

Wreck Hopping

Discover Your Own Virgin Wreck Sites and Reap the Fishing Rewards

BY DALE SANDERS

Imagine coming upon an oasis teeming with fish among the hundreds of miles of desolate, shallow sandbanks of the Bahamas. Almost the instant you drop a line, a big one grabs it and you're off to the races — and you get this kind of action all day long!

Such spots do exist, found accidentally by the lucky but more often located by a knowledgeable few. Each wreck is different yet the same: a swamped island mail boat, a drug plane, an old Spanish galleon — all underwater magnets for marine life. The fishing opportunities can be incredible for those who enjoy flat-lining crabs for permit, jigging for snapper and grouper, popping surface plugs for barracuda or playing tug-of-war with sharks.

Zeroing In

Step one is to break out the charts because they hold important clues for locating both known and unknown wrecks. Obtain the most detailed charts available for the area of

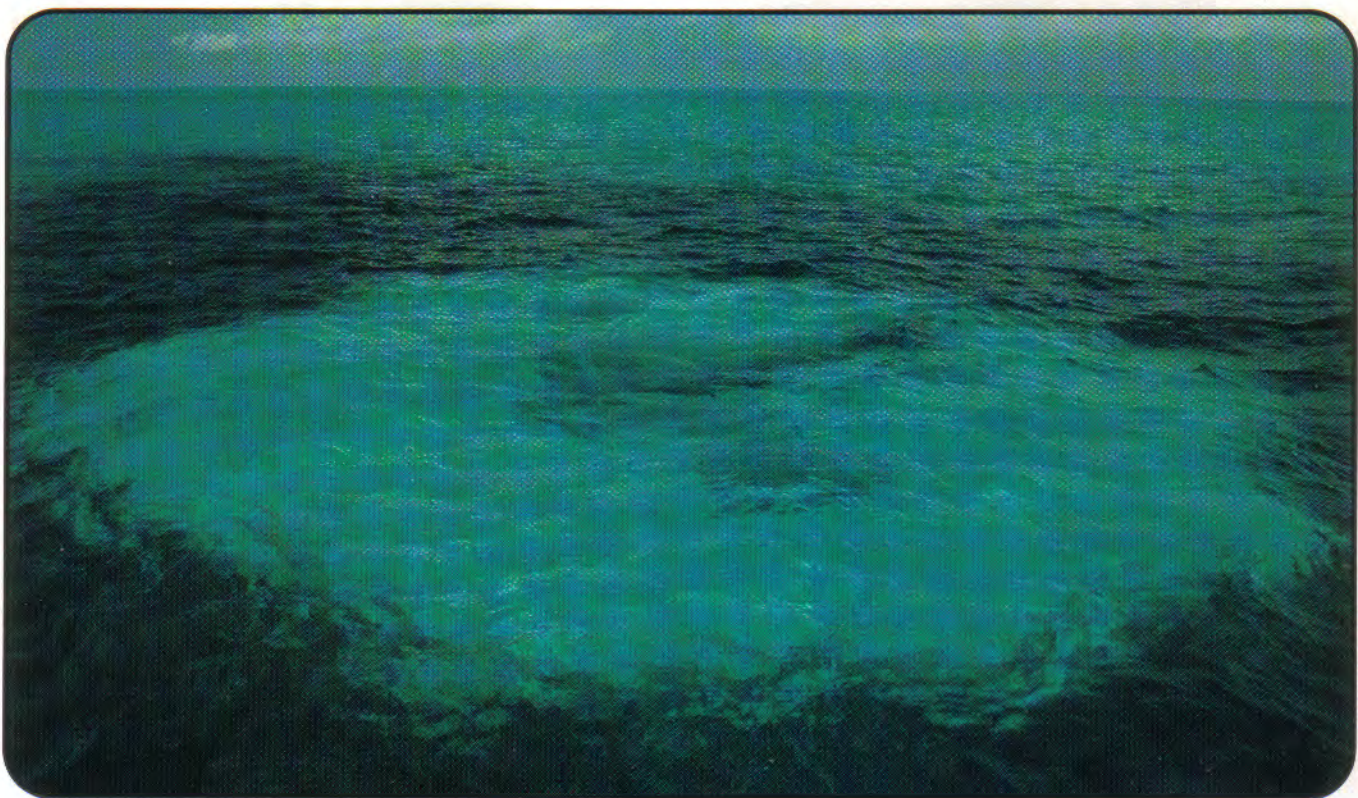
interest and make sure they feature GPS, lat/lon or loran lines.

Many charts show wreck symbols, so you can start by locating the symbols and plugging in their positions. Keep in mind that wreck symbols sometimes have codes such as PA (position approximate) or PD (position doubtful), which may require a lot of extra searching to pinpoint them. Also, the symbols are often old, which could mean a wreck's been buried under sand after dozens of ensuing storms or it was placed on the chart based on rumor or highly imaginative sources.

It's best to seek out your first wreck by visiting a known location, even if this means the spot has received a degree of fishing pressure. In this fashion you can view the bottom surrounding the wreck, perhaps even dive on it, and become more familiar with what you'll be looking for at a later time.

Once you've located the wreck you're seeking, take a look at your chart and try to figure out why the wreck may have sunk. Many times

The easiest way to spot wrecks such as the airplane on the opposite page is to look for donut shapes in grassy areas (below) caused by tidal surges that uproot and erode grasses around wrecks; the wreck itself will be near the center of the donut.



PHOTOS BY DALE SANDERS