

GRANDER!

Vamizi releases three big blacks off Bazaruto

WITH a winter sailfish run and the recent discovery of reliable blue- and striped marlin fisheries out wide, which seems to peak outside the traditional season and even into the colder months, the waters of the Bazaruto Archipelago realistically offer year-round billfish opportunities. However, September to December is undoubtedly the peak time to target the giant black marlin the area is famous for.

Although at times the fishing was inconsistent due to unseasonal weather conditions, most anglers and boats that visited the area for the peak of the 2014 season were satisfied both with the quantity and certainly the quality of the fish encountered. The crew of the 31ft charter boat *Vamizi*, in particular, will not soon forget this season. Captained by Duarte Rato, with deckhands Alex Zivane and Alberto Massane, they managed to release three marlin around the 1 000 lb mark.

Vamizi started the season in early September and, mostly fishing out wide, caught a number of good blue marlin up to 600 lb. By the end of September black marlin fishing was firing on the edge and on 28th September they raised their first really big fish estimated at over 1 200 lb. Despite coming in on a short lure three times, the marlin never struck.

There were a few up to 700 lb in between, but *Vamizi's* crew had to wait until 14th October for another really good one to show up, this time behind a live skipjack tuna. On its first jump the crew called the fish at 1 000 lb, but then, to everyone's utter disappointment, the bait went flying. Luckily she was hungry and tailed the bait. As soon as the crew engaged the throttles and started skipping the now dead bait, the big fish piled on it. This time the 20/0 circle hook found the spot and Lowtjie Nel from South Africa was hooked up to his first marlin.



With most of the fight on or near the surface, with numerous jumps, the fish soon tired herself out and was released in just less than two hours. Of course, without weighing her the crew couldn't be 100% sure that she was a grander, so just to be safe they decided to call the fish 950-plus!

Just five days later, on 19th October, another big fish showed up, this time on one of the long lures. In the chair was angler Carl Jankowitz, no stranger to these waters and who has previously weighed 1 107 lb and 1 098 lb marlin with the same crew. Carl has become such an aficionado on these waters that he recently bought his own boat, a 31ft Triton, that he keeps and fishes off Bazaruto year-round.

Once again this was a cooperative fish that fought on the surface and jumped her heart out. With Carl's expert technique applying well over 60 lb of drag for most of the time, it took just over two hours until they could release her. Everyone knew the fish could easily be over 1 000 lb, but being borderline again and humbled by catching two such great fish within a few days of each other, the crew decided to once again call her 950-plus.

Although the crew on *Vamizi* released a lot of good fish up to 850 lb in between, the third really big fish only showed up six weeks later, on 9th December. Amazingly, Carl Jankowitz was again on board for his third charter of the season, but this time it was his good friend Peter Dowling's turn in the chair. Even more remarkable was that the fish took the same lure on which Carl caught his fish in October.

However, this fish behaved completely unlike the other two which had stayed on or near the surface for most of the fight and tired themselves out with endless jumping displays. This one behaved more like the stubborn bulls big blacks are known to be. To add that extra challenge, the reel's drag started slipping and the fight dragged on for almost four hours. It was already pitch dark when they eventually managed to

release this great fish which they estimated at well over 1 000 lb. A season to remember indeed.

For further information about fishing off Bazaruto, contact Duarte Rato on +258 82 805 7160 or +258 84 639 0466 or email <dudas7mares@gmail.com>.