keep count."

Another factor pointing to a good bite in 2011 is the sheer number of fish in the ocean. "There's no doubt in my mind that using circle hooks is making a huge difference," Duffie says. "Just think about the White Marlin Open alone and how many fish get caught during that tournament. Fishing with J hooks, a huge number of those fish would be killed. But today, just about everyone's using circle hooks and releasing their marlin in good condition."

Want to see firsthand how hot the action got? Check out marlinmag.com/whitemarlinbite for a look. — Lenny Rudow

GRANDER BLUE MARLIN CAUGHT IN CAPE VERDE

Cape Verde, Sao Vicente, Marina Mindelo — Our fishing team, anglers Jörg Donath and myself, Capt. Zak Conde, first mate "Scuba" Steve Hall, and second mate Towares Chiy, started our first fishing day on *Amelia* bright and early at 6:30 a.m. Since the fish hadn't been biting around Sao Vicente, we pulled up the anchor and headed for our next favorite fishing spot, the area between Noroeste Bank and the island of Santo Antao.

At 11:30 a.m., our instruments told us that we were approaching the bank,

but the presence of large numbers of birds and giant schools of bait had already tipped us off. We caught three wahoo and a small yellowfin tuna in no time. Around 2:00 p.m., we started fishing for marlin again. At 3:00 p.m., we got a violent marlin strike, and my struggle with the fish began.

After an hour and 10 minutes of brutal work, the guys took the leader and set the flying gaffs. Then the real dilemma reared its head — despite our best efforts and great teamwork, we couldn't manage to pull the fish on board. The tuna door in the transom of the boat was too small for a marlin of this size. Then someone yelled "Shark!" and our blood ran cold. Indeed, a pack of hungry sharks circled the boat — coming ever closer on each pass. "Scuba" Steve summoned up his

ON THE DRAWING BOARD



Cabo 40 Hardtop Express

It's often said that change is inevitable. That certainly proved to be the case with Cabo Yachts. The company closed its California production facility in Adelanto and moved the whole kit and caboodle east to join sister company Hatteras Yachts in North Carolina. While the move certainly saves East Coast buyers sizable cross-country shipping costs, many questioned whether the quality and fish-raising ability that Cabo gained its fame from would falter. The answer? A resounding no!

Cabo enjoyed remarkable success with its recently introduced 44 HTX, thanks in part to the innovative styling that stems from the integrated hardtop. Even though it may have the look of a cruiser, like its older siblings, it still sports the heart of a dedicated fishing machine.

The cockpit sole comes with a molded-in aluminum plate to support a fighting chair, and the 48-gallon livewell molded into the transom can be fitted with an optional window so you can check your bait's condition with a glance. Twin insulated fish boxes can be equipped with optional freezer plates to cool your catch, and the coaming pads on the gunwales keep your knees from taking a beating. Other standard fishing amenities include a tuna door with bridge opening, tackle rigging station with storage, mezzanine-style seating

and rod/gaff racks to port and starboard.

The entire helm deck rises on rams for easy access to the engine compartment and the power plants below. You'll find the helm seat on the centerline with a matching companion seat outboard to starboard — you can add an optional third companion seat on the port side if you so choose.

Speaking of the engine room, Cabo coats every surface in a glossy gelcoat for easy cleaning and supplies a crash pump on one of the engines as an additional safety feature. In this space, you'll also find the 10 kW generator and a Glencor shore-cable reel.

Belowdecks, buyers can choose between two- or four-berth layouts. The latter replaces the L-shaped salon settee to starboard with a cabin containing over/under singles. Both versions sport an island double in the forward cabin.

Cabo uses advanced construction techniques and materials, like premium resins, coring from the waterline up and vacuum-bagged construction to attain a perfect laminate. And advanced technology applies to the available propulsion systems too. The most popular power choice for this boat will mostly likely be the twin 600 hp CMD diesels with Zeus pod propulsion and joystick maneuvering. — Dean Travis Clarke

SPECIFICATIONS

LOA:	42'10"
BEAM:	15'9"
DEADRISE:	16.5 degrees
DRAFT:	3'5"
WEIGHT:	31,000 pounds (loaded)
FUEL:	550 gallons
WATER:	95 gallons
MAX POWER:	Twin 725 hp Cummins QSM11-M diesels

CABO YACHTS

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BLUE WATER CURRENTS

The *Amelia* crew celebrates the catch of an 1,150-pound blue off the Cape Verde Islands.

courage, jumped into the water and tied a rope around the tail of the fish. In an act of complete desperation, we finally managed to muster enough strength to get the marlin on board. The entire battle lasted more than two hours. We then headed home toward Mindelo at over 30 knots.

In the thick of the night, about 10 miles from the marina, the boat came to an abrupt halt: *Amelia* was ensnared in an abandoned fishing net. After some initial struggle, we finally managed to free a single propeller, and puttered in on one engine. Before long, we saw the harbor lights of Mindelo, finally reaching the marina at around 11:30 p.m. A crane, truck and helpers stood at the ready among many spectators to help us weigh the fish. The big blue weighed in at 1,150 pounds!

This makes the first grander weighed for Zak Conde as captain, and is his first weighed blue marlin grander;



BLUE WATER CURRENTS

"Scuba" Steve Hall and Towares Chiy caught their largest blue marlin; and now I'm only missing a 1,000-pound black marlin for my "grander collection." After that, I'll stop the marlin fishing and only go fly- and popper fishing. Many thanks to Captain Berno Niebuhr and Capt. Clay Hansley, as well as his two assistants from Ghana, for organizing the crane, truck and digital scale at midnight.

The fish was caught with our Bluewater Fishing Superjet in black/chartreuse/red. For more information about the lure, check out our website, bluewaterfishing.eu. — *Stephan Kreupl*

THREE THOUSAND BILLFISH ON FLY

Nick Smith of Stuart, Florida, caught his 3,000th billfish on fly on March 14, 2011. An ardent billfisherman since 1955, Smith caught 6,000 billfish on conventional tackle up until 1999. On Nov. 20 of that same year, Smith traveled to Fins and Feathers in Guatemala to try and catch a large number of sails on conventional tackle.

"Capt. Bud Gramer on *Intensity* talked me into throwing the fly, and I got lucky on a suicidal fish — and I was the one that got hooked! The rest is history," Smith says. "When I first started, I used to say, 'Wouldn't it be nice to catch 100 of these things on fly?'"

Since that time, Smith traveled seven countries and three states in the singular pursuit of catching billfish on fly. He even built *Old Reliable* to travel the



Pacific side from Mexico to Panama so he could follow the bite and get the greatest number of shots. Here's a sample of Smith's incredible stats over the last 12 years. Most of the fish were caught with Capt. Chip Shafer and first mate Gresel Moreno on *Old Reliable*.

BILLFISH FLY STATS

559	Fishing Days
12,631	Billfish Raised
4,464	Bites
3,046	Releases (5.46 releases/day)

SPECIES CAUGHT/HOW MANY

Sailfish	2,630
Blue Marlin	19
Black Marlin	3
Striped Marlin	389
White Marlin	4
Spearfish	1

BEST YEAR/MOST RELEASES

2006	663 billfish
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BEST DAYS/MOST RELEASES

Sailfish	35 (twice)
Striped Marlin	16
Blue Marlin	2

5 or more sailfish ... 40 times released in one day

20 or more sailfish ... 13 times released in one day

30 or more sailfish ... 4 times released in one day



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