

Moisture management:

Boats are interesting in that they seem to keep water in even better than they keep it out. Wood rot and mildew is accelerated by sweet water while corrosion is accelerated by salt water. That leaves us Florida boaters in a bit of a lurch. Because, to quote my father "water finds a way". Boy isn't that the truth. Many of you are thinking about heading north and that means putting the boat away for the summer and perhaps you could use some ideas on how to keep moisture out of the cabin and fresh air in.

The number one enemy to mildew is ventilation. This is a tough prospect when packing up the boat for the summer. Larger yachts that are kept wet slipped have a great option by using the humidistat feature on their air conditioner. One word of caution regarding the humidistat feature; the cabin gets very hot I mean like 110 degrees hot. Many decorator items and trim pieces are fitted with adhesives that will fail at these temperatures. So it is best to remove the items prior to leaving rather than open the boat next winter to find your art on the floor and glue running down the walls. Also the air conditioner pump runs when using the humidistat so you need to have your yacht attendant strip and clean the strainer every month. For the rest of us with smaller craft kept on lifts, in barns or upon trailers the options are very much tailored to your specific circumstances. In all cases I highly recommend removing all the cushions and gear from the cabin. Empty, completely 100% empty. Charts, tools, spares all the "stuff" should come out and go in the garage, spare bedroom, storage shed whatever. You may have noticed that Marco has a few bugs and rodents. No paper, food or moisture makes your cabin very uninviting for these critters.

This is the Cliff note version of how I would prep my mid size cabin boat for a long hot summer without me.

#1) I would come back in the summer just to use the boat. Summers are great. The water is calm and warm, the fishing is great and you can make a left turn in traffic. "nuff said"

#2) If I had the good fortune to have a high and dry rack inside an enclosed barn: I would empty all my gear and leave two port lights cracked open but fitted with screens. Pay attention to the location of deck drains and bilge discharges of upper level and neighboring craft when choosing which portlights to leave open.

#3) on my lift behind my house or open rack storage or even on a trailer a solar vent is my very best choice. Some builders (Salt Shaker, Intrepid) equip their boats with solar vents at the factory level. The install is easy, the materials relatively inexpensive and the results are extraordinary. The almost intangible airflow provided by a solar vent completely eliminated any mildew issues I have faced in smaller cabin boats.

