

	Season	Location	Bait / Lures
<i>Makaira nigricans</i> Atlantic Blue Marlin	All year with peak season May - October	St. Thomas North & South Drops, St. Croix 100 fathom drop-off & all shelf areas, FADS	Lures, Ballyhoo, Mackerel, Belly Strips
<i>Tetrapturus albidus</i> White Marlin	All year with peak season April - May	St. Thomas North & South Drops, St. Croix 100 fathom drop-off, FADS	Lures, Ballyhoo, Belly Strips
<i>Istiophorus platypterus</i> Sail Fish	October - March	St. Thomas North & South Drops, St. Croix 100 fathom drop-off	Lures, Ballyhoo, Belly Strips
<i>Thunnus albacares</i> Yellowfin Tuna	August - February	St. Thomas North & South Drops, St. Croix 100 fathom drop-off & all shelf areas, FADS	Feathers, Lures
<i>Thunnus atlanticus</i> Blackfin Tuna	All year	Shelf areas on all 3 islands, FADS	Feathers, Lures
<i>Euthynnus pelamis</i> Skipjack Tuna	All year	Shelf areas on all 3 islands, FADS	Lures, Ballyhoo
<i>Acanthocybium solandri</i> Wahoo	Peak season September - May	Shelf areas on all 3 islands, FADS	Lures, Ballyhoo
<i>Coryphaena hippurus</i> Dolphin Fish	Peak season October - January, May, July	North & South Drops & shelf areas on all 3 islands, FADS	Lures, Ballyhoo, Flying Fish

Helpful Hints

1. **Use barbless hooks:** these reduce the time needed to handle a fish before releasing & will be easier to remove if you get hooked.
2. **Use stainless steel hooks:** stainless steel hooks left in fish will not rust and will likely be thrown, while steel hooks that rust can cause a toxic shock response in some fishes.
3. **Use artificial lures:** natural baits are more likely to be swallowed, causing extreme damage to the fish.
3. **Reduce fight time:** energetic fish recover faster.
4. **Keep the fish in the water:** try to remove the hook & release the fish without removing the fish from the water.
5. **Use a "dehooking" device:** try not to handle the fish by using a "dehooking" device instead.
6. **Be gentle:** wet your hand first to minimize the amount of protective coating of "slime" removed from the fish by handling it.
7. **Help the fish:** when releasing it, hold the fish loosely by the base of the tail under the stomach (in the water) in an upright (swimming) position until it is strong enough to swim away.

Ethical Angling

- Help fish stocks increase through catch & release.
- Limit your take - don't always take your limit.
- Observe regulations & report violations.
- Bring all garbage in - don't teach it to swim!
- Captain your boat - practice safety afloat.



For more information on recreational sportfishing visit:

dpnr.vi.gov/fish-and-wildlife

DPNR's Division of Fish & Wildlife

St. Croix:
45 Mars Hall, Frederiksted
St. Croix, VI 00840
(340) 773-1082

St. Thomas / St. John:
6291 Est. Nazareth 101
St. Thomas, VI 00802
(340) 775-6762

**Department of Planning
& Natural Resources**
Division of Fish & Wildlife

Deep Water Game Fish Recreational Fishing



Sportfishing

Offshore recreational fishing for billfish & other pelagics in the US Virgin Islands began in the mid-1950s. Recreational sportfishing has expanded greatly in recent years, & a thriving offshore marine recreational fisheries industry exists throughout St. Thomas & St. Croix. Some of the best blue marlin fishing in the world is available in the waters of the USVI & adjacent BVI. Hence, the reputation of the "Blue Marlin Capital of the World".

Working the Drop

Offshore recreational fishing is done primarily from vessels over 30 feet in length unless deep water is accessible close to shore. It is customary when off-shore fishing in the USVI to fish "the drop". There are 3 "drops". Drops are areas 20 miles north or 8 miles south of St. Thomas & .5 to 4 miles north or south off St. Croix where the insular shelf drops off.

These are areas where migrating schools of small fish are abundant & attract larger pelagics, such as billfish, tuna, wahoo & dolphin fish. "Working the drop" consists of trolling with lines baited with either artificial or natural baits & traversing back & forth across the 50 to 100 fathom contour, either in a westerly or an easterly direction.

Time of Day

The best times for catching most offshore species are between 0800 & 1600 hrs. As a rule, the majority of blue marlin are hooked between 0900 & 1500 hrs. White marlin & sailfish are hooked between 0800 & 1600 hrs.

Working the Birds

Captains, mates & anglers constantly scan the horizon for seabirds that will lead them to areas where bait are running. Watch for tropic birds & boobies on the way out to the drop. They are pelagic "plunge divers" who will feed on sub-surface baitfish that are most likely being preyed upon by flying fish, ballyhoo & mackerels.

Frigates & seagulls are surface feeders & will spot schools of bonitos, jacks & dolphin being pushed to the surface by blue marlin, white marlin, sailfish, tunas & wahoo. When trolling large areas of ocean, offshore anglers can save a great deal of time & money by looking for seabirds.

Watch Your Lines!

If it appears a seabird is going for baited lines, create loud noises to scare them. This action alone could prevent feeding birds from getting entangled in fishing lines. It is important to protect these birds because some are endangered.

Moon Phase

Many years of data collection indicate a correlation for marlin between the number of fish hooked & or caught & the full moon. This data suggests that more fish are raised, hooked & caught immediately before, during & immediately after the full moon. Most tournaments in the USVI are scheduled close to or during the full moon.



Bait

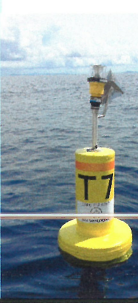
Most recreational anglers in the USVI troll both artificial & natural baits simultaneously. However, some will troll either all artificial or all natural bait. The most commonly used baits are ballyhoo, lures & feathers.

Look for Floaters

Items floating on the surface for a length of time serve as cover for baitfish & in turn, attract large pelagic species. Floaters can be anything from seaweed to tree limbs or discarded trash from boats.

FADs

Fish Aggregating Devices (FADs) encourage additional congregations of fish to relieve fishing pressure.



MAP OF DEEP WATER FISHING SITES

