

A• Ideally, I would suggest picking the species you want to target, then build the pattern of lures or baits and troll them at the speed that would be most productive for the species at that particular time and place. You will be far more productive if you concentrate on targeting one species than try to catch them both at the same time. It is very difficult to get a pattern of lures of all different sizes and shapes to swim well together and catch both species. You will also have to contend with hooking marlin on lures rigged with lighter leaders intended for tuna in a mixed spread. When I fish for marlin I fish for marlin, and when fishing tuna I fish for tuna. If, for example, I am fishing blue marlin and come across a tuna school, I replace my blue marlin spread with a tuna spread and adjust my speed to whatever speed I need to be at to get the tuna to bite. I may be pulling a blue marlin spread at 8.8 knots, then switch over to a pattern of bars for tuna and be doing 7.2 knots or increase the speed to 9 knots or faster with jets out trying to stay with the tuna.

I will talk lures here only. If you still want to fish a mixed pattern to target both species I would suggest a trolling speed with lures of 7.2 to 8.8 knots and select a group of lures that will all work together in the pattern complementing each other to present the best illusion to both species. For example, select 12- to 15-inch lures in the short corner and long corner positions, a 9- to 12-inch medium-size lure in the short rigger, and 6- to 10-inch, tuna-size lures on the long rigger and center rigger. I find it easiest to select and adjust the tuna lures in the spread versus the larger marlin lures. Tuna lures can be selected for the conditions and speed based on the weight of the lure. For example, a jet or bul-

let head over a weighted or non-weighted resin head. With the mixed pattern you should be able to offer large, attractive lures to a marlin up close to the transom and at the short rigger position and have lures that will attract tuna back farther in the wake. As I mentioned before, don't be surprised if a marlin takes a smaller lure intended for a tuna.

Select a speed at which these lures or baits perform best in the wake. Your lures should produce a steady bubble stream, and ride below the surface for much of their cycle of grabbing air from the surface, expelling the air on the dive, and returning to the surface once again. The lures should not be jumping out of the water, however, don't pull them so slow as to make them appear lazy. Lazy lures do not resemble a frightened bait fish fleeing a predator, they just look unnatural. Select lures that run well together at particular speeds.



Dave Brackmann
CALIENTE
Cabo San Lucas, Mexico

Q• While cruising out to the fishing grounds I often see hundreds of small black birds just sitting on the surface. Does this mean fish are in the area or are we better off just passing this spot by?

Chad Derosa
Salisbury, MD

A• When venturing offshore in search of tuna and marlin, there are various signs to keep and eye out for—not the least of which includes bird life. In the Northeast canyons we see primarily two species of bird: shearwaters and the small black birds I think you are referring which go by various names including tuna chicks, chick birds, and their proper, storm petrels. Storm petrels are often found sitting in small packs on the ocean surface. When they go on the feed they appear to hover just above the surface of the water picking off any remnants of bait-fish that failed to escape the predators below. This is what you want to look for.

There is perhaps no better indication that game fish are feeding below than birds picking easy meals left behind. On the edge we usually encounter tuna feeding on squid, anchovies, and sardines 50 to 250 feet plus down, and the slicks produced by their carnage will ultimately surface.



Adam LaRosa

While feeding storm petrels, a.k.a., chick birds can be a great indicator offshore, do not be anxious to pass by these birds if they are just sitting on the water. Chances are, they're waiting for the bit to turn on.



W.S. Barnhart

These slicks provide the first indication that you have found the right patch of water to work. However, sometimes these slicks are quite small and hard to notice. In fact, many times they are no bigger than the size of your vessel. That is why we are always on the lookout for tuna chicks hovering just above the water as they are much easier to spot.

Once one of these slicks pops up, nine times out of 10, a barrage of tuna will follow in short order. However, just finding one of these slicks will not put tuna in the boat unless you know how to work them, and that does not include just driving your vessel right through the middle. Remember, these slicks can be produced from tuna feeding at 250-foot plus depths. By the time the blood and oil released from their prey floats to the surface, the current will cause the slick to pop-up downcurrent from where the tuna actually are feeding. Sometimes these slicks can be

several hundred yards downcurrent. As early as possible into your trip make note of the set and drift of the current and take this into account when you start working slicks. If the current is setting to the south, for example, you should work due north of any slicks you find while on the troll.

While feeding storm petrels will lead you almost immediately to a hot bite, do not pass by large flocks of these birds just sitting on the surface. They are there for one reason only and that is because their instincts are telling them that dinner is not far off. Waiting out the bite with them can sometimes be your best bet if nothing else is going on on the edge.



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SEPTEMBER

Mercury S.L.A.M. Celebrity Tournament
Gary Ellis 305-664-2002 Key West
Islamorada Fall Fly Bonefish Tournament
Charlotte Ambrogio 305-664-2444
Marathon International Bonefish Tournament
Lindsay Rabito 305-743-7368
Scientific Anglers Women's World Invitational Fly Championship-Bonefish Series
Sue Moret 305-664-5423 Islamorada

OCTOBER

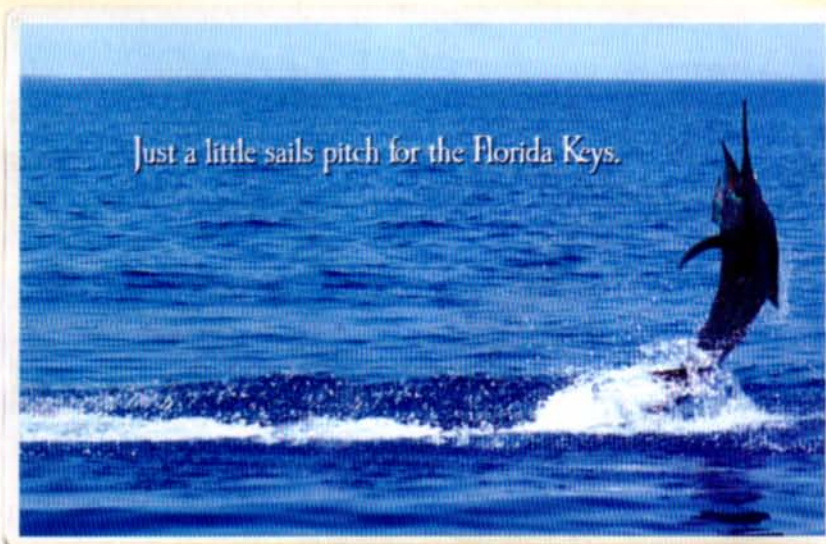
Mercury Baybone Celebrity Tournament
Gary Ellis 305-664-2002 Key Largo
Mercury Outboards Bonefishing World Championship/Islamorada All-Tackle Bonefish Tournament
Fred Troxel 305-872-2366
Action Craft's 13th Annual Owners Tournament
Jennifer Johnson 941-574-7008 Islamorada
Ladies, Let's Go Fishing
Betty Bauman 954-475-9068 Islamorada
Take Stock In The Children Backcountry Challenge
Norm Whittle 305-451-5461 Key Largo
George Bush/Cheeca Lodge Bonefish Tournament
Julie Olsen 305-517-4456 Islamorada

NOVEMBER

Islamorada Fishing Club Junior Derby
Jan Moore 305-664-4735

DECEMBER

Florida Keys Gold Cup Sailfish Championship
Dianne Harbaugh 305-852-2102 Islamorada
Islamorada Sailfish Tournament
Dianne Harbaugh 305-852-2102
Mercury Cheeca/Redbone Celebrity Tournament
Gary Ellis 305-664-2002 Islamorada
Metropolitan South Florida Fishing Tournament Mini-Met
Mary Key Dudas 305-233-5535 or 300-6547 All The Florida Keys
Boy Scout Backbone Tournament
Jeff Harkavy 800-334-2777 Key Largo
Islamorada Junior Sailfish Tournament
Tammie Gurgio 305-852-9337
Capt. Don Gurgio Sailfish Classic
Tammie Gurgio 305-852-9337 Islamorada



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