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APRIL 2019 NO. 283

The Caribbean's Monthly Look at Sea & Shore

ANTIGUA ISLAND GIRLS



— See story on page 16

GEMMA HAZELWOOD



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The Caribbean's Monthly Look at Sea & Shore

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APRIL 2019 • NUMBER 283



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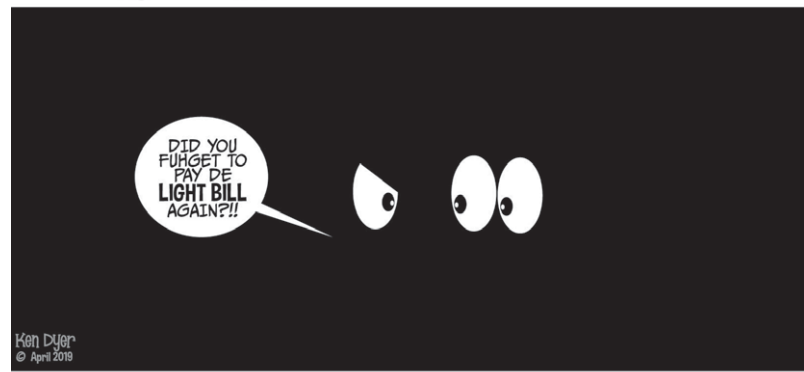


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KEN DYER



Ken Dyer
© April 2019

WEN DE LIGHTS WENT OUT ON DE ELECTRIC EELS...

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Tel: (784) 457-3409, Fax: (784) 457-3410, compass@caribbeancompass.com, www.caribbeancompass.com

Publisher.....Tom Hopman
tom@caribbeancompass.com

Art, Design & Production.....Wilfred Dederer
wilfred@caribbeancompass.com

Editor.....Sally Erdle
sally@caribbeancompass.com

Advertising & Administration...Shellese Craig
shellese@caribbeancompass.com

Assistant Editor.....Elaine Ollivierre
jsprat@vincysurf.com

Advertising
compass@caribbeancompass.com

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On the cover: The jubilant arrival of the Antigua Island Girls, the first all-black team to row across the Atlantic, was captured by photographer Gemma Hazelwood. View more of his work at www.facebook.com/gemmahazelwoodphotography or on Instagram at [GemmaHazelwoodPhotography](https://www.instagram.com/GemmaHazelwoodPhotography). See story on page 16



Compass covers the Caribbean! From Cuba to Trinidad, from Panama to Barbuda, we've got the news and views that sailors can use. We're the Caribbean's monthly look at sea and shore.

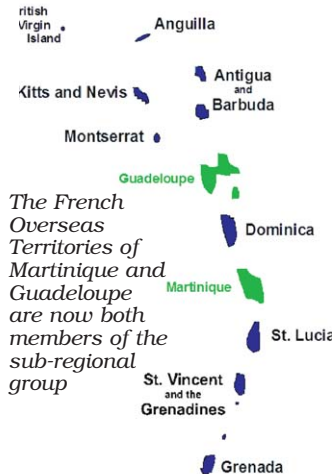
'Compass is great — an authentic source of relevant information and local flavor' — Readers' Survey respondent

Click Google Map link to find the Caribbean Compass near you! <http://bit.ly/1fMC2Oy>

Info & Updates

Marine Weather Time Changes

As a result of Daylight Savings Time starting in the US on March 10th, the times of Marine Weather Services' SSB Voice Nets have changed. You can download an easy-to-read schedule at www.mwxc.com/marine_weather_services.php



Guadeloupe Joins the OECS

On March 14th, Guadeloupe, an overseas Department of France, formally joined the Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS) — a group including Antigua & Barbuda, the Commonwealth of Dominica, Grenada, Montserrat, St. Kitts & Nevis, St. Lucia, St. Vincent & the Grenadines, the British Virgin Islands, Anguilla and Martinique.

Ary Chalus, president of Region Guadeloupe, says, "Guadeloupe, located in the middle of the island arc of the Lesser Antilles, shares a strong community of interest with... the OECS partners. Our shared history, geography, physical and human ties are self-evident in institutionalizing cooperation with our neighbours for the promise of a better future for our youth and the development of our people. Guadeloupe shares a strong community of interest with OECS Member States and we enthusiastically embrace our membership to the Organisation."

T&T launches Environmental Guidebook for Marinas

The new *Guidebook on Sustainable Environmental Practices for Marinas and Boatyards in Trinidad & Tobago* describes measures to promote economic growth in T&T's maritime sector in a manner that is socially and environmentally responsible, addressing key environmental issues affecting boatyards and marinas and providing working solutions towards consistent improvement in this industry.

The guidebook is available at <https://tradeind.gov.tt/yachting-guidebook>

Dominican Republic Addresses Security

Omar Shamir Reynoso reports: The president of the Dominican Republic recently issued a decree asking the National authorities to diagnose the weaknesses in tourist security. Through sailors' forums and publications such as the *Compass* we will diagnose safety complaints at Dominican ports, especially Luperon, Samaná and Santo Domingo.

Observations were made to establish stricter safety protocols, as well as a boarding protocol. Plans are on the table to strengthen surveillance, to develop a mobile app for reporting, and to offer more information on official websites.

Eight Bells

• GEOFF BOND

Sandy Mair reports: I am saddened to report that Geoff Bond passed away in Australia just before Christmas, as a result of mesothelioma contracted from working in an asbestos factory as a youth. Geoff Bond was a rebel, a pirate, one of the old-time characters of the Caribbean cruiser scene.



He first arrived in St. Lucia in 1985, having sailed from Greece with his partner Lorraine, in his Jeanneau 39 *Themroc*, and quickly made friends with the yachtie community in the then very fledgling Rodney Bay Marina, from where he did charters to Martinique. They left for Annapolis a year later where they sold *Themroc* but quickly returned to St. Lucia to buy the Stevens Yachts-managed Peterson 44 *Dona Louise*, which became Geoff's home for the rest of his life.

Geoff and *Dona Louise* cruised the Caribbean extensively from Venezuela to the Virgin Islands, based at various times in Trinidad, St. Lucia, Dominica, Antigua and Anguilla — wherever Geoff could find work, often in the construction industry or engine maintenance. Then came an Atlantic crossing in 1999 via the USA to Ireland. Geoff liked to move and he and his boat lived at various times in Falmouth, Faro, Gdansk, Skye and finally Sligo in Ireland where the boat still is.

—Continued on next page

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Wherever Geoff went he made friends quickly and easily. His boat was always the dock tearoom, with the kettle always on the stove and a "welcome aboard" to everyone for a chat and a cuppa. Geoff was a radical and a liberal through and through and hated bureaucracy and authority with a passion, whether it be left, right or centre. A chat and a cup of tea on his boat usually ended in a lively and heated three-hour debate on the evils of the modern world and politicians in general. Many a happy hour I spent in the cabin of *Dona Louise*.

And Geoff also had his scrapes at sea. A wild Atlantic crossing from Annapolis in a gale most of the way with a pick-up crew who had never sailed before, a very near miss from a freighter in the Baltic when his loyal crewman (me) fell asleep on watch, a minor collision in the English Channel when both boats were self-steering (but Geoff was on starboard). But Geoff, normally a singlehander, was a fine seaman with many thousands of ocean miles under his belt, and a trained and excellent mechanical marine engineer.

Geoff's other passion was cycling: only three months before his death he completed the 1,000-kilometre "Wild Atlantic Way" ride, following the complete West Coast of Ireland — and with only one functioning lung.

Yes, those who knew him will miss him — his warmth, his friendliness and his ever-generous hospitality. He is survived by his ex-partner Lorraine and his daughter Jess, herself an accomplished yacht skipper, seamstress, sailmaker and chef extraordinaire.



Peter Roren (Fixman One) retired. He spent the following 14 years working as a master fixer of almost anything afloat, from dinghies to superyachts — and stuff that didn't float, like teakettles and Land Rovers. Nothing was impossible to repair or rebuild at the "Fixworld" workshop. However, there was one exception; "I don't do weed-whackers," he would say with his big flashing grin.

• ROBIN SMITH
Pedro el Reparador reports: The people of Bequia and the yachting community in the region were deeply saddened to learn that Robin Smith, known locally as "Fixman Two," passed away on February 9th.

Robin exited the fast lane of racing Formula One cars around the world to enjoy a much slower pace under sail in the Caribbean. He arrived in Bequia during the summer of 2004 to take the helm of Fixman Marine Engineering when

Few on Bequia knew of Robin's previous endeavours as a famous racecar driver. This modest Scot found no need to brag about his merits, although there were certain indications that his past was indeed fast and furious. If speed limits were in existence on Bequia, Robin would have held the record for breaking them. He certainly did on the track in France, being an eight-time Le Mans 24-hour racer and a 1979 Class winner, including top positions in a variety of other sports car, GT, and Formula One entries.

Robin was a man with many great projects and ideas — some quite wild, and some not so great. His main project and commitment was to turn his live-aboard Norwegian ferry *Tjeldøy* into an informal floating nightclub. However, just keeping it afloat took most of his time, but there was time in-between for him to "open ship" for lively private parties with live music. Thank you, Robin.

Among his other visions was the "island" car; a solar-powered lightweight boxcar that would climb the steepest hill on Bequia on sunshine, and happily charge the batteries running downhill. The plans had just been rendered on the drawing board when illness overtook him.

His fixing capabilities were greatly appreciated. If a fisherman couldn't settle the bill for an outboard repair, lobster or fish was good enough. If there was a notice on the workshop door saying, GONE FOR FUN - BACK IN A WHILE, we just didn't care. Give the man a break!

Robin was very much in demand; sometimes he would say, "Haven't got time, but you can fix this yourself." Then he would take more time than doing the actual job by explaining to the victim the DIY procedure.

He gave high priority to keeping a slow Caribbean pace, no stress and lots of fun. And fun we all had in his presence. Many times we heard him say during happy hour, "I'm so glad I came here, and I'm here for the rest of my life."

Sadly, that happy life on Bequia has ended, but we know he had a great island life while it lasted. We will miss you, Robin.

• SYLVIE BRANTON

Doina Cornell reports: We are very sad to report that our colleague Sylvie Branton passed away in Grenada on March 6th. Sylvie designed the Cornell Sailing website and the previous Cornell Sailing Events websites, and has been managing them since 2011.

A software engineering consultant in Paris in a previous life, she lived and worked on the sea with her lifetime companion for over 20 years, travelling from Northern Europe to South America to the multicultural Caribbean that she loved.

Sylvie was also a major contributor to Kathy Parsons' popular books *Spanish for Cruisers* and *French for Cruisers*, and also to the Women and Cruising website.

She was a talented and warm-hearted person who will be sorely missed by all those whose lives she touched. Sylvie will forever live in our hearts and minds.

APIS Again...

Early last month reports began to surface of yacht skippers being asked to comply with something called "eAPIS" when entering St. Kitts. The Caribbean Marine Association (CMA) also received complaints from skippers that St. Kitts & Nevis had ceased using the widely accepted SailClear electronic yacht pre-clearance system in favour of eAPIS.

—Continued on next page



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What is "eAPIS"? In early 2007, ten member states of the Caribbean Economic Community, CARICOM, passed legislation requiring Advance Passenger Information to be transmitted to CARICOM's Joint Regional Communication Centre (JRCC) in Barbados for all "air and sea carriers" arriving at and departing from each member state. This Advance Passenger Information System was known as APIS (now eAPIS, i.e. electronic APIS).

While most CARICOM countries interpreted "carriers" to refer to commercial vessels such as cruise ships (the form had space for hundreds of passengers' names, and required precise arrival times and the use of seaport codes), both Antigua &



CHRIS DOYLE

Yachts at Basseterre, St. Kitts, where APIS was recently resurrected

Barbuda and St. Vincent & the Grenadines briefly attempted to apply APIS to yachts. It quickly became apparent that APIS was extremely problematic for yacht skippers to use. The Caribbean Marine Association, supported by the Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States, spearheaded the fight against APIS for yachts, and by 2008 it was dropped.

SailClear (SailClear.com), a system developed specifically to allow yachts to submit their Customs declarations electronically prior to arrival, was introduced by the Caribbean Customs Law Enforcement Council in 2013. Easy and convenient, it has since proven to be very popular with yacht skippers, and since its introduction we have heard nothing about yachts being asked to use the APIS system instead — until now.

Last month, cruisers' groups on Facebook erupted with complaints about St. Kitts: "Hard to believe that they would suddenly revert to an impossible on-line clear-in procedure." "The Caribbean Marine Association fought this system in 2007 and it seemed to die at that time, however, St. Kitts has chosen unilaterally to resurrect it as a way to make boating less pleasurable and make everyone's lives miserable."

"You need to take a laptop with you, use their WiFi to download the program, then complete the Excel spreadsheet." "It took my wife four hours to check in to St. Kitts, and that's with an MSc degree in Computing." "We had to use our iPads using cellular data and download Excel to accomplish. Just looking through the spreadsheet of seaport codes was insane... Horrible system." "This is an unworkable system for private sailing cruisers; I made one attempt, which cost me two hours fighting with the Excel sheet and several codes. Crazy system, forget it!" "There is NO provision for delays, rerouting, cancellations etc..." "You are supposed to submit the form while en route. Who has internet onboard while sailing; who can use a computer while sailing? It's a totally unworkable system... Best to avoid St. Kitts until this is resolved."

"I was threatened with a \$100,000 fine for non-compliance. At some point they are going to follow through with that." "When a system is so faulty and bad to handle and you have tried to report properly without success, then it would be against the law to fine you. But it is better to avoid visiting such countries." "Anyone with knowledge of yacht tourism knew that this kind of time-consuming red tape could quickly strangle it to death."

John Duffy, President of the Caribbean Marine Association, says, "I am surprised that this has raised its head again, as the whole matter of APIS for yachts was resolved back in 2007-08. Insofar as I am aware, it is only St. Kitts & Nevis who seem to be attempting to use APIS; all other Eastern Caribbean islands appear to be complying with the 2008 OECS/CCLEC/CMA-led agreement. APIS was seen... as being damaging to yachting tourism and there is no doubt that its re-introduction is harmful to the general reputation of yachting in the Caribbean."

Cruising guide author Chris Doyle says, "St. Kitts & Nevis has recently taken giant steps to make visiting easier for cruising yachts. Why reverse it now by applying APIS? APIS works for commercial carriers with agents, but does not work for yachts. Even the USA does not expect yachts to use APIS, so why would St. Kitts & Nevis? Because someone noticed they had signed the law?"

"For the regional yachting industry to work, clearing between the various countries must be as simple as possible. CCLEC did a grand job of creating SailClear, which gives them complete information on who is visiting by yacht and where they have been. APIS collects information about tourists visiting via commercial carriers. Imagine if we made each arriving airline or cruiseship passenger spend an hour on a computer trying to fill in the required forms, and told them that if they failed to do it right they could be fined US\$100,000. But that is exactly what you are asking of yacht skippers. We are visitors, not commercial carriers, and this will not work for yachting."

As this issue of *Compass* goes to press, we have been informed that this problem has been discussed in St. Kitts at the National Yachting Committee with the Ministry of Tourism, the St. Kitts Tourism Authority, and relevant agencies. Carlene Henry Morton, Permanent Secretary (Ag.), in the Ministry of Tourism, says, "I wish to reassure all concerned that we have shared the concerns with the relevant authorities and hope to hold an emergency meeting shortly to discuss the way forward in the given circumstances."

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Meanwhile, on March 16th, one sailor reported, "They did not ask us about APIS when clearing in, but that doesn't mean they won't ask others."

Easter Fun on Union Island

Stanton Gomes reports: The Union Island Easterval has been around for 52 years, and has made a name for itself, not just in St. Vincent & the Grenadines but also around the world. This cultural tradition has become symbolic of the heritage of

across Union Island and guest performers from nearby Carriacou and Petite Martinique. See a traditional wedding ceremony, including the cake dance and the dancing of the flags.

The Island Basketball tournament will bounce off on April 18th at 6:00PM.

Our Festival Day on April 20th will be a highlight, with a Kids' Parade and Traditional Games, Steel Pan and Cultural Dances. In addition, a Trade Fair and Exhibition dubbed "Union Expo" will take place along Clifton's main street, where locally made art, crafts, clothing, and food will be displayed and sold.

This event will allow persons to have a chance to experience what Union Island really has to offer. The Union Island Lions Club all-inclusive catamaran sunset cruise will sail off at 4:30PM for a trip around the Southern Grenadines. Our Miss Easterval Pageant, which will start at 8:00PM, will see eight contestants taking the stage to be crowned Miss Easterval 2019. This year, contestants will be representing Guyana, Trinidad & Tobago, St. Vincent, Union Island, St. Lucia, Barbados, Grenada, and Carriacou. It is the only regional beauty contest remaining in SVG and normally attracts a large following.

The All Fours Dominoes Match is scheduled for April 21st and Easterval will end on April 22nd with the Island J'Ouvert, with paint and powder starting at 4:00AM and a Cooler Fête in the evening.

Visit www.easterval.com for more information.

Dates Set for Next NSA Resort Instructor Course

In October 2018, Antigua & Barbuda's National Sailing Academy hosted its first Resort Instructor training course. This course was developed as a response to the requirements of the Antigua & Barbuda Small Craft Control Act of 2015, which requires all watersports employees in resorts and sailing schools to have appropriate certification. The demand was such that a second course was run in December.

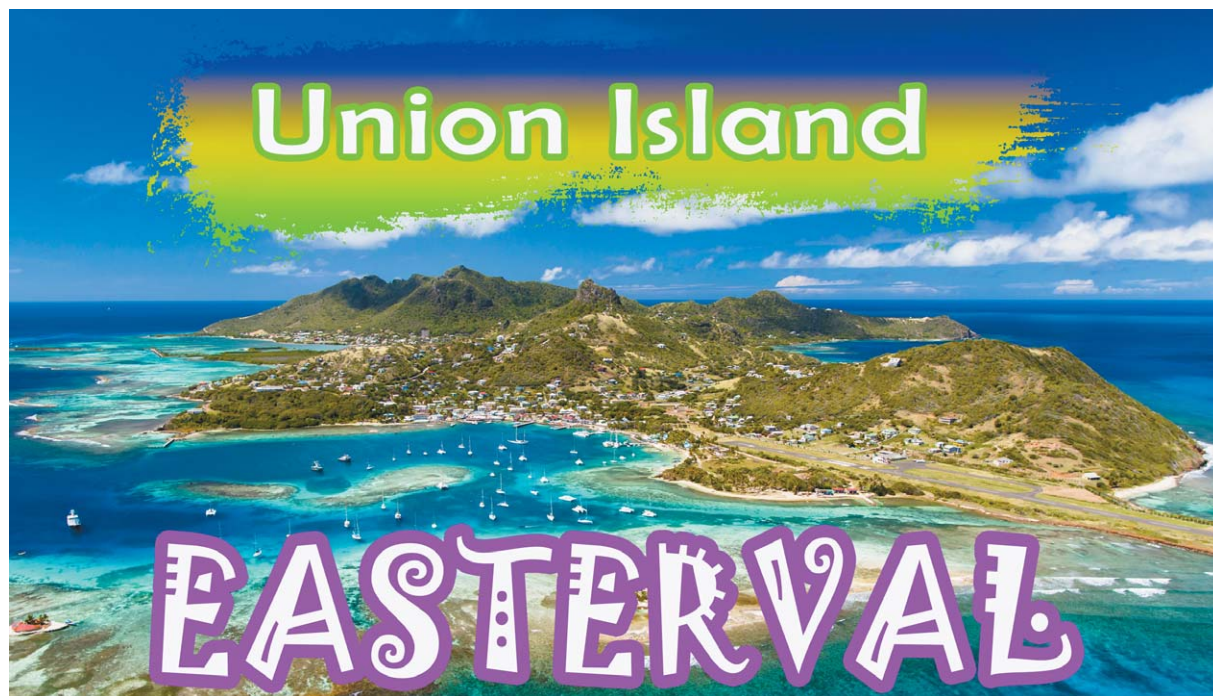
The third Resort Instructor course will be held from May 27th through 29th at Antigua's National Sailing Academy. Resorts or staff interested in attending the

next course can find out more by contacting Elizabeth Jordan via e-mail info@nationalsailingacademy.org.

If you are with a club or school in the region and would like more information on teaching the course in your country, e-mail vp@caribbean-sailing.com.

It's Not Counterfeit!

In June, the Eastern Caribbean Central Bank will put polymer EC banknotes in circulation, commencing with the new \$50 bill, followed by the \$100, \$20 and \$10 bills in August and September and the \$5 bill in 2020. The polymer notes and current paper notes will co-circulate.



Union Island and the uniqueness of its people.

The 53rd Union Island Easterval Festival will begin on April 14th and end on April 22nd. The managing body, the Easterval Committee, led by Anthony Alexander, has promised a "fun-packed" calendar.

The April 14th opening of Easterval 2019 at the Ashton Hard Court will feature several local performances and a guest performance by the Royal St Vincent & the Grenadines Police Band. A Gospel Concert will take place on April 15th and SocaRama, involving a local soca artiste competition, will take place on April 16th.

On April 17th, the Culture Fest features traditional performances, such as the Big Drum performances unique to Union Island. The event will host performers from



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BUSINESS BRIEFS

Budget Marine Sponsors Caribbean Multihull Regatta



The Budget Marine chandlery sponsored the inaugural Caribbean Multihull Regatta, which took place from February 8th through 10th (see report on page 18). Robbie Ferron of Budget Marine, who acted as race director, reports: "We believe that regattas are increasingly moving towards narrower audiences like Swan regattas, classic regattas, grand prix regattas, superyacht regattas, etcetera. A niche that was previously unfilled is that of multihulls, and St. Maarten is going to make every effort to own that niche, given the island's long history with multihulls and the large number of persons with that passion locally. With the first edition of the Caribbean Multihull Challenge in 2019, our vision of a multihull regatta out of St. Maarten has been solidified. It was a

huge success and formed the basis for the creation of a fixture that will have continuity. The spirit of the event was powerful and the number of boats — 15 — shows hope for the future."

See ad on page 2 for more information about Budget Marine.

Weekly Buffets at Blue Lagoon Hotel & Marina

The Loft Restaurant & Bar at the Blue Lagoon Hotel & Marina in St. Vincent now offers the following weekly buffets:

- Wednesday - Barbecue Buffet from 6:30PM to 10:00PM
 - Saturday - Seafood Buffet from 6:30PM to 10:00PM
 - Sunday - Brunch from 11:00AM to 2:00PM
- For reservations, call (784) 458-4308, ext. 5007.

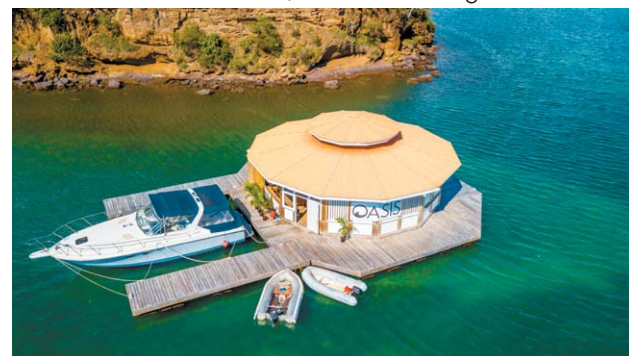
See ad on page 41 for more information about Blue Lagoon Hotel & Marina.



Oasis: One of the Caribbean's Most Unusual Bars

Grenada now has a new bar and it floats! Located in Mount Hartman Bay, opposite Secret Harbour Marina, the Oasis floating bar is "without doubt one of the Caribbean's most unusual bars."

— *The Telegraph*
The bar is currently open Friday through Sunday from 12:00PM until late, is famous for its Oasis rum punch and Halloween party, and welcomes everyone all year round. Look out for movie nights, chocolate and wine evenings, and cruiser



barbecue events. If you need a lift, call the bar (473) 459-6246 and someone will dinghy you across from a nearby beach!

Visit <https://oasis.gd> or Facebook page www.facebook.com/oasisgrenada for more information.

Fresh Mango Launches Disaster Recovery Website

Fresh Mango Technologies, the BVI-based IT solution provider, recently launched a dedicated website for Cloud backup and disaster recovery. The website is designed to highlight the many benefits for businesses of backing up their data to the Cloud, as well as demonstrating the importance of Cloud backup as part of business continuity plans.

Commenting on the launch, Fresh Mango Managing Director Guy Phoenix stated: "We decided to launch a dedicated Cloud backup website after assisting businesses in the Caribbean recover from the disastrous hurricanes of 2017. Many businesses suffered total destruction of their IT infrastructure. The businesses that had their data backed up and replicated in the Cloud were able to recover very quickly. Those that didn't found themselves in a much more challenging situation. Some businesses without Cloud backup were unable to recover. Our website specifically highlights the benefits of Cloud backup, from a business continuity perspective and an everyday business management viewpoint. Our saying is 'It's not a matter of if your computer will fail, but when.' We hope that business owners, directors, and IT departments find it useful."

The website went live in mid-January 2019 at <https://neovault.net>

Caribbean ECO-News

Training to Conserve Caribbean Shorebirds

"I honestly finally feel like I can tackle shorebirds with some level of comfort and confidence. I am so excited to get back out and practice!"



MONICA IGLECIA

Natalya Lawrence, a program officer at the Environmental Awareness Group in Antigua, had just returned from an International Training Workshop on Conserving Caribbean Shorebirds and Their Habitats. She was excited by her experience at the workshop, which was hosted by BirdsCaribbean and Manomet in partnership with local NGO Sociedad Ornitológica Puertorriqueña. The workshop took place at the Cabo Rojo National Wildlife Refuge in Puerto Rico, February 11th through 15th. The lessons, developed by BirdsCaribbean and Manomet's Habitats for Shorebirds Project, help local leaders protect shorebirds in the Caribbean.

Shorebirds, including sandpipers, plovers, and oystercatchers, are among the most threatened groups of birds in the world. Many species migrate, making annual long-distance movements between nesting areas in the far north and nonbreeding areas in the tropics and South America. Their steady decline in numbers over the past four decades is connected with human activities such as habitat loss and development, environmental pollution, and hunting.

The group of 33 Caribbean conservationists learned about how these and other threats affect not only shorebirds and waterbirds, but also the places where they live and work. They also learned how to identify and count the birds and carry out conservation actions. "We were thrilled to work with this enthusiastic group of conservationists this week," said Lisa Sorenson, Executive Director of BirdsCaribbean. "They have all pledged to use what they learned to help study and protect threatened shorebirds in their home countries."

The group of students, wildlife managers, and educators from both the government and the non-profit sectors came from 14 island nations: Antigua, the Bahamas, Dominica, the Dominican Republic, Grenada, Haiti, Jamaica, Montserrat, Puerto Rico, St. Lucia, St. Vincent & the Grenadines, St. Maarten, Trinidad & Tobago, and the US Virgin Islands. Over five days, they shared ideas, compared experiences, visited watery habitats, and learned about two critical monitoring programs, the Caribbean Waterbird Census and the International Shorebird Survey.

The training included 30 hours of classroom learning and six field trips to local wetlands and beaches. The field trips around Cabo Rojo offered students the opportunity to identify birds and to practice estimating the number of birds in a flock.

"There are many threats to shorebirds throughout the year, but by working locally at sites in the Caribbean and beyond, we can support the conservation of their great migrations. This workshop is the start of great things ahead," commented Monica Iglecia, Assistant Director of Shorebird Habitat Management, Manomet.

While the first three days focused on bird identification, ecology, and collecting and exploring data, the final two days turned to conservation solutions. After sharing the challenges they face in their countries, many of which are similar, trainees and their facilitators shared ideas and strategies for reducing threats. In the coming days, participants will have the opportunity to apply for funding from BirdsCaribbean to carry out conservation activities. They will receive support for their efforts from both Manomet and BirdsCaribbean.

The participants came away with plans to share their newfound knowledge with colleagues and new tools to help them in their efforts. "Thank you so much for always providing opportunities for conservationists in the Caribbean like myself," wrote Laura Baboolal from Trinidad. She aims to start a shorebird monitoring program for Trinidadian wetlands. All participants also received new Vortex binoculars and ten organizations received a new Vortex spotting scope and tripod — "must-have" equipment for monitoring programs

and ensuring proper identification. The group also received field guides and other resources for bird identification and data collection.

Visit www.manomet.org for more information.

New Grenadines Initiative: Saving Our Seabirds

A new year-long initiative called "Conservation of Key Offshore Island Reserves" aims to develop long-term strategies to protect Grenadines seabirds.

The project is a partnership between the US-based non-profit organization Environmental Protection in the Caribbean (EPIC) and St. Vincent-based Science Initiative for Environmental Conservation and Education (SCIENCE). With funding from the US Fish and Wildlife Service and USAID, the project will contribute to seabird conservation and management throughout the archipelago, involving both nations of Grenada and St. Vincent & the Grenadines.

The project will build upon previous activities, such as strengthening the existing Grenadines Volunteer Patrol monitoring effort as well as developing a transboundary community-based seabird management plan.

Until now, seabirds have been afforded limited conservation and protection in the region owing to lack of financial resources, compounded by the remoteness and inaccessibility of nesting islands. Seabirds in fact are rapidly declining worldwide from factors such as development, climate change, invasive predators and declines in forage fish. The Grenadines are no exception and birds are further threatened by livestock grazing, traditional harvests and an overall absence of

conservation and management strategies.

The Grenadine archipelago consists of over 50 islands, islets, and cays that provide important nesting, resting and feeding habitat for more than 20 species of seabirds. Not only are seabirds important indicators of ocean health and climate change, but they have been an important part of Grenadines' culture and livelihood.

If you would like more information on this project or would like to contribute as a stakeholder contact Juliana Coffey, Project Coordinator at juliana@epicislands.org, on WhatsApp (70) 770-6877 or phone (473) 422-9547.

To learn about upcoming activities, follow EPIC on Facebook at www.facebook.com/epicislands.

Sargassum Watch: You Can Help

At a meeting in March, the Caribbean Regional Fisheries Mechanism discussed challenges confronting the region's fisheries sector, and provided an update on a recently concluded regional study on the impacts of unprecedented Sargassum inundation on the Caribbean. The CRFM has noted that 2018 was a year of record high influx. There are ongoing concerns over the impact on fisheries, and the broader socio-economic and environmental impacts on coastal communities across our region.

Joan Conover reports that the sargassum bloom extent in 2019, although lower than in 2018, is still significantly higher than most of the years during 2011-2018 for the Caribbean and the central West Atlantic. The reasons behind this are yet to be determined.

Sargassum seaweed is impacting the open waters and beaches of the tropical Eastern Atlantic, from



EPIC BRB03

Left: The group practices their field ID skills on Combate Beach, Puerto Rico. Machel Sulton of Dominica points out a Spotted Sandpiper to Ajhermae White of Montserrat

Above: A Brown Booby chick waits for its parents to return with food

Bottom: Fishing boat navigating through sargassum-inundated waters in St. Vincent & the Grenadines

South America to the eastern coastlines of the United States, along Gulf of Mexico shores and the western Caribbean. It seems to be coming from an area on or south of the equator, between South America and Africa. The plant's leaf, weighted to stay upright, acts as a sail — an amazing adaptation that makes this wind-driven plant very mobile. The large mats float just under water, with the tips of leaves in the air.

—Continued on page 39



REGATTA NEWS

Grenada's First Oasis Hobie Cat Challenge



Aaron Sylvester reports: This year, Oasis, Grenada's only wooden floating bar, organized the first Hobie Cat time trial challenge around Mount Hartman Bay during the January 30th lay day of Grenada Sailing Week 2019 — after all, when you have a day off from racing, you keep on racing, right? Seven teams from across the world participated in multiple attempts to score the fastest time around the bay.

Mike and Shannon of Ireland and the USA secured first place on a Hobie Cat from Petite Calivigny Yacht Club, with a time of 3 minutes and 45 seconds. Tom and kids of the United Kingdom and the USA, also on a Hobie Cat from PCYC, came in second after 4 minutes and 12 seconds, and Rudy and Benedict of Switzerland finished third in 4 minutes and 22 seconds on a Hobie Cat from Le Phare Bleu marina.

Viking Explorers Rally Ends in St. Vincent

Mike Westin and Oliver Solanas Heinrichs, authors of the *Cruising Guide to the Canary Islands*, arranged the second edition of their friendly Viking Explorers rally to end at Blue Lagoon Marina, St. Vincent & the Grenadines, in early February. The rally started in Las Palmas de Gran Canaria, with six boats ranging from 36 to 44 feet. With a stopover in Mindelo, Cape Verde, the crossing took 14 days for the fastest

boats and up to three weeks for the slowest.

The British steel boat *Elemiah del Mar* had the oldest skipper and crew — 73 and 78 years — and the couple on the smallest boat in the fleet, a Sweden Yacht 34, *Hakuna Matata*, are in their late twenties. (Any boat where the whole crew is 25 years or younger can join Viking Explorers for free — the organizers want to see more young people out sailing!)



The Viking Explorers participants are keen cruisers who agree to the rally's ethos of helping each other as much as possible — from first-aid lectures to lending special tools. They enjoy their time together and become fast friends. "We do this for the fun of it and to meet new friends," says founder Mike Westin. "This is such a lovely bunch of cruisers," Oliver Solanas Heinrichs added. Viking Explorers organizers found St. Vincent to be very friendly and promise to spread the word of a great place to visit.

The third Viking Explorers will start on January 5th, 2020 in Las Palmas de Gran Canaria. There will be a maximum of 20 boats to create the best experience for all participants. About 13 boats have already signed up as this issue of *Compass* goes to press.

Visit www.vikingexplorers.eu or www.facebook.com/vikingexplorers for more information.

New Dates for Superyacht Challenge Antigua

After four days of racing, the ninth edition of the Superyacht Challenge Antigua concluded on February 3rd. The Notice of Race for the 10th edition was announced, with the 2020 edition moving to new dates: March 11th through 15th.

"The change in date is better for all sorts of reasons, including the fact that in late January, accommodation in English Harbour is in high demand. Next year the regatta will be held just before St. Barths Bucket, when many superyachts are already in race mode. They can come and have a regatta with us before the Bucket," said organizer Paul Deeth. "The format of racing and parties will be the same, but we plan to include a Round Antigua Race, should conditions permit."

The fourth and final race for the 2019 Superyacht Challenge Antigua was held in a light to moderate breeze with flat seas. Principal Race Officer John Coveney selected a shorter course of approximately 18 nautical miles for both classes.

—Continued on next page

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The final race produced thrilling action at the start. The 112-foot (34 metre) sloop *Spilp* was three seconds shy of the starting gun, the 140-foot (42 metre) Frers ketch *Rebecca* was two seconds from the line, but the 148-foot (45 metre) Dubois ketch *Catalina* topped them all, starting just one second after the gun.

The 112-foot (34 metre) Sparkman & Stephens sloop *Kawil* scored a perfect four bullets to win the Buccaneers Class and the 112-foot (34 metre) sloop *Nilaya*, with Filip Balcaen at the helm, won the last race to finish first in the Corsairs Class.

The Gosnell Trophy is the main prize of the Superyacht Challenge Antigua. Each boat and the race committee have one vote for a yacht that competed in the spirit of the regatta, both afloat and ashore. The loudest cheer of the night was reserved for *Rebecca*, winning the Gosnell Trophy for the first time, after competing in the regatta since 2012.

Visit www.superyachtchallengeantigua.com for more information.

Sleeper 'Best' at Valentine's Regatta in Antigua

The 2019 Valentine's Regatta took place in Jolly Harbour, Antigua from February 8th through 10th. Seventeen boats and over 100 sailors raced in three classes under the CSA rating rule, in classic tradewind conditions.



Jonty Layfield's Team *Sleeper* won first prize in Racing Class, and received the Absolute Properties Trophy for the best overall boat

In the Racing Class, *Sleeper*, a Swan 48 skippered by Jonty Layfield, received first prize. In the Racer/Cruiser Class, the J/30 *Blue Peter* captained by Tanner Jones finished first. In the Cruising Class, *Elethea*, the Beneteau First 38 of Rick Gormley, won first prize. The winner of the Sun General Insurance Trophy for the most first places was presented to *Blue Peter* and the Absolute Properties Trophy for the best overall boat went to *Sleeper*.

The dates for the next Valentine's Regatta are February 14th through February 16th, 2020.

Visit www.jhycantigua.com for the full race results.

New Format a Hit at Round Martinique Regatta

The Round Martinique Regatta (February 8th through 10th) featured tight racing for the finish in Fort de France. Following three days of intense competition, the Round Martinique Crédit Mutuel AG concluded with four class winners. All of them completed "Round Rock", the 22-mile race between Ste. Anne and Fort de France, in



which the 26-knot winds challenged the crews. Each race group was able to compete in a variety of inshore races and an exciting coastal race. This, a new format, was very successful.

In the Racing Class, *GFA Caraïbes*, the J/111 skippered by Nicolas Gillet won first prize. Tristan Marmousez with *La Morigane* led the Surprise Class. The Racing/Cruising Class was won by *Foxy's* with Max Volny-Anne at the helm. In the Cruising Class, Ludovic Jdrzejowski's *Valentin Lindor* took first.

Organized by the Yacht Club of Martinique with the support of three yacht clubs and two associations, the Round Martinique Regatta is enjoyed by residents of neighboring islands, who are attracted by the mix of competition and fun.

Visit www.theroundmartinique.com/en/results.html for full results.

Records Broken at RORC Caribbean 600

The 11th RORC Caribbean 600, a 600-mile offshore race beginning and finishing in Antigua, started on February 24th. It attracted a diverse fleet with 76 teams from 21 countries and crews from six continents.

—Continued on next page



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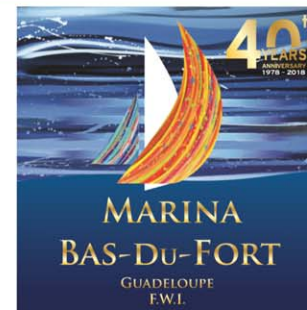
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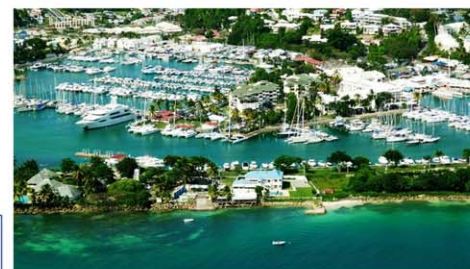
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David and Peter Askew's US-based Volvo 70 team, racing *Wizard*, won the RORC Caribbean 600 Trophy for the best corrected time under IRC. John Gallagher's Gunboat 62 *Chim Chim*, also of the USA, received the Multihull Prize for the best corrected time under MOCRA. Catherine Pourre's French Class40, *Earendil*, raised the



ARTHUR DANIEL

Class40 Rum Barrel for the second time, winning the Class40 division which this year had a record entry.

Maserati Multi 70 skippered by Giovanni Soldini of Italy crossed the finish line in an elapsed time of 1 day, 06 hours 49 minutes and 00 seconds, taking Multihull Line honours and setting a new Multihull Race Record. Jason Carroll's MOD70 *Argo* of the USA also beat the previous record, but finished the race just seven minutes behind *Maserati*. Forty-eight hours before the start, *Argo* capsized in training. A herculean effort got her back into the race, with both multihulls recording over 30 knots of boat speed. At Redonda, the final island of the course, *Argo* made a great tactical move to close the gap on *Maserati* and an intense match race ensued.

The overall winner of the MOCRA Class, John Gallagher, said, "My impression of the RORC Caribbean 600 is like it's an entire Caribbean racing season in two days of sailing!"

Ten teams, from France, Norway and Brazil, formed a race record entry for the Class40 Division. After two and a half days and nights of competition, it all came down to just a few minutes. *Earendil* won Line Honours for the Class40 Division for the second year in a row.

IRC Zero accounted for the top three yachts overall under IRC. *Wizard* was first,

with two British based yachts filling the podium: The Botin 52 *Tala* was second, with the Ker 46 *Lady Mariposa*, skippered by Nigel King, in third. The Baltic-built *Nikata* was the winner of the Superyacht Class.

Gibb Kane's Swan 66, *Bounty*, of the USA was victorious in IRC One. Scarlet Oyster won IRC Two, this is the sixth class win for the Oyster 48 and the seventh for her British skipper Ross Applebey. *Scarlet Oyster* was also the winner of CSA 2.

Visit <http://caribbean600.rorc.org> for more information and full results.

Whistler 'Most Worthy' at St. Maarten Heineken

The 39th annual St. Maarten Heineken Regatta took place from February 28th through March 3rd, with more than 1,500 sailors from over 22 countries. The prize for Most Worthy Performance Overall was presented to Peter Lewis's J/105, *Whistler*, of Barbados.

In the Inshore Class, sailing in the lagoon in Jeanneau 20s, *Miss Guided* won overall, helmed by Rein Kootenai, who has sailed in 38 of the 39 St. Maarten Heineken Regattas.



LAURENS MOREL

In the Offshore Multihull class, the famous trimaran *Tryst*, helmed by Bernard Stoutenbeek, won with a clean sweep of first places. This is spectacular form for a boat that has been wrecked and rebuilt seven times after hurricanes.

CSA Class 4 was won by *Whistler*, which took the bullet on the last day to win the class overall. In CSA Class 3, *Touch2Play*'s first place on the last day gave her the overall podium spot.

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Pamela Baldwin's J/122, *Liquid*, and Ross Applebey's Oyster 48, *Scarlet Oyster*, ended up with equal points, resulting in *Liquid* coming second overall and *Scarlet Oyster* third.

Ocean Racing 1 class was dominated by the Volvo Open 70 *I Love Poland*. See Chelsea Pyne's first-hand report on page 20, and visit www.heinekenregatta.com for more information and full results.

ON THE HORIZON

Bequia's Easter Regatta Good to Go!

The Bequia Sailing Club, organizer of Bequia's Easter Regatta, welcomes participating yachts, crews, supporters, and visitors to our "Island of Clouds" for the 38th annu-



al Easter Regatta, running from April 19th through April 22nd. After Vincy Mas, this is the biggest and most prestigious tourist event in the Grenadine islands, with a combination of exciting yachting and local Bequia double-ender racing over four full days, from Good Friday to Easter Monday. Based at the bayside Plantation Hotel, the regatta runs in conjunction with various on-shore family events and parties across the island, including the Hairouna Film Festival — St. Vincent & the Grenadines' first-ever film festival.

Pre-registration is open with a last opportunity to get a waiver of clearance charges for pre-registrations before April 12th.

Visit www.bequiaregatta.com for more information.

10th Voiles de St. Barth Next Month

The 10th edition of Les Voiles de St. Barth begins April 14th, with classes for Maxis, Spinnakers, Multihulls and Melges 24s. To support the event's increasing popularity among the Maxis, organizers François Tolède and Luc Poupon have endorsed the switch from the CSA (Caribbean Sailing Association) rule to the IRC rule, an international race rule recognized by World Sailing.

The event will welcome new entries this year, including *Fling 16*, Irvine Laidlaw's Botin 56 launched last October and seen on the racecourse for the first time in the St Maarten Heineken Regatta 2019; *The Kid*, the JPK54 which will be skippered by Jean-Pierre Dick, double champion of the Barcelona World Race and four-time winner of the Transat Jacques Vabre in IMOCA; *Ambersail 2*, the VOR65 helmed by Rokas Milevicius, the only Lithuanian to have participated in the Volvo Ocean Race to date; and *Chim Chim*, the Gunboat 62 sailed by John Gallagher, recent multihull champion in the Caribbean RORC 600.

Visit www.lesvoillesdesaintbarth.com/us for more information.

Fun for All at Antigua Sailing Week

Antigua Sailing Week, now in its 52nd year, offers one of the best sailing regattas in the Caribbean. Key changes to racing at the 2019 edition include two new classes, four new racing marks, and information about ASW Minimum Safety Rules. The new



classes will be the Double Handed Class and the High Performance Class. The new marks will facilitate longer-leg coastal courses and improve options for windward leeward legs for all classes.

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PAUL WYETH / WWW.PWPICTURES.COM

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Palma – Ft. Lauderdale November 2019

Mediterranean – Caribbean

Palma – St Thomas October 2019

Palma – Martinique November 2019

Genoa – Martinique November 2019

E. Coast US – Caribbean

Ft. Lauderdale – St Thomas November 2019

Caribbean – E. Coast US

Martinique – Ft. Lauderdale November 2019

Martinique – Ft. Lauderdale December 2019

US. E Coast – Mediterranean

Ft. Lauderdale – Genoa September 2019

Ft. Lauderdale – Palma September 2019

Ft. Lauderdale – Genoa October 2019

Ft. Lauderdale – Palma November 2019

Caribbean/ E. Coast US – South Pacific

Martinique – Gofitito Costa Rica, Papeete Tahiti, Auckland NZ and Brisbane AUS December 2019

Ft. Lauderdale - Gofitito Costa Rica, Papeete Tahiti, Auckland NZ and Brisbane AUS December 2019

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This year, April 27th through May 3rd, Antigua Sailing Week also brings experiences for fun-loving non-sailors. Visitors can catch the excitement of the races with hikes along Carpenter's Rock, the Pillars of Hercules, and the historic Shirley Heights Lookout, which offer amazing vantage points. "Chase the Race" sea excursions allow spectators to get on the water. Aboard a catamaran, chasers get in on the on-the-water action while enjoying music, drinks, and lunch.

By night, the highlight of the week is "Reggae in the Park", an international reggae concert in historic Nelson's Dockyard, where many of the competing boats line the marina wall. Caribbean entertainment is provided in the company of an international crowd to the backdrop of the Copper and Lumber Historic Inn and the old Officers Quarters in the UNESCO World Heritage Site of Nelson's Dockyard.

Visit www.sailingweek.com for more information.

Registration Open for Salty Dawg Cruising Rally

The nonprofit Salty Dawg Sailing Association (SDSA) has opened registration for its Spring Rally from the Virgin Islands to the US. Three additional Salty Dawg rallies in 2019 can be entered as well.

The Spring Rally will depart on May 4th from Crown Bay Marina, Charlotte Amalie, St. Thomas, USVI, heading to Hampton, Virginia (or other ports on the US east coast) or to Bermuda. Pre-departure activities begin on May 1st.

"The Spring Rally is made up of a diverse group of sailors including North American cruisers returning after a season in the Caribbean, as well as European cruisers continuing their 'Atlantic Circle' and looking forward to a summer on the Eastern Seaboard. This rally is a great way to meet other cruisers, and to sail offshore in company," said Rick Palm, SDSA Director of Rally Management.

The Spring Rally will feature weather routing services by Chris Parker of Marine Weather Center, online tracking on the Salty Dawg 'Follow the Fleet' web link hosted by OCENS, shoreside coordination and communication by experienced Salty Dawg volunteers, a twice-daily SSB Net facilitating communication among the boats in the fleet, a cruise-in-company support system where veteran participants offer advice and counsel to others, and a low entry fee thanks to the support of over 40 sponsors and dozens of experienced cruisers volunteering their time.

In addition, those leaving from Crown Bay Marina will benefit from daily pre-departure weather briefings with group discussions, a departure party, happy hour social events, and discounts on dockage and marine services. For the first time, the SDSA will be holding destination activities in Hampton, Virginia to celebrate successful completion of the passage.

The SDSA also opened registration for the following 2019 rallies: the Salty Dawg Rally to Maine, scheduled to depart the Chesapeake Bay on July 7th, the Salty Dawg Rally to Nova Scotia, departing Rockland, Maine on August 4th, and the Salty Dawg Fall Rally to the Caribbean, starting with pre-departure events on October 26th in Hampton, Virginia, and leaving on November 2nd.

With an emphasis on safety, communication, education, and camaraderie, over 700 boats and more than 3,000 sailors have participated in Salty Dawg rallies since the organization was founded in 2011.

Visit www.saltydawgsailing.org for more information.

Foxy's Wooden Boat Regatta is Back!

Foxy Callwood of Jost van Dyke, British Virgin Islands announces the return of the

Wooden Boat Regatta, along with a Classics Class. On May 25th and 26th, the Loyal West End Yacht Club will be hosted by Foxy's Tamarind Bar in Great Harbour, for a Memorial Day Weekend full of sailing, fun, and music. All wooden boats are welcome and encouraged to compete, as are all classics or 'spirit' class vessels.

Visit www.facebook.com/Foxy'sBVI or contact westendyachtclub@gmail.com for more information.

YOUTH SAILING NEWS

BVI Teen Sailor in Hempel World Cup Series

Thad Lettsome of the British Virgin Islands placed 88th in Round Two of the Hempel World Cup Series 2019 in Miami, USA on February 2nd. Round Three will be held in Italy on April 14th, and the Finals take place in France on June 2nd.

Competing in his first elite regatta at 16 years of age, Lettsome raced in a fleet of 101 Lasers (the equipment used at the Olympic Games), among Olympic medalists and world champions. Conditions were tricky throughout the regatta with storms whipping through the course areas and dramatic wind shifts.

The qualifying series consisted of four races over two days before the fleet was divided into gold and silver fleets. Lettsome posted consistent results with his best finish in 39th position. Assigned to the silver fleet, he went on to impress with outstanding scores in races 8 and 9 when he claimed seventh and fifth place.



With a respectable overall position of 88th, Lettsome takes home valuable experience from his first top-level senior regatta. His next challenges include the Hempel Youth Sailing World Championships in Poland in July.

The Hempel World Cup Series is the annual series of Olympic sailing events for elite and professional sailors. The multi-class regattas attract the best of the best with this year's Miami event listing entries including 2016 Olympic gold medalist Tom Burton from Australia and bronze medalist Sam Meech from New Zealand.

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The First All-Black Team to Row the Atlantic:

ANTIGUA ISLAND GIRLS

by Erin Carey

As the first all-black team to row across the Atlantic Ocean, the women had good reason to boast. However, they were surprisingly nonchalant. Completing the Talisker Whisky Atlantic Challenge, dubbed "The World's Toughest Row", the four-some departed from San Sebastian in the Canary Islands and arrived at English Harbour, Antigua almost seven weeks later. Their vessel, a 25-foot, two-cabin, self-righting rowboat, was far from standard, with a watermaker, autopilot, automatic



bilge pumps, GPS, VHF, and AIS. It sounded like something more akin to a yacht, minus the sails and motor. Yet, with an open cockpit in which they rowed, and tiny living quarters at each end, they were constantly exposed to the elements in cringe-worthy conditions.

Elvira Bell, Christal Clashing, Samara Emanuel and Kevinia Francis rowed nonstop for 47 days, 8 hours and 25 minutes. A mind-boggling 1.5 million strokes. Crossing the finish line on January 28th, a day declared by the Prime Minister of Antigua & Barbuda as a national holiday, the women were met by thousands of admiring fans. Schools were closed for the afternoon, and people finished work early to welcome the iconic team. Helicopters circled overhead, and news reporters flocked to Nelson's Dockyard, hoping to get the scoop. Arriving 13th out of 28 boats, the girls finished strong. However, they didn't achieve their goal of being the first all-female team to cross the finish line and seemed obviously disappointed about it.

"We definitely thought of it as a race. We are disappointed that we didn't accomplish our race goal. Unfortunately, we were the third female team to finish," said Samara Emanuel, 33. With a team of onshore supporters reporting the weather via satellite phone, the ladies decided to take a more southerly route. While they had good winds for a week and a half of their journey, after that time the winds died out completely. They described the daily struggle they faced, rowing against tides and swells, the water feeling as thick as mud. "Because it didn't play out as we'd hoped, we actually rowed a lot more miles than other teams, added Elvira Bell, 37. The teams in previous years had much faster conditions, we expected to be home in five weeks, not seven!"

—Continued on next page

Top right: Left to right, Samara, Elvira, Kevinia and Christal
Above: Crowds came to see the Island Girls row home; their arrival was a national holiday

Wearing matching uniforms and standing in a neat row, quite coincidentally I'm sure, the Island Girls looked as though they were about to receive their medals at the Olympic Games. I approached them and smiled as I introduced myself. Their firm, calloused hands shook mine, and I was immediately reminded of the fact that, despite living on a boat, I really needed to toughen up. Before our interview could even begin, an older couple spotted the homegrown heroes and they were bombarded with questions and praise. "How did you sleep?" asked the lady; "Did you have a motor?" asked the man. The fact was, during the race, these ladies didn't sleep more than 45 minutes at a time, and they most definitely did not have a motor or any form of propulsion besides oars. Oars that they pushed and pulled themselves, rowing across the Atlantic Ocean for 3,000 grueling miles.

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AB INFLATABLES

LARGE STOCK




—Continued from previous page

So how did these four women come to row across the Atlantic Ocean in a glorified canoe, and was it the hardest thing they have ever done? Christal Clashing, 28, a former Olympian swimmer, represented Antigua & Barbuda in Athens at the 2004 Olympic Games, citing that as her toughest challenge to date. Kevinia Francis, 40, the captain of the rowing team, is also a professional cyclist and black belt karate champion — she found both of those achievements more challenging to accomplish. “For me the trip wasn’t as tough as I expected; after a while, I got into a groove. The toughest part was waking every two hours.” Samara, the first female ship captain on the island, added, “At times it was really challenging but it still wasn’t as bad as I anticipated. We prepared ourselves both mentally and physically very well.”

When the Prime Minister put the call out for an all-woman team, the four women, some of whom did not know each other previously, found themselves being nominated by friends and family. Kevinia disregarded the challenge at first — after all, she wasn’t a strong swimmer and didn’t like the water — but the advice she had given her personal-training clients echoed in her ears. “The very things people use as excuses can actually be used as reasons for doing something. Fears shouldn’t stop you from accomplishing great things. You can accomplish anything, even if it’s not your forte, so that’s what I wanted to prove,” she said.

In search of adventure, the team wanted to inspire and encourage other women to dream big. Raising money for their chosen charity, Cottage of Hope, the Island Girls hoped they would become role models for the youngsters their charity helped, girls who have been abused, neglected or orphaned. However, perhaps the greatest significance of all was the fact that these four Antiguan women would be retracing the steps of their ancestors, crossing the very ocean that millions of African men, women, and children had traversed centuries ago under inhumane conditions: a tortuous journey in sailing ships. But the Island Girls weren’t crossing the ocean for a fate of slavery; they were doing it of their own free will.

Rowing around the clock, the women worked in two-hour shifts, getting no more than 45 minutes’ sleep at any one time. In cramped conditions, they slept, ate, bathed and used the toilet, or should I say bucket, in one another’s company. Surviving on dehydrated meals and protein shakes, the girls kicked themselves for not packing enough chocolate. “Based on last year’s timing, we expected to complete the journey much faster than we actually did,” said Kevinia. Given the design of their vessel, leaving their designated area would unbalance the boat and risk capsizing it; therefore, every move they made had to be done with thought and awareness.

Suffering seasickness for the first 72 hours, Elvira was worried she was going to end the journey for her teammates before they had barely begun. Unable to eat anything or even hold down water, the shore support crew and a team of doctors gave her 12 hours for the sickness to subside. She described those 12 hours as her absolute lowest point. Elvira was determined not to let her crew down, and as a testament to her will and strength, she pulled out all the stops to overcome her sickness. “There was no way I was going to give up. We had so much riding on our shoulders: all the sponsorship, the people of our island, our charity, and women of color. There was no way I was going to let all of those people down.”

Using food bribes to keep themselves motivated, the girls laughed that while Samara longed for KFC, Elvira was craving “pea balls”, a vegetarian meatball substitute. Music also helped them across the line, as did personal challenges such as seeing who could row the most miles each day. With a suspected UFO sighting, hundreds of man-o-war jellyfish, vivid dreams, a night rainbow, massive pods of dolphins and a solar eclipse, the four girls didn’t seem short for topics of conversation, still chatting away at our table despite all the time they had spent together. Yet, when morale was low, they would pull out letters from home, providing the encouragement they needed to keep rowing.

Perhaps the toughest time of the trip was when their autopilot failed towards the end, requiring the ladies to hand steer 24 hours a day. “We were getting thrown around and smashed from side to side as the waves slammed into us. We couldn’t hold onto anything solid while also holding the ropes that steered the boat. That was

by far the toughest part, both mentally and physically,” explained Kevinia. Then, out of nowhere, the quartet encountered a rogue wave that saw them very nearly capsize. They were thrown from their bunks and rowing stations and slammed into the safety rails. “From that moment on, none of us could relax,” recalled Kevinia, as she recounted their frightening experience. “It was pitch black dark, and we weren’t expecting it, it wasn’t even a windy night. We just wanted to get home after that,” she added.

Having trained in the gym for five or six days a week, the girls spoke of the sacrifices they had made to achieve their goal. Not only did they miss out on time with



The team rowed their 25-foot, self-righting rowboat for 47 days, 8 hours and 25 minutes, a mind-boggling 1.5 million strokes

their families, but they also had to take leave without pay from their jobs. Luckily their eight and a half months of training prepared the team well, even though the farthest they had ever rowed before the race was 90 miles, around the island of Antigua. Interestingly, the team trained for 12 months less than their fellow Antiguan all-male counterparts, who competed in the same race in the years prior — evidence of these incredible ladies’ strength and vigor.

It was little surprise to hear them unanimously agree that crossing the finish line was the absolute high point of their journey. So, what advice can the team offer those hoping to complete an enormous challenge? “Anything is achievable. Do your research. Make sacrifices, because you will need to make sacrifices. Be prepared and go for it. Don’t be deterred when times get tough; just getting to the start line will be one of the biggest challenges,” said Kevinia.

Time will tell, but I have a distinct feeling a second ocean row might be in the cards for this resolute bunch, just going by Samara’s casual remark, “Could we do it again? Yes. Would we do it again — you’ll have to wait and see.”

Visit www.taliskerwhiskyatlanticchallenge.com for more information on the Talisker Whisky Atlantic Challenge.

Visit www.facebook.com/teamantiguaislandgirls for more information on Team Antigua Island Girls.

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HULL, YEAH! THE NEXT BIG REGATTA

by Chelsea Pyne

I want to have a word with whoever created sailing terminology. I still consider myself a lightly salted seadog, and nautical jargon could cut some slack for us beginners. Who decided to place the jib, genoa, and genneker next to each other? We couldn't have come up with a few more easily distinguishable words? Geez!

As always, practice makes perfect, and the first annual Caribbean Multihull Challenge (CMC) gave me the opportunity to get all my terms in line (or is it rope?). It was the third regatta in my life, and during the previous two I mostly sat politely out of the way, so I was delighted to have a role. Of course, I'm still in the "You want me to do what? Are you sure? What's that again?" mind-frame. I'm terribly confused when it comes to sailing. It's a slow process of getting over a fear of not knowing what's going on. But as I found out through this CMC regatta, the boat will explain itself — pay close attention and follow the lines!

St. Maarten hosted the Caribbean Multihull Challenge on February 8th, 9th, and 10th. It was the perfect occasion to get my muscle memory activated for the regattas to come. I hopped aboard *Liquid Spirit*, a Neel 45 captained by Marco Brocken and named after Gregory Porter's song. (If you haven't heard it, search for "Gregory Porter, Liquid Spirit", listen and enjoy.) Our trimaran was a beauty; in fact, I've never been on such a nice boat — and I've never been trusted so much to make things happen. It was a feeling of nervous pride. We were in the Cruising Class, one of the few boats that doubled as a home. The pressure was heavy; if I were to mess up, I could cost this man more than his boat. Still, our pre-race giddiness took over and all that mattered was filling the sails.

Our competition, may I add, was topnotch. All crews were comprised of men and women who know how to race. Many of the sailors were local to St. Maarten and were thrilled to launch the island's month-long regatta season in multihull fashion. There were 15 boats total, with three racing classes.



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The CMC is meant to become the premiere multihull regatta in the Caribbean. Robbie Ferron, the man behind the idea, told me that this regatta proved something important: multihulls aren't just comfortable boats — they sail and race just as well, if not better, than monohulls. Cats and trimarans are becoming increasingly popular. The island itself has seen a large contingent of multihulls that run the gamut from those built for pure comfort to those built for speed.

Not only is this unique regatta concept exciting for sailors and partiers alike, there is a special history in St. Maarten of multihull sailing. Famous boatbuilder Peter Spronk sparked the multihull revolution back in the 1970s.

—Continued on next page



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—Continued from previous page

Spronk was one of the first to build advanced catamarans in the Caribbean, and his boatyard was located across from where the Sint Maarten Yacht Club stands today. Paying homage to the progression of our maritime history, the CMC is adding on to what Spronk started almost 50 years ago.

In fact, the race's organizers' goal is to raise the bar and make this regatta equivalent to the monohull grand prix. (And I was going to be right in the thick of it, of course.) Steering Committee Chairman Petro Jonker explained how this race was



Fujin, the St. Croix-built 53-foot Bieker catamaran named for the Japanese god of wind, topped Class A

designed with multiple-hulled sailboats in mind. "We have long start lines with reaching starts, which requires a different set of skills to normal windward starts. This also makes for safer sailing, as multihulls are not as quick to tack or bear away as monohulls," Petro said.

"This event welcomes every multihull sailor, from Gunboats, Lagoons, Leopards and Fountaine Pajot to Spronk boats, catamarans to trimarans. The whole idea is to offer creative races that put a smile on every sailor's face. Combine that with post-racing events and this will become a real hit in the Caribbean racing circuit," he added.

And we've long heard of the debates between sailors who would never set foot on a catamaran and those who'd never go back to one hull. So it's interesting to see the new energy behind the multihull movement. It just so happens that I've recently made the change myself, switching from a CSY 44 (still for sale) to a Seawind 1160. I've jumped on board the multihull train for a more spacious and level cruising life. (Of course, I also want a boat that sails well — even if I don't understand exactly why it does.)

The CMC was the crash course I needed to get into the multihull swing of things. The three days of racing came and went in the blink of an eye. *Liquid Spirit* had a motley crew for sure. Captain Marco and his wife Katie hailed from Holland, plus we had a 13-year-old sailing student, a Frenchman and a German-man. We had our first mate bail on us after we didn't place on the podium. (Another opportunity for me to rise in the ranks!) So we welcomed his departure as a way for us to lighten our load and keep going.

On Day One I had the most work on the winches. I was not as quick as I'd hoped to

be, and a little awkward at that, but I got the job done. And I worked hard to do so. (I like to think that we didn't receive second-to-last place because of my noodle arms.)

The second day started with thunder and lightning. Heavy dark clouds sent gusts and rain our way. But our course set us in the opposite direction to St. Barths, and we were able to have a day of perfect conditions. Class A and Class B left Simpson Bay bound towards St. Barths and a rounding of Groupers Rocks, while Class C sailed a shorter track around the small island of Molly Beday on St. Maarten's south-eastern coast. We rounded St. Maarten's southern tip, gave a quick wave to Gustavia, and returned to Simpson Bay with time to spare. First across the line! A big step up from Day One's result. Yet when it came to prize time, we did not even make bronze on the podium. (Although we did receive an honorable mention, sigh.) I wonder if it had to do with our relentless pestering of the committee boat earlier that day? Since we had finished at noon, we thought it only made sense for the committee to hold a second race.

"Committee boat, this is *Liquid Spirit*. Why not push back the party till six and get in another race? It's what we came here to do."

"*Liquid Spirit*, that is something we'd have to discuss with the beach bar; we're unable to comply."

The organizers wanted us promptly at the beach, ready for the oh-so exciting crab race! They came all the way from Anguilla, you know. For a hermit crab, that's about as exhausting as *Fujin's* crew flying in from Seattle. (Now that we know, next time we'll be more considerate than to interfere with the crabs' schedule. I'm sure it's packed.)

A great day of sailing and a disappointing result only fueled us to return the next morning ready to win. Unfortunately, we misread the course and went around the wrong side of the mark. So we sailed an easy race and placed second across the line — just happy for the ideal sailing conditions. Although the crew felt a little rusty during the regatta, it did get us in the racing spirit. Regattas take just as much mental preparedness as physical.

Overall, it was a great weekend to grease our sea legs and gain some confidence. Building a little muscle on my arms will go a long way as high season picks up.

Next year's Caribbean Multihull Challenge will take place February 14th through 16th, giving multihull sailors a great warm-up for the Heineken Regatta to follow.

Visit www.smyc.com/caribbean-multihull-challenge for more information.

Caribbean Multihull Challenge 2019 Winners

Class A

- 1) *Fujin*, Bieker 53, Greg Slyngstad, USA
- 2) *R-SIX*, HH 66, Robert Szustkowski, Poland
- 3) *Shooting Star*, Melvin & Morelli 50, Jonathan Hyde, USA

Class B

- 1) *Arawak*, Joubert-Nivelt 52, Rodney Williams, St. Maarten
- 2) *Tryst*, Dick Newick, Bernard Stoutenbeek, St. Maarten
- 3) *Le Tri*, Montaubin, Fabrice Maitre, France

Class C

- 1) *Kids at Sea*, Leopard 45, Garth Steyn, St. Maarten
- 2) *Seaduction*, Leopard 47, Petro Jonker, St. Maarten
- 3) *Primula*, Fountaine Pajot Belize 43, Ron Teule, Canada



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Learning How to Have 'SERIOUS FUN'

by Chelsea Pyne

I knew I was going to like my fellow crewmembers when I heard it took them three hours to clear in. The Immigration officer asked if they came into the Simpson Bay lagoon through the bridge, to which they responded, "No, we took the tunnel." What better way to start out a fun weekend in St. Maarten? "Always be nice to Customs and Immigration" was the first mental note I made upon meeting the team. Participating in a regatta teaches you a wide array of lessons. Other than understanding how the race actually works, you also learn networking, cooperation, and speech and debate skills. How well do you perform under pressure? How smart are your comebacks when dealing with older men who think they're funny? You must be quick on your feet and mentally prepared for more than just racing. The saltier you are, the better.

This year we celebrated the 39th Annual St. Maarten Hangover Regatta. Excuse me, Heineken Regatta, aboard a Beneteau Oceanis 41. Four days of sailing, drinking, dancing, and sunbathing, with the motto "Serious Fun". There were over 22 countries represented, 114 boats, 1,500 sailors, and 230 volunteers working from 6:00AM to 3:00AM. Most importantly this year — we had wind. After the first day of racing, Race Director Paul Miller announced, "The conditions were absolutely sparkling. The best starts I've seen in my life." I knew this year would be special.

My boat, Team Nai'a, was captained by Bob Beltrano and the crew was composed of men with great sailing knowledge. I was a bit of an outlier. But I was ready to become a sailing machine under their guidance. They spoke of ebbing tides, moon-rise, current wind speeds at 30,000 feet... things I've never even considered! Luckily for me, they were an easygoing crew who didn't want to wring the fun out of every race. However, I was thinking pretty seriously about placing first. I had been taking protein shakes a month before the regatta, in case I needed to play heroine if the opportunity presented itself. Instead, I spent four days crawling across the deck, using my 120 pounds for hiking out. (It made all the difference though, I'm sure.) Which brings up another question: why on earth couldn't I find padded sailing shorts?! I was constantly skimming the water to snatch out sea sponges so I could stuff them into my pants. Thankfully, after Day Three, my bum was rubbed raw enough that I couldn't feel anything — but sorrow. Another reason the mid-race Heinekens were always a welcomed distraction. Funny to have thought that sailing would make me strong, when in fact, I became a bit squishy.

Team Nai'a was in the CSA 4 class, competing against 14 others. My fellow crewmembers were great in helping explain headers, lifts, laylines, and so on. Still, I have some technical questions that need answering. Why are the radios inaudible? It's

2019, people! All I can make out are crackling sounds. I'm the one in charge of the countdown for our start and I can't keep track of who says what. Second, why are all the pins orange? At this point, I expect holograms to appear over the water with the correct number. Many times we couldn't find the mark in the waves, or we would get confused with other race pins. The fishing traps were also orange, which indeed made things "#seriousfun". My favorite bit, which my team could not explain to me, was why the committee set up the racecourse the way they did. As I heard over the radio madness, "The green triangle is described as an orange rectangle. 34 green. 10 green. 36 red." Racing may never make sense to me.



But I did learn one thing that I will forever hold dear: how to catch a chicken. It's funny, because this came up recently during the 2018 Course de l'Alliance and it was a big problem for me. I wasn't able to sleep thanks to the Anguillian roosters cockle-doodle-dooing all night long. I found out you just need three things: a bowl of rice, rum, and a box of Heinekens. This is how it works. Pour the rum into the bowl of rice. Invite the chickens and roosters to feast. While the birds get tipsy, you may join the fun and drink the beers. After they retire in their drunken stupor, pick them up and put them in the empty box. Carry them across a bridge and leave the woozy chickens to their hangovers. Chickens will never cross a bridge, so your problem is now on the other side. And that is a great synopsis of how Team Nai'a deals with life's hurdles. (But no animal cruelty, of course!)

On the topic of drinking, I suppose it'd be good to mention the other side of the regatta. But because I'm another year older and my spirit is slowly fading out, I missed the first three nights of music. Last year I appeared on stage as Taco Girl; this year I limped home by eight o'clock. But I did make sure to see the big Sunday "Legendary" finale. After Orange Grove, our biggest and brightest local band, opened for The Jacksons, I was surprised to see the smooth moves of Tito, Jackie, and Marlon.

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Even more surprised to hear the high-pitched vocals that indeed sounded like Michael. The biggest shock, however, was the lack of microphone. Incredibly, we could not hear Marlon sing. The backup singers were coming through, but the main vocals fizzled out. Using the power of my pink press pass, I sprinted backstage and spoke with a sound engineer. He told me The Jacksons rent the equipment from his company, but use their own sound people. I'm thinking, "Okay great. Go tell those people we can't hear him." Unfortunately, he told me — with a bit of an attitude — he can't talk to The Jacksons' people. Of course I'm distraught by the politics, but also by the fact it was my last and only night to party. I begged him. "Just switch his mic! It's so simple!" Nada. I moped back to where the common people dance and sipped my mojito in vain.



The 2019 St. Maarten Heineken Regatta delivered an action-packed for days



LAURENS MOREL (2)

Although Team Nai'a placed tenth out of 15 in our class, and I may not have danced as long as I had hoped, the 2019 St. Maarten Heineken Regatta delivered an action-packed four days. Sailing is "a bit of a miserable sport", as one of the regatta's founders said, and I'm still getting my bearings to figure out if racing is for me. I love the salty atmosphere and the people who come together to celebrate sailing, but I also understand why there must be parties after the regatta. The pressure, the miscommunication, the stress, the bruises — it's all counterbalanced by beers and live music.

It's not easy pulling off a world-class event on a small island that is still reeling from the 2017 hurricane season. The fact that people came from all over the world (most notably Poland) to participate is an ode to how unique this regatta is.

The 40th annual St. Maarten Heineken Regatta will take place March 5th through 8th 2020. I've heard rumors that Heineken will spare no expense for the Big 4-0, so expect hologram markers, audible radio tech, fully charged microphones, intense competition, ideal sailing conditions, and more!

Visit Heinekenregatta.com for full 2019 results and more information about next year's 40th anniversary event.



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Carlos Aguilar Event Matches Foreign Competitors with Local Youth

Youth2Adult — Y2A — is a series of articles celebrating sailing's role in youth development for Caribbean children.

"I felt proud as I watched our Marine Vocational Program students climb comfortably aboard the boats and immediately become racing team members — their ease to integrate showed me that they have become real boaters," says CEO of the Marine



Members of the Boys and Girl Club of St. Thomas had the opportunity to sail with world-class racers

Right: Team ISV for a day — maybe more

Vocational Program (MVP) in St. Thomas, Jimmy Loveland. Collaborating with the Boys and Girls Club of St. Thomas and the Carlos Aguilar Match Race (CAMR) regatta organizers, they advance sailing development and marine vocational training with St. Thomas and St. John disadvantaged youth. Occurring each fall for the last ten years in St. Thomas, the two-day, high-level match race event has evolved to include hands-on experiences for local youth. As part of the overall event, the one-day CAMR Youth Regatta 2018 saw local girls, boys and young adults sailing with visiting yachtswomen from France, Great Britain, the Netherlands, Sweden and the USA who were competing in the Women's International Match Racing Series hosted by the Carlos Aguilar Match Race.

Match racing is sailed in two identical boats around a short course, providing fast action close to the crowds on shore. The intense racing is just as exciting for the spectators as it is strategically, tactically and physically challenging for the competing crews, and the CAMR courses, right off the Charlotte Amalie waterfront, provide excellent viewing.

"Students of the Marine Vocational Program and members of the Boys & Girls Club St. Thomas/St. John have learned that sailing a boat calls for quick action, a blend of feeling the wind and water as well as with the very heart and soul of the boat itself. Sailing has taught our students alertness and courage, and gives back a joyousness and peace that other sports cannot offer. They raise the sails with strong hands and go after the opportunities that arise in life at sea. They are not a drop in the ocean but are the ocean in a drop."

— Jacqueline Brown, Director of the Boys & Girls Club St. Thomas/St. John

History of Carlos Aguilar Match Race

From carlosaguilarmatchrace.com: While the memory of Carlos Aguilar is embedded in the hearts of family and friends, it will forever be inscribed on the Caribbean Sea. It is there that his mentoring is played out again and again by the young sailors he counseled and loved. Since his death in October 2007, they continue to sail themselves to new heights and undoubtedly will pass down his nautical wisdom to their own children one day.

For Carlos, there could be no better tribute. Sailing was in his blood. As a young boy growing up in El Salvador, he spent many a weekend sailing on a nearby lake. His competitive spirit came from his father, who sailed for El Salvador in the 1968 Olympics.

Carlos found himself in the Virgin Islands after graduating from college in Kansas with a degree in architecture. He answered an ad from an architectural firm on St. Thomas, and decades later, the island remained his home.

Friends appreciated his generosity and attention, often expressed through his tal-

ents as someone unusually clever with his hands and gifted with keen instincts. Bill Canfield will never forget Carlos pushing aside Bill's efforts to remodel his home, changing the dwelling into one that truly made sense for a person of limited mobility. Just days after Carlos died, Beth and Bruce Marshall moved into the home he had designed for them, finding carefully placed notes on exactly how they should use their space.

To many, Carlos was a quiet presence — an enigma — dignified, handsome in his polo and khakis, always willing to return a smile, respond hello — but never one to insinuate himself or spend his conversation on casual acquaintances. He stayed in the background. Except when it came to young people. He had a natural gift that endeared them to him. He was salty, and he challenged them. But he was kind, and always ready to have fun.

This regatta is a tribute to the type of sailing that Carlos most loved, and to the spirit and loyalty he engendered in those he touched. Here's to sailing, and to his mantra that friends and loved ones regarded as his signature wisdom: "Let it go."

The CAMR is a World Sailing (WS)-provisional Grade One event. The format features a full round robin of all teams followed by knockout quarterfinals for the top eight, then knockout semi-finals, petit-finals and finals. The event is sailed in the IC24, a modification of the J/24.

The CAMR is known internationally for introducing young sailors to the sport, working cooperatively with the US Virgin Islands' government and USVI Department of Tourism in its efforts to get more of the islands' youth out on the water. As such, the event hosts the CAMR Youth Regatta each year.

Carol Bareuther reported: "The 2018 Women's International Match Racing Series finale was held during the Carlos Aguilar Match Race in St. Thomas, USVI, from November 29th through December 2nd. Twelve teams — from France, Great Britain, the Netherlands, Sweden and the USA — participated. The WIM Series is the first

and only professional sailing series for women, hosted by the Women's International Match Racing Association (WIMRA) and joined by the world's leading women match racing sailors."

The Future

Bill Canfield, President of Virgin Islands Sailing Association: "The VI Sailing Association is extremely proud of the accomplishments of our junior sailors over the past two decades. We are now working hard to get more of the islands' youth to feel part of our events and get out on the water. As an island nation, we are behind some of our neighbors in this effort but feel it is an important part of our ongoing function to push each and every regatta to introduce a few new young faces to an on-the-water experience. It is our feeling that introducing our natural water environment to more and more local islanders may change their lives for the better. The Carlos Aguilar Match Race is proud to be part of that effort."



However, Canfield notes, "There is a core group of five or six of us that have been carrying the event since Day One. As a group, we decided to go out on top. It was a wonderful event for ten years." He stated that the event's organizers have come to an impasse related to obtaining the annual sponsorship required to run the event. No 2019 CAMR is scheduled.

Call to action: Is there any individual or organization poised to financially keep CAMR afloat?

Visit carlosaguilarmatchrace.com for more information on CAMR.

Visit bgcusvi.org for more information on the Boys and Girls Club of St. Thomas.

Ellen Birrell attributes her opportunity to cruise the Caribbean aboard S/V Boldly Go to life skills built in childhood in coastal southern California. Believing swimming and sailing, along with reading, writing, arithmetic, music and art, are essentials for island youth, she supports youth development through writing and networking. Reach her at ellenbirrell@gmail.com



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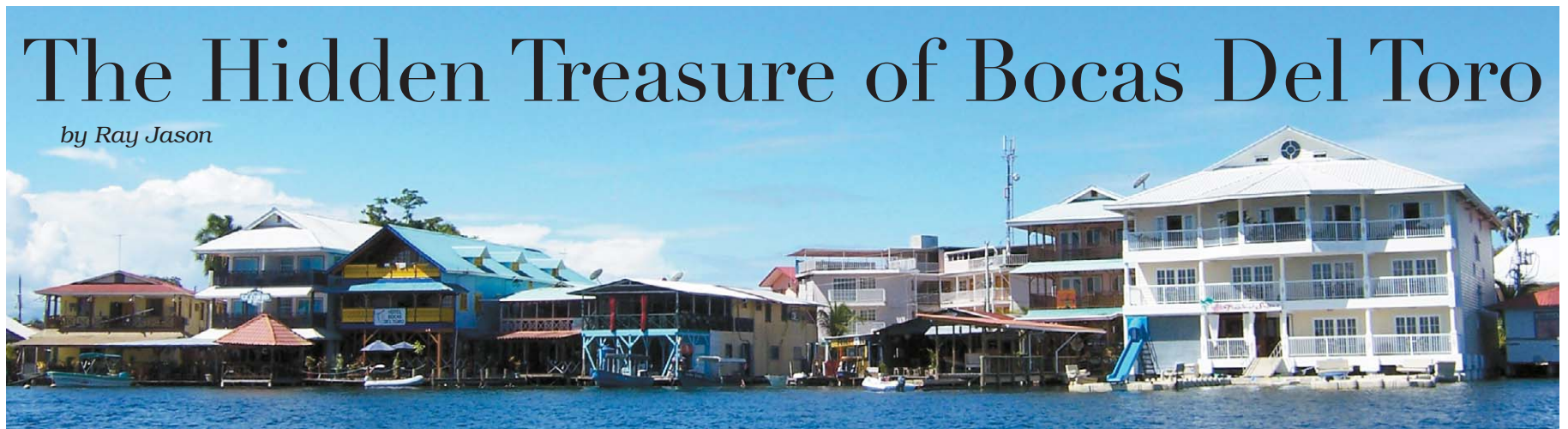
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The Hidden Treasure of Bocas Del Toro

by Ray Jason



Bocas del Toro is not just one of the destinations that attract savvy cruisers to the “undiscovered Caribbean”, it is the crown jewel of Panama’s magnificent coastline. In recent articles (see footnote) I have discussed the spectacular San Blas islands and then focused on the attractions centered on the Panama Canal region. Today I will introduce you to the area that has been my liveboard home for a decade.

Bocas del Toro is an archipelago of nine big islands and hundreds of small ones. Mingled among them are hundreds of pristine bays, and almost none of them have boats anchored in them. Even the two “crowded” spots only have about 20, which provides plenty of room to swing on the hook. And there are no “pay-by-the-day” moorings.

The islas themselves range from one-palm specks to large, high islands with little Indio villages. The backdrop to this splendid scenery is a high mountain range, dot-

fortunate, you might even hear the roar of a jaguar far up in the hills. If you don’t notice it, your on-board dog probably will. Some of the less intimidating local fauna includes zillions of wild parrots along with a few toucans and many tiny but colorful frogs.

The setting is so lightly touched by the modern world, that many cruisers have thrown out the hook and built homes in quiet coves and on hills with panoramic views. These are all self-sufficient, with solar electricity, water catchments and back-up generators for cloudy stretches. Only one of the islands actually has roads; and water taxis far outnumber their asphalt-bound siblings.

What makes this archipelago so superb for sailors is the fact that because of the way the islands are aligned, it creates an inland sea. So even when there is a good breeze blowing, there are no big, square waves. Plus, the various attractions are spread out in every compass direction. So, if you don’t want to sail upwind, you can just fall off and head for Dolphin Bay instead of Starfish Beach. Bocas is also well below the hurricane belt and well within the insurance belt.

Top: The trees are taller than most of the Bocas’ soaring skyline

Bottom Right: The author’s boat in a secluded Bocas cove

Below: A palapa restaurant near one of the out islands



ted with volcanoes, that stretches all the way from Alaska to Cape Horn. There are a sweet variety of beaches and many reefs to dive.

The flora in the neighborhood is Dramatic with a Capital D — full climax jungle where you will often be woken by the barks of howler monkeys. If you are really



There are three full-service marinas to choose from. My recommendation is Bocas Marina (www.bocasmarina.com), which has lots of champagne features at beer prices. The docks are floating concrete ones shipped in from the US. The water and electricity service is very reliable, and they provide free WiFi to each boat.

—Continued on next page

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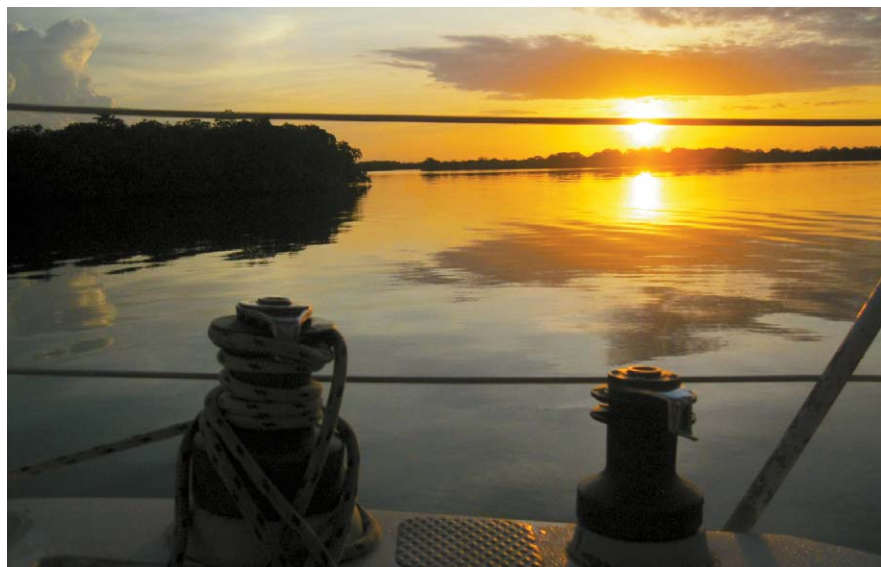
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—Continued from previous page

The bathrooms are sparkling clean and there are laundry services, propane filling and Marine Warehouse reps to help with shipping in boat parts. They also feature



Above: Sunrise in Bocas del Toro

Right: A cruisers' potluck at the Calypso Cantina

Below: Bocas Marina



an on-premises bar and restaurant called the Calypso Cantina. It is one of the last great cruisers' havens left anywhere, with excellent food and drink and weekly live music for free. It also hosts swap meets and potlucks and general low-grade mayhem.

Marina Carenero (www.careningcaymarina.com) offers an amazingly historic opportunity besides the usual amenities. That's because Christopher Columbus careened his fleet in that exact spot to clean his ships' bottoms on his final voyage. So you might have a slip directly above The Admiral of the Ocean Seas' lost shoe. If you find it, please slip me ten percent for tipping you off.

The Red Frog Marina (www.igy-redfrogmarina.com) offers more seclusion about a half-hour boat ride from town. It also has a beach nearby with spectacular body surfing. It

gets most of the megayacht traffic, so if you are arriving with a helicopter on the aft deck, this will be your best choice.

The town of Bocas del Toro is spectacularly... unspectacular. On a gentrification scale of 10, it is a 2 slowly nudging to 3. You will never confuse it with a prissied-up cruise ship port. And none of the usual visitors look like they missed the bus headed for Disneyworld.

Instead, it is full of surfers, back-packers, sailors and adventure travelers. Indeed, if you are a young cruiser who recently bought a hurricane boat, this will be heaven for you. The social scene is spectacular for an age range that I sometimes remember on my good days.

There are an amazing variety of bars, restaurants and clubs. New additions include a tequila specialty bar with a rubberized floor (one tequila, two tequila, three tequila, floor...), a sushi bar and an

Argentinian steak house. No fire-twirling gauchos yet, but one can hope. The newest disco doesn't even open until after Cruisers' Midnight (2100 hours).

And last but not least in the frolic category, is the new Floating Bar. Anchored near town and only a short water taxi away, it is the perfect waypoint for a memorable afternoon or evening — although it often becomes an afternoon AND evening. That could be because of the bikini lounging platform or the diving board from the upper deck. Ashley and Dave conceived, built and now run it. Don't miss it or I may have to personally discipline you.

Bocas provides a variety of grocery stores. Having shopped them all, I recommend Supermercado Isla Colon, where the young owner Felix will give you excellent service in English, Spanish or Mandarin. There is also a specialty grocery called The Super Gourmet, which is owned by a former cruiser who liked it here so much, she settled in. Lorelei offers many items that are not available elsewhere. It is where a real sailorman like myself buys his quiche.

There are good hardware stores to choose from as well as pharmacies and general merchandise spots where you can find items like fabric or mattress foam. There is a new bi-lingual medical clinic that I got to sample when an it'sy bitsy spider... The surgery was quick, excellent and inexpensive.

Another great new addition to the area for sea gypsies is a full-service boatyard (www.bocasboatyard.com). They have a 50-ton travel-lift that can accommodate boats up to 20 feet wide. Their crew is top-notch and they offer bottom cleaning, painting, and electrical and mechanical skills. Long-term storage is available and Bocas is a fairly easy spot to fly in and out of.

Finally, even though I love the beauty and many conveniences of my adopted home, there is something else that has made this a Velcro Port for me. And that is the fact that it is so different from the world "back there" that I sailed away from. Here is an example.

I was passing by a little general store where an old local man was helping a young girl choose her first tiny bicycle. He was gently pushing her around when a tourist woman approached. In English she asked me, "Isn't he going to buy her some training wheels?" I translated the question to the man and he replied, "Here we don't have training wheels, we have grandfathers."

Read Ray Jason's previous articles about Panama in Caribbean Compass:

"Panama, A Caribbean Cruiser's Overview", on page 18

at www.caribbeancompass.com/online/february18compass_online.pdf

"The South Seas of El Norte", on page 22

at www.caribbeancompass.com/online/july18compass_online.pdf

"Central Panama is Far More Than the Canal", on page 22

at http://www.caribbeancompass.com/online/october18compass_online.pdf





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With the Turtles in Grand Cayman

by Paul Sutcliffe



The sail from Negril on the west coast of Jamaica to Cayman Brac was one of my best ever. There was a flat sea and enough wind to go six knots — my Elizabethan 31, *Sonic Boom*, gliding beautifully smooth through the water. After clearing in, I moved to one of the free mooring balls and was amazed at how clear the water was. I could see the bottom and lots of colorful fish swimming among the coral.

I sailed from Cayman Brac to Little Cayman five miles away, from where I would sail the 90 miles to Grand Cayman. Even smaller than Cayman Brac, only a hundred people lived on Little Cayman, and the water was even clearer, if that was possible. I picked up a ball in Bloody Bay above a reef shelf, which was at about 40 feet, but

Above: I took this shot while my dive buddy was filming this hawksbill turtle with lights. Dive lights bring back a lot of the color that is filtered out by the deep water

Right: My favorite things to see when diving are turtles

Below: At the dock on West Bay beach, Grand Cayman



just behind me there was a vertical wall that dropped to the depths, thousands of feet below. It was absolutely stunning. It was a popular dive to go along the wall, but even just snorkeling was incredible.

The sail to Grand Cayman was slow; the wind died completely at night so I dropped my sails and went to bed. The wind didn't pick up until the next day. I'd had to clear

out on leaving Cayman Brac and so had to clear in again at George Town. Then I sailed into North Sound and through another channel into Governor's Creek where I could anchor for free or tie up to one of the docks at the Cayman Islands Yacht Club. The yacht club was basically a small marina with slips, a fuel dock, a small supermarket, and a restaurant. Farther south, Barcadere Marina, with full marina facilities, was another option.

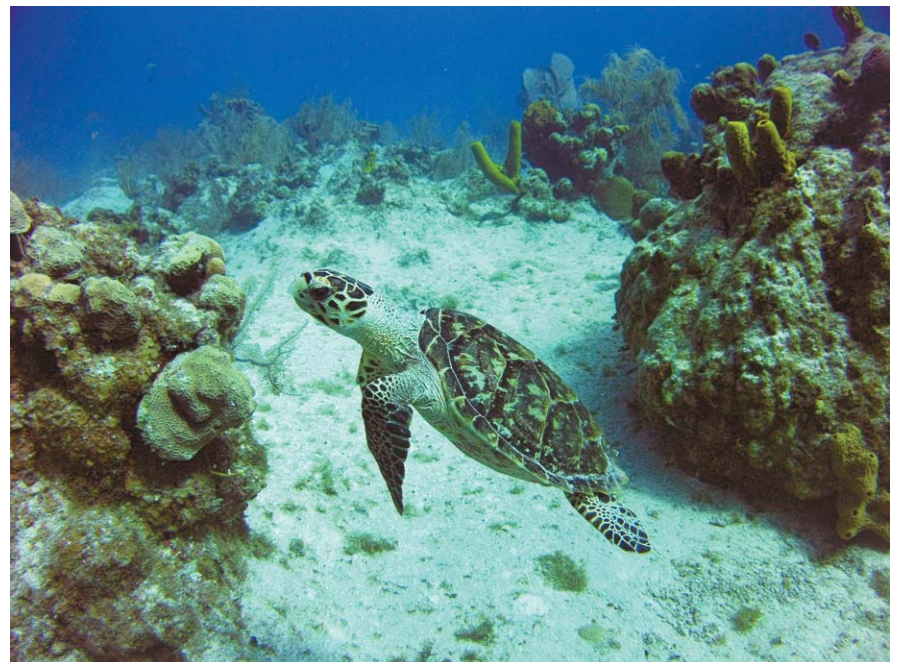
Diving in Grand Cayman is some of the best in the world, with clear, warm water, an abundance of marine life and amazing coral reefs. While I love to see sharks, explore shipwrecks, and swim through coral tunnels, my favorite things to see when diving are turtles. I was definitely in the right place. Turtles often pop their heads out of the water in anchorages all over the Caribbean. Globally, the Caribbean is home to the largest population of sea turtles, but here in the Caymans the turtle is a national symbol. There is a turtle on the national coat of arms and on the national flag. There are turtles on the banknotes. A cartoon sea turtle, "Sir Turtle", is the mascot of the national airline, Cayman Airways, and is displayed on the tail of its aircraft.

When Columbus discovered the Cayman Islands in 1503, he named them "Las Tortugas" because of the many sea turtles in the waters around the islands. Many of the earliest visitors came to the Cayman Islands to capture the turtles as a source of fresh meat during long voyages. Today, nearly all species of sea turtles are endangered, mainly because of threats from humans — hunting, pollution, fishing nets, and destruction of habitat.

I went on many dives during my stay in the Cayman Islands in February 2017, and was especially lucky to get a chance to dive with Cayman Turtle Divers just before I left. Alan and JT were two of the nicest dive operators. I met up with them at West Bay public beach and went for a two-tank afternoon boat dive with JT and dive master Corey.

First we went to Big Tunnels, a deep dive (I went to 107 feet) with a spectacular swim-through — just like a big tunnel. After a tea break, we motored the boat around the coast to Rainbow Reef. As the name would suggest, it was incredibly colorful, just like swimming in an aquarium. I saw turtles, an eel, and porcupine fish. Corey and JT were great guides, the boat was immaculate, the ocean was flat calm; it really was a perfect afternoon's diving.

On the reef I watched turtles eat sponges and jellyfish, but mainly they feed on sea grass. Mowing sea grass beds makes the sea grass stronger, providing habitat for fish and other creatures. Turtles can stay underwater for hours, and in fact they sleep while submerged.



I learnt a lot about sea turtles while I was in Grand Cayman. Actually they have a lot in common with us cruisers. Yellow tang fish feed on algae on the turtle's body, cleaning it. Just like scraping the bottom of your boat, it reduces drag and makes the turtle faster. Turtles migrate long distances, up to 1,600 miles to return to the beach they were born on. A turtle you see in the Dominican Republic might have come from St. Martin. They use an internal magnetic compass to navigate. But mostly they like to stay in one area, often returning to the same bed every night.

Paul Sutcliffe has been cruising his Elizabethan 31, Sonic Boom, solo for the last five years.



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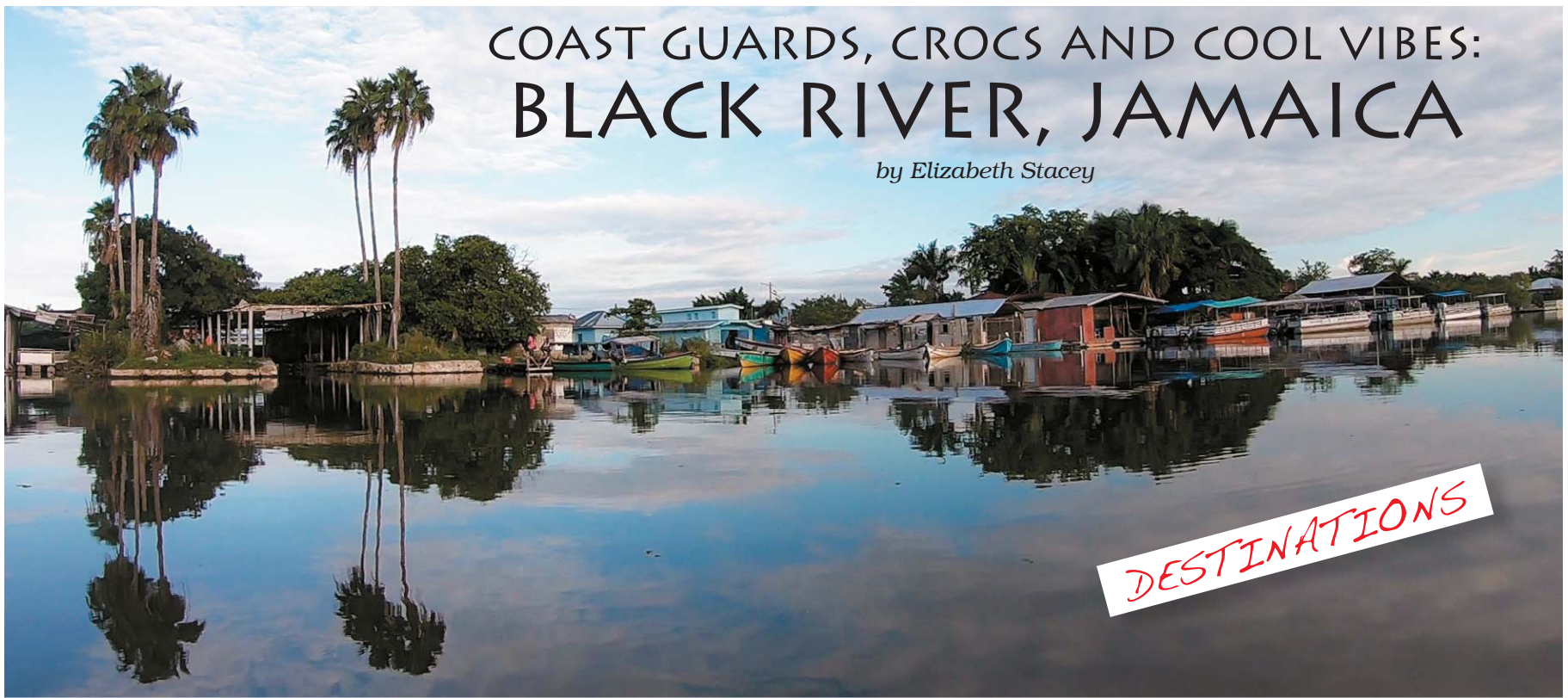
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COAST GUARDS, CROCS AND COOL VIBES: BLACK RIVER, JAMAICA

by Elizabeth Stacey



DESTINATIONS

Garth and I left Pigeon Island on Jamaica's south coast late morning with a light breeze at the stern of our 42-foot ketch, *Irwinish*. Our newly replaced starter fired up perfectly — whew! Once out of the channel, we set the sails wing-on-wing and we were cruising at about five knots. Our whisker pole was working great. We put out fishing lines but nothing bit. By midday the wind had picked up to a stiff breeze and we were flying along at around seven knots. At this speed we would arrive in the middle of the night, not the best for a new place. We kept on rolling.

At around 9:30PM, just as I was coming off watch, there was some lightning ahead that eventually turned into a small squall with the wind backing our headsail and causing a little drama as we tried to get it rolled back in. The wind died and we drifted to within a few miles of the entrance to the Black River anchorage. We motored for an hour or so and dropped anchor at 5AM. Fish traps marked with old Coke bottles were the only obstacles we encountered.

Above: We took our dinghy in to shore, up the river just past the mouth

Right: The mangroves were very cool and some seemed to be very old

Below: Parking at Floyd's Place. Our four-and-a-half mile dinghy ride to get there seemed to impress a couple of the local ferry guys



We were having coffee after we got some sleep when the Jamaican Coast Guard showed up in a rough-looking boat. Representatives from Customs, Immigration and the Health Ministry were all on board checking our paperwork. They were very serious but friendly and we had no issues. They liked filling out multiple copies of everything and asked if we had bed bugs, which was strange. Maybe it's just the way Garth looks!

Formalities completed, we took our dinghy in to shore, up the river just past the mouth. There are very few places to tie your dinghy up here. We had a beer at a small bar and found a place closer to the center of town to tie up the dinghy for a few minutes. On the way over, a tour boat was feeding a saltwater crocodile so we hung out for the free show. You get a little uneasy with those things swimming around a rubber boat.

We found grocery stores and other shops to get provisions in town, got some fresh vegetables and took a quick walk around. It's a very busy little town and not touristy at all.

On Day Two we decided to explore the river on our own. We went about three miles or so up the Black River by dinghy, and it was amazing. There are tons of birds and some big tarpon in the river. The mangroves were very cool and some seemed to be very old. The river does look black as you get farther up it. It's not dirty; it's owing to the minerals in the silt. We opted out of a swim because of the crocodiles. Some areas felt like we were in the Pirates of the Caribbean movie when they go into the swamp. We ran into a fisherman in a wooded dugout canoe on the way back down. We did not take pictures of him, as he seemed very shy. He just gave us a nod and slipped into the mangroves out of sight. We saw more crocodiles near town as we

ended our trip. They seem to congregate there. We were told they killed a woman who was cleaning fish on the bank recently, which does not seem to be the best idea, considering. Garth and I kept our distance.

After a lunch of curry chicken and beef Jamaican patties, we headed out of the river to Floyd's Place — a bar/restaurant sitting on a reef, built on wood stilts. Floyd originally built it for himself and his friends; others quickly discovered it. We took a four-and-a-half mile dinghy ride to get there, which seemed to impress a couple of the local ferry guys. It is a relaxed spot and very rustic. They only have a couple of beer choices, and rum. If you order a "Q" here, they just fill a bottle with whatever rum they have open.

The kitchen is a shack and they cook on charcoal in the open air. The chef is super-friendly and showed us how to clean and cook an eel they had caught. He has a great view of the sea while cooking. They did have one fire extinguisher, so we felt totally safe, despite the cooking fire and people smoking on what amounts to a giant pile of kindling. Floyd and his family were there and were very welcoming and extremely friendly. Tour boats do bring people out for lunch so it's best to come early if you want more space and quiet.

We stayed for four hours and watched people come and go. Just before we left, who showed up but our friends from the Coast Guard! This time they had their girlfriends on board, all decked out in lifejackets and hair bows. I guess it was date night! There was much posing for photos and selfie taking, which was pretty funny considering how serious they had been the day before. They came over and said hello and were happy to pose for a picture for us. We had a great time.

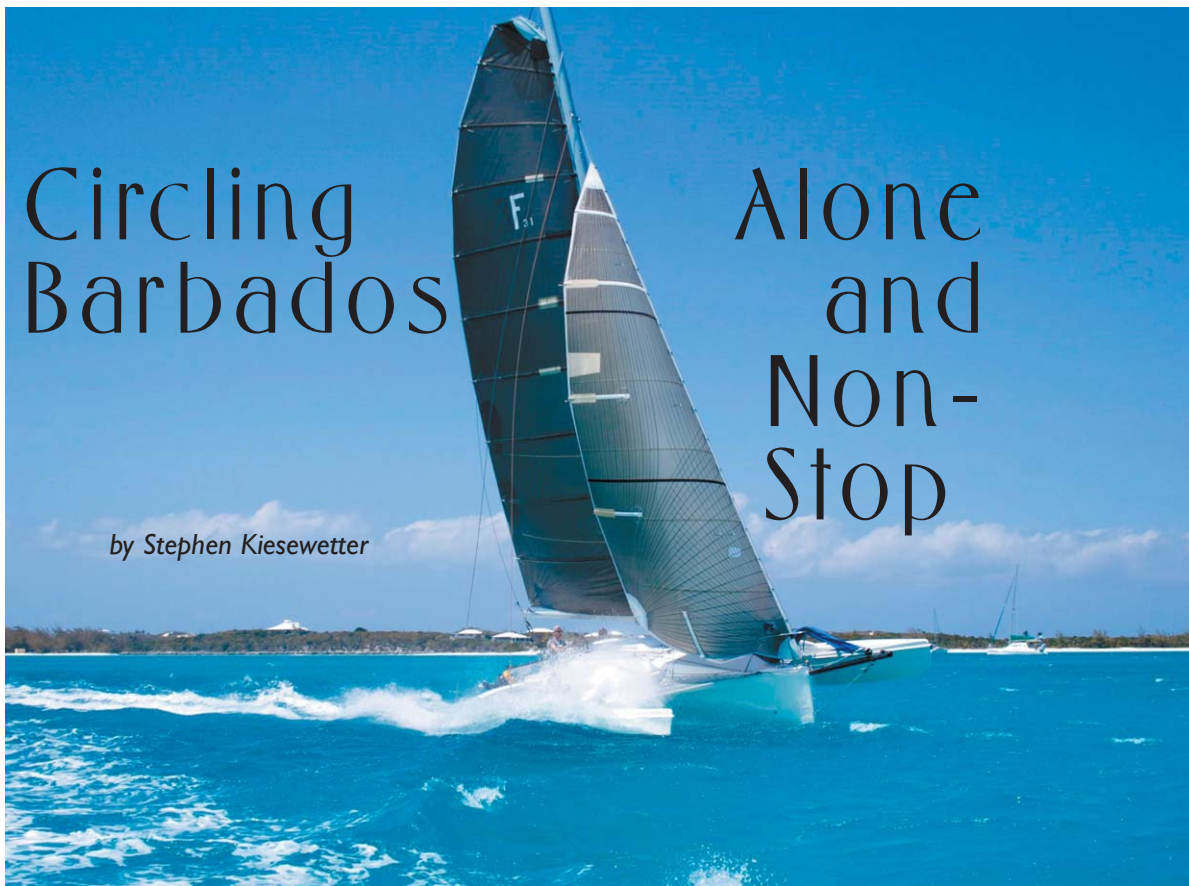
All in all we liked Black River, although the anchorage is not the best for comfort. The holding is very good but it gets pretty roly as the swell wraps around into the bay, and docking for your dinghy is really limited. The natural beauty of the river is wonderful and we were happy not to see very much trash on the river. If you happen to be here on December 25th they have a huge reggae concert every year that is supposed to be worth the trip if you are a fan.

Next stop, Bluefields!

Elizabeth and Garth Stacey are travelling the world on their 1975 42-foot Irwin ketch. The boat has been heavily modified over time and is now very much "Irwinish".

Circling Barbados Alone and Non-Stop

by Stephen Kiesewetter



Infinity is a 19-year-old, 31-foot Corsair trimaran

Friday, November 9th, 2018. A dark night, just after midnight. I'm 25 miles due north of Barbados and tacking southeast into the lashing rain of another heavy squall to sail southwards around the windward side of this island, which I can't even see. Thirty-six hours ago I left Carriacou to sail into the unhindered 3,000-mile fetch of the Atlantic Ocean. I feel like I'm the first man to sail alone non-stop around Barbados in a 31-foot trimaran... A week ago this passage wasn't even in the plan. And after my trip I learned about the annual Round Barbados race and feel for the sailors who participate.

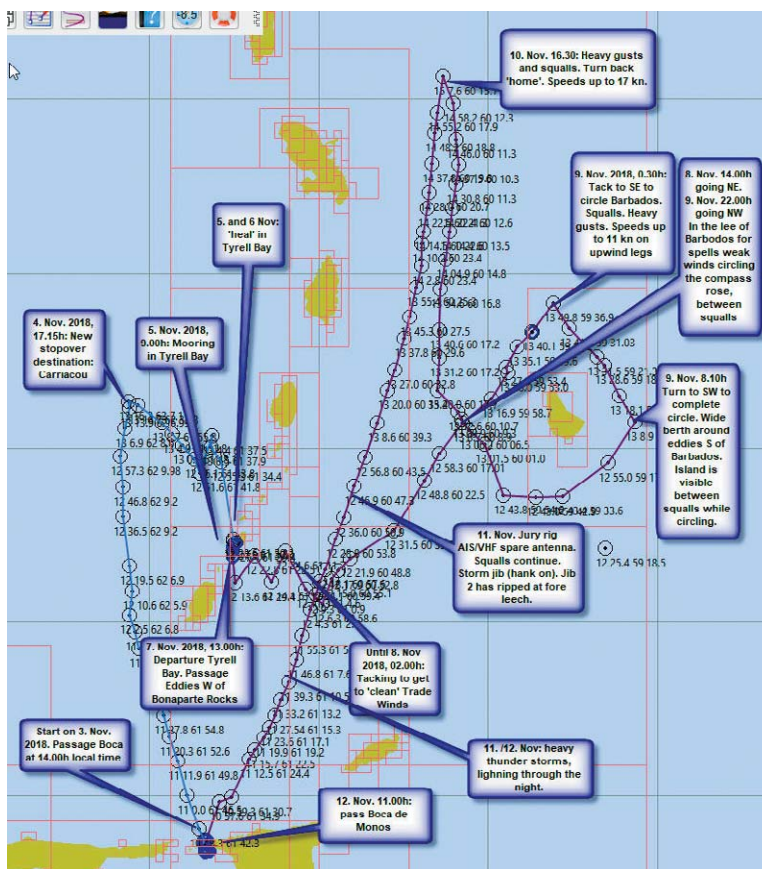
This has been a Passage of Many Revised Plans. When I flew out to Trinidad from Germany such a short while ago, I had a month before I had to return to family and work. With so little time I wanted to spend it sailing. Since getting my lovely boat *Infinity* I rarely bother to land anywhere. Singlehanded a trimaran makes coming alongside much too difficult, so I prefer to stay offshore. Friends who see the tracks of my passages wonder at my sanity, but I love this intense style of sailing.

I shall remember this passage as "Strange weather, bad backache".

I settle the boat on a close reach towards a patch of sea eight hours ahead and 20 miles off Ragged Point on the eastern-most corner of Barbados. Yesterday I had struggled with light and fickle winds boxing the compass in the lee of Barbados, but now I have Beaufort Force Fives and Sixes and much more in the squalls. The sea is rough but steady, not chaotic as it had been in the channels around Bonaparte Rocks and Les Tantes when I beat my way east from Carriacou. The boat and I took a beating back there; coming north has been an exciting mix of tacking, reefing, changing jib to storm jib and back, all in salt spray and sometimes pounding rain. But I've turned the corner. *Infinity* is skimming southwards over the waves, hitting 11 knots. I set the tiller-pilot. I need sleep. I set my alarm to wake me every hour.

Navigation has been reduced to the old ways. On the day I left Trinidad my plotter died. Not having electronic charts and AIS would have made singlehanded back home in the congested North Sea impossible, but here in the warm and relatively empty waters of the island chain I was prepared to take the risk. After all, I was here to sail. I did a workaround with an iPad, the wireless signal from the AIS transponder, and paper maps, but I lost even that in those rough Carriacouan channels when the antenna was shaken off the mast-head. Without AIS I was electronically invisible and blind and didn't know how much shipping I might meet around Barbados. None of this would have bothered the old timers on the island schooners.

My plan when I left Power Boats in Trinidad just one week ago was a comfortable broad reach to the BVI to see how well they had recovered after that ferocious hit by Hurricane Irma in 2017, then a romp comfortably south back to Trinidad. What simple joy all that



The Passage of Many Revised Plans. Friends who see the tracks of my passages wonder at my sanity

would be. Except the weather turned me around. After 30 hours, when I was still only level with St. Vincent, the wind died. That, and the terrible back pain from twisting while lifting a big battery the day before departure from Trinidad, made for a plan revision. I needed to rest. I turned for Carriacou. Tyrell Bay is ideal for singlehanded trimaran sailors: an easy entrance, a secure anchorage, and no need to come alongside. It felt like a holiday after I cleared Customs and Immigration. It had taken 16 hours of hard beating into wind and current to get here. I swam, relaxed, read, and did more relaxing. But the backache wasn't improving, the heavy squalls were disturbing, and the mosquitoes were infuriating. That is when I hatched the plan to circumnavigate Barbados. After two nights in Tyrell Bay I raised anchor and left the mosquitoes behind.

Something magical happened as I went tack, tack, tacking for half a day through the Carriacouan channels to the Atlantic. The ocean funnelling through the channels added nasty eddies to the effects of wind and

current off the ends of the islands, especially Bonaparte Rocks and Les Tantes, but the intense movement of *Infinity* as she skipped over the seas at between seven and 11 knots relaxed my back. Any doubts about my crazy idea of circumnavigating Barbados alone and non-stop disappeared as the pain lessened.

The new Plan was on.

I sailed southeast for eight hours to arrive at my turning point off Ragged Point. It was bright daylight, only dark when another heavy squall came over. I had slept between the hourly alarm bells. Once I woke because the motion had changed to a worrying gentleness. The shackle at the end of the boom was gone, the mainsheet trailing in the wake, the mainsail quietly shifting back and forth. I fixed it, and on we romped.

At Ragged Point I turned southwest to pass well clear of the eddies off the tail of Barbados. I could see the island now for the first time, between squalls. *Infinity* flew as we came onto a broad reach and then ran due west before tacking to the northwest to cross my track. The nearly 200-mile circumnavigation had taken a little over 30 hours. Conditions fell light in the lee of Barbados, perhaps 25 miles to my east. I had to sail west of north before I found clear winds and could point north to stay well to windward of St. Lucia and Martinique.

Conditions were changing. The weather hadn't been bad: overcast and sunny apart from the squalls, with the usual easterly tradewinds, but as I headed north to Martinique and Dominica the gusts were stronger — Beaufort Sixes and Sevens — and I didn't like the look of the sky or the sea. Perhaps I was meeting the forecast tropical disturbances east of the Windwards, getting worse farther north. So 20 hours after I had crossed my track around Barbados I turned back south.

Now *Infinity* was racing. She hit 17 knots on this leg. In less than two days I was coming back through the Boca de Monas into the Gulf of Paria. A final squall hit me in the Boca, leaving me freshly showered and immaculately presentable when I landed at the welcoming yard of Power Boats.

Now I had another insane plot to show my despairing friends. Nearly seven days at sea, 1,000 miles sailed, average speed 6.5 knots, maximum speed 17 knots, only one stop and a rare non-racing circumnavigation of Barbados, a Caribbean island stuck out in the Atlantic Ocean. I had been turned back from my plans twice: once by no wind, once by too much. I had tacked, reached and run through rough seas and intense squalls. I had a backache and no electronic navigation. On the way home I fixed up a VHF jury antenna and there, on AIS, was the five-masted *Royal Clipper* just two and a half miles off to the west, the first ship I had seen. My jib split at the luff coming south and I sailed the thundery squalls under storm jib and reefed main. The whole of my last night at sea was a lightning storm with rain so torrential that it washed the salt from my sails. I had some luck: the Sargassum wasn't bad enough to block my rudder, as it had been in July; the leak in the heads hadn't got any worse.

There is a legend about a Flying Dutchman doomed never to make land. Perhaps there is a Flying Deutschemann similarly doomed. But it had been an intensely enjoyable few weeks in the Caribbean.

The hard sailing and gear failures in filthy weather recall Roger Murtaugh from "Lethal Weapon" complaining to his partner: "I am too old for this sh**." But now, back in Germany watching the magical falling snow, hardships fade; I'm ready to go again. Caribbean cruising is so much fun.

Stephen Kiesewetter is an engineering consultant living and working in Germany. *Infinity* is a 19-year-old Corsair trimaran, 31 feet six inches long, 23 feet wide, and displacing two tonnes. In 2016 he took nine days to sail the 1,500 miles from Amsterdam, Netherlands to Lagos, Portugal, singlehanded and non-stop. He left Lagos in 2017 on *Infinity* for the 3,800-mile crossing, choosing to make Trinidad his base to be out of the hurricane zone and because Don Stollmeyer at Power Boats promised to store *Infinity* ashore in its own "house" on a specially made trailer.



Singlehanded a tri makes coming alongside difficult; I prefer to be at sea

Our legs felt like lead. Having just completed the 1,064th step, we worshiped the flat ground beneath us. At 2,910 feet above the sea on which our yacht was moored, the view from the peak promised to be remarkable, and we were itching to get our first glimpse. Arriving at the southernmost position on the mountaintop, we perched ourselves on a rock, intensely aware of the sheer drop-off to our left and frightened to make even the slightest movement. Cloud cover obstructed the view; we sat despondently, waiting, hoping it would clear. After several minutes our wish was granted, and like the opening scene to a world-class show, the clouds parted like heavy velvet curtains, and the crowd gasped.

As if seen out of the window of an airplane, the view below looked almost dreamlike. Perfect red roofs adorned the adorable white cottages, and tiny turquoise swimming pools could be seen dotted throughout the villages. The ocean surrounding us looked flat and calm, and you would never have believed it had kept us awake half the night with its incessant roll. Greenery surrounded the town of Windward Side and cliffs jutted out at even intervals. Waiting for the clouds to clear just long enough to snap the perfect photo felt like a game. At times we had a clear view straight through to the peaks of St. Kitts, yet the land below the clouds was nowhere to be seen. Minutes later, St. Kitts would disappear and, as if a magician were ripping away his cloth, the picture-perfect villages beneath us would be unveiled.

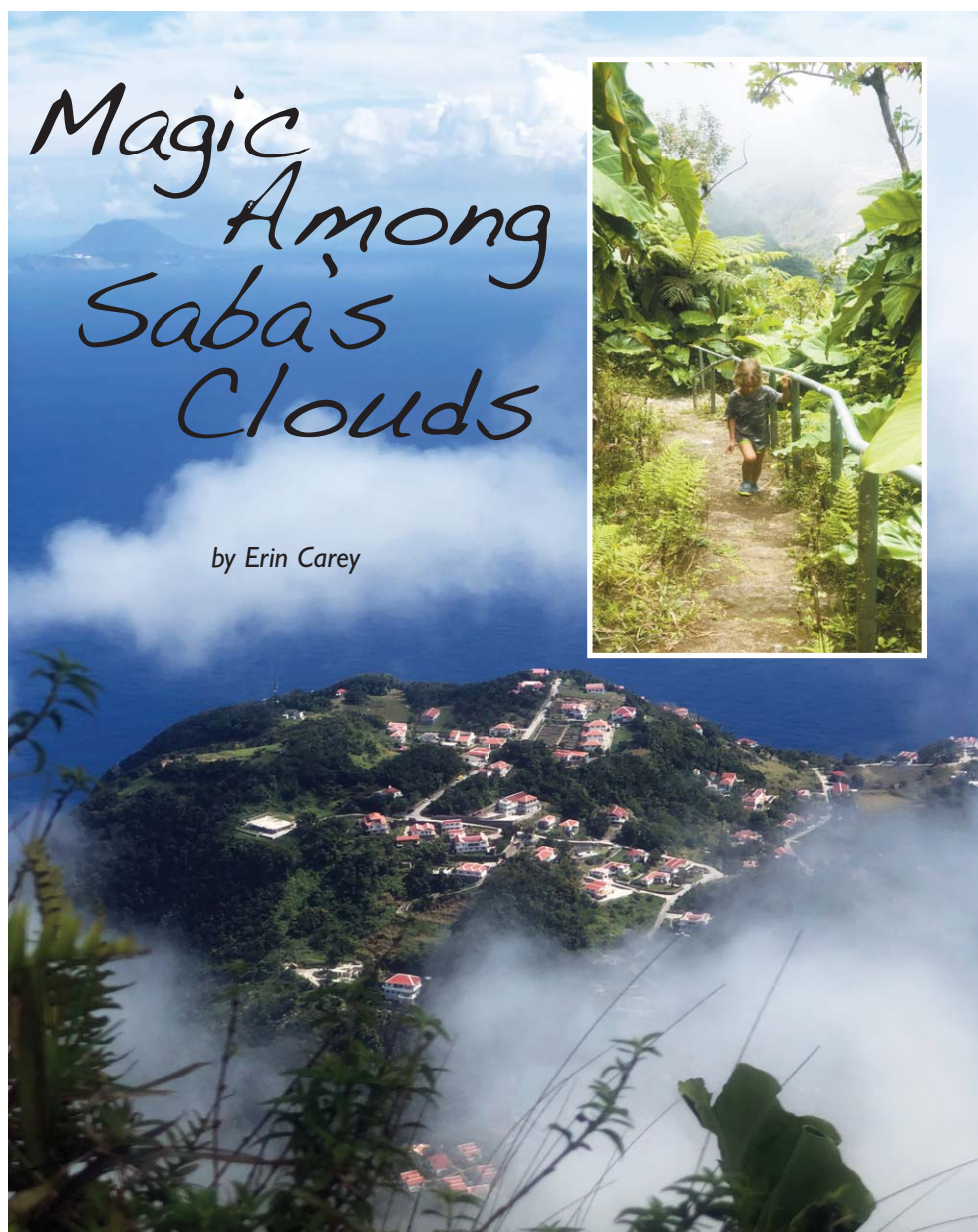
Sailing into Saba the previous morning had been phenomenal. The vast brown rock rose hundreds of metres before us, its deep valleys and gorges looked like scars in its otherwise unblemished exterior. Forbidding and mysterious, the island seemed almost uninhabitable, and I was wondering how and where we would make landfall. Birds soared in full flight, not one-third of the way up the towering rock.

Tying to a mooring ball in Fort Bay, my husband, our three young sons and I made our way to shore. Industrial and sparse, we found Immigration and Customs and cleared into this "special municipality" of the Netherlands. A friendly local advised that if we wanted to reach the town, we had a 30-minute walk ahead of us, straight up. He wasn't joking; the road was steep, yet we were determined not to succumb to the passersby who were offering us rides. Eventually, we reached the town known as The Bottom. Never before had we walked so high to reach the bottom!



The picturesque village was like a scene from a storybook. Spotlessly clean, white cottages, complete with colored shutters and fences covered in pink and orange bougainvillea, lined the streets. If it weren't for the faint sound of Rasta music and the smell of marijuana in the air, I would have believed we were in Holland or the Swiss Alps. Aware that hitchhiking was completely safe and acceptable on the island, we quickly organized some supplies before heading back to the main road for a lift out of town. With there being five of us, we waited patiently for a truck or four-wheel-drive vehicle to approach us, not daring to pile into a four-cylinder car in fear that it wouldn't make it up the steep hills. As luck would have it, a modern four-door pickup truck came along, and my four-year-old stuck out his little thumb. Moments later we were piling into the tray of the truck and winding our way towards the town of Windward Side.

The view from the road was spectacular, if not a little frightening, and we sat in awe as we wove along the precarious road. We searched for our yacht as we drove along the cliff edge and remarked at the sheer drop-off not more than two metres



Magic Among Saba's Clouds

by Erin Carey



Above: At times we could see the peaks of St. Kitts. Minutes later, the picture-perfect villages beneath us would be unveiled

Inset: We had three children with us, the youngest being four years old

Below: The view of Mt. Scenery from Windward Side

Continuing, the trail was now lined with tiny pink and yellow flowers; a hummingbird fluttered by to stop and inquire. Its emerald green crest was almost luminescent. We listened intently to hear the sound of its beating wings. As we ascended, clouds began to drift over the trail like ghosts, there one minute, gone the next. The gradient increased, and for the last 30 minutes, a steel handrail provided some much-needed assistance to pull our bodies up the steps. We reminisced about the toughest hikes we had done in the Caribbean, agreeing that this one was similar in difficulty to Mont Pelée in Martinique, but not as tricky as some of the Grenadian Hashes.

Reaching what we mistakenly thought was the summit, it became clear that we still needed to head down into the crater of the mountain before re-emerging on the other side. The outline of an enormous telephone tower on the hill in front of us could be seen, and we were all struggling to accept the fact that we had another steep incline to tackle. With one last effort that involved some serious negotiating (bribing) of the kids, we eventually reached the top. After two hours and those 1,064 stairs, the cool air was a treat and the level ground even more so.

Mt. Scenery, a dormant volcano, is the highest point in the kingdom of the Netherlands. It was a relief to reach the top of this unique cloud forest we had read so much about. Described as "strenuous" in the Trail Shop guidebook, the hike took us just over two hours to reach the summit rather than the 90 minutes the book had suggested. However, we did take numerous breaks along the way and had three children with us, the youngest being four years old.

The hike down was almost as demanding as the ascent, and our ankles and toes were all feeling some degree of discomfort. The handrails made the steeper parts of the trail more comfortable, yet the stone steps were often too high to traverse without first turning sideways. After one hour and 15 minutes, we were extremely grateful to reach the Trail Shop where we began.

Saba is a delightfully unique Caribbean island and one that shouldn't be missed. Without a single white sandy beach or cruise ship dock, it's a refreshing change. It's not yet overrun by tourists; you'll feel like the only visitors on the island. One walk along its incredibly steep roads will give you a real appreciation for the dedication and heartiness of the people who settled here centuries ago. The anchorages can feel exposed, and the conditions have to be just right to visit, but it's worth the effort. For an island of only five square miles, most of it so uninhabitable even Christopher Columbus sailed straight past, it packs a real punch.

Hailing from the land down under, Erin and her family live aboard their Moody 47 in the Eastern Caribbean. Despite having never owned a boat and having practically no sailing experience, the family quit the rat race and bought a yacht, sight unseen, on the other side of the world! Follow their journey on Facebook and Instagram @ Sailing to Roam, as they navigate not only the seas but how to live aboard a boat with three young boys!

away. Five minutes later, our ride slowed down, and we were dropped right outside of the Trail Shop, directly in front of the jumping-off point for our Mt. Scenery hike. Visiting the shop, we marveled at some of the souvenirs and artwork before we signed the visitors' book, ensuring there was a record of our planned hike for the day. The signpost announced the start of the trail and warned us of the 1,064 steps we had to conquer. In hindsight, I would have rather not known.

The trail was steep from the outset, and within minutes our heart rates had increased. We were enveloped in greenery; even the rocky steps were covered in soft and delicate moss. I was stunned to find ourselves in this lush rainforest. From its brown rugged exterior, the island looked dry and almost barren, yet here we were in the midst of a rainforest. Creepers and vines entwined themselves around the tall mahogany trees, in a fight for the life-giving light.

The rocky steps were meticulously maintained, and it felt as though we were walking through a botanical garden. The sounds from the road had disappeared, replaced by bird-song and the occasional crowing rooster. With the absence of any other tourists, the rainforest was peaceful; it was as if we had the entire island to ourselves.

Lemon trees grew along the trail, their fresh citrus smell permeating the air. We passed banana, papaya, prickly pear and cocoa trees, evidence of rich and fertile land. Reaching a clearing after 20 minutes, we passed a small field, home to a large bull, its coat shiny and smooth, its eyes deep brown and inquisitive. "No boys, you cannot go and pat the bull," I said as I rolled my eyes. The trail was well signposted along the way and at no point were we unsure which direction to take. After a five-minute break for bananas and water, we were once again stepping our way towards the clouds.

The view along the trail was limited, usually shielded by huge ferns and palms; when we finally caught a glimpse of just how high we were, we were taken aback. Not yet obstructed by cloud, it was unclear where the ocean finished, and the sky began.

CHARTING THE EASTERN CARIBBEAN

by Don Street

In March 1957, I bought *Iolaire*, a 46-foot engineless cutter built in 1905. For the next 40 years I cruised, chartered, explored, and raced her throughout the Eastern Caribbean. In 1995 *Iolaire* departed to Europe, and I continued sailing on the 28-foot engineless yawl *Li'l Iolaire*.

The early days were true explorations. There were no guidebooks, and charts were extremely hard to find. Most St. Thomas-based charter skippers were reluctant to beat across Anegada Passage, so *Iolaire* picked up the charters from sailors who wanted to sail to St. Martin, St. Barts and beyond. Very little information was available on islands east and south of the BVI.

The Nicholson charter fleet, almost all 65 feet and longer — boats that were in those days considered luxurious compared to the 45-footers in the St. Thomas fleet — didn't much like beating to windward either. They mostly stuck to a run between English Harbour, Antigua and St. George's, Grenada. *Iolaire* was the only charter boat that regularly cruised the entire Lesser Antilles.

My instincts led me to explore "off the beaten track" areas such as the south and east coasts of Grenada and the east coast of Martinique. I worked out ranges/transits that would allow sailors to thread their way through the unbuoyed, unlit Grenadines.

Leadlines and Sounding Poles

Often I would remove my small Wilfred O White dome-shaped compass from *Iolaire* and take it, along with a lead line and notebook, in the dinghy powered by an ever-unfaithful Seagull. When the Seagull failed, the clinker dinghy rowed beautifully, easily propelled by a pair of light, nine-foot oars. The oars were dual purpose: used for propulsion when the Seagull failed, and as sounding poles in shoal water when the Seagull was running. When running under Seagull power, steering with the tiller extension between my legs, I learned to toss the lead far enough ahead to obtain soundings while underway.

I also stood on *Iolaire's* lower spreaders, eyeballing channels through reefs. The year we spent exploring Antigua's North Sound and Barbuda, I spent a lot of time up there. Soon, I developed a very sore right elbow. The pain did not go away so I finally went to a doctor. The diagnosis, tennis elbow. But I pointed out to the doctor I had never held a tennis racket in my life — I had spreader elbow!

The Trouble with the Old Charts

I eventually accumulated about 150 US, British and French charts, but I was unhappy with some of their accuracy. For example, when I laid out the transit/range that I always used for the south entrance to the Tobago Cays on the British Admiralty chart of the Grenadines, it went right over a reef! Obviously the range/transit was correct, the BA chart wrong.

When those charts were made, when considering areas to be covered and the borders of the charts, little thought was given by the cartographer to the sailor using the chart. The top edge of the old BA chart of the Grenadines ended one mile south of West Cay, Bequia, so I glued on a piece of paper with an X representing the lat and long of West Cay. Thus I could lay a course off from Glossy Hill, Canouan to West Cay. Similarly, the US chart of the Virgin Islands cut Gorda Sound in half. For information on Virgin Gorda, Necker Island and Anegada, you had to find — with difficulty — the British chart of the BVI, a chart based on survey work done in the 1870s. This chart ended at the west end of Great Thatch, so only showed the eastern end of St. John.

Both the US and British would produce a chart of an island and a separate chart for its main harbour. Imray, as standard practice, would do a general chart of an island and then put in detailed insets for harbors and important coves.

At the time, to cover Puerto Rico to Trinidad, the US produced 65 charts, the BA 37, France (only covering French islands) 25. Other than the French charts, and a few US and Spanish Virgin Islands charts updated by the US Navy in WWII, the US and the BA charts dated from surveys of the 1870s and had never been updated or corrected. The British chart of St. Thomas Harbor in 1979 showed Ballast Island off Frenchtown, but Ballast Island had been dredged out by the US Navy in 1917!

Could We Do Better?

In 1979, at the London Boat Show, I approached Sanford, a British firm that privately printed charts in competition with the British Admiralty. I proposed to them that they make an arrangement with me to supply them with the information and they make, publish and distribute charts of the Eastern Caribbean. They turned me down flat.

But right next to them was the booth of Imray, another British firm that privately printed charts. Imray is actually an amalgamation of four old chart and guide companies, Imray, Laurie, Norie and Wilson, and traces its history back to the late 17th century. I introduced myself to Tom Wilson and pointed out that until I wrote my own, the guidebook I used in the Caribbean was a *Norie and Wilson Sailing Directions to the West Indies*, published in 1867. I started to tell him of my guides to give him a sales pitch; he said he knew of my guides. I proposed privately printed charts to the Eastern Caribbean, myself providing the information to update and

correct the existing charts and lay them out in a fashion that would be suitable to the yachting sailor.

Tom immediately said, "I like the idea. In the late 18th and early 19th century we produced charts of the Caribbean and Bahamas. We sold the charts and the rights to them to the British Admiralty in the 1830s. It would be interesting to again do charts of the area. Make up a proposed agreement and we will hassle it out."

I sat down and started to work laying out the proposed Imray Iolaire charts for the Caribbean. Imray and I achieved complete and up-to-date coverage from Puerto Rico to Grenada with only 37 charts.

Adjusting Our Sails

The charts were an immediate success, but with one problem. In spray or damp conditions the paper dissolved with extreme rapidity. I asked Tom Wilson why did Imray not use the same paper as did the British Admiralty? Tom replied, "The minimum order is 16 tons — more paper than Imray could store or use!"

In the late 1980s we were approached by a US company that was printing Bahamian and Puerto Rican charts on waterproof paper. They wanted Imray to sell them the rights to our Eastern Caribbean charts so they could print them. After Willie Wilson and I discussed their proposal, we turned them down. The following year, when I turned them down again, they said, "You must sell out to us or we will drive you out of business". It was a tough search, but by the early 1990s Willie finally managed to find a waterproof paper on which charts could be printed, so all was well.

But, also in the early 1990s, NV charts showed up in the Caribbean. We had a serious problem on our hands: our best customer was the Moorings, and NV charts were sold through a company owned by the then-managers of the Moorings' Caribbean fleets. We had to do something to convince them to stick with Imray Iolaire charts. The machine that printed the charts was capable of printing on both sides at the same time. Willie asked me to pull tidal, current, interisland sailing and harbour piloting directions from my guides, and rewrite and reorganize the material so the information could be printed on the backs of the charts, making the Imray Iolaire charts a chart and guide in one. It was time-consuming work but it was worth the effort. The Moorings stuck with Imray Iolaire charts.

Sadly, the big printing machine that printed on both sides of a chart expired recently. Now Imray Iolaire charts are printed on one side only, but the additional information that was on the reverse is still available. The main points are in a booklet that comes with the chart. Information that will not fit in the booklet is found at www.imray.com/chartnotes. This can be printed out as a pdf (whether you own the chart or not).

Puerto Rico and Vieques

In the '80s we started exploring the Spanish Virgins and the east, south and west coasts of Puerto Rico — it was at times again real exploring. We had the latest NOAA charts but we discovered that all the Spanish Virgin and Puerto Rican charts were based on US Navy surveys done from 1902 to 1912. Except for around major harbors, no corrections or resurvey work had been done. While visiting NOAA head office in Washington, DC, I also discovered a detailed unpublished survey of the southwest corner of Puerto Rico. This we used to make a detailed chart of the La Paguera area, a great cruising ground with more anchorages than you can count.

While exploring in Vieques, a fortuitous meeting in a bar with a submariner resulted in a photostat of the restricted DMA chart of eastern Vieques. The gunnery range was then still active but yachts could visit the area as long as the red flag was not flying from the bombproof observation post. The only detailed chart of the wonderful harbors on the north and south

sides of the eastern end of Vieques are found on Imray Iolaire A 131. On the north side of Ensenada Honda two deep creeks go into the mangroves far enough to offer hurricane shelter to a score of boats.

Getting Ahead with WGS 84

When the satellite system became fully operational, all charts and maps had to be recalibrated to WGS 84 (the World Geodetic System established in 1984, comprising a standard coordinate system for the Earth). How to do this as a private company when all the government hydrographic offices worldwide were having trouble doing the job? I started thinking: airplanes navigate completely by GPS; how do they find the airports? I learned that NOAA (the US National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration) had produced a book that gave the GPS latitude and longitude of the centreline of every airport in North and South America.

So I fed Imray's Alan Wilkenson the information on the centrelines of the runways that showed on the charts of the islands. He was then able to record on each chart that the GPS position should be moved accordingly when plotting GPS positions. That operation was difficult to do, so I simplified it. Using Alan's information, I worked out the direction in degrees and distance in yards that a GPS position had to be moved when plotting GPS positions on charts. I also discovered that the BA had corrected some BA charts, but not all; same for the French and the US. We used the BA, French and US information to cross-check Alan's calculations. Alan, and I were proud of the fact that we had worked out the offset on every Imray Iolaire chart before the various government hydrographic offices had done so.

Alan then started repositioning the charts as they came up for reprinting so that all Imray Iolaire charts were redone to WGS 84 before the government charts were redone. All this work was well worth it as Garmin, Navionics, Jeppesen, C-Map and other electronic chart companies pay Imray a royalty for use of Imray Iolaire information to keep their charts up to date, too.

We can only keep Imray Iolaire charts truly up to date if sailors inform us of errors in the charts owing to changes — such as new marinas, docks, breakwaters or dredging — that they feel should be included in an existing chart or shown in chart corrections at www.imray.com/corrections. Send information to me at streetiolaire@hotmail.com

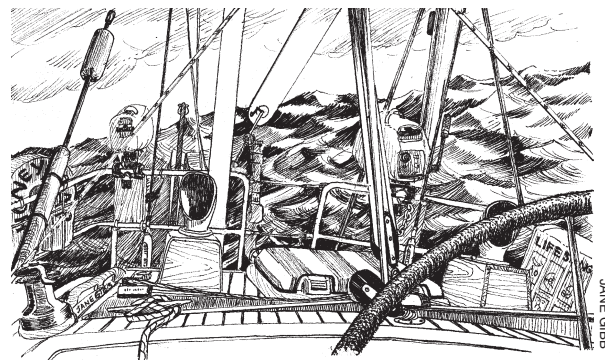


My instincts led me to explore 'off the beaten track'... I worked out ranges/transits

BACK FROM SINT MAARTEN

She was second in class. So close
 And she well knows what comes next
 Many times before, return voyage to the east and south
 Hard time for small Antiguan boat
 Clear Customs and pasta meal
 Pass Phillipsburg 1600hrs
 Hope for north in the wind
 Settle close-hauled
 But due east breeze; and too much of it
 Falling below the rhumb line. And St. Barts
 Got to make to windward. So change to starboard tack at dusk
 Plan to clear St. Barts and get some easting
 But boat going sideways and
 South shore looms. Few scattered lights on land
 Not real squalls, but there's more wind in the rainy times
 She won't weather it. Hear the breakers on the beach
 Forced tack back to port
 Hunker down
 All's against her. Weather bowing, leeway and that northwest-going current
 Good we put on delivery sails
 Small headsail, high cut Yankee. Undersize main, sets well
 Now she needs professionals. Two down below conserve energy
 Engine on slow and auto-helm
 Hunched in cockpit the one on watch
 Can't see much anyway
 No moon, occasional star
 Eventually, past the leach, the faint loom of St. Kitts
 Leaning, bouncing she doggedly points up
 Track just ten degrees below waypoint bearing
 Night hours pass
 Maybe slight north wind-shift
 How close will she see Nevis? Or Redonda?
 Grey dawn clouds scudding
 She's fallen down but 13 miles off Antigua
 Stand on
 Don't tack too soon
 Sun warmer now
 She tacks onto starboard
 Slanting for St. John's
 Inshore past Hawksbill
 Too late, Customs gone
 Crew can' go 'til morning
 Yes, a hard sail
 Back from Sint Maarten

— Rick Gormley



Island
Poets

Girl Pat Race to Grenada April 12, 2019

Let's sail the Girl Pat race to Grenada!
 Come, Man! Let's see if we can persuade a
 Whole bunch of sailors to come on the race,
 For we think that somehow it is a disgrace
 To see all those sailboats tied tight to their mooring,
 Never sailed, never raced, and thereby ensuring
 This club's swift demise, for a sail club must be
 Full of sailors who take their sailboats to sea!

Not just 'Down the Islands'; that is not enough.
 A sailor must learn about oceans and stuff,
 Its challenges, currents, the skills that are needed
 To make him a mariner, someone who heeded
 The lessons he learned well by being at sea,
 So come on the race, Boy! It's the place to be!

This race has been going for 60 long years
 And its spirit has worn a bit thin. There are fears
 That in the near future, no one will have guts,
 They'll be glued to their cell phones and Netflix and such.

Don't let this happen, Man; fix up your boat,
 Come race to Grenada. Once there, you can gloat
 On a major achievement for you and your crew,
 Share jokes at the Yacht Club while sipping a brew,
 Collecting a prize for this 60th year?
 What are you waiting for? Spruce up that gear,
 Get with the spirit! Promote Trinidad!
 Girl Pat to Grenada! Come! You will be glad.

— Nan Hatch

PENN'S LANDING MARINA EAST END BAY TORTOLA BRITISH VIRGIN ISLANDS

- 12 MONO HULL SLIPS WITH WATER AND POWER
- 25 MOORING BALLS POST IRMA SERVICED AND UPGRADED
- VESSEL CARE TAKING, LONG / SHORT TERM IN WATER STORAGE
- BOAT SERVICES, DIAGNOSTICS, REPAIRS, UPGRADES
- SUMMER DECOMMISSION, HAUL AND STORAGE PROGRAM
- LAUNCH PREP AND RE-COMMISSION
- FREE WIFI, SHOWERS
- LAUNDRY, SUPERMARKET, FUEL AND PROPANE NEARBY
- REDROCK RESTAURANT ON PROPERTY



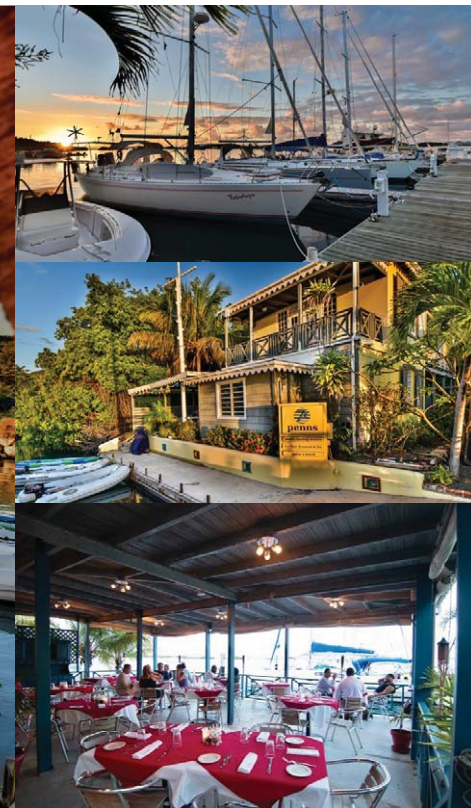
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The Sky from Mid-April to Mid-May

by Jim Ulik

In April 1960 NASA (the US National Aeronautics and Space Administration) launched its first weather satellite. This was the beginning of a series of satellites launched into space that helped forecast the weather by monitoring clouds and atmospheric conditions over Earth's oceans and remote land areas. The success of these missions led to the development of NASA's Earth Science Division. By 1965 NASA was monitoring Earth's oceans, landmasses, atmosphere and natural resources. Constant advances in technology provided for more accurate data collection of the continually changing environment of Earth. In the 1970s, the science acquired from the Earth Observation missions and public interest helped lead to the creation of the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). Did the image of Earthrise over the Moon taken in 1968 from Apollo 8 play a role by allowing people to see their planet for the first time as a whole world? Will the concept behind Earth Day continue beyond this year's 49th anniversary on April 22nd? Over one billion people participated in 2018.

"NASA uses the vantage point of space to increase our understanding of our home planet, improve lives and safeguard our future. We develop new ways to observe and study Earth's interconnected natural systems with long-term data records, share this unique knowledge, and work with institutions around the world to gain new insights into how our planet is changing."

— Maj. Gen. (Ret.) Charles F. Bolden, Jr.

Tuesday, April 16th

The Roman goddess of love and beauty ushers in this period as a bright morning star. Venus's bright appearance in the morning or night sky may be a beautiful sight but an atmosphere high in CO₂ and acid rain from clouds of sulfuric acid make it a very hostile planet. This morning, Mercury will enter Venus's garden as shown in Figure 2. In the east, before sunrise, Venus will take her place just above the messenger of the gods. Tomorrow, Venus reaches aphelion or its farthest orbital distance from the Sun.

Friday, April 19th

The Moon reaches its full phase about one hour after it sets. It may have appeared full last night but tonight should be the time for either a Full Moon party or dinghy drift. The Moon appears near Spica in the constellation Virgo.

Sunday, April 21st

Tonight the Moon reaches aphelion, or its farthest distance from the Sun. As it rises in the east you will notice a point of light twinkling east-southeast of the Moon. That reddish star is the Heart of the Scorpion, or Antares. A few minutes later, look for Jupiter to break the horizon. It will be positioned directly below the Moon.

Within this triangle of celestial bodies there may be a few shooting stars radiating out across the night sky. Tonight is the beginning of the Alpha Scorpiids. This meteor shower is active through May 19th. The peak event is on April 28th.

Monday, April 22nd

From space to Earth is one of NASA's many images of our planet on Earth Day (Figure 3). The Earth Day Network "works year round to solve climate change, to end plastic pollution, to protect endangered species, and to broaden, educate, and activate the environmental movement across the globe." Earth Day was founded in 1970 by Gaylord Nelson, a US Senator from Wisconsin and environmentalist, to promote

ecology and respect for life on the planet as well as to encourage awareness of the growing problems of air, water, and soil pollution.

"There's no more important planet than Earth, and I invite you to celebrate it with us this Earth Day."

— Maj. Gen. (Ret.) Charles F. Bolden, Jr.

From Earth to space, the Moon can be seen transiting the night sky alongside Jupiter. Also active tonight are the Lyrids and Alpha Scorpiids meteor showers. Look for the Lyrids to radiate out of the northeastern sky near the star Vega. This shower is variable, producing up to 90 meteors per hour. The Alpha Scorpiids are less productive, radiating out of the southeast from an area near Antares.

Thursday, April 25th

There is a conjunction between the Moon and Saturn. Both celestial bodies are riding in the Milky Way in Sagittarius. Named after Saturnus, the Roman god of agriculture, Saturn is now located just off the bright side of the Moon. Tomorrow the Moon reaches last quarter.

Thursday, May 2nd

The daily eastern shift of the Moon in the sky has now put it in a position next to Venus. This pair is visible in the east for about one hour. With a clear view of the horizon you may catch a glimpse of Mercury for a few minutes before sunrise.

Friday, May 3rd

For those early risers — and you know who you are, Ted — the narrow sliver of a Moon is paired up with Mercury. Both bodies are situated just above the horizon and



Mercury (far left) is on watch over Venus's (center) garden. Painting by Sandro Botticelli (1482)

will only be visible for a few minutes. And that bright object in the southwestern sky this morning is Jupiter.

Every year, the first Friday in May has been set aside as National Space Day. This concept, evolving into International Space Day with the assistance of astronaut John Glenn, was initiated by the Lockheed Martin Corporation. The goal of International Space Day is to promote math, science, technology and engineering education in young people to inspire them to pursue a career in science, especially a career in space-related jobs. Pass it on.

—Continued on next page

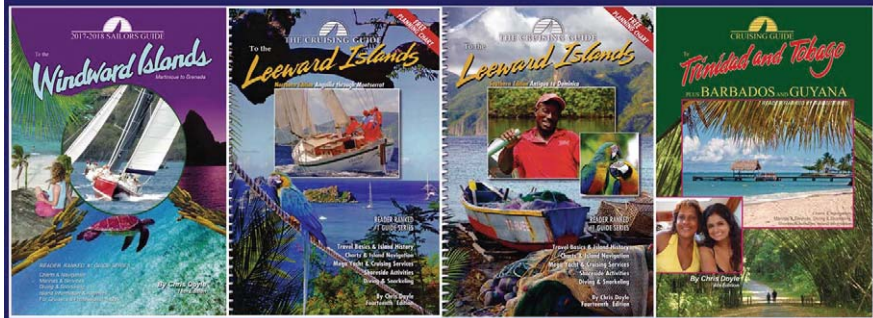
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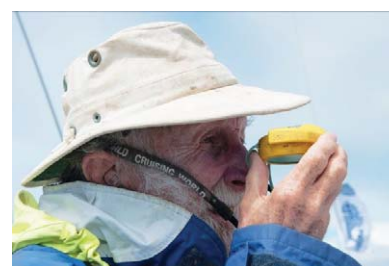
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—Continued from previous page

In Cuba, a school program titled Relativistic Astrophysics and Connected Problems will be held May 3rd and 4th at the Instituto de Cibernética, Matemática y Física (ICIMAF - The Institute of Cybernetics, Mathematics and Physics) in Havana. The program is designed for both students and young researchers. Registration and participation in the school are free of charge. See "In the News" for additional Caribbean cosmology.

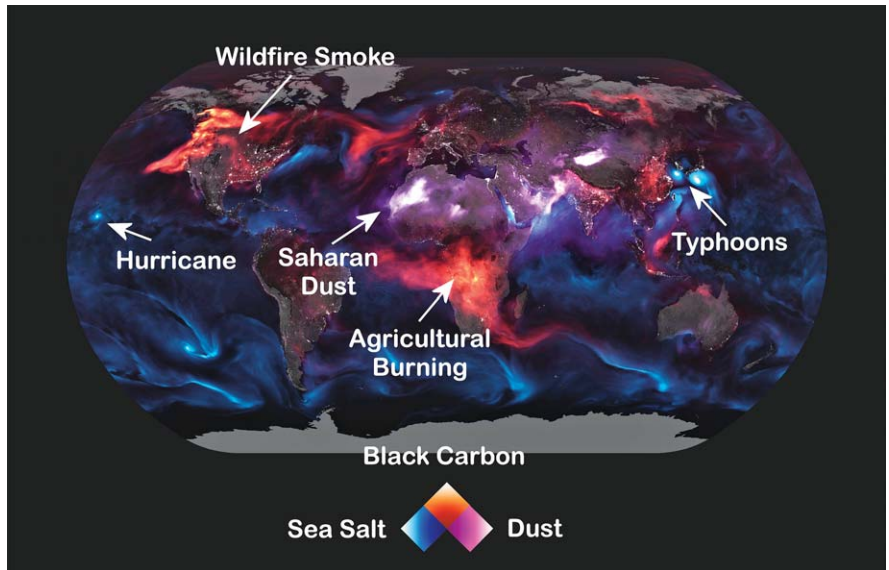


FIGURE 1 – NASA Earth Observing satellites record aerosols found in the air over oceans, deserts, mountains, forests, ice, and every ecosystem in between. August 23rd, 2018

FIGURE 3 – NASA's image of Earth Day from the International Space Station

FIGURE 4 – Portions of Cuba (site of the STARS symposium), the Bahamas, and the Turks & Caicos Islands are viewed from the International Space Station



Monday, May 6th

There are two meteor showers peaking on May 6th. The first shower is best seen a couple of hours after midnight radiating out of Aquarius. These meteors are the remnants of Comet Halley. The Eta Aquariids can produce up to 85 meteors per hour.

A couple of hours after sunset another round of falling stars will originate from Libra. The May Librids are active from May 1st through 9th.

Tuesday, May 7th

As the Moon again makes its appearance in the night sky, it settles in for the night next to Mars. For our perspective there is very little of the Moon's surface illuminated by the Sun now. A closer look will show the rest of the Moon's surface, thanks to the sunlight reflected off the Earth.

Friday, May 10th

The Moon has taken its place in Cancer near the Beehive cluster (M44). With a pair of binoculars you may be able to spot a few of the thousands of stars that make up M44. Look for them off the dark side of the Moon.

Monday, May 13th

The Moon will reach the closest point along its orbit to the Earth and will appear slightly larger. The difference in size may be less noticeable because it isn't fully illuminated. It has only been two days since the Moon reached First Quarter.

Wednesday, May 15th

The Moon is now located in Virgo. The bright object to the southeast is the blue-white giant star Spica.

In the News

Caribbean cosmology is making another appearance. In addition to the program for students mentioned above there are two more symposiums being offered to exchange research and developments in various fields of cosmology, nuclear physics, particle physics and other areas of science and astronomy. On May 6th through 8th in Havana, Cuba is the 5th Caribbean Symposium on Cosmology, Gravitation, Nuclear and Astroparticle Physics (STARS 2019). On May 9th through 12th is the 6th International Symposium on Strong Electromagnetic Fields and Neutron Stars (SMFNS 2019) being held in Varadero, Cuba. Over 15 countries are represented at this event. Make your reservations.

All times are given as Atlantic Standard Time (AST) unless otherwise noted. The times are based on a viewing position in Grenada and may vary by only a few minutes in different Caribbean locations.

Jim Ulrik of S/V Merengue is a photographer and cruiser.

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The Short-Billed Dowitcher

Relatively recently I had the pleasure of observing a small group of these peace-loving shorebirds foraging on one of Carriacou's seaweed-clad beaches. They were captivating to watch as a couple of individuals raised their wings to display eye-catching barred plumage.

Every year, regardless of the weather, the conspicuous Short-Billed Dowitcher (*Limnodromus griseus*) flies south in flocks of one hundred or more, from its far-flung breeding grounds in the taiga and subarctic tundra of North America to the West Indian and South American wetlands, navigating along a capacious road in the sky known as the Atlantic Flyway.

Soberly dressed in a grey-mottled mantle and striking black- and white-barred undersides, this shorebird suffered a massive population decline in the 1800s owing to large scale hunting. Indeed, back then, given their widespread breeding range, Short-Billed Dowitchers could have numbered in the hundreds of thousands. M. Smith (quoted by Palmer, 1949) wrote of a spring flight of Short-Billed Dowitchers on the 25th of May, 1868, that "extended from horizon to horizon" and must have been 12 to 15 miles wide and 100 miles long — yet, by the late 1800s, sightings of these birds were few and far between. Nevertheless, the population somewhat recovered in the 1950s, only to reverse this trend from the 1970s onwards. Today, the entire population of Short-Billed Dowitchers is comparable to the human population of Curaçao, with estimated numbers of 150,000-175,000 individuals. So, why the decline?

Early records show that centuries ago, vast numbers of migratory shorebirds wintered in the West Indies in relative safety. The Taino and Carib people who inhabited the islands noticed these birds coming and going with little idea of where they came from, or where they went to when they disappeared. One legend claimed that the shorebirds hid in the trees, yet another declared that they flew to the moon. Armed with simple bows and blowguns, the indigenous people hunted shorebirds, but killed only what they needed, allowing nature to remain in perfect balance. However, from the mid-17th century onwards, the arrival of Europeans with their firearms forever altered this balance, and what had begun as opportunistic hunting developed into large-scale shooting by the mid-19th century, as wealthy plantation owners with plenty of time on their hands indulged in hunting shorebirds on their own structured, well managed "shooting swamps", with dyked impoundments mechanically flooded and groomed to attract the maximum number of shorebirds. According to the 19th-century ornithologist, Alexander Wilson, in such settings, hunters would kill as many as 85 Short-Billed Dowitchers with one shot of the musket.

ISS (International Shorebird Survey) reports from 1972 to 1983, show a 46-percent population decline aided by improved swamps, better weapons and the use of audio-tape lures, which played back recorded bird calls to attract passing birds. More recent data from 2001 to 2010 indicates that about three percent of the entire population of the Short-Billed Dowitcher was being killed on Barbados's shooting swamps alone. Perhaps the problem may be exacerbated by the Short-Billed Dowitcher's tame nature, often allowing close approach while busy foraging, and its tendency to fly over shot flock-companions, thus becoming easy targets.

Although abundant in times gone by, this species has long been one of the least understood of all shorebirds, mainly due to being confused with the Long-Billed Dowitcher. These two species are so outwardly similar that only in the 1950s were the two species of Dowitcher recognized and the Short-Billed Dowitcher separated into three races (*L. griseus griseus*, *L. g. hendersoni*, and *L. g. caurinus*), each with distinct breeding areas and migration routes as well as being distinguishable by plumage and size. In the West Indies, we are visited by the race *L. g. griseus*, which are relatively common in the Bahamas, Cayman Islands, Greater Antilles and Barbados, but less common in the Lesser Antilles.



Short-billed Dowitcher
Bela Almeida Brown

Although its name implies otherwise, the straight, long bill of the Short-Billed Dowitcher is one of the longest of all shorebirds and can be as long as the Long-Billed's, thus bill size should not be used to distinguish between the two Dowitchers; nor should body size, as a female Short-Billed can be as large as a male Long-Billed. Alas, correct identification is a challenge only made easier if you see both species together, when subtle field marks can be used as reference, such as the shallower forehead of the Long-Billed, as opposed to the steeper forehead of the Short-Billed, the slightly longer tail, longer legs and slightly concave back of the Long-Billed which gives it a slightly "cocked tail" appearance. During the breeding season all Dowitchers have differing amounts of pale-rusty undersides, which in the *L. g. griseus* is restricted to the breast and chin.

During northbound migration in April and May, the *griseus* undertakes non-stop flights from Guyana to the southeastern United States, and rests and feeds in large flocks in the area between Delaware Bay and Long Island, NY, from whence it flies directly to its

breeding grounds in Churchill, Manitoba. Competition for mates takes place soon after arrival at the breeding grounds, with aggressive charges and extremely complex and beautiful vocal contests. On one occasion, two males were observed performing a vocal contest while the female listened nearby. Eventually the two males shoved each other until one left and the other stayed with the female. Every so often the situation escalates and competing males fly up to face each other with dangling legs and arched backs, only to land a few metres apart. Aerial chases may involve drawn-out level flights where both birds shift positions or try to get above one another, while now and again jabbing out with the bill. Once courtship takes place, paired couples spend most of the pre-incubation time feeding and swimming together, while males will maintain a constant lookout and chase any unpaired males that may dare to feed or display near their mates.

But, regardless of its territorial conflicts during the breeding season, this charming medium-sized sand-

piper is otherwise known for its tame and social nature, often sharing feeding grounds with Lesser Yellowlegs, Stilt Sandpipers, Semipalmated Sandpipers and other shorebirds. Typically, it forages in close-knit intraspecific flocks that move regimented across the shallows — each bird probing around itself with rapid pivotal movements of the body, then taking a step forward to repeat the process, usually using the full length of its bill, even occasionally submerging its head, to probe for aquatic invertebrates and worms. They can feed by both day and night, using taste and tactile probing to locate prey and relying on high-density rods in the retina for enhanced night vision. Occasionally, its foraging behaviour may become mildly aggressive when feeding on small, patchy areas that restrict the movement of the flock, generating competition for foraging space.

In the West Indies, small flocks of Short-Billed Dowitchers may be seen from August to April, wading on sun-baked salt ponds, in coastal swamps and shallow ungrazed beaches.

I enjoy shooting them — with my telephoto zoom lens.

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The Reef Oddballs – Part 2

Filefish, Triggerfish and Drums



by Darelle Snyman

Queen Triggerfish

Before continuing to introduce you to more of our odd-shaped reef dwellers, I need to make a correction to the March article: the wrong photo was submitted for the Scrawled Cowfish, it was in fact a Scrawled Filefish meant for this month's article.

Filefishes belong to the diverse family Monacanthidae and their laterally flattened bodies have a distinctive rhomboid shape. Their keeled appearance is the result of an extendable "dewlap" under their bellies that makes them appear larger than they actually are.

A fun fact about filefish is that their common name relates to their rough sand-papery skin, which, according to literature, was once used to finish wooden boats. The roughness is the result of their scales having *setae* or spines and if you ever held one in your hands, which I have not, you would apparently understand why.

The first time I encountered the White-Spotted Filefish (*Cantherhines macrocerus*) with its bright orange body was at Devil's Table in Bequia, and since then, they have become a familiar sight on my reef explorations. I am fascinated by how they just calmly stare at you with those large curious eyes. They are



Orange-Spotted Filefish

certainly one of the easier fish to photograph without stressing out an entire reef community. Their soft, relatively small, simple fins restrict them to swimming with a sluggish gait. To compensate for their lack of speed they are adapted in other ways to fool both predator and prey. You will often see them hanging head downward among the coral and seaweed as a means to blend in. Like all members of the Monacanthidae family they have the unique ability to alter their colors rapidly from light to dark, quite a

treasure to see. Another weapon in their defense arsenal is a retractable spine that crowns the head; when threatened they erect the dorsal spine to wedge themselves into caves and crevices, making it very difficult for a predator to remove them.

Other filefish that frequent the Caribbean waters are the Scrawled Filefish (*Aluterus scriptus*) and the Orange-Spotted Filefish (*Cantherhines pullus*). The Scrawled Filefish, with its distinctive scribbled azure markings, is the largest member of the Monacanthidae family and more elongated in shape than its relative the White-Spotted Filefish. Its large tailfin is often furred, hence one of its local names being the Broomtail Filefish.

A smaller member of the clan is the Orange-Spotted Filefish; it can reach up to seven inches or 18 centimeters and tends to be bottom dwelling, where it feeds mainly on sponges and algae. I have only encountered these beauties a few times; the first time was in St. Pierre, Martinique after already being months in the Caribbean. I most probably just don't notice them because they blend in so well with their surroundings. The orange spots that give this filefish its name are not often obvious; more obvious are the brown and irregu-



Adult Spotted Drum

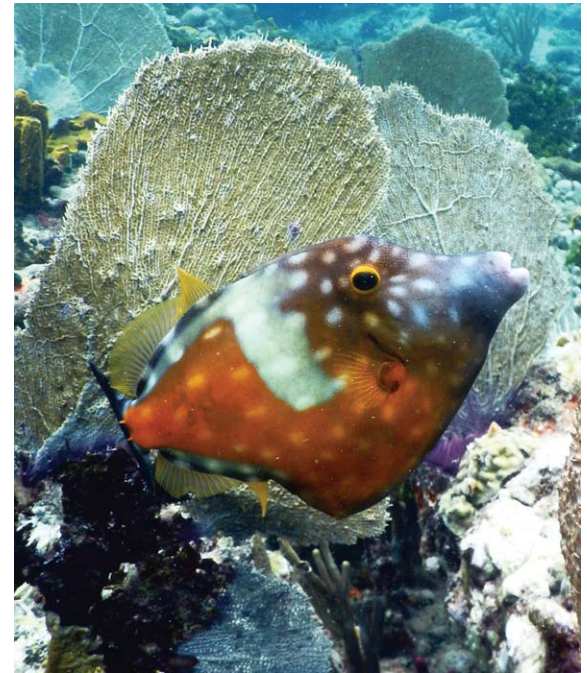
lar pale stripes that run along the sides of the body.

Next up are the triggerfishes, the striking and bold-colored cousins of the filefish. These attractively patterned fish belong to the family Balistidae and, like their filefish relatives, have dorsal spines that can be erected to wedge themselves into crevices. Where the filefish have two spines, one long and the second minute or even absent, the triggerfish has three dorsal spines and, once erected, the first dorsal spine remains locked in position until the second spine is depressed like a trigger, hence the name triggerfish.

Triggerfish are actually fascinating creatures, well equipped for reef life. The most interesting trait is their ability to emit a grunting sound as a warning when they spot a predator. So if you have been lucky enough to hear such a sound while diving, you were not hearing things — it was just a vigilant triggerfish warning other fish to stay away. Another neat aspect is their ability to move their eyes, which are situated far back on their head and independent of each other.

The Queen Triggerfish (*Balistes vetula*) is probably the most beautiful triggerfish that graces the Caribbean waters. Its most distinctive features are the two bright

blue bands that line its yellow cheeks from the snout to below and in front of the pectoral fins, which give it a somewhat grumpy appearance. They are ferocious feeders, equipped with powerful teeth and jaws to quickly crush and consume the hard-shelled bottom dwelling creatures they feed on such as crabs, starfish and sea urchins. They circumvent the protective spines of sea urchins by blowing water from their mouths to create a current that turns the poor urchin over. The Queen Triggerfish, like most of its kin, has a reputation for being very aggressive. This fact I cannot attest to, as sadly, I have only encountered them a handful of times, the first time at Ronde Island, Grenada in somewhat murky waters. Another sad truth is that this beauty is listed as near threatened on the IUCN red



White-Spotted Filefish

data list owing to a decline in population numbers. The main threat according to the IUCN red data list is overfishing, both commercial and subsistence; many are taken as bycatch in commercial long-line and vertical line fisheries in the Gulf of Mexico as well as in Brazil. They have also been recorded in the diet of the invasive lionfish, *Pterois volitans*. Many other triggerfish are

also at risk, as their attractive colors and patterns make them popular in the aquarium-fish trade.

Another unique reef dweller that I love to watch is the Spotted Drum (*Equetus punctatus*), which belongs to the large Sciaenidae family, commonly called drums or croakers. These bottom dwellers are named after the repetitive low-pitched throbbing sound they make by vibrating their abdominal muscles against their swim bladders. The Spotted Drum is easily identified by its distinctive long dorsal fin and unusual black and white pattern of stripes and spots. The juveniles of these quirky little fish lack spots and have even longer, more elegant dorsal fins. These fins shorten as they age. As nocturnal feeders, they spend their day under ledges or near openings of small caves, swimming around in a repetitive pattern that makes you dizzy to watch. They are really quick as they dart in and out for their hiding places; as a result I have many a blurred picture of them. To spot them during the daytime you will have to dive down and inspect all those bottom ledges and small caves!

LOOK OUT FOR...

Mother Nature Gone Wild: THE CROTON

by Lynn Kaak

As you travel through the Caribbean, every month there's something special to look out for.

You'll see this colourful shrub in virtually every Caribbean garden. A native of the South Pacific and Indonesia, the croton is found everywhere throughout the tropics now. The Europeans saw the esthetic value of this plant, and carried it with them to the New World. As long as the temperature never gets below about 13°C (55°F or so), it will do well.

The croton, *Codiaeum variegatum* or *Croton variegatum*, is a botanical chameleon of sorts. The "variegatum" in the taxonomic name may be a giveaway on that, as the meaning really is "varied."

So, what does this plant look like? That is the tough part to define! The leaves have long stems, and are somewhat leathery, but can be almost any shape, varying from a long thin spike to a broad scalloped form. They can be anywhere from five to 30 centimetres (two to 12 inches) long. The colours of the leaves can range from a brown or green to red, orange, purple and yellow — often on the same leaf. The results may be equivalent to what would happen if a three-year-old were set loose with a box of crayons. The patterns and colours may vary on the same plant.

Because of their tendency towards bushiness, these plants are popular for hedges and a colourful privacy fence. They provide brilliant pops of colour as a potted plant. They grow easily in well-drained soil, and can tolerate a fair amount of sun, but do like a bit of shade so they don't get cooked in the UV.

The flowers of this plant are not the main attraction. Tiny flowers grow in a long cluster from a stalk, with male and female flowers on separate stalks. Eventually they give way to tiny seeds.

This plant is purely decorative, and can be detrimental to one's health if any part of it is eaten. Even handling the sap or latex from them can cause skin irritation, and gloves are highly recommended. This may be an added bonus as a deterrent if using this plant as a hedge.

Generally, if left to grow on their own, the plants can reach a height of about three metres (ten feet), and depending on the specifics of the particular cultivar, may get quite bushy or stay close and spiky.

This is not a plant that one must "look out for" — it is everywhere! However, where visitors might have known it as a popular houseplant before, it is often a bush here. With its foliage providing perpetual splashes of vibrant and various colour, no wonder the croton has won a place in so many Caribbean gardens.



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MERIDIAN PASSAGE OF THE MOON

APRIL - MAY 2019

Crossing the channels between Caribbean islands with a favorable tide will make your passage faster and more comfortable. The table below, courtesy Don Street, author of Street's Guides and compiler of Imray-Iolaire charts, which shows the time of the meridian passage (or zenith) of the moon for this AND next month, will help you calculate the tides.

Water, Don explains, generally tries to run toward the moon. The tide starts running to the east soon after moonrise, continues to run east until about an hour after the moon reaches its zenith (see TIME below) and then runs westward. From just after the moon's setting to just after its nadir, the tide runs eastward; and from just after its nadir to soon after its rising, the tide runs westward; i.e. the tide floods from west to east. Times given are local.

Note: the maximum tide is 3 or 4 days after the new and full moons.
For more information, see "Tides and Currents" on the back of all Imray Iolaire charts. Fair tides!

April 2019		May 2019	
DATE	TIME	DATE	TIME
1	0924	11	1803
2	1008	12	1858
3	1051	13	1951
4	1134	14	2043
5	1216	15	2133
6	1300	16	2223
7	1348	17	2314
8	1434	18	0000 FULL MOON
9	1525	19	0006
10	1619	20	0059
11	1715	21	0152
12	1813	22	0245
13	1911	23	0337
14	2008	24	0426
15	2104	25	0514
16	2158	26	0559
17	2250	27	0642
18	2342	28	0725
19	0000 FULL MOON	29	0807
20	0034	30	0850
		31	0934
		10	1706



by Ross Mavis

Pressure Cooking Revisited

A telephone call from the Bahamas recently brought back to me the joys of sailing — and cooking onboard. My son Philip and daughter-in-law Michelle are cruising on their boat, *S/V Mariposa*. Before they left on their great adventure, my wife Willa and I gave them a gift we knew would be invaluable — a pressure cooker. Now, my wife is no amateur sailor: she has sailed from Sweden to North America, making landfall in Antigua, with her then husband and five-year-old son on their 29-foot *Scampi*. This was almost 50 years ago, but her love of cooking still remains as strong today as then. (Yes, I am a lucky man.)

We both knew that the benefits of pressure cooking, especially on a small sailboat, are many. To be able to prepare a hot meal using only a minimum of fuel is one thing. The fact that only one cooking vessel is used means less clean-up. A cheaper, tougher cut of meat can become delicious, moist and fork tender using pressure cooking. Also, the prepared dish can be safely resealed in its cooking container for the short term, minimizing the need for refrigerated storage. It was these benefits that we knew would also be of great assistance to cruising “kids”.

Sure enough, the phone call confirmed our original suspicions. Pressure cookers aren't new. The device was invented in the late 1600s by Frenchman Denis Papin. It works by allowing pressure in a sealed pot to build up to a higher temperature before boiling, thus reducing the time necessary for cooking. The steam regulator, safety valve and pressure-activated locking mechanism provide protection against overheating and any danger of explosion. Read the booklet that comes with your cooker.

So, what is it that many cruisers are concerned about when considering a pressure cooker for their galley? The very name of the pot scares some folks. Cooking under pressure sounds dangerous. My mum still used hers until she was into her 90's. One day she admitted she had a problem once using her old Presto pressure cooker.

“It wasn't the pot's fault,” she confessed, “I forgot it was on the stove and it boiled too vigorously and blew the safety valve off and spread bean soup all over my kitchen, including the ceiling!” At her age, not only was this forgivable, but understandable. Pressure cookers need only moderate heat to operate, another big benefit to cruisers. In less than 30 minutes you can cook and be ready to enjoy a dinner — with lots of leftovers for future meals.

If your galley doesn't have a pressure cooker, don't hesitate to get one. I know you will be pleased with the benefits. I once said if I was marooned on a desert island, one of the only items I could not do without is a pressure cooker. Willa and I still use one we've had for almost half a century.

Here's a recipe you'll want to try, suggested by Michelle. Meat in the Caribbean can be expensive, so Phil and Michelle were delighted to find a nice fresh chicken for ten dollars. It provided them with five meals! Two lunches of soup, chicken salad sandwiches, curried chicken over rice, and wraps using leftovers. Here's what Michelle did, using a four-quart pressure cooker.

Pressure Cooker Chicken

One 4 or 5 pound chicken, washed and cut into parts
 4 Cups chicken stock (or water and a bouillon cube)
 1/4 teaspoon salt
 1/2 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper
 Dried or fresh parsley
 1 chopped onion
 1/2 cup chopped celery (or celery salt for flavor)
 2 carrots, cut into large chunks
 1 or 2 bay leaves

Put all ingredients into cooker and bring to a boil. Put lid on cooker and cook on low to moderate heat until pressure builds and pot top rocker gently releases excess steam. Cook like this for 20 minutes. Turn stove off and let pot sit until pressure drops and the lid can be easily opened. The fragrance is overwhelming!

The taste is also incredible. Remove cooked chicken, removing skin and bay leaves. Save the choicer chunks for other recipes.

Pick the meat from the back, neck and other “odd” pieces and return to the soup. Season to taste. You can add rice or pasta to the stock for a hearty soup. Enjoy!



If your pressure cooker is large enough, you can cook a chicken whole

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OARS FOR A SAFE DINGHY RIDE

Dear Compass,

Regarding the article on page 33 in the February 2019 edition of the *Compass*, I must say, the most important items for a safe dinghy ride are not mentioned in the article. These are OARS for each rider! I have so often witnessed that people don't have oars or they can't handle them.

Additionally, for added safety, carry enough fuel in the tank and spare fuel, too. For long dinghy distances I have a tool kit with me to be able to clean the spark plug, which is what causes the most outboard problems.

Angelika Grüner
S/V Angelos

Hi Angelika,

Good advice about having enough fuel, and also a way to clean the spark plugs. Thank you.

The article "Your Dinghy Emergency Kit" by Emma Smith (see page 33 at www.caribbeancompass.com/online/february19compass_online.pdf) did mention oars briefly, however: "Having oars or a sailing rig in the dinghy might help, but if the wind is strong from the wrong direction you might not make sufficient headway to reach safety, especially in an inflatable."

CC

CHART PLOTTER FREE SOFTWARE

Dear Compass,

This month, after several years of using various versions, we upgraded to the newest OPENCPN version 4.8.8. The newest release of this software shows amazing new features and development efforts. With a decent internet/WiFi connection, it took me a couple of hours to download and install the OPENCPN application, and download plug-ins I was interested in.

After the upgrade, I downloaded and updated the free USA and world marine charts, something that is critical to keep current. These NOAA charts (ENC and RNC) cover a major part of the USA and Caribbean and other areas are available from other government services. The software can also read and use commercially purchased charting products.

We are impressed with this free software, which has grown over the years and offers a large number of marine-based applications. With electronic charts, the software "sees" buoys and warnings; it puts a kind of "physics" into the waterways we cruise. The software/plug-ins and charts are also updated with releases, with many showing a date of 2018-2019 — a good thing!

The system, with its basic functionality of charts, tracking, waypoints (exportable), routing, weather features, and more can be added on with featured plug-ins, at no charge. I would be surprised if there is NOT a plug-in for a majority of the functionality found in commercial packages. A manual/documentation is available as PDF or online from the site, which states that plug-ins and the website are date-stamped 2019, with current development ongoing.

As a former software developer, I can say this is a carefully designed product with all the earmarks of good engineering. An open-source system. OPENCPN is supported by a team of developers/boaters, has real-world testing, and has many additional add-ons/maritime plug-ins that expand the software. This means an integrated chart plotter with AIS, GPS navigation, tracking, weather routing, weather fax, and more.

To test it, I downloaded GRIB files (SAILDOCS works with it too) using Zgrib, displayed the weather, then loaded weather files from NWS/NOAA and overlaid those files on the charts. Just this capability, and yes, you can use HF Radiofax captures, makes this something for the cruiser's toolkit on board. Even weather routing, similar to products costing hundreds of dollars, has been added to the system as a free plug-in.

On our sailboat, we have it loaded on a Windows laptop, with GPS puck and AIS USB receive-only capability. The puck was US\$14 and the AIS USB was

US\$8 from Amazon. This is an inexpensive backup to our more expensive chartplotters with AIS and GPS systems — and may become our primary chart plotter if a waterproof Android tablet is in the cruising kitty. We also loaded the software via Google Play on my Android phone, downloaded the free charts, and now have an excellent system to use as long as we are in reach of cell service. Apple iPad and Raspberry PI (a new, small, and inexpensive computing system) are also supported operating systems. A Raspberry PI will soon be added to our toolkit on board, so we are glad to see OPENCPN supporting the technology.

OPENCPN is a nice package of capability for cruisers. We continue to operate our marine hardware systems, radar, and chartplotters, but can export and load waypoints from OPENCPN, a really efficient way to plan for voyaging. We also donated to the developers, something that's polite to do if you like and will use the product.

Find the product at www.opencpn.org and try it out. The price is certainly right!

Joan Conover
S/V Groultiger

NOT A FAMOUS YACHTSMAN

Dear Compass,

I would like to add my own few words to Sandy Mair's excellent goodbye to Geoff Bond that appears in this month's Info & Updates.

Geoff was not a famous yachtsman, known to all, but to those of us who did know him he was special: always welcoming, always friendly, always cheerful, and always with time for you.

One time I saw him, many years ago, he was sailing a Beneteau with a friend called Lorraine. They were not then together, just good friends that got on really well on a boat together. Geoff at the time was reeling from some marriage disaster that crashed badly. However, some of his friends felt, "Well, Geoff, you get on so well with Lorraine, think about it!" With hindsight the match was maybe not ideal for a very long duration. Lorraine: competent, a black belt in Judo or some such, decisive and strong. Geoff: much more vague, often indecisive (he might turn up to visit for a week and stay a month), and a gentle, kind person. But it was wonderful they did, even if it was not forever, because they had a daughter, Jessacca (Jesse). They chartered in the Caribbean around this time, and were a wonderful haven for me, because I could be



somewhat lost in where I was headed, and they were like home.

Lorraine was fearless. One Friday night after the street party at Gros Islet, St. Lucia, they were walking home. Geoff was walking somewhat ahead of Lorraine, who was carrying Jesse. A mugger jumped out of the bushes and grabbed Geoff by the back of the neck and pulled him backwards. Lorraine tucked Jesse under one arm, freeing the other, and laid the mugger flat with one blow, whereupon he jumped up and fled.

When their relationship ended, Geoff still sailed in the Caribbean for a year or two. Once he sold ads for Cruising Guide Publications for the Leewards. I was spending the summers in Vermont by then, and he came and helped me build a little cabin. Geoff then went onto other adventures with his boat in Europe and I was delighted when Jesse, now grown, sailed to the Caribbean, and even came and sailed with me on *Ti Kanot* a couple of times.

My life was enriched by knowing Geoff; I really appreciate having been his friend.

Chris Doyle
Ti Kanot

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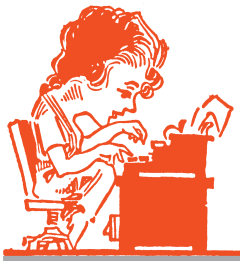
Dear Compass Readers,

We want to hear from YOU!

Be sure to include your name, boat name, or shore-side address, and a way we can contact you (preferably by email) if clarification is required.

We do not publish individual consumer complaints or individual regatta results complaints. (Kudos are okay!) We do not publish anonymous letters; however, your name may be withheld from print at your request. Please keep letters shorter than 600 words. Letters may be edited for length, clarity, and fair play.

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Letter of the Month

historically fed their success. Anyway, there are other places people can go to hear the sizzle — like the happy hour bar and grill.

CSSN's long history of exclusively publishing reports of actual events and avoiding suspicion and fear of potential threats has been compromised with this annual report's inaccurate inflation of violent crime. Reports of actual vetted events help all of us understand the historical instances of crimes against yachts and plan accordingly. Reports featuring suspicion, perceived threats, and fear set off amplified alarms that can distract from rational fact-based risk assessment. It is even worse when reports of "suspicion" detract from the rare good news that violent crime last year was at a five-year low.

Hopefully, CSSN will honor the best practices of the past and exclusively focus on the reporting of ACTUAL events. Hopefully, they will reject reporting of "suspicious activity" and subjective threats of POTENTIAL crimes. Hopefully, they will stop inflating crime levels to enhance the sizzle — risking incineration of the steak in the process.

Signed,
Mary Stone
M/V Ms Astor

Disclosure and disclaimer from Mary Stone: I served CSSN as the primary donor and website feature developer from 2013 to 2017, requesting that attributions concerning such service be anonymous. Requests were not honored. An EU General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) complaint produced evidence proving name and boat name were published without consent. Unauthorized attribution should not infer tacit endorsement of current CSSN editorial practice.

Dear Compass Readers,

We asked Kim White, administrator of the Caribbean Safety and Security Net, for her response, which follows.

CC

Dear Compass,

Thanks for the opportunity to address your letter writer's concerns, but I won't be using up your valuable space with a response. As most are already aware, CSSN, as an online publisher, addresses questions from users on our informative website FAQ, as well as directly by e-mail. We provide links on our website and in our reports (including the annual reports) to make it easy.

Best regards,
Kim White
CSSN

Editor's note:

As Kim suggested, we asked for clarification on this point via via e-mail. The reply is below.

Dear Compass,

Thank you for contacting CSSN with your question about the 2018 annual report. I am glad to clarify for you.

The Suspicious Activity category (new in 2018) was included with its parent or related category, Piracy, so as to allow all reports of this nature to be reviewed together. In the 2018 CSSN annual report you will notice a nice graphic titled "Countries Where Violent/Suspicious Activity Incidents were Reported 2018". You will also notice a similar pairing on the next "Types of Incidents" graphic where attempted theft and theft are also shown together.

I hope this answers your question, glad to know you value our reports and information.

Best Regards,
Kim R. White, S/V Gabrielle
Caribbean Safety and Security Net
www.safetyandsecuritynet.org

'SUSPICIOUS ACTIVITY': CSSN'S 2018 ANNUAL REPORT

Dear Compass,

The Caribbean Safety and Security Net's annual report for 2018 (safetyandsecuritynet.org/cssn-annual-report-2018-reported-yacht-crime-caribbean) reported non-violent crime up and violent crime down (a five-year low). The numbers can't be deeply analyzed with standard statistical methods because they are too small (112 events spread over more than 35 countries). On the surface, the report contains the expected dynamic year-on-year dance of the usual suspects in the usual places over the usual time periods — except for the low number of violent crime reports: half of the previous year's. That's good!

Recently, however, in addition to first- and second-hand reports of crimes or attempted crimes against yachts in the Caribbean, CSSN has been collecting and publishing "suspicious activity" reports — subjective perceptions of suspicion, threat, fear, or alarm — the opposite of CSSN's usual attention to "just the facts".

A look at how this new category is counted in the 2018 report revealed that it inflated the low violent crime data. That's not so good.

For example, of the seven incidents characterized as "violent incidents", two were actually "suspicious activity" where nothing violent actually happened. This means there were only five actual violent events in 2018 instead of seven, 40 percent less. So, it is not accurate to say that violent incidents decreased by 50 percent, from 14 in 2017 to seven in 2018. Removing the two "suspicious activity" inflators reveals that violent incidents actually decreased by 64 percent, from 14 to five events in 2018. The new event category, "suspicious activity", inflated by 40 percent a record five-year low level of violent crime. That is suspicious activity!

Let's suppose for a moment that we can set aside how "suspicious activity" inflated the record low level of violent crime. Are there stand-alone compelling arguments against reporting "suspicious activity", based on the fundamental defects integral to its nature? There are. For example, an honest reporter deducing that there is "suspicious activity" in progress is viewing that activity through a lens of subjective perception influenced by a unique mix of emotion, fear, past experience, and cultural norms, among other natural biases. The dilemma is that another reporter with a different mix of those elements might view the same activity and come to a different conclusion. What is perceived by one reporter as a break-glass-pull-alarm moment, is not such an alarm to another. Such is the defect with reports of "suspicious activity": it can't be vetted. CSSN not only has reported these subjective judgments, but they also used those reports — of activities that were not violent, and moreover had no victim, because no crime actually happened — to inflate "violent crime" numbers.

To the credit of CSSN, actual event reports have typically been based on vetted facts including the what, when, where, who, how and why of an event having an actual victim.

Of course, many people naturally want more sizzle alongside the well-done meat of fact-based real event reports. The "high-interest piracy sphere" where CSSN said they report most "suspicious activity" is a perfect place to heat up the grill and cook the meat. "Piracy" is an emotional and misused term with a lot of sizzle. But a credible CSSN should not need to take on the role of sizzler when it's the steak that has

—Continued from page 9 ... Caribbean Eco News

To help researchers track the seaweed's migration and stages of growth, citizen scientists including cruisers assist in environmental research by reporting impacted areas, whether out at sea or piled up in harbors. Thick mats float on the ocean, causing fouling of vessels. This weed can cover beaches in metres of stinking rot. It's an ongoing problem wherever the weed migrates via winds and currents.

The Pelagic Sargassum research is a part of two university programs: one at the University of South Florida and the University of Southern Mississippi's Gulf Coast Research Laboratory. To support the research, the Seven Seas Cruising Association has developed a Clean Wake program to recruit yachts on passage that can report sightings; we send research and alert information to publications, inform members and the public and also utilize the SSCA Single Sideband radio station, KPK, to get the message out. Over the past four years, cruisers' reports and samples have helped develop a satellite imagery early warning system and helped identify new ways in which this weed propagates.

But the problem is continuing, and researchers still need more reports, especially from the northern and western Caribbean.

The website for reporting link is below. Reporting cruisers note the lat/long, DTG and type of weed form (mats or strings/threads). The site describes it, and vessels can report when they get to harbor and internet. On our boat, we also photograph the weed from the cockpit, along with a photo of the chartplotter.

Cruisers can be a big help to researchers by sending in reports of where you have seen sargassum. Information about where sargassum is *not* located is also helpful: for "no sargassum sighted", make one report on return from a passage, with approximate locations of your travel with a few lat/longs and the DTGs of your trip.

To report sargassum sightings (or lack thereof), go to Gulf Coast Research Laboratory website <http://gcr.l.usm.edu/sargassum/index.php>

See <https://optics.marine.usf.edu/projects/SaWS/pdf> for the latest sargassum predictions for the Caribbean Sea.

BirdSleuth Caribbean Program on St. Martin

Over the last five years, almost 50,000 people on 22 islands have learned new things about birds. They took part in BirdSleuth Caribbean, a program that uses birds to teach science and conservation. The program was done by BirdsCaribbean and partners throughout the region.

"The goal of BirdSleuth Caribbean is to promote the protection of birds and nature," explained BirdsCaribbean Executive Director Lisa Sorenson. "It's easy to fall in love with birds. They are beautiful and they are all around us. That makes them a perfect tool for teaching science and conservation."

At a training workshop in 2013, 27 people from all over the Caribbean learned the program and received kits of materials. Back home, they led teacher trainings for over 1,000 teachers. On St. Martin, dozens of teachers have learned BirdSleuth. The

program is available in English, Spanish and French.

Over two dozen activities are part of the BirdSleuth program. They include classroom lessons, games and outdoor activities. BirdSleuth can be taught as a series of ten lessons. Many activities also work well on their own.

BirdSleuth activities have been used in many ways. They are offered in schools and museums. Fun activities like Bird Bingo and the Habitat Scavenger Hunt are popular at bird and wildlife events. The focus on Caribbean birds connects with kids, especially on islands where most teaching tools come from far away.

On St. Martin, over 1,000 youths have participated in BirdSleuth Caribbean. Both Environmental Protection in the Caribbean and the Les Fruits de Mer association have trained teachers and led BirdSleuth with students.

These activities are offered for free to classes and groups visiting Amuseum Naturalis at The Old House in the French Quarter. The activities are led by local bird expert Binkie van Es and other Les Fruits de Mer association volunteers.

Visit www.lesfruitsdemer.com/projects/birdsleuth-caribbean for more information.



Kids explore nature during a BirdSleuth activity at Amuseum Naturalis on St. Martin

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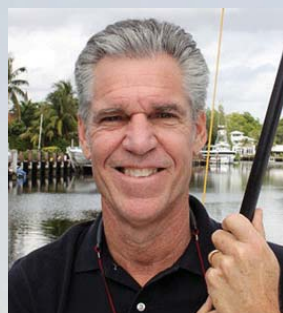
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2015 LAGOON 52
\$1,100,000



2015 FP SANYA 57
\$1,099,000



2015 ALIBI 54
\$899,000



2015 LAGOON 560 S2
\$1,250,000



2014 LAGOON 450
\$599,000



2011 LAGOON 450
\$495,000



2014 BALANCE 451
\$529,000



2006 PRIVILEGE 435
€310,000



2001 SWITCH 51
\$449,000



2016 NEEL 45
€455,000



2001 LAGOON 570
\$499,999

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2015 CATANA 47



2009 CATANA 50



2010 KNYSNA 480



2000 CATANA 471



2014 LAGOON 450



2010 OUTREMER 49



2006 SUNREEF 62

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SEA TURTLES FOR RANSOM

by Emma Doyle



A number of sea turtle groups in the Caribbean are officially permitted to undertake monitoring programs where sea turtles are captured by trained researchers and tagged with flipper tags and/or microchips. Tagging is critical in helping to assess the trends in abundance in sea turtle populations across the region and to drive policy needed to ensure that sea turtles are used sustainably. Tagged turtles are formally recorded at WIDECAST's Marine Turtle Tagging Centre at the University of the West Indies, Cave Hill Campus, Barbados. Because of



Above: Darren and Glenroy, training in Barbados
Left: Keniel releasing a tagged turtle in the Tobago Cays Marine Park

Right: Releasing a tagged turtle in the Tobago Cays Marine Park

threats to sea turtles, such as incidental catch and plastic ingestion, most countries in the region have recognized the need for closure of sea turtle fisheries to allow recovery of over-exploited populations.

On sea turtles being purchased for release, Ms Charles comments that "they are not contributing anything to our scientific knowledge of these endangered species. Nor are those who purchase turtles helping to bring about the necessary national decisions and enforcement support that is needed to ensure the legal protection of all sea turtles."

A more effective alternative is to support those sea turtle groups that have formal permits to conduct research and conservation work and that are part of the WIDECAST network, ensuring they uphold international best practices that are founded on solid science.

See www.widecast.org/who-we-are/widecast-ccs for a list of official sea turtle contacts and groups in each Caribbean country and territory.

These groups often get local fishers involved in helping with their research and monitoring programs, for which the fishers earn a wage or stipend in return. This represents a more sustainable local livelihood option for fishers and, accordingly, such "community researcher programs" are seen as a best practice in conservation.

It's also important for cruisers and visitors to know where they stand legally when in foreign waters. A few Caribbean countries still have legal open fisheries for sea turtles. In some cases, open seasons last for several months, but the sea turtle fishery is closed during the annual turtle nesting season. Grenada, St. Lucia, Dominica, St. Kitts & Nevis, the British Virgin Islands, Montserrat, Haiti and the Turks & Caicos Islands are among these. In other cases, a particular species of sea turtle can be legally fished while others are protected, for example in Grenada and St. Lucia. In some

cases, there are minimum and/or maximum size limits for allowed turtle catch. Some countries also have a legal indigenous sea turtle fishery, such as Nicaragua, Honduras and Colombia. In these cases, and during these times, the fisher asking you to buy the turtle has every right to fish it. However, if a fisher approaches you during the closed season then it's illegal for them to have the turtle and your correct response is to report their details to the local police, fisheries officers or park rangers.

It's worth being aware that in countries where sea turtles are fully protected, or during the closed season, it's against the law to interfere with sea turtles in any way. So you place yourself at risk of prosecution should you purchase a turtle, bring a sea turtle onboard or handle a sea turtle in any way. And handling a sea turtle brings other risks, too. Ms Charles adds: "Remember that sea turtles are reptiles and they can carry salmonella. There is also a herpes virus called fibropapilloma that is affecting sea turtles in the Caribbean region, it causes cancer-like tumours that spread. Always consider your own health before you touch any sea turtle."

When faced with the plight of an endangered sea turtle, we often have the best intentions. In the past some sea turtle groups have themselves tried purchasing turtles from fishers but the strategy is not financially sustainable and we now know that the cons outweigh the pros. "These days, credible sea turtle researchers in the region will not tag turtles that have been purchased for a ransom. And for the well-inten-



tioned cruiser or visiting diver there's no way to know whether the fisher is re-capturing the same turtle to sell over and over again," says Ms Charles.

"Don't be taken advantage of and please don't place more sea turtles at risk. If you wish to make a donation to help these endangered species then please support credible sea turtle efforts throughout the region."

For more information see widecast.org and oceanspirits.org

Reports are coming in from Grenada that cruisers and dive boats are increasingly being approached by fishers with live sea turtles who request payment in order to secure the turtles' release, or else threaten that the turtles will be slaughtered.

Ocean Spirits, a non-profit Grenadian community-based sea turtle research, conservation and education group that is part of the Wider Caribbean Sea Turtle Conservation Network (WIDECAST), warns that this is causing more fishers to catch sea turtles, knowing that they can make quick money from a sale for release.

"Purchasing sea turtles for release actually does more harm than good. Turtles are captured in nets and many drown in the process. Without realizing it, persons purchasing turtles are encouraging fishers who didn't previously target turtles to now try to catch them. For each one you might see alive there are other turtles that have already died, as well as other by-catch that is caught in the nets, such as stingrays and sharks," explains Kate Charles, Project Manager for Ocean Spirits.



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CALENDAR

APRIL

- 6 – 7 St. Maarten Multiclass Regatta. SMYC, www.smyc.com
 12 Girl Pat Race, Trinidad to Grenada
 13 Island Water World Cruiser Seminar, Cole Bay, St. Maarten.
www.facebook.com/Islandwaterworld
 14 Massy Stores Dinghy Regatta, Barbados. BYC,
www.barbadosyachtclub.com
 14 – 20 Les Voiles de St. Barths. SBYC, www.stbarthyachtclub.com
 14 – 20 Easterval Festival, Union Island, Grenadines. easterval@gmail.com
 15 Public holiday in Puerto Rico (Birthday of José de Diego)
 17 – 23 Antigua Classic Yacht Regatta. www.antiguaclassics.com
 18 – 22 Bequia Easter Regatta, BSC, www.bequiaegatta.com
 19 FULL MOON & Public holiday in Venezuela
 (Declaration of Independence)
 19 – 20 Curaçao Regatta. SVCR, tiki-mas@hotmail.com
 19 – 22 Rupununi Rodeo, Leyhem, Guyana. www.visitrupununi.com
 21 – 22 Virgin Gorda Easter Festival
 22 International Earth Day
 22 Antigua & Barbuda Kite Festival, Devil's Bridge. visitantiguabarbuda.com
 25 – 28 The Tobago Jazz Experience. www.carnifest.com
 26 – 28 500th Anniversary of Havana Dinghy Regatta, Cuba.
 CNIH, yachtclub@cni.h.mh.tur.cu
 26 – 28 Carriacou Maroon & String Band Music Festival.
www.carriacoumaroon.com
 26 – 28 West Indies Regatta, St. Barth. <http://westindiesregatta.com>
 27 Round Antigua Race. AYC, www.antiguayachtclub.com
 28 Carnival in Jamaica. www.bacchanaljamaica.com
 28 Public holiday in Barbados (National Heroes' Day)
 28 – 3 May Antigua Sailing Week, AYC, www.sailingweek.com
 28 – 3 May Conch Republic Cup Regatta, Florida to Cuba. Key West Yacht Club
 30 Public holiday in Bonaire (Rincon Day)

MAY

- 1 Public holiday in many places (Labour Day)
 1 – 5 Mayreau Regatta, Grenadines. www.facebook.com/mayreau.regatta
 3 500th Anniversary of Havana Sailing Cruise, Cuba.
 CNIH, yachtclub@cni.h.mh.tur.cu
 3 – 5 Bahamas Carnival 'Junkanoo'. bahamascarnival.com
 3 – 26 St. Barth Theatre Festival. www.festivalde theatre desaintbarthelemy.com
 4 Lowell Wheatley Anegada Pursuit Race, BVI. RBVIYC,
admin@royalbvicyc.org
 4 Start of ARC USA rally from Tortola to Virginia or Florida.
 WCC, www.worldcruising.com
 4 Start of ARC Europe rally from Tortola to Portugal via Bermuda,
www.worldcruising.com
 4 Start of Salty Dawg Spring Rally to the US from Virgin Gorda, BVI.
www.saltydawgsailing.org
 4 Dockyard Day, English Harbour, Antigua. www.sailingweek.com
 4 – 5 Virgin Islands Carnival, St. Thomas. USVI. www.vicarnival.com
 4 – 5 Cayman Islands Carnival, 'Batabano'. www.caymancarnival.com
 5 Jazz 'n Creole Festival, Portsmouth, Dominica.
<http://dominicafestivals.com>
 5 – 7 Point Fortin Borough Day, Point Fortin, Trinidad.
 5 – 8 Cuba Rally, Key West to Havana. Florida Yachts Charters
 5 – 12 St. Lucia Jazz Festival. www.stlucia.org/summerfestival
 6 500th Anniversary of Havana Boat Parade, Havana, Cuba.
 CNIH, yachtclub@cni.h.mh.tur.cu
 6 – 7 St. Maarten Carnival. www.facebook.com/sxmcarnival
 7 Point Fortin Borough Day Regatta, Guapo Beach, Point Fortin, Trinidad
 8 Start of Antigua to Bermuda Race. <https://antiguabermuda.com>
 12 Atlantic Back Rally departs Guadeloupe for Azores.
www.atlanticbackcruising.com
 12 UOC Race, Curaçao. CYA, info2cya@gmail.com
 15 – 18 ANR Regatta, Tobago. ansailing.com
 16 – 20 Cayman Islands Carnival 'CayMas'. www.caymas.ky
 17 – 19 BVI Dinghy Championships, Tortola. RBVIYC, admin@royalbvicyc.org
 17 – 27 Guyana Carnival. www.guyanacarnival592.com
 18 FULL MOON
 19 Rudy Dovale Sunfish Race, Curaçao. CSSA, tiki-mas@hotmail.com
 20 Public holiday in the Cayman Islands (Discovery Day)
 25 – 26 Foxy's Wooden Boat Regatta, Jost Van Dyke, BVI. www.foxysbar.com
 27 Public holiday in Puerto Rico (Memorial Day)
 30 Public holiday in Aruba, Bonaire and Curaçao (Ascension Day)
 and in Trinidad & Tobago (Indian Arrival Day) and Anguilla (Anguilla Day)
 30 – 2 June Baai Hoppen, Curaçao. Leden CYA, info2cya@gmail.com
 30 – 6 June Combat de Coques regatta, Martinique. CNM,
www.clubnautiquedumarin.com
 31 – 7 June Grenada Chocolate Festival. grenadachocolatefest.com

All information was correct to the best of our knowledge at the time
 this issue of Compass went to press — but plans change,
 so please contact event organizers directly for confirmation.

If you would like a nautical or tourism event listed FREE in our monthly calendar,
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 and contact information of the organizing body to
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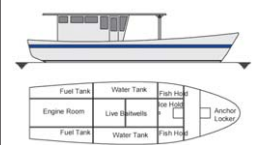
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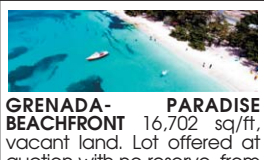
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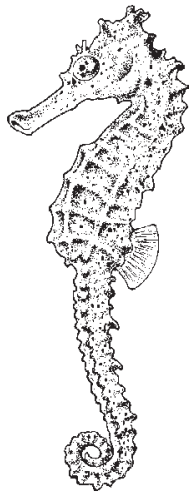


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