



Whopper 560 lb Swordfish Caught off St Croix

Virgin Islands' waters are renowned for big blue marlin. The catch of a 560-pound swordfish less than a mile north of Christiansted, St. Croix, has put the territory on the map as a potentially great recreational fishery for this species too.

Mike Fuller, captain aboard the Oh Suzanna who is well known for chasing the next fishing horizon, says, "An old time charter captain told me that back in the 1950s swordfish were caught right in front of the harbor. He also said that the swordfish were quite large and were sold to the Department of Education for lunch for the school children. After hearing this, I wanted to see if they were still around today."

Fuller spoke with commercial sword fishermen in Florida and the Caribbean and applied these valuable insights to develop the rigs (rod and reel), techniques (deep-dropping during the day), and baits (dolphin or wahoo bellies to make Panama strip baits) he needed to be successful. Then, he began his hunt in earnest in January of 2009 and started catching oil fish, a species that's usually found where swordfish swim.

Luck struck on October 9, when angler Sarah Griffin reeled in the 560-pounder.

"I'd been out fishing with Mike for about four months and everyone said we needed to try deeper," says Griffin, a nurse and avid angler. "So, we sent the bait that day down to 1750-feet and that's where I got the bite."

Griffin fought the fish for nearly two hours on 80-pound line before getting it up to the back of the boat where crew member, Daniel Griffin, landed two gaffs. It was a struggle to get this 15-foot-long monster in the boat. Its dorsal fin was too high to come through the tuna door sideways and the tail needed to be bent up in order to close the door. A crane operator at St. Croix Marine lifted the swordfish up on the scales to weigh.

"Everyone is fired up to try this now," says Fuller. "Who knows, maybe we have a recreational fishery here now for swordfish."

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