CARIBBEAN COMPASS

MARCH 2024 NO. 333

The Caribbean's Look at Sea & Shore

6TH CMC: NO WIND? NO PROBLEM!

— SEE STORY ON PAGE 19



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The sun sets over Great Bay, St. Maarten, the anchorage for rally participants on the first night of the sixth annual Caribbean Multihull Challenge.

ELAINE LEMBO

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On the Cover

Captain Berit Bus, far left, succeeded in her mission to introduce women of any and all skill levels to the joys of sailing during the Caribbean Multihull Rally in early February 2024. For the story, turn to page 19.

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Caribbean Compass

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LOOKING FOR NEW PLASTIC MAN



SEAN ROBERTS

Richard Laflamme, founder of No-To-Single-Use Association, and Kentisha Boatswain, granulator expert

Dear *Compass*:

Richard Laflamme, No-to-Single-Use Association founder, is looking for a local individual, community, entity or government to take over waste plastic recycling in Carriacou or Grenada. Plastic-to-Concrete is readily operational and profitable.

Last steps for full production:



DESIGN BY RICHARD LAFLAMME

NSU Logo

1-Find an entity to re-purchase/donate grant money to re-pay plastic granulator loans ($38,000 US).

2- Technical support will be offered for 12 months during transition.

3- Find a permanent location for plastic and glass granulators, raw material and finished goods.

Let's transform 91 percent of all plastic waste pollution on this small island into a resource, granulate it and replace 10 percent of sand aggregate in eco-blocks. They meet class "A" structural standard. Sand is a limited natural resource.

There is no need for a multi-million-dollar sorting plant to recycle only 9 percent of waste plastic where virgin plastic is cheaper than recycled. Are you ready for the "real" free plastic island challenge? WhatsApp your interest to 473-456-3474.

Hopefully communities from Carriacou will take the challenge and move forward to become waste-plastic free by 2025 with waste-to-concrete technology.

Regards,

Richard (Plasticman) Laflamme
No-To-Single-Use Association
WA: 1-473-456-3474

NEW TAKE ON S. BRIAN SAMUEL

Dear *Compass*:

I am happy *Compass* reviewed *Song for My Father* by S. Brian Samuel (February 2024). I was a little startled at how little Caitlin Richards thought of this fine work. I read it many months ago and thought that Samuel is a wonderful new writer and a masterful storyteller. So much so, I have read it twice since, each time with deep pleasure. I am not alone. It has received many rave reviews both on Amazon and in the Caribbean press. I noted with interest that many, like me, found the book so engaging it was hard to put down.

As a *Compass* reader, contributor, and occasional reporter, I wonder if you would allow me a second opinion in reprinting a review I posted on Facebook?

"Brian Samuel had an eventful life, the turning point of which was the complete disappearance of his mother when he was six years old. Her absence was palpable and provides a tension to this story, with a denouement at the end which brings closure. Her disappearance also led to all the moves and transitions that followed. Brian's storytelling is excellent, and *Song for My Father* is a page turner that is hard to put down. Much of the depth in this story is provided by the huge amount of research that went into it. Luckily Brian's father, Darwin, hoarded all letters, documents and photos, which provided a great start that enables the author to dig backward so that he can follow his father's life from well before he was born.



COURTESY S. BRIAN SAMUEL

Brian Samuel

Brian's father, Darwin, was Grenadian, son of a highly successful Black peasant farmer who had worked hard and bought as much land as he could. Darwin was desperate for a life of his own. His relationship with his father (Brian's grandfather) was rocky. While still a teenager he took a ship to the UK at the beginning of the second world war, when the UK was desperate for technical workers and invited Caribbean men to come to learn skills, training included. He survived the North Atlantic passage and the bombing and spent the war building aircraft for the British. He met and married Neleen, a Scottish nurse, who was shunned by her family due to the mixed-race marriage. They had one child in the UK, then returned to Grenada where the family grew to three boys, Brian the youngest. This was a time of revolution and change in Grenada with trade Unionist Eric Gairy fighting for power against the colonialists. Darwin becomes involved with Gairy, but then, as Gairy became more narcissistic and eccentric, disenchanted. The family leaves for Guyana and then Trinidad, where suddenly, while enjoying an apparently successful and happy life, Neleen vanishes. Brian's father, unprepared to be a single dad, will not let his children down, and managed to raise them with love, sometimes tough love. Over the years they lived in the UK, the US and Jamaica. The book is full of wonderful stories of their scraps and adventures, beautifully written, always interesting, and full of humor. It offers interesting insights into racism in different countries. One of the best episodes is a year in the U.S., where Darwin turns up to a teaching post to a white community, who have no idea he is Black. After a few moments of shock, the community decides that the Samuels are English, so that somehow color does not matter, and they have a good year. Darwin dies young, and then suddenly, Neleen, their missing mother, comes back in the picture. This leads to a dramatic ending where she tries to destroy the very core of Brian's being.

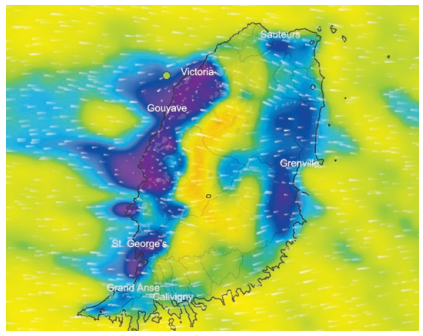
This is a wonderful book, fresh, honest, and heartfelt. It offers a deep look into society during this period. I enjoyed it especially because I have spent much of my life in Grenada, and it filled many gaps in my knowledge. I hope this is not the only book Brian will write, because I am ready to read the next."

Chris Doyle

Channel 16

PredictCurrent Offers High-Resolution Tidal Currents Model

PredictWind, a leader in maritime weather technology, has introduced PredictCurrent, a new high-resolution tidal currents model which can be used globally to empower users to navigate local waters with a new level of accuracy. PredictCurrent offers tidal current maps for 90 percent of the world's coastlines.



COURTESY PREDICTWIND

PredictCurrent map of Grenada

PredictWind has integrated Mercator ocean currents with the PredictCurrent tidal model, allowing users to comprehend the intricate interplay between oceanic and tidal currents on a single map.

PredictCurrent can be accessed through the PredictWind App or Offshore app, allowing users to view maps or access data in Grib format.

Sign up for PredictCurrent or any of PredictWind's offerings at forecast.predictwind.com/en/register/free/yourDetails



SEBASTIAN CYRUS

Kai arrives at Bequia Head.

Teen Sailor Makes Record-Breaking Voyage

In January 2024, 13-year-old Vincentian Kai Marks Dasent made a record-setting 10-mile sail from St. Vincent to Bequia in one hour and 12 minutes, as a fundraiser for his team, the Vincy Sailing Team. They are planning to participate in international sailing competitions, with the ultimate goal of reaching the Olympics in 2028.

Challenges along the route, from the Blue Lagoon markers in St. Vincent to the Devil's Table marker in Bequia, included navigating two-meter rollers in approximately 12 to 15 knots of wind.

Kai has already raised enough money from local sponsors to contribute to two international events this year: the Open Skiff North American Championships in Augusta, Georgia, and the Antigua National Championships, where his team took the silver medal last year.

Trinidad GAM

The tradition of the GAM (General Annual Meeting) in the Caribbean goes back to whaling days, when two or more ships would hail each other, then exchange visits by their crews.

In Trinidad, the modem GAM tradition stretches back 27 years as a New Year's Day potluck lunch, hosted since its inception by local legend Jesse James, of YSATT (Yacht Servies Association of Trinidad and Tobago) and his own Members Only Taxi Service (membersonlytaxi.com).



DICK ON *REMEDY*

Jesse James welcomes cruisers to the GAM.

The 2024 GAM took place on the patio dining area of the Wheel House Pub in Chaguamaras, with 22 cruisers from all ages and all levels of experience. They came from all corners of the world, from a young couple from Canada to old salts from the Netherlands, Scotland, Sweden, the U.S. and beyond. The afternoon began with a moment of silence for longtime GAM regulars Mike of *s/v El Lobo* and Eian of s/v *Layla*, for whom eight bells rang during the past year.

Then the stories began, including the account of one couple who were stranded engineless aboard their yacht *Mustang Sally*, in danger of drifting into Venezuelan waters, rescued with a mission put together by Jesse, who arranged Captain Frazier and his local fishing boat Perseverance to go out and tow *Mustang Sally* to safety.

Jesse provided the main dish of BBQ chicken, power boats provided beverages, and the attendees brought dishes to share. Door prizes were donated by local vendors.

Soldini, Maserati End Partnership

The eleven-year partnership between Giovanni Soldini, perhaps Italy's most famous sailor since Christopher Columbus, and the Maserati corporation, has reached its end. Soldini first joined up with Maserati in 2012 to develop and race the monohull Maserati *VOR70*. The partnership continued with the trimaran Maserati *Multi70*.



COURTESY MASERATI

Giovanni Soldini

Soldini and his team set nine new records and participated in 27 regattas around the world. Their successes include the Golden Route from New York to San Francisco via Cape Horn, sailed in 2013 in 47 days, 42 minutes and 29 seconds, and a record-breaking victory in the 2014 Cape2Rio. Moving on to the multihull Maserati *Multi70* in 2016, he set a record for the Hong Kong-London route, shattering the previous record by five days. Other victories included the RORC Transatlantic Race, RORC Caribbean 600 and Rolex Middle Sea Race.

The Moorings Sponsors St. Thomas International Regatta

Yacht charter provider The Moorings returns as a sponsor of the 50th anniversary St. Thomas International Regatta, March 29-31, 2024. Some of the finest yachts in competition are already registered to compete in the 50th STIR, including Cape 31 *Flying Jenny*, JPK 1180 *Dawn Treader*; *Little Wing*, a custom Bob Perry/Jim Antrim design; and noted St. Maarten skipper Frits Bus, this year racing his Melges 24, *Team Island Water World*. In addition, there will be other contenders and first-time entrants — and it's not too late to enter. STIR 2024 invites CSA (Caribbean Sailing Association-handicap rule), racing, cruising, and bareboat classes; ORC; large multihulls; Hobie Waves; and one-design classes with a minimum length of 20 feet.



COURTESY FRITS BUS

Team Island Water World, *driven by St. Maarten's Frits Bus*

For more information, visit www.stthomasinternationalregatta.com

Major Sponsors Return for 2024 BVI Spring Regatta

As the 2024 BVI Spring Regatta approaches, three major long-term sponsors continue to support the event: Nanny Cay Resort & Marina, Mount Gay Rum, and Scrub Island Resort, Spa & Marina. The seven-day event starts on Monday April 1 with opening day festivities. The Sailing Festival, a warmup event, takes place Tuesday April 2 and Wednesday April 3, while also on April 2, sailors will race 37 nautical miles around Tortola for the Nanny Cay Cup. On April 3, the Scrub Island Invitational will end some 12 nautical miles upwind at a fabulous island party hosted by Scrub Island Resort.



COURTESY RON BOEHM

Little Wing, *the 52-foot Perry/Antrim custom multihull*

—Continued on next page

—Continued from previous page



INGRID ABERY

Mount Gay Rum has been the drink of choice since the BVI Spring Regatta's inception in 1972 and the tradition continues for 2024 as the Official Rum of the BVI Spring Regatta.

Thursday, April 4, is a day of casual activity before the big event, the 51st BVI Spring Regatta, which kicks off on April 5 for three days of world-class racing.

For more information go to www.bvispringregatta.org

Don Casey, Man of Mystery



Caribbean Compass recently received notice of the publication of a new book, a novel — a murder mystery. Our initial reaction was that this must have been sent to us in error, but then we noticed that the author was Don Casey.

If you have a bookcase aboard your sailboat, odds are pretty good that it holds at least one Don Casey book. There are lots of them and they have been providing lucent and reliable guidance for evaluating, repairing, upgrading, maintaining, and using sailboats for more than three decades. Plenty of Caribbean sailors have a more direct connection with Don and mate Olga, having shared anchorages with their lovely small ketch, *Richard Cory*, for the dozen years they cruised the Eastern Caribbean. Sending the publication notice to *Caribbean Compass* was to share this event with cruising friends and fans. We get that.

The mystery for us was why the change from boats to bodies, from canvaswork to crime solving? Not surprisingly, Don had a clear answer. He reminded us that before internet, cell phones, and DVDs, almost every cruising sailboat carried around a bag of paperback books that were traded whenever you arrived in a new anchorage or when a new boat arrived in yours. "Over thousands of nights at anchor I read scores of mystery novels, with the mediocrity of many making me wonder if I could do better," Don told us.

"But first I wrote *This Old Boat*, trying to pull together into a single source the essentials for selecting, outfitting, and maintaining a cruising sailboat. That book became such a success that it diverted me onto an unplanned career path of providing what I hope has been wise counsel to a couple of generations of sailors. All these years later, my time under sail has declined while my reading remains unabated, so recently I returned to the idea of writing a mystery. The happy result is *Marjoram & Mace*.

"Is it too late? Obviously I don't think so, but readers get to decide. What I do know is at $2.99 for the Kindle edition, the cost is hardly different from the books in that long-ago canvas bag, making it an exceptional entertainment value if you do like it."

We cannot argue with that.

And a blurb from Lin Pardey: *What an enjoyable surprise from Don Casey. I knew he was a good technical sailing writer, but fiction? Thrillers? His tale romps along. I got hooked and read until early in the morning. Loved the way he weaved sailing and young people into the story.*



COURTESY PETER ISLAND RESORT

Deadman's Beach at Peter Island Resort

Peter Island Luxury Resort Reopens

Peter Island Resort in the British Virgin Islands is reopening after six years. The resort was forced to close after the hurricane season of 2017.

As before, Peter Island offers an intimate setting with just 52 rooms, suite and villa accommodations, but all the new rooms, junior suites and two-bedroom villas will be beachfront. Its luxury villa, Falcons Nest, is being rebuilt and redesigned on its mountain. Hawks Nest Villa, conveniently nestled on the hillside overlooking Sprat Bay, is also being upgraded and redecorated.

The resort is expanding its meetings and events facilities, including a new 3,000 square foot oceanfront conference center. The spa is being upgraded and redesigned in its original location overlooking Big Reef Bay.

Reservations are accepted for stays from October 2024 onward.

For updates and more details, visit Peter Island Resort's website at www.peterisland.com

The Moorings and Sunsail Welcome New BVI Fleet

The Moorings and its sister company Sunsail have recently added 78 new yachts to their BVI charter fleet: 19 new monohulls, 35 new sailing catamarans, and 24 new power catamarans. This brings the operators' combined charter fleet to 254 yachts.



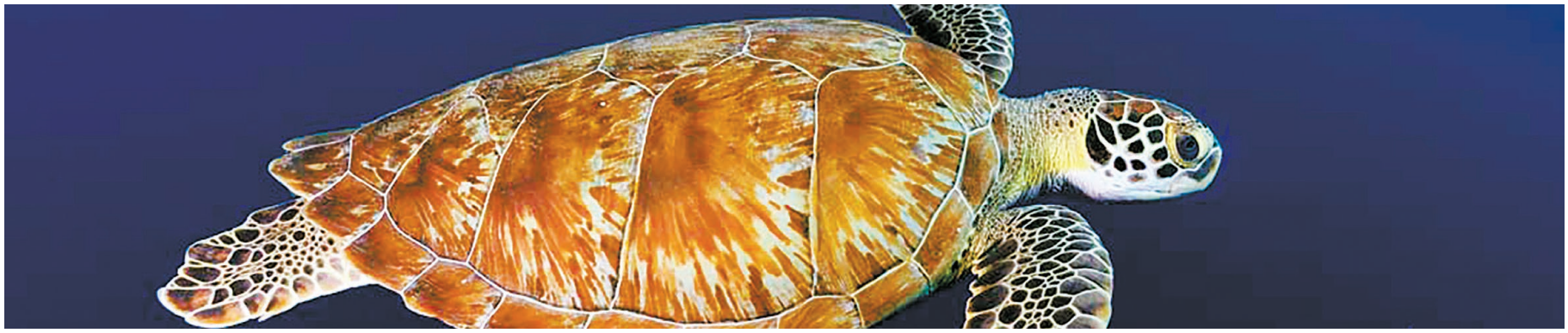
JEROME KELAGOPIAN

Fun from the deck of a Moorings charter




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SEA TURTLE CONSERVATION BONAIRE



Green Turtle

Bonaire is home to three of the world's seven species of sea turtles. Green and hawksbill turtles can be seen year-round, while loggerheads generally visit only during the nesting season.

The only time Bonaire's sea turtles come ashore is when adult females emerge to lay their nests. Each year they arrive, sometimes from thousands of kilometers away. They return to the beaches where they were born decades before. Each turtle will lay on average three to six clutches of eggs, depositing 100 to 180 eggs per nest, depending on species. Once a nest is laid, the female returns to the sea, leaving the eggs on their own, to hatch in about 60 days. The entire nest of eggs hatches at the same time and the baby turtles scramble together to the sea. These hatchlings face many predators on land and in the sea.

Most turtle nests are laid on the beaches that lie along the northeast coast of Klein Bonaire. The importance of this area for turtle nesting helped the effort to purchase the island from its private owners in 1999, spearheaded by the Foundation Preservation Klein Bonaire. Klein Bonaire now belongs to the people of Bonaire and is a protected area.

All photos courtesy of Sea Turtle Conservation Bonaire except where indicated.

—For more Eco News, turn to page 11



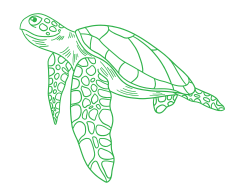
CLAUDIA NICCOLOW

A hatchling turtle makes its way across the beach.



Every year we conduct in-water research in Lac Bay, carefully capturing, tagging, and measuring sea turtles. This research gives us new insights on their health, population size and growth rate. During our first netting week, we were able to capture 33 turtles with the help of 14 of our volunteers.
Sea turtles in Lac have an annual growth of about 8 centimeters (3 inches) while the turtles in the wider Caribbean have only 3 centimeters (1.2 inches). This underscores the exceptional ecological importance of Lac.





Abigail Petrich, a sophomore at St. John's College in Santa Fe, New Mexico, returns to her childhood home on Bonaire as an intern. Volunteers and interns are so important to the work we do.

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REGATTAS & RALLIES

Warrior Won Takes RORC Transatlantic Race Trophy

PAC52 *Warrior Won*, owned and skippered by Chris Sheehan, has been awarded the RORC Transatlantic Race Trophy, with an elapsed time of 11 days, 5 hours, 18 minutes and 28 seconds. *Warrior Won* is the first American boat to win the RORC Transatlantic Race and the second smallest boat to do so.





ARTHUR DANIEL/RORC

Left: 2024 RORC Transatlantic Race Trophy, presented to the Warrior Won *team by former RORC Commodore and Admiral, Andrew McIrvine*
Right: Warrior Won *arrives victorious in Grenada.*

The French JPK 1180 *Cocody*, owned and skippered by Richard Fromentin, finished second. British JPK 1180 *Dawn Treader*, owned and captained by Ed Bell, was third.

For Chris Sheehan, winning the RORC Transatlantic Race was the ultimate ambition.

"We raced more than 4,000 miles to complete this race," said Sheehan. "It has been on our schedule for five years. My crew asked me what the goal was. Normally I say let's win our class. I was audacious and told them, I want to win overall, and we delivered, which is phenomenal!"

For more details consult the website (www.rorctransatlantic.rorc.org).

COURTESY SMYC



Lining up to start at the Grant Thornton Regatta

Sint Maarten Yacht Club Hosts Grant Thornton Regatta

The Sint Maarten Yacht Club hosted Club de Voile de Friar's Bay from French Saint Martin and Saint Barths Yacht Club for the Grant Thornton Multiclass Regatta in late January 2024. The regatta featured three classes: Laser, Sunfast 20, and Optimist, the last of which encompassed three sub-fleets: SailQube fleet, White fleet, and Green fleet.

In the Optimist White fleet, Lourenco Couto Jorge from St. Barths secured top position. Tao Carmona, also from St. Barths, finished second, and Nathan Sheppard from Sint Maarten Yacht Club was third.

Stanley Haes from Club de Voile finished first in the Green fleet. Sarah Michaux, also from Club de Voile, secured second place, and Oskar Versteegden from the St. Maarten came in third.

This year marked the debut of the SailQube fleet, with Axel Le Chavez and Nathaniel from Club de Voile claiming the top two positions, followed by Benjamin Dekker Aardema from the St. Maarten in third place.

Lolie Osswald from St. Barths won the Laser fleet, with two St. Maarten racers, Rio Stomp and Frits Bus, finishing second and third.

The Sunfast 20 class was won by Robbie Ferron and his team, followed by Stephana Ferron and her team, with Brad Taylor and his team finishing third.





VI Jam Fest is billed as "a grass-roots super casual festival on a beautiful overlook on a tiny island" — St. John, in the United States Virgin Islands.

COURTESY VI JAM FEST

By Tad Richards

March 1-3: Heineken Regatta, St. Martin

Caribbean culture is the theme of the entertainment portion of St. Martin's big regatta celebration. St. Vincent natives **Kevin Lytle and Rupee** bring their islamd-flavored dance pop om March 1, along with **King T-Mo, Control Band** and **Mix Master Pauly**. March 2 brings Haitian hotshot **Dro X Yani** headlining a program that includes local artists **King James, Latin Sugar, Urmain Drum Band**, as well as a Carnival Troupe dance performance. The major attraction, on March 3, is reggae superstar **Tarrus Riley**. Also featured: **Adam O with Blind Earz, DJ Puffy, Tamillia Chance** and **Kenyo Baly.**

March 1-3: ACT Festival, Barbados

Barbados kicks off the month with its arts, culture, technology festival, headlined by hip-hop monsters the **Black Eyed Peas**, and superstar of the rap, reggae and dancehall worlds **Sean Paul**. But as with any good festival, some of the real delights are to be found if you look under the surface of the headliners. Arts and technology are well represented in the techno and electronic music of **Vlada, RP Boo, Sonja Moonear, Moritz von Oswald** and others, while **Lyra Primuk**'s amalgam of futuristic movement and vocals are in a category of their own. Barbados' own culture is showcased in a studio tour of some of the island's finest female artists, and a group show at the Gallery of Caribbean Art. *visitbarbados.org*



TAD RICHARDS

Sean Paul

March 2: Paulina Rubio, San Juan, Puerto Rico

The "Queen of Latin Pop" and TV personality (*The X Factor*) has been listed among the "50 Most Powerful Women in Mexico" by Forbes Mexico, and as one of the greatest Latin artists of all time by *Billboard*. *www.cocacolamusichall.com*

March 5-10: Fiesta del Tambor, Havana, Cuba

This center for so much rhythmic innovation hosts its annual celebration of the drum, with many of the world's top percussionists. The lineup has yet to be announced, but the fiesta will pay tribute to three of Cuba's legends, **Carlos Embale Molina, Jesús Abreu (Los Papines)**, and **Tirso Duarte**. Competition is at the heart of the festival, including battles of drums, congas and timbales, and casino and rumba for dancers. *fiestadeltambor.cult.cu*

March 7-9: Virgin Islands Jam Fest, St. John

This charming event isn't the biggest festival in the islands, and the organizers intend to keep it that way. They announce with some pride that "the VI Jam Fest is a grass-roots super casual festival on a beautiful overlook on a tiny island. We usually have around 350 people in attendance." Roots musicians **Fortunate Youth** are scheduled to appear. *vijamfest.com*

March 9: Isle of Light Festival, Dominican Republic

The one-day "complete immersion of music, art, and good vibes" features French art-rockers **Phoenix**, Argentine new wave rapper **Trueno**, and **Villano Antillano**, a pioneer of the *cuir* movement of gender and racial diversity in Puerto Rican music. And much more. *Isleoflight.com*

March 10-11: Pablo Alborán, San Juan, Puerto Rico

The Spanish singer-songwriter of romantic ballads performs at Coliseo de Puerto Rico José Miguel Agrelot.

March 11-18: SXM Electronic Music Festival, St. Maarten/St. Martin



TAD RICHARDS

Anja Schneider

Electronic dance music festivals are a worldwide phenomenon, but there may be none other quite like this one, which prides itself on being "the only festival in the world to use an entire island for a venue," and which will see such diverse dancehalls as a secluded beach, a private boat, and a clearing in an old rainforest. The international performers are too numerous to mention, but some of the headliners are German DJ and producer **Anja Schneider**, British electronic duo **Eli & Fur**, Italian DJ **Ilario Alicante**, techno pioneer **Kevin Saunderson**, and German house superstars **Loco Dice** and **Tiefschwarz**. Get a complete list of talent (although it seems to grow every day) at sxmfestival.com. The festival organizers also list sustainability and reducing impact on the earth as among their goals, so come prepared to treat the island venue with respect. *sxmfestival.com*

March 16: Karol G, Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic

The Colombian reggaeton star is a multi-Grammy-winner. Her many hits include her collaboration with Bad Bunny, "Ahora Me Llama," the female-empowerment anthem "A Ella," and most recently her *Billboard*-chart-topper, "TQG," in collaboration with Shakira. At Félix Sánchez Olympic Stadium.

March 23: Rey Ruiz, San Juan, Puerto Rico

The salsa star is also a household name through his commercials for Pepsi, Miller Beer, and Sony. Coca-Cola Music Hall.

Foxy's Music Fest, at the iconic Jost Van Dyke, BVI bar, is penciled in for March but no details available as we went to press. *foxysbvi.com*

Repast and Libation

The best for the palate and the spirit of good fellowship abounds in the Caribbean in March, starting with the spirit that has been the islands' specialty since the days of Blackbeard and "yo-ho-ho, and a bottle of..." **A Taste of Rum**, Puerto Rico's International Rum Festival, at the Puerto Rico Convention Center, San Juan, March 7. **A Taste of Virgin Gorda** is an upscale ($200 per person) celebration of the culinary arts at Virgin Gorda Yacht Harbor, featuring a chef cook-off and samples from the area's finest restaurants. There'll also be entertainment, with name acts. March 16. This is part of a monthlong Virgin Gorda festival that includes teen beauty pageants, Easter Egg hunts, and a gala Easter Monday parade.

And the end of the month, March 29-April 1, sees a couple of seafood-oriented small-town fests. The little fishing village of Oistins, in Christ Church, Barbados, turns out for its annual **Oistins Fish Festival**. A celebration of Barbadan piscine culture, it includes calypso and steel pan bands, boat races, exhibits of local arts, a culinary carnival, and even a fish cleaning competition, which is something you don't see every day. And Island Harbor, Anguilla, hosts the **Festival del Mar**, with family beach fun, steel pan and reggae music, and, mostly, a non-stop feast from the sea, from breakfast through the setting sun.

Onboard with Greenpeace

by Stephanie Cooke with photos by Luciano Rangel Lopes

We crossed the Atlantic to the Caribbean on our Moody 376 last year and have now spent a few sailing seasons in the Caribbean. But it seems that everywhere we go, we miss Carnival and national days by a day or two. We missed Carnival in Grenada by less than a week last year as we had to fly back to work. This year we missed Carnival in Martinique as we had to collect our cats that were being flown out to St. Lucia and could only pass by longingly. We missed Carnival in Dominica by arriving two days late for the same reason.

We've been feeling pretty unlucky about our timing. So imagine how serendipitous it felt when after arriving in Bonaire in April 2023, on our way to customs, we walked past *the* iconic Greenpeace boat. *Arctic Sunrise* loomed



large and green with that inimitable white font plastered across the entire side. We couldn't stay long to look at it right then; we had to go and clear in. But we were excited to rush back to take a few photos before it departed. As we were waiting in the customs office, a young woman walked in wearing a Greenpeace T-shirt. We simply had to ask her about it. She told us that she was a local Greenpeace activist. Excitedly, she informed us that an Open Boat would be held the following day and we could actually take a tour on board!

A large share of the motivation for our transition onboard our sailing boat was environmental. Two pull factors were living a lower impact life and living



The old seal hunter now proudly proclaims itself for Greenpeace.

closer and more in tune with nature. Like many, we have been growing increasingly alarmed at the impacts of global warming around the world. Yearly record-breaking temperatures, flooding, wildfires, coral bleaching; the list goes on.

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I thought there was reasonable environmental awareness in the United Kingdom. But as we sailed around the Windward Islands last year, I realized quite how far behind these countries we are. Everywhere we went, there was a highly visible environmental consciousness. There are murals painted by local artists and schoolchildren about marine life. There are projects led by local people to restore mangroves and keep beaches clean. The bus services are outstanding and there is a lack of the hugely wasteful consumerist and disposability culture that we have in the UK. The contribution to the increase in global temperatures is so little in the Caribbean, yet these islands will suffer far more than we will and have far less economic capacity to withstand its devastating impacts.



Arctic meets Caribbean

The next day we headed to the dock to have our tour onboard the Greenpeace boat. Seventeen people representing sixteen different nationalities are currently living onboard, although the boat has the capacity for up to thirty six. It was inspiring to see what an international effort it is and the support they are giving to amplify the voices of the hard-working activists on Bonaire. We heard first from a veteran French activist who told us about the history of the ship, *Arctic Sunrise*. Built in 1975 in Norway as a sealing boat, we were told that Greenpeace had to conceal its identity in order to buy the ship from the sealing company! As an ice breaker, *Arctic Sunrise* is very hardy for all different conditions, although we were told that she has a tendency to roll. Much of the function of the ship involves conducting environmental research as well as being used in protests. In the case of Bonaire, she has arrived in support of legal action. *Arctic Sunrise* is Dutch registered and together, seven citizens of Bonaire and Greenpeace are suing the Dutch government for failing to protect them against climate breakdown.

Citizens of Bonaire and Greenpeace have sued the Dutch government for failing to protect them against climate breakdown.

The next stage of the tour was up the steep stairs to the bridge. It's rather bigger than a sailing boat cockpit! We were given a talk by a Peruvian crew member, who explained about the navigation equipment and night watches. Interestingly they have an old school speaking tube that can be used to communicate with people on deck just above. Onward we went to the stern of the ship where we heard more about the actual problems facing Bonaire and what Greenpeace is doing about it. One of the big issues relevant here relates to climate justice, highlighted by the large *Climate Justice Now* banner on the side of the ship. Climate justice aims to highlight the imbalance of climate breakdown impacts, elevate the voices of the marginalized and grassroots campaigners, and ensure that responsibility for alleviating the effects is firmly placed on those nations or corporations who play the greatest roles in contributing to it.

From the perspective of the young local activist who spoke with such passion to us, the concept of *climate justice* is core to the environmental issues facing Bonaire and the reason why they are suing the Dutch government. Unlike its neighbours Aruba and Curação, Bonaire is part of the Netherlands. It's a special municipality, as are the Leeward islands of Saba and St. Eustatius. It is governed by both the Dutch government and its island executive council. Therefore, they argue, the Dutch government has the responsibility to mitigate the effects of the climate crisis in Bonaire equally with the mainland Netherlands itself.

Yet this is not happening. For example, the Netherlands has coastal protection plans, but Bonaire does not. Bonaire has a tiny population of fewer than 20,000 people. Its contribution to the climate crisis is negligible. Yet as a low-lying country with many jobs dependent on tourism due to its coral reefs, it is at huge risk of devastating economic effects on local people.

In addition, its salt and fish exports are also threatened due to rising sea levels, increased water temperatures and ocean acidification. As the activist explained, the impact of the climate emergency on the island cannot be separated from issues of social justice. For instance, the minimum wage in the Netherlands is based on the cost of living, but that in Bonaire is not, and already 40 percent of Bonaire's residents live below the poverty line. These inequalities are only set to worsen unless drastic action is taken to halt global temperature rises and to ensure those most affected are protected and compensated.



The view from Mount Brandaris, the highest point on Bonaire

We were deeply moved by the plight facing Bonaireans, but also heartened by the good fight they are putting up and by the solidarity shown by this international pressure group to the tiny island. This feeling was magnified by our experiences enjoying Bonaire's natural wonders. Bonaire is famous for its amazing diving, but I didn't know that above, the ground is equally stunning. They are working hard to keep it that way. Every visitor must pay a US$40 nature fee, even to swim off your boat. This is steep, but in the case of Bonaire, it really is being put to good use. The nature fee is paid to Stichting Nationale Parken Bonaire (STINAPA), an organization founded in 1962 which administers the island's two nature reserves.

Created in 1979, the Bonaire National Marine Park is one of the oldest marine reserves in the world. When we went scuba diving, we saw first-hand the extensive measures that are being taken to prevent the spread of Stony Coral Tissue Loss Disease (SCTLD). All scuba equipment must be disinfected after use; you are warned against visiting diving sites in different parts of the island on the same day; and the spread of the disease is mapped. There is also an app for scuba divers and snorkellers to report further cases.

Washington Slagbaai National Park covers a remarkable fifth of Bonaire's land area and is host to incredible amounts of wildlife. The nature fee includes unlimited entry to the park and allows you to swim, snorkel and dive in the protected waters. It doesn't only protect biological wonders, but also Bonaire's geological and cultural heritage. We waded in beautiful bays, goggled at the immensity of a million-year-old huge boulder that was hauled onland by an ancient tsunami, and wandered in the ruins of an abandoned lighthouse overlooking a bay full of shipwrecks. (Aspects of Bonaire's cultural heritage are at risk from rising sea levels, including colonial-era slave huts constructed in 1850 for slaves collecting salt.)

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The bird life is also spectacular; we saw huge numbers of flamingos, pelicans, herons and royal terns in the saltwater pools and some obscure and colourful tropical and songbirds in the freshwater pools, including the large-crested caracara warawara, the yellow warbler and the lora. We saw lots of different types of lizard, including the blue whiptail lizard, and plenty of iguanas, which are very tame here compared to the nervy ones we have fleetingly glimpsed in the eastern Caribbean. We also climbed Mount Brandaris, the highest point on Bonaire. At only 241 metres, it is not exactly Himalayan in scale. However, because Bonaire is so flat, the views from the top are truly remarkable, with a 360-degree panorama of the saltwater lagoons, the pink salt flats, the dry little hillocks known as serus, and the ocean all the way across to Curação.



Flamingoes off Bonaire



A friendly iguana

We wish the Bonaireans good luck in their court case; just a couple of weeks after we left, a 'letter before action' was delivered to the Dutch Prime Minister, Mark Rutte. This letter stating their demands is a requirement under the Dutch legal system as a final warning before a court summons is issued. The islanders are doing a lot to try to preserve their incredible biodiversity, but they can't stop sea level rise on their own. We departed Bonaire two days before the Dia de Rincon, a cultural festival that attracts people from all over the world. We had to get to Curação to meet another work deadline. Next year we'll try to be more organized and time our landfalls to Carnival. In the meantime, we're very glad we chanced to time our visit with that of the *Arctic Sunrise*. Solidarity!

Stephanie Cooke and her husband, Luciano Rangel Lopes, have cruised Matusadona*, their liveaboard Moody 376, since departing England in August 2021. They chronicle their adventures via the blog* The Black Sprayhood *(theblacksprayhood.com).*



Caribbean Airlines Hosts "Culture in d'Park"

Caribbean Airlines hosted its launch of Trinidad and Tobago Carnival 2024 "Culture in D' Park" at Nelson Mandela Park, Port-of-Spain, Trinidad, in February. The park was transformed into a cultural village where patrons were treated to a parade of traditional carnival characters. Carnival-themed workshops, a kids zone with many activities for children and the entire family including an aircraft simulator powered by Boeing, and performances by Mical Teja (his hit song "D.N.A." is the Caribbean Airlines theme song for 2024), Faye-Ann Lyons, Bunji Garlin, Patrice Roberts and Ravi B were the day's activities.



COURTESY CARIBBEAN AIRLINES

Culture in d'Park

Dustless Sand Blasting at Fiber Tec

Fiber Tec Yacht Services Limited, situated in Clarke's Court Boatyard & Marina in Grenada, has recently obtained the industry's top dustless sand blasting machine. This equipment combines water with abrasive materials inside its blast tank, creating a binding effect that prevents the particles from polluting the air. This method not only eliminates hazardous dust plumes and the risk of ignitable sparks but also provides a precise and effective cleaning solution without toxic byproducts. A recycled glass aggregate makes up 40 percent of the blasting material.

For more information, see www.fibertecgrenada.com.

Anguilla Tourism Expansion

The Anguilla Tourist Board announces a new ferry terminal at Blowing Point and ongoing improvements at the Clayton J. Lloyd International Airport, as the government works to enhance Anguilla's infrastructure, responding to the increase in tourism. Ground has been broken on a project comprising a 118-berth marina to accommodate yachts of up to 250 feet, a 62-room five-star hotel, 58 branded residences, and a state-of-the-art fitness center with a spa and duty free shopping. The marina infrastructure should be completed in 2025, and the yacht club boutique hotel component in 2026.

For more information visit the official website of the Anguilla Tourist Board (www.IvisitAnguilla.com).



COURTESY PORTFOLIO MARKETING GROUP

Water- and land-based tourism are on the rise in Anguilla.

Exhibition Space Available at Martinique Boat Show

The Martinique Boat Show 2024, from May 30 to June 2, is inviting boat sellers and dealers from the Caribbean region to showcase their latest offerings and connect with potential buyers. Special exhibition spaces are also available at a discounted rate to private sellers looking to sell their catamarans.

For more information and to reserve exhibition space, visit martinique-boat-show.fr, or contact Sophie Jugniot at communication@martinique-boat-show.fr



FANNY FOR MARTINIQUE BOAT SHOW

An iguana basks in the sunlight on the bay of Fort-de-France, Martinique.



Things that Go Bump in the Night: One Landing Craft, One Barge, One Trimaran

Story and photos by JoAnne and Bill Harris

We were delighted to arrive once again in the beautiful Bay Islands of Honduras to continue our *ULTRA* Community Projects and to see old friends and to meet new ones. After arriving in Guanaja, we were super excited to meet again with the mayor and other officials to discuss how *ULTRA* Community Projects could further help the island as well as meet with local friends that were victims of the devastating El Cayo (Bonacca Cay) fire. *ULTRA* again was loaded to the gills with a mother lode of building materials, tools, paint, clothing, house wares, solar panels, water filter systems, food, bedding and more that were ready for immediate distribution like before. However, our plans soon changed as we had dinner with old friends at the Hans Pico Restaurant in Fruit Harbour. While paying our bill, we noticed a string of lights out in the harbor, near where we had moored our trimaran, where no such lights should have been.

In recent days, several landing craft and barges had been busy transporting materials during daylight hours, but we could not have imagined these enormous vessels would be moving at night. We ran to the dock, jumped into our dinghy, and returned to our boat.

To our horror, these enormous vessels were moving at night. The wind was gusting 20 knots. A steel landing craft more than 180 feet long with a steel barge of the same length loaded with sand, gravel, rocks, equipment and more tied to it was dangerously close to *ULTRA*. Our boat was well lit with an anchor light and LED solar lights, but it seemed that the massive vessels were not even aware of our presence.

Bill immediately drove to *ULTRA*'s bow and JoAnne jumped onboard, while he stayed with the dinghy to provide a barrier between the massive vessels and our tiny trimaran. JoAnne turned on more lights so the captain and crew could better see *ULTRA* and also to ensure Bill's safety.

Despite our efforts to signal with our powerful flashlights, the barges continued to drift toward our boat. There was absolutely no time to call for help, since it was all happening so fast and the vessels were getting out of control. As the night grew darker and the wind intensified, the situation became increasingly perilous for us and our beloved home. It was impossible for us to pick up the anchor, since it was 200 feet in front of our boat and the vessels were perpendicular to the bow, giving us no room to move forward. Bill stood in the dinghy at the starboard bow net, fighting against the elements to shield *ULTRA* from the impending danger.

Meanwhile, aboard *ULTRA*, JoAnne frantically continued to keep lights on. Unfortunately, there was no longer a full air horn aboard, since we had recently emptied it during a storm to wake up an anchored sailboat. Our trimaran trembled under the force of the wind and the waves and we knew



Damage to ULTRA*'s bow ama*

that the fate of *ULTRA* and our lives hung in the balance. The landing craft and barge together weighed an estimated 3,000-4,000 pounds. *ULTRA* is made of lightweight plastic, foam and fiberglass and is a third of that length.



ULTRA *bow roller system and pulpit including center ama damage*

Bill held the inflatable dinghy wedged between the vessels and *ULTRA*, but he was in a perilous predicament, and with each passing moment, the chaos and unpredictability of the situation grew. JoAnne had been watching from above and quickly screamed to Bill to get out of the dinghy and onboard *ULTRA, now!* Seizing the moment, Bill leapt from the dinghy onto the front bow net, leaving the dinghy tied there.

Soon after, the sounds of crunching, bending and the grinding of fiberglass and metal ensued. The vessels had made full contact with *ULTRA* while we were on the bow waving flashlights and shouting up to the captain and crew. Our boat was shuddering violently as it was being pushed backward with the force of vessels that were putting strain on the anchor chain. JoAnne ran inside to check for water coming in by opening up the floor boards and wall lockers. What a relief, *no water!*

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We look forward to meeting you.

—Continued from previous page

But for what seemed like an eternity, we were sure our boat was going to either be dismasted or sink right there, right now, or both, with us onboard. The vessels were soon entangled within *ULTRA* and pushing her backward like a floating toy, even through 200 feet of chain and a 90-pound Rocna anchor.



The enormous barges that hit ULTRA

The stanchions were bending, the bow pulpit system was being twisted and pulled up from the deck, and the fiberglass was crushing like it was cardboard. It was completely impossible for us to move our boat without risk of our anchor chain getting caught in the propellers and either pulling our boat under it or it simply being run over. In that moment, we shared a profound feeling of vulnerability and knew that despite our best efforts, we were at the mercy of the chaotic forces unfolding around us. The colossal barges with their massive weight and momentum seemed unstoppable and continued to push our boat through the anchorage.

Then through the chaos and despair, a local speed boat arrived with powerful motors. Like a guardian angel, the captain, Mr. Roger Wood, quickly tied a line onto one of *ULTRA*'s stern cleats, and skillfully pulled our boat outward, trying to diminish the points of contact of the relentless vessels, and gradually freeing *ULTRA* from the clutches of destruction.

JoAnne quickly went inside and replied on the VHF radio to the anchored fleet that had heard our screams and called to offer help. She thanked them all and advised them that there was nothing that they could have done. JoAnne warned all anchored boats to be on alert and to please *"Light up their boats like it was the 4th of July as the enormous vessels would now be moving through the anchorage!"*



Mr. Roger Wood, who helped ULTRA *the night of the collision*

Captain Wood made his way through the harbor to assist the other anchored boats and to steer them clear of the colossal vessels. The anchored sailboats were all lit up so the monstrous vessels could navigate through the harbor until they slowly disappeared into darkness. He returned and we thanked him for rescuing us.

With the immediate danger averted, a mixture of exhaustion and disbelief washed over us. We held each other tight and told each other how thankful we were that we and our boat survived the ordeal. We assessed the damage as best we could in the darkness, set alarms to monitor the bilges, and kept our anchor alarm active. Thank goodness the bilges and other areas remained dry and our boat stayed anchored.

The next morning, we contacted Mr. Ashford, the owner of the vessels, and sent him the photos of the damage. He was apologetic and assured us that he would take care of all the repairs. We contacted our El Cayo contacts about the incident and told them we could not meet them as planned. The collision news had already spread through the Coconut Telegraph, and the local community expressed its sympathy and was relieved we were safe.

We checked for additional damage to the port ama (aka pontoon) bow and bow pulpit system since they received the brunt of the vessels' weight. Rain was expected in the forecast, so we repaired the damaged areas with epoxy to prevent rainwater from entering. Since Bill built *ULTRA*, he knows every inch of her. The temporary repair was solid and good enough to prevent rain and sea water from entering. The stanchions and bow anchor roller system were seriously bent and needed more extensive work that required one of Mr. Ashford's welders to rebuild them upon our return to Roatan.

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Since our boat had been pushed back through the anchorage, we still needed to re-anchor. While JoAnne was pulling up the anchor, the windlass began whining loudly. We looked down and there was a stubborn, thick steel cable that had hooked onto the anchor. *Hmm … is it a power line, is it boat rigging, or what?* We called for help from Tom of *SV Lone Star* and Mark of *SV Wild Iris*. We soon realized it was just old boat rigging and Bill got in the water. JoAnne stayed on the wheel and Mark and Tom lifted the anchor to help Bill free the cable. We shared a celebratory beer with Mark and Tom to thank them for their friendship, tremendous help and great moral support.



ULTRA *Community Project: Bedding donations.*

Meet and Distribute

The following day, we along with the amazing cruiser volunteers, Mark and Lisa of *SV Wild Iris* and Jeff and Marcia of *SV U Jam N*, donned foul weather gear and loaded up the donations into the dinghies to deliver and distribute them at El Cayo. Afterward, it was time for Art Day at the school with volunteers. After all of the mayhem that had transpired the night before, it was so much fun to be surrounded by the great energy of the cruisers, teachers, families and children. We then met with friends who are fire victims to see the rebuilding and to distribute donations of building materials and more. In our meetings with Mayor Spurgeon, Vice Mayor Sheray, Mr. Wendell and other officials, we discussed how *ULTRA* Community Projects could further assist with the needs of El Cayo and the main island of Guanaja. Fun donations of chairs, art supplies, a television for educational programs, school supplies and 50 more books were given to the Bonacca Library and Reading Center.



The rebuilding in El Cayo, Guanaja begins.



ULTRA *Community Project: Art Day at the Valle School in El Cayo, Guanaja, with Lisa of* SV Wild Iris, *a volunteer*

Friends for Life

After the completion of our *ULTRA* Community Projects, we said our goodbyes and sailed to the Roatan Yacht Club Marina in French Harbour for our scheduled boat repairs. Mr. Ashford and his crew repaired *ULTRA* as quickly as possible. In the end, *ULTRA* received a new anchor bow roller system, repaired bow pulpit, a new bow dolphin system, fiberglass repairs of port bow and center bow ama, and reimbursement for repairs we did ourselves.



ULTRA *is good as new and repaired.*

In the aftermath of the tumultuous encounter, we were left with a profound understanding of the interplay between fate and care for others. The actions of everyone who helped us are forever imprinted upon our souls and they all demonstrated the importance of community, solidarity, and the inherent strength found in unity. It is almost 26 years since the day we first met aboard *ULTRA*, and 15 years of cruising aboard her full time. We are super familiar with her and have depended on each other during several close Music Jam calls of life and death situations along the way aboard her. We depend 100 percent on each other to be competent, calm, and knowledgeable about security and safety during our lives around land, sea, and air. This terrifying incident was no exception and it definitely brought us even closer together. On June 23, 2024, we will celebrate our 24th wedding anniversary and feel truly blessed to still be happy and healthy living aboard *ULTRA* and chasing more dreams and adventures.



ULTRA *Community Project: Bill, Joanne and Mayor Spurgeon of Guanaja*

The Harrises are the Ocean Cruising Club port officers and the Seven Seas Cruising Association cruising hosts for Honduras including The Bay Islands. They have been cruising almost 15 years full time aboard ULTRA. *Follow their travels and triumphs of giving back to the communities they visit*

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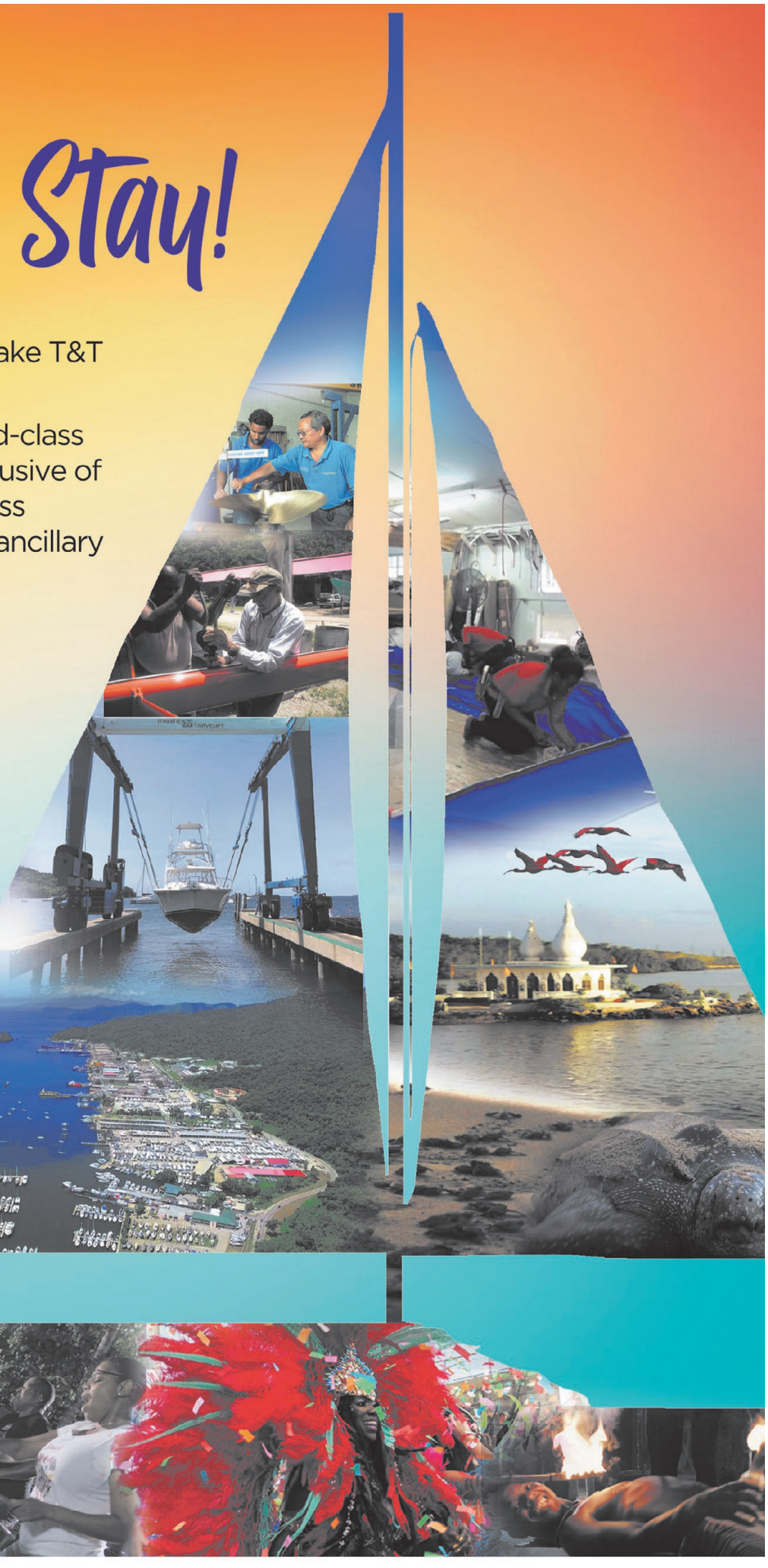
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Becalmed and Beguiled

By Elaine Lembo

Despite light airs, the sixth Caribbean Multihull Challenge delivers on its guarantee of herding cats into a froth of competition and fun

"Whattaya mean, no wind?"

Groans spread fast throughout the 35-member fleet of racers and cruisers, the largest to jump in on the Caribbean Multihull Challenge in St. Maarten since it launched six years before. While organizers at the Sint Maarten Yacht Club did their duty putting a cheery spin on the unusual weather conditions for the early February 2024 event, which included a division of ten speedy Diam 24 open trimarans, there was no denying what was obvious: It was hot, it was still, and the waters of the Anguilla Channel looked more like a brew of melting, bubbling cobalt glass than a white-capped Caribbean Sea.



COURTESY *LITTLE WING*

Little Wing *crew, from left: Lawrence Henderson, Dennis Rowedder, Michelle Slade, Steve Sargent, Ron Boehm*

Conditions also got the attention of CMC rally participants, a contingent that joined in for the soft competition and entertainment more than for hard-core racing. The fleet of 16 included some of top names in the world of cats. Catana, Balance, Lagoon, Fountaine Pajot, HH and Voyage models came to the party, and five had opted to try out the event's new time trial, a staggered start that eliminates the risk of collision and, by association, insurance prohibitions and exorbitant penalties.

"Statistically, February is the perfect time to race," noted an apologetic Stephen Burzon, CMC volunteer marketing and operations director. The experienced offshore cruising and racing sailor echoed a well-known fact of the eastern Caribbean in winter — that trade winds normally blow steadily east-northeast or east-southeast from 20 to 25 knots.

"Light air is harder to race in than 25 knots," Burzon added. "It's hard to tweak an extra inch per mile. It will be interesting."



MATTHEW D. BURZON/MATTHEWBURZON.COM

Leaping into the doldrums were Emilie Tetu, Elaine Lembo, and Lydia Mullen, managing editor, SAIL *magazine.*

Billed as a unique experience drawing racers and visitors from all over the world to enjoy an "unforgettable journey and discover something new," the CMC, which started with a fleet of 12 in 2019, had thus far delivered on its promises. It has increasingly drawn competitors and name sponsors over its relatively brief history, working toward its goal to become the second most popular regatta after the renowned St. Maarten Heineken Regatta, now in its 44th year. Amstel Bright Beer, the St. Maarten Tourism Bureau, FKG Rigging, Lifeline Batteries, The Moorings/Sunsail, the Multihull Company, TradeWinds Experience, Bainbridge International, Karver Roller Furling, Plastimo Compass and David Walters Yacht Brokerage pitched in with support so they could fly brand burgees and more.

Now the event was delivering on its promise to let the race and rally committees discover something new — specifically, new courses. Hastily scrapped were the 60-mile sprint around St. Barts and the 52-mile dash around Saba in favor of short buoy courses. Burzon, locked up in last-minute meetings, again apologized, this time, for bailing on his plans to retrieve members of the press at the airport upon our arrival.

Mid Sixty — and Counting

Fresh priorities and shifting winds also forced change in the rally courses; perhaps inadvertently, this let the CMC again do its magic and deliver a memorable journey with new experiences for the media aboard the apt-named *Mid Sixty*, a Sunsail Lagoon 424.

We working crew were firmly divided into diverse age camps: skipper Hans Huele and this journalist are boomers; photographer Matthew Burzon and *Cruising World* magazine editor in chief Andrew Parkinson have a couple of decades to go before catching up to us. The beautiful Emilie Tetu, a newbie to sailing who was game to sign on as swab and cook, represented *Mid Sixty*'s millennial division. Lydia Mullen, *Sail* magazine managing editor, mostly crewed aboard *Aurora*, a TradeWinds Experience TW6e, the all-electric six-cabin Samana 59 cat built by Fountaine Pajot and making its debut during the CMC.



MATTHEW D. BURZON/MATTHEWBURZON.COM

Mid Sixty, *a Sunsail Lagoon 424, was the platform for the media crew that participated in the CMC rally.*

On the first race day, in 5-6-knot zephyrs, plans to sail from Simpson Bay to Île Tintamarre were ejected; instead, we floated by iron jib and mainsail into Green Cay at Orient Bay. After a quick splash in emerald waters, I swapped boats for the late-afternoon jaunt to Great Bay, off Philipsburg, and sailed aboard *Little Wing*, Ron Boehm's Bob Perry-designed Antrim 52, built in 1996.

Stowed on the forward trampoline was a new Ullman spinnaker that came in handy when a southerly briefly piped up to 13 knots and *Little Wing* engaged in a racing duel with the Leopard 47 *Seaduction*. Properly exercised, the crew was now ready to relax.

"We were just mixing up some dark 'n' stormies, would you like us to make



MATTHEW D. BURZON/MATTHEWBURZON.COM

Mid Sixty *crew: Andrew Parkinson, editor of* Cruising World *magazine; captain Hans Huele; Elaine Lembo, editor of* Caribbean Compass*, and photographer Matthew D. Burzon.*

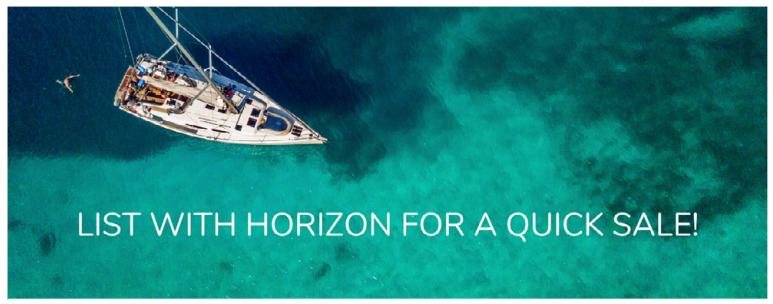
you one?" asked crewmate and *Compass* contributor Michelle Slade.

As I sipped, Boehm, of Santa Barbara, California, recounted his sailing resume, whose recurring thread is a 50-year-long addiction to one-design racing aboard the International 14. "Cruising was never on my radar," he said. "My wife and I got into chartering in the BVI." Now besides *Little Wing*, Boehm has two catamarans in charter in the BVI, a Saba 50 and a Helia 44.

"I had to learn everything about this boat, and I still make mistakes," he said, adding that this was his second CMC rally. "I love to race — to be in the Caribbean and to race, and I want to do more and more. The rally is a way to get more people sailing."

—Continued on next page

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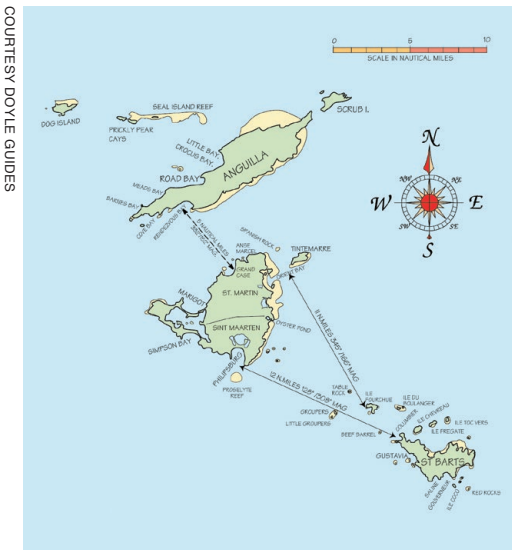
MATTHEW D. BURZON/MATTHEWBURZON.COM

The anchorage at Île Fourchue, an uninhabited island, is a turtle playground.

After sunset, I dinghied ashore to Doc Maarten Marina in Great Bay with the *Little Wing* crew, then reunited with my pals on *Mid Sixty* and *Compass* publishers Dan and Kelly Merton and their boys Alex and Andrew. The Mertons, avid sailors, couldn't resist the urge to fly in from the U.S. to connect with sailors and enjoy a long weekend on the island.

Start Your Engines!

A wet, squally day two raised hopes. Aboard *Mid Sixty*, we put ourselves through the appropriate paces in decent wind, sailing some 15 miles west around Sint Maarten north toward Anse Marcel, at French St. Martin. Tacking sent a watermelon in the galley bouncing onto the saloon sole, where it split. A good omen, I thought, for more wind.



COURTESY DOYLE GUIDES

The racing and rally areas as portrayed in this illustration by Doyle Guides included Sint Maarten, St. Martin, and St. Barts.

But day three dawned like an oven door cracked open to inspect a Thanksgiving turkey. I got up early and watched a guy in a long-sleeved rash guard e-foil by our cat on his motorized board, holding a mug of coffee. Around and around the glass-still Anse Marcel anchorage the smart aleck zipped.

Andrew joined me for coffee in the saloon. "I think St. Barts is dead head-to-wind and we've got about 1 knot of it," he said, scanning a weather app on his phone. "At 11 a.m., 1.2 knots. At 2 p.m., 2 knots. 5 p.m., 0.2 knots."

Yet I sensed opportunity. The CMC was presenting me a once-in-a-lifetime moment on a silver platter and I wasn't going to let it slip by. Long was my frustration that I'd never sailed my own boat through the Pacific Ocean. I wanted to experience the joyful abandon of jumping overboard in the doldrums for a swim. And for all my years as a Caribbean liveaboard and charter crew, I'd never made it to Île Fourchue or St. Barts.

This was about to change. And I had the rally committee to thank.

Before 10 a.m., the announcement came in loud and clear on VHF Ch. 71: "To all participants, there is no wind. It makes no sense to drift. We are cancelling the rally. Start your engines and do whatever you want. Have a nice, warm day!"

Yippee! Next thing I knew, Lydia was spending the day with us aboard *Mid Sixty*. Andrew took off to learn about the sustainable innovations aboard Aurora, which, with 42 square meters of solar panels and wind generators, boasts the ability to run air conditioning, a favorite creature comfort of his, all night long on lithium-ion batteries, without tapping into a diesel-fed generator.

I swiftly proposed an itinerary to Captain Hans: a stop past Tintamarre to take a plunge and swim around *Mid Sixty*; then a glide southeast to lunch at Île Fourchue, then on to Gustavia, St. Barts, for the party at the St. Barths Yacht Club and dinner. Matt turned up the tunes, which combined Emilie's favorite French standards with more contemporary selections, and off we went.

What followed was the ideal day aboard in the Caribbean: good music, good food, cold beer, a laid-back, competent captain, and clean, blue water that enveloped Lydia, Emilie and me as we leapt off the bow of *Mid Sixty* in a synchronized countdown.

—Continued on next page

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From the dinghy, Matt caught the moment, which made our hearts beat faster as we leapt into free fall. Then we giggled and did it again. Close to that high was swimming with turtles in the crystal waters of the Île Fourchue anchorage. I had to pinch myself that it all really happened.

CMC Fandom

By late afternoon, anchored off St. Barts and barefoot at the beach off the yacht club, I was eager to learn from rally goers their reasons for joining the CMC. I caught up with another Californian, Kevin Hutton, an emergency room physician who was participating for the second year. He liked it so much last year that this time he returned aboard *Golden Hour*, his Balance 482, whose credits include winner of *Cruising World*'s Best Performance Catamaran in the 2022 Boat of the Year contest.



ELAINE LEMBO

Kevin Hutton, owner of Golden Hour

As reflections of the colorful hues of the anchored *Golden Hour*'s hull were mirrored in the water, Hutton, who with his wife, Sandy, specializes in medical evacuations by air, explained that the term "golden hour" means the period of time immediately after a traumatic injury when medical and surgical treatment can prevent death.

Theirs is a meaningful profession that requires an equally hefty break from its demands. "I was a Hobie catter and I was looking for a responsive boat," he said, "and though I flip-flop between cats and monohulls, and have experience fixing up old Catalinas, the Caribbean has amazing sailing 99 percent of the time. I do this event for the camaraderie and to be close to the other Balance boats in the fleet. This reminds me of a Hobie cat regatta in the '70s."

A few yards away, the giggling all-women crew of Team Island Water World was posing for photographs, and I walked over to say hi. They had good cause to celebrate: Not only did they have the youngest crew — little Ayla Bus, nine years old — but her sister, licensed skipper Berit Bus, an accomplished one-design racing sailor and the other daughter of St. Maarten Yacht Club commodore Frits Bus, had successfully pulled together the group, whose skill set ranged from novice to elite, to crew aboard *Bayla*, the Bus family 2007 Lagoon 38. The team was new and the boat was new to them, and they'd succeeded.



LAURENS MOREL/SALTYCOLOURS.COM

The women of Team Island Water World combined coaching with a good time aboard Bayla*, a Lagoon 38.*

"I wanted to get more females involved in sailing, so I asked around," Berit explained. "Four youths who are members of the SMYC youth sailing program joined us. Then I asked other girls I knew would be a good fit as they are gym goers, even though they had never held a line in their hands. Lastly I asked a few other friends who are on our Melges 24 Budget Marine sailing team and they were all enthusiastic to join the female team."

Despite the lack of wind, the CMC energized the crew. "Numerous women have contributed to the marine industry by breaking the norms and just going for what their hearts desired," Berit said. "I look forward to sailing with an all-girls team again next year, since sailing takes confidence, knowledge and skill. I think we girls all have it but don't implement it enough. I hope to learn a lot during future CMCs and look forward to just having some fun sailing with some girlfriends."

That endorsement was probably the best gift for the tireless Steve Burzon, who celebrated his birthday the Sunday of the event. The weather gods may not have given him the winds he sought, but the rally goers and racers of the CMC, who ended the event with a jubilant awards ceremony that night, gave every hint that like the trade winds, they will return.



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CMC Winners

by Herb McCormick

The sixth running of the Caribbean Multihull Challenge Race and Rally concluded February 4, 2024, at a prizegiving ceremony on the grounds of the St. Maarten Yacht Club. It was a time to celebrate the latest excellent edition of the annual event and look ahead to the future.



LAURENS MOREL/SALTYCOLOURS.COM

The Diam 24 Merlin *took eight victories in a 12-race series to win its class.*

The Most Worthy Performer prize went to Alexis de Boucaud's Diam 24 *Merlin*, which strung together eight victories in a 12-race series to win the expertly driven 10-boat class of sprightly trimarans. In presenting the award, CMC steering committee member Robbie Ferron had high praise for the popular and growing fleet of one-design multihulls, which are taking the island by storm. "The Caribbean has never seen a fleet of this quality with racing this close and competitive," he said. "It was very, very impressive."

There was no shortage of rock-star talent in the CSA 1 class, with a pair of 66-foot heavyweights trading punches throughout the eight-race series. The HH66 *Nemo* registered three bullets on the final day of racing to seal the CSA 1 championship.

With the usual easterly trades on hiatus, the conditions were unlike what the Caribbean generally dishes up. In fact, with no breeze whatsoever on the event's third day with high pressure settled atop St. Maarten, principal race officer Chris Mansfield was forced to cancel the day's competition. But Mansfield and his team did an excellent job taking what the weather gods offered, and were able to conduct three fine days of competition.

The weather presented few issues for the 16 yachts in the rally portion of the event, which visited Great Bay, Orient Bay, Anse Marcel and St. Barts over the course of their travels, a movable feast which featured shoreside parties, music and food all along the way. When all was over, at the prizegiving a pair of rally entries also scored awards: Pierre Yves-Legris's Alibi 65 *Surprise* won the time trials in which boats were challenged to predict their expected times of each leg of the rally. And Ron Boehm's Antrim Perry 52 *Little Wing* took home a pair of prizes, for both the Navigational Challenge and the Bingo Card Challenge, in which the rally boats were charged with completing a host of tasks along the way.

What's Yachting Worth to St. Maarten?

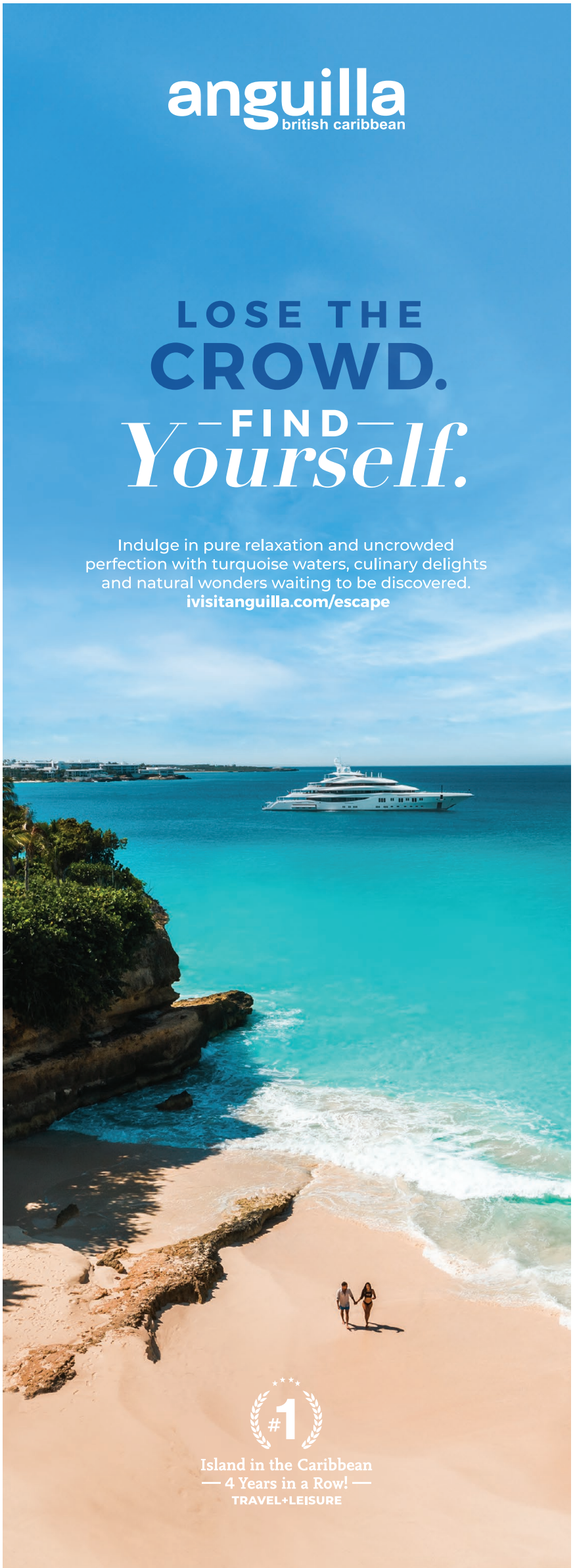
Take the Survey

It's a question the St. Maarten Marine Trades Association and the island's tourism and economic ministers are eager to understand. To do so, they have commissioned a study led in part by CMC competitor Guy Chester, skipper of the Crowther-designed trimaran *Oceans Tribute*.

"We know yachting is a major part of St. Maarten's economy," says Jesse Peterson, chair of the trades association. "This study will show the overall economic impact of our thriving marine industry on the island."

An understanding of the economic impact of yachting will help guide future government policy and its support for infrastructure and services for yachting.

This link will take you to the survey.
https://www.research.net/r/yacht-racing-regatta



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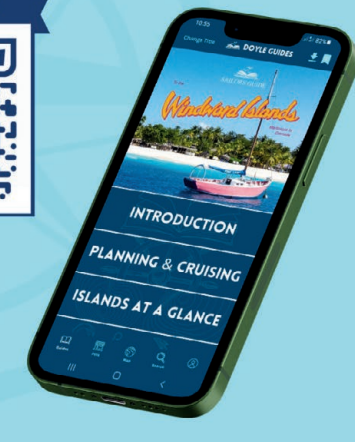
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Kenetha Ashton Island Vibe Chef Extraordinaire

By Michelle Slade

I'm a pushover for a decent chicken curry, especially one prepared in a classic West Indian style, so it took me less than five seconds to enquire as to how Chef Kenetha Ashton prepared her mouth-watering version of the age-old dish when enjoying a meal one evening at the Royal BVI Yacht Club in Tortola, in the British Virgin Islands.

As a restaurant consultant, Ashton was assisting with the re-opening of the yacht club after a long closure, taking on the temporary chef role. I boldly took my interest in her outstanding curry one step further; I asked her if she would teach me how to make it. A few days later I showed up in the yacht club kitchen, donned an apron, hair cap, and prepared for instruction.

COURTESY MICHELLE SLADE



Chef Kenetha Ashton with the author

The teaching that transpired was truly a spiritual experience as the statuesque Ashton (she towered over me at some six feet tall) engaged my attention with her melodic directions, all the while recounting memories of growing up with a father who cooked. We were preparing restaurant quantities so before long I was buried in mounds of chopped onions, carrots, garlic, tomatoes, and celery, while the earthy colors of cumin, garam masala, cinnamon sticks, bay leaves, turmeric, paprika, and cloves combined to deliver the exotic aroma that only curry knows.

"My love for food grew from my dad who had a small restaurant and that's where my training started," explained Ashton, who is from St. Vincent in the Grenadines. "After working all day, he would come home and whatever was in the garden, whether it be 'fresh' chicken (she laughed) and whatever veggies were there, he'd bring it all together with spices. Everything was always delicious."

Ashton initially immersed herself in the charter world, sharing her passion for cooking with BVI boat guests from all corners. In 2022 she launched her business, Elite Culinaire, providing provisioning and private chef services as well as gourmet meal kits to charter guests; as soon as a client books a trip, they can order meals including breakfast, lunch, and dinner options. Ashton delivers all of the meals to their boat when they arrive.

"I decided to service the industry with prepared gourmet meals because not everyone has space for a chef on board, and not everyone wants to go out for dinner every night when they live aboard," Ashton said.

Drawing on the flavors and local foods of the Caribbean, Ashton prepares 99 percent of her own food, from home-made bagels and spinach tortillas to home-made yogurt.

"I incorporate a lot of fresh fruit like pineapple, coconut, papaya, and passionfruit for flavor and fragrance, as well as different spices like nutmeg grown in the Caribbean, which I infuse into modern sauces," she explained.

Fresh fish is a staple, with local red snapper favored for its availability, noted Ashton. She loves Caribbean lobster, which she gets from both Anegada and the fishermen in Carrot Bay on Tortola. But, when it comes to the ubiquitous conch fritter, she has some rules.

"You want to bite into the conch and taste that, not just the batter," Ashton said. "Blend together lots of conch meat and add chives, onions, and fresh thyme to the batter. It's always best when it's deep fried, and I love to pair them with a really good spicy mango aioli, it's just delicious!"

While fancier items may not be readily available on the island, like carrot tops and broccolini, Ashton is a master at working with the plentiful organically grown island bounty like eggplant, beans, kale, peppers, spinach, and even green bananas.

"Green bananas have the texture of potato so they can be used like a mashed potato, and coconut oil is made on the island," Ashton said. "I use coconut oil to sauté and, in my baking, for cheesecake and key lime pie crusts; a ginger cookie crust with coconut oil instead of butter is divine."

Ashton took a Michelin Star training course in London in 2019, studying advanced food science where she learned just how food pulls together and its nutritional value under different conditions; whether it should be roasted, boiled, grilled, pureed, or mashed for example. Following her time in the Michelin kitchen, Ashton says her inspiration now comes from the science behind the food.

"Add vinegar to shallots, reduce that, add white wine then the shallots swell up and you can taste the vinegar – there is science behind that," she said. "The Michelin kitchen inspired me to be more adventurous; put anything in front of me and I can do it with good grace!"

Her special connection with food and its preparation has helped Ashton forge connections in the charter industry and of course, in her own neighborhood. Her meals are hugely popular, and every now and then she enjoys the opportunity to jump aboard for a one-off pop-up chef experience for special guests.

"I've worked with most of the charter companies, and it's a service that every charter company enjoys," she said. "Clients I have worked with love what I cook for them, but it goes beyond food; it's the love and artistic experience that I bring to them. Growing up I learned about the power of food to bring people together, and it's so much fun when people come together to enjoy tasty food, the conversation is elevated and it's so satisfying for me when people enjoy my meals."

For more information about Ashton's repertoire, visit Elite Culinaire (https://www.eliteculinaire.com).



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Gourmet Market Manager

Virgin Gorda Yacht Harbour Management Limited

We are seeking an experienced retail food service industry professional to take a leadership role as Gourmet Market Manager as part of our dynamic management team at Virgin Gorda Yacht Harbour Marina.

The Gourmet Market Manager is responsible for managing the daily operations of our market, including the selection, development, and performance management of team members.

Job Duties & Responsibilities:

- Oversee and supervise all market departments in goals and objectives and standards of the organization, planning and performance to profitable revenues,
- Responsible for preparing reports including but not limited to forecasting, declining balances, profit & loss reports, product margins and inventory.
- Purchasing
- Adhere to company standards and service levels to increase sales and minimize costs, including food, beverage, supply, utility, and labor costs.
- Responsible to train and develop all new Front of the House (FOH) & Back of the House (BOH) employees.
- Assures operational expenses and costs are in line with budgets.
- Direct and maintain inventory, product mix and merchandising standards
- Delegates tasks for ordering supplies and follows up to assure accuracies.
- Enforce sanitary practices for food handling, general cleanliness, and maintenance of kitchen and dining areas.
- Ensure compliance with operational standards, company policies, local laws, and ordinances.
- Maintain professional market image, including market cleanliness, proper uniforms, and appearance standards.
- Maintain product quality and positive guest relations in the Market.
- Ensure the market is properly opened/closed and maintained in areas including but not limited to the front of the house, outside searing areas, and interior market floors.
- Assist in facilitation of floor flow and product rotation including merchandising, facing and blocking
- Ensure proper cash management controls are followed by all staff members, as per policy.
- Manage shifts which include daily decision making, scheduling, maintaining attendance logs, upholding service standards, product quality and cleanliness.
- Provides direction and communication to team members regarding operational information and procedural changes
- Maintain an accurate and up-to-date plan of market staffing needs with trained competent individuals.
- Have complete knowledge of all policies, standards, and procedures of the department.
- Available for work assignments outside of Manager's customary work schedule. This may include evenings, catering events, weekends, and holidays.

Physical Requirements:

- Must be able to stand entire shift if necessary.
- Must be able to stand, walk, reach with arms and hands, climb or balance, and to stoop, kneel, crouch or crawl.
- Must be able to actively inspect, balance or transport objects repetitively
- Must be able to communicate effectively amongst their staff and upper management.

Education, Experience, Skills and Abilities:

- Must be able to understand, communicate, read and write English
- Knowledge of computers (MS Word, Excel. Micros POS)
- High school certificate with at least 5 years of experience directly related to the duties and responsibilities specified
- Completed degree (s) from an accredited institution that are above the minimum education requirement may be substituted for experience on a year to year basis.

Salary is commensurate with experience.

Boatyard Supervisor

Virgin Gorda Yacht Harbour Management Limited

We are seeking an experienced marine industry professional to take a leadership role as Boatyard Supervisor as part of our dynamic management team at Virgin Gorda Yacht Harbour Marina.

The Boatyard Supervisor holds ultimate responsibility for the safe, efficient, and profitable operations of the boatyard at Virgin Gorda Yacht Harbour Marina. The position calls for a hands-on team leader who has the ability to operate all of the plant and equipment as well as supervise subordinates and third parties utilising the boatyard facility. The boatyard facility is to be managed in absolute compliance with all company and regulatory policies and procedures.

It is the Boatyard Supervisor responsibility to maximize the efficiency of the boatyard assets in terms of generating activity and financial returns. It is the responsibility of the Boatyard Supervisor to ensure that all boat lifting operations are undertaken in strict compliance with company Health and Safety policies and procedures.

The Boatyard Supervisor will be expected to undertake all duties as is required for the efficient operations of the boatyard at VGYH Marina.

The Boatyard Supervisor will at all times consider operational requirements to include peak demands, events, and or shows and is required to be on call to deal with matters such as inclement weather or an emergency situation as may arise.

Requirements and Skills:

The Boatyard Supervisor must be able to demonstrate the following:

- An understanding of boating and water sports and an appreciation of the range of recreational boating types and associated customer needs.
- Experience in the handling of heavy plant and equipment for the purpose of lifting leisure vessels into and out of the water.
- Experience in securing vessels ashore using a range of methods, fixed cradles, adjustable cradles, timber shoring, blocking and boat stands.
- An appreciation for leisure vessel construction materials and methods of building.
- To lead a small team and instill confidence in subordinates to deliver exceptional service and meet common goals and objectives.
- Approach to business in a tactful, respectful manner treating others with respect and consideration regardless of their status or position. Reacts in a measured and considered way when under pressure.
- Possess accurate communication skills both verbal and written and in a timely manner.
- Be able to demonstrate an ability to deal with conflict, disaster and emergency situations.
- Possess certification in plant and equipment equivalent to NPORS for boat hoist, boat mover, forklift truck, banksman/slinger.
- Demonstrate a general level of competence in modern business office procedures, to include word processing, excel, Outlook.
- Understand Marina Regulations, Terms and Conditions, Local Regulatory policy, berthing and storage agreements as well as short-and long-term contracts.
- Manage levels of service to include internal and external customers, with an ability to respond quickly and efficiently to concerns and or complaints.
- Strive to evolve and improve services and facilities throughout the marina operations.
- Demonstrates an ability to prioritize tasks, plan work activities and use time and resources efficiently and plan and meet deadlines.
- Provides a safe and healthy working environment for all users of VGYH Marina, reporting any areas of concern that are out of his/her control to the General Manager..
- Must be able to swim.

Salary is commensurate with experience.

If you are interested in this challenging career opportunity, please forward a copy of your resume and cover letter, by March 31, 2024 to:

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Seagrass Meadows and the Life Hidden Among the Green

Story and photos by Darelle Snyman

It is undeniable that coral reefs are fascinating, but in our efforts to reach them we are often riding or finning over a marine habitat largely ignored — seagrass beds. These expanses of green might seem dull in comparison to the vibrancy of coral reefs, but within their depths lies a treasure trove of finds that need close inspection and not at a casual glance. I have been guilty of not appreciating that these vital marine habitats can make for interesting exploration in their own right. Although often regarded as individual habitats, seagrass meadows, mangroves, and coral reefs are actually interlinked systems that need each other to thrive.



Red cushion star lying among manatee grass

First off, let's dive into what seagrasses really are. They are not seaweed, and their common name is just the result of their resemblance to terrestrial grasses. They are actually true vascular plants, more closely related to terrestrial lilies, and the world's only underwater flowering plants (angiosperms). They, like their terrestrial counterparts, flower, photosynthesize and have roots for attachment and nutrient absorption, only they do it all under water. There are three main species of seagrass you are likely to swim into while exploring the shallow coastal waters, with turtle grass (*Thalassia testudinum*) being the most abundant. This ribbon-like grass has rounded tips and can reach a length of 14 inches (35.5 cm) with the leaf blade being about half an inch (10 mm) wide. An extensive root system anchors it securely to the substrate which aids in binding the sediment and preventing erosion, especially during storms and hurricanes.

Manatee grass (*Syringodium filiforme*) comes in a close second in terms of abundance and is often found growing intertwined with turtle grass. Manatee grass is easily distinguished by its long, thin leaves that are cylindrical instead of flat, like that of most seagrass species. The third, shoal grass (*Halodule wrightii*), resembles land grass the most and has thin, flat bladed leaves that are notched at their tips. It is a hardy grass that can tolerate a wide range of salinities and is often most abundant in shallow water. It is considered a pioneer species as it is able to colonize disturbed areas where turtle grass and manatee grass often cannot grow, making it a very important seagrass species.

So exactly how do these green expanses benefit the coral reefs we love to explore? A healthy seagrass meadow slows down the flow of water, causing sediment particles to settle on the substratum and the seagrass leaves themselves. Through this action seagrass acts as a filter, cleaning the water of sediments and nutrients, improving the water quality before it reaches the delicate coral communities. Through photosynthesis it oxygenates the water and fulfills the vital ecological service of acting as a carbon sink, meaning that a meadow can capture and hold carbon. Some of the carbon it sequesters is used to build leaves and roots, but most is stored in the soil below it. The carbon locked up in coastal soils is often thousands of years old. On land, carbon deposits trapped by habitats, such as forests, are known as green carbon reserves, while carbon deposits captured by a coastal ecosystem such as seagrass beds are referred to as blue carbon reserves. Scientists have estimated that seagrass meadows capture about 27.4 million tons of carbon each year, highlighting the importance of protecting these habitats. Through their destruction, an enormous amount of carbon is emitted back into the atmosphere.

Not only do seagrass meadows provide vital water cleaning services for the adjacent coral communities, they are also a haven for a wealth of marine life that either start their life there, come to forage, or make them their permanent home. Many of the fish we love to watch on a coral reef spend their early life within the protective leafy canopy seagrasses provide, sheltering them from predators until they are mature enough to join life on the reef. An estimated one-fifth of the world's most sought after recreational and commercial fish species rely on seagrass meadows as nursery grounds for their young. The loss of these crucial habitats thus has a direct impact on the survival of these fish species and consequently the fishing industry.

As a foraging ground none are more dependent on these swaying blades for their survival than sea turtles and manatees. When it comes to grazing, sea turtles act as mowers, munching on the leaves, while manatees dig in the sediment to get to the roots. Green sea turtles (*Chelonia mydas*) in fact eat so much of these leafy greens that their fat is green, hence their common name. Through their foraging activities they help keep these green meadows healthy and biodiverse. While some graze, others hunt, like the intimidating looking great barracuda (*Sphyraena barracuda*), a predator often encountered as it patrols the waters above seagrass beds. Like the barracuda, many fish are equally at home on the reef and seagrass beds. One such beauty that became a familiar sight while this writer was exploring a seagrass bed in Bocas del Toro, Panama, is the scrawled file fish. The diversity of its omnivorous diet, which includes algae, anemones, seagrass, gorgonian coral, and tunicate worms, allows it to utilize both habitats as feeding grounds.

Another little fish that became a shadowy companion as I swam around its watery seagrass home was the yellowfin mojarra (*Gerres cinereus*). This silvery fish with its deeply forked tail is commonly seen swimming about seagrass beds and sandy bottoms, pecking about for small invertebrates hiding in the sediment. Its distinctive protruding mouth, longer on the bottom than the top, gives it the edge to scoop up those tasty morsels buried in the sediment.



Three-rowed sea cucumber feeding among bottom segments in turtle grass bed

Seagrasses, as a result of their structure, create an increased surface area for the settlement of a wealth of epiphytic algae, an algae species that grows on plants. Over 100 species of epiphytic algae have been recorded on turtle grass alone. The epiphytes in turn are grazed upon by snails. As the epiphyte-laden seagrass blades die off, they become part of the detritus. Epiphytes and detritus-rich sediments are among the factors that make seagrass beds the perfect habitat for a diversity of invertebrates. An iconic invertebrate of seagrass meadows is the stunning red cushion star (*Oreaster reticulatus*), which can also assume orange and yellow tones as can be seen in the photo where it lies among manatee grass. This omnivore flourishes in seagrass beds which provide it with all of its favorite food items, namely sea urchins, sponges, and epiphytic algae and seafloor sediment. Sea cucumbers such as the three-rowed sea cucumber (*Isostichopus badionatus*) also find a perfect feeding ground here. As a deposit feeder, the sea cucumber literally eats the sediments on the ocean floor by pushing them into its mouth with numerous short tentacles. These warty critters consume an estimated one to 2.3 tons of sediment per year.

Sea urchins are common to seagrass beds, and often fall prey to cushion stars. The green sea urchin (*Lytechinus variegatus*, shown in the photo) is another fun find in the seagrass beds of Bocas del Toro.

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To hide from predators and protect itself from the harsh tropical sun it covers and camouflages itself with seagrass leaves using its prominent white pedicellariae. This lover of turtle grass shares its leafy home with scores of sponges and anemones.



Green sea urchin covered with turtle grass leaves

Apart from the large number of underwater species that depend on these valuable habitats for shelter and food there are also many birds, especially wading birds, that utilize seagrass beds. It is clear that one article can barely scratch the surface when it comes to discovering the magic of seagrass meadows. Unfortunately, on a global scale, we are losing seagrass coverage at a rate of seven percent a year, or roughly two football fields of seagrass every hour — a shocking statistic considering the ecologically important services it provides us and the creatures that depend on it. Numerous factors contribute to this loss, with pollution, particularly high levels of nutrients, being the biggest threat. So next time you are out and about, remember seagrass meadows are just as fragile as the reef structure, so take care and enjoy the life among the green.

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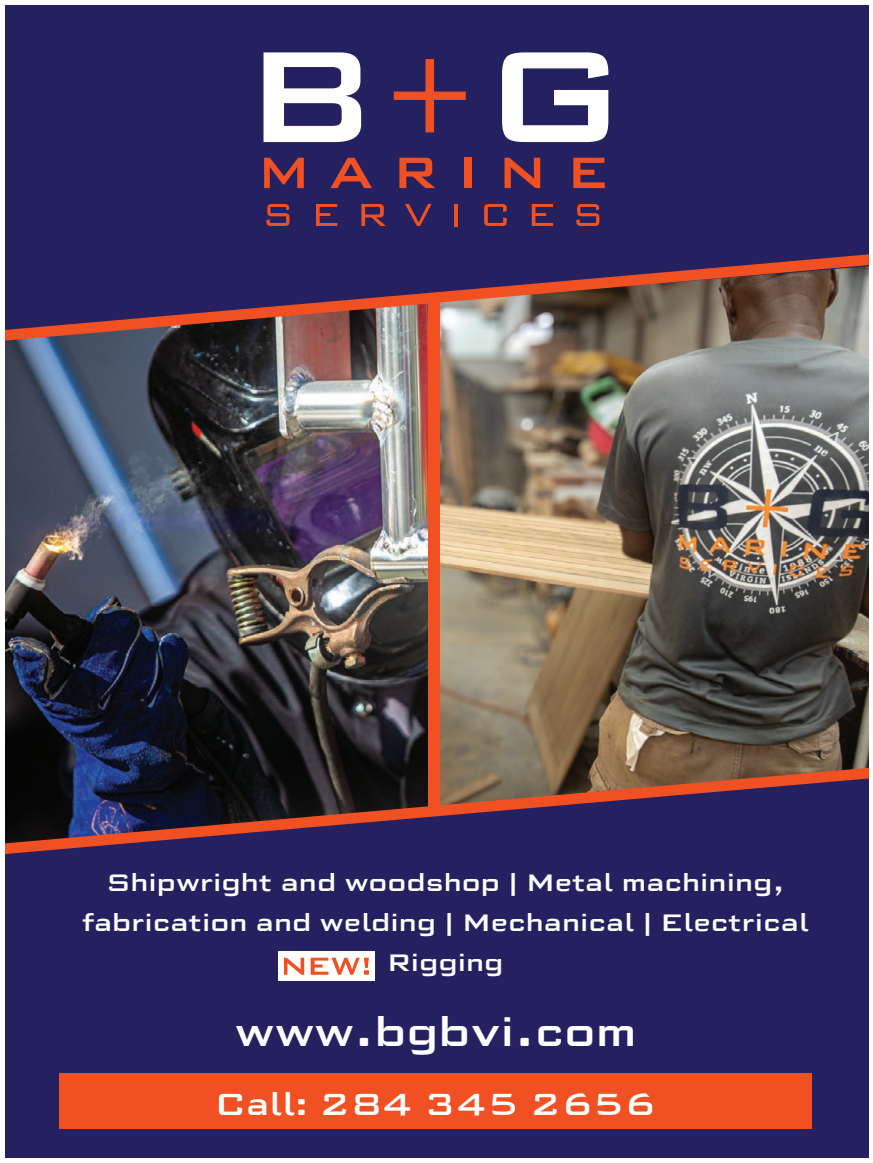
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Island Spotlight: Bequia

Story and photos by Chris Doyle and Lexi Fisher



Vanessa Vaughn-Richards's ascent reward is a stunning view of Admiralty Bay.

Bequia lies only eight nautical miles south of mainland St. Vincent and is the largest of the 32 Grenadine islands. The passage from Young Island Cut and Blue Lagoon in St. Vincent to Bequia is usually pleasant, off-the-wind sailing. It is closer to the wind if you are coming from St. Vincent's west coast, but usually still easily done on one tack.

Bequia has long been a favorite of yachts people. Isolated enough to remain relatively unspoiled, yet lively enough to be stimulating and entertaining, it provides a blend of the old and new that many find perfect. It is well connected with St. Vincent and the other Grenadines, both by a small airport and by the cheaper and more traditional ferries. Some yachts people leave their boats anchored in Bequia and take a ferry to visit St. Vincent.

Bequia is an island of sailors and boats, linked to the outside world mainly by the sea, and the old traditions continue. Boats are built on the beach in the shade of palm trees, though these days the building methods are a lot more high-tech, and the traditional fishing boats have morphed into sport boats capable of speeds well over 10 knots. Bequians travel all over the world on cargo vessels; quite a few have ended up owning their own, and some are intrepid fishermen who venture all over the Grenadines in little open boats. They are a proud people, descendants of settlers who came from North America, on whaling boats from farms in Scotland, from France as freebooters, and as enslaved people from Africa.

The island has an active whaling station in a low-key and traditional way. By International Whaling Commission agreement, local whalers can take four whales a year, but in some years they do not get any. The whaling season is from February to April. At this time of year humpback whales leave their northern feeding grounds and head south to mate and bear young. Few people are left in Bequia with the skills necessary to hunt them — a daring feat in an open sailing boat, using hand-thrown harpoons. On the rare occasions that they make a kill, the hunters tow the whale to Semplers Cay for butchering.

Friendship Bay is a harbor on the south coast, and there is a daytime anchorage at Petit Nevis, but Bequia's main harbor is Admiralty Bay. It is a huge, well-protected bay with Bequia's only town, Port Elizabeth, at its head. Small hotels, bars, restaurants, and shops spread from town along both shores, strung together in the south by the popular Belmont Walkway. This delightful coastal path, renovated and extended by Action Bequia, meanders along the shore, skirting a few trees to Plantation House. Here it climbs the hill before bringing you back to the sea via a lovely wooden staircase. It then turns into a path that takes you to Princess Margaret Beach.

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Much of Bequia's tourist industry is based on visiting yachts, so you will find good yacht services, restaurants, shops, and handicrafts, many made only here. Best of all, Bequians understand yachting. Several yacht services are grouped together in Ocar on the northern shore. Others are in Port Elizabeth. Good dinghy docks are spaced around the bay, including one at Dockside Marine, a large and well-stocked chandlery. There are multiple canvas and sailmakers on the island, and Bequia has the friendliest and broadest range of on-water service providers, from which you can get everything from your water and diesel tanks filled to fresh bakery items every morning, laundry services, and garbage collection.



The closeup view of the anchorage from the Gingerbread Hotel is one that inspires visitor Jeff Fisher of Grenada to linger.

You will also have a great range of restaurants and entertainment, from relaxed beach bars to the more formal atmosphere of the larger resorts. There is no shortage of waterfront dining options in town, all conveniently connected by the Belmont Walkway. Wander down the coast for a beach day and dine with your toes in the sand, overlooking the clear turquoise waters of Lower Bay. Afterwards, dinghy over to Bar One, the Windward's only floating bar, for a cocktail to go with the explosion of color that so often accompanies the Caribbean sunset. Paired with the friendly locals and accessible yacht services, it's no wonder Bequia is such a popular yachting destination.

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Supported by Women Who Sail

By Joyce Gauthier



JAMES LOVING

The author at her new gig as captain of the St. Michaels Harbor Shuttle on the Miles River in Saint Michaels, Maryland

Before releasing the dock lines for the first time, I gobbled up all the information I could. I took American Sailing Association (ASA) courses, read blogs, watched YouTube videos, and turned to Facebook to learn from those who came before me. I was lucky to have found a female ASA instructor (there was only one female instructor in the ASA school I attended). The docks at our marina were male-dominated. The YouTube channels we watched rarely featured a female captain. Women were seen in sexy, bikini-clad images to get people to click on the video, but infrequently in a leadership role. It was a welcome change to find a Facebook group called Women Who Sail (WWS).

WWS can be traced back to 2011, when Charlotte Kaufman, an avid sailor herself, envisioned a space where women could connect, share experiences, and support one another in their boating endeavors. Since its humble beginnings as a Facebook group, WWS has grown to over 50,000 members in the last twelve years. According to the Women Who Sail website, womenwhosail.com, "Women Who Sail is the first and only of its kind community, built through grassroots efforts to create a forum for discussion, exchange, and coordination for a community often alienated and underserved by the mainstream sailing community, which is dominated by men and traditional yacht clubs."

When I was starting out in sailing, I was blissfully unaware of the need for such a group. I naively looked at WWS as a resource for the "pink jobs" – a tongue-in-cheek reference to what would stereotypically be a female job (cooking, cleaning, first mate). "Blue jobs" are the stereotypical male jobs on a boat (docking, engine maintenance, being a captain). Over the years, my need for guidance has changed as my role in the boating world has progressed. I was just scratching the surface of what WWS had to offer during those first few years.

I adore the WWS Facebook group because no question is off limits. One simple question can bring hundreds of responses in minutes. Or one can simply use the search feature. In a group that has been around for over a decade, chances are, the topic has been covered.

Kimberly Boneham has been a full-time liveaboard since 2018 and member of WWS since 2013. "WWS helped prepare me for the cruising lifestyle by reading about the ups and downs of cruising and realizing it's not always sunsets and cocktails. The highs are high and the lows are low." When Kimberly's Bristol collided with the Reedy Island Dike in the Delaware Bay, she "was absolutely despondent, and posted about the experience on WWS within hours of the collision (once we were safely at a dock). Literally hundreds of women encouraged me, telling me about the times they had run aground or collided with something. They assured me that I would laugh about the incident someday, and although I didn't believe it at the time, they were right. It made all of the difference just knowing that there were so many other women that had been through the same type of thing. I dried my tears, dusted myself off, and we made it to the Bahamas that winter."

Over the years, I took in all the wisdom I could from the wise, seasoned sailors of WWS. They were blunt, they were resourceful, but most of all, they were kind. Just as with Kimberly's story, there is rarely an "I told you so," but more of an "I've been there too" feel to the responses. In a sea of Facebook groups for cruisers, it was the only group in which I felt comfortable asking a question.

A couple of years into my time living aboard a sailboat, a switch went off. I was tired of being the first mate. I wanted to be independent on my boat. I didn't want to rely on my husband for everything. I don't have a gift for mechanical things, so I gravitated toward what I think is the most fun, driving. I took over docking the boat at every fuel dock, pump out, and marina. I enjoyed the attention it brought. Usually, the man docks and the woman throws the lines. I enjoyed driving our boat and dinghy so much, I got my captain's license.

Once I started working in the industry for a water taxi, I became all too aware of how women are treated in the boating industry. I found myself not only being the only woman in boating situations, but like some kind of unicorn. People lined up on the docks to watch me pull the boat into the slip and cheered in awe that a woman could actually be doing such a thing.

While I do not have the answer for female equality in the boating world, I know what I can do as an individual. I vow to not only do "pink jobs." I will dock, I will drive the dinghy, I will learn as much as I can about the boat's systems. I will support other women who want to learn. I will take women out on the water to learn how to dock or go for a ride. I will answer questions from anyone starting out. I am passionate about the highs and lows of the cruising lifestyle and am open to sharing my story. It is because of WWS that I am where I am. Without their kindness when I was starting out, I would have been lost. I want to pay it forward.

With over 50,000 members, WWS has become a hub for women to exchange knowledge and skills, both online and in person. There are over 50 subgroups, most of which are broken down by geographic areas, but some are based on interest, like Women Who Sail Who Write or Women Who Sail – Women of Color. These subgroups exist to further the mission of connecting sailing women. Women looking for crew, lessons, or other women to sail with can find that in the subgroups.

I am eternally grateful for Women Who Sail and their mission. They were there when I was just starting out and continue to be a resource as I mature as a sailor.

Capt. Joyce Gauthier owns a 1974 Camper Nicholson ketch, s/v Gavia. *She is a regular contributor to windandwellness.com, a blog about health and wellness for cruisers. Joyce loves creating original dishes in the galley, lounging on white sandy beaches with her husband Matt, and snuggling her shih tzu, Loki.*

March Sky

By Jim Ulik

"For my part I know nothing with any certainty, but the sight of the stars makes me dream."

—Vincent van Gogh



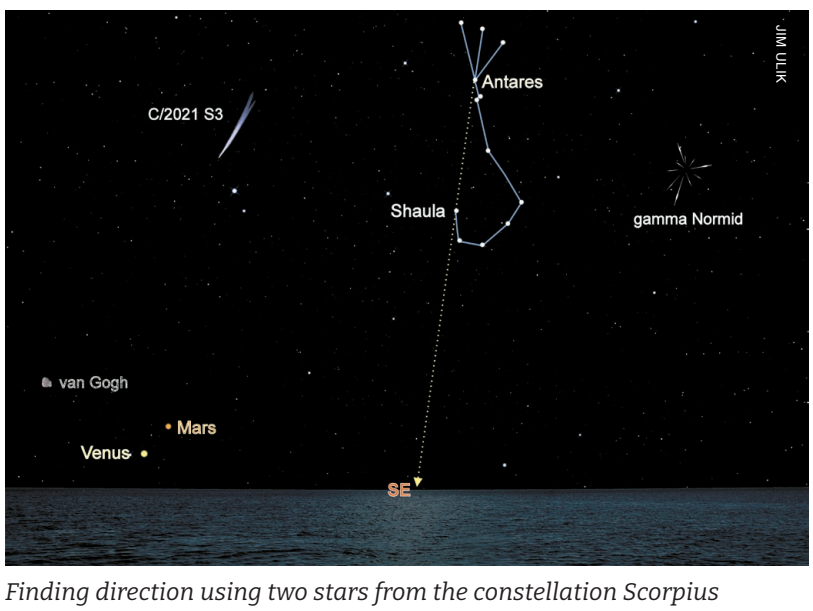
"The Starry Night" (1889) Vincent van Gogh

What was it Vincent van Gogh was reflecting upon as he gazed out of his window? "This morning I saw the countryside from my window a long time before sunrise, with nothing but the morning star, which looked very big." Van Gogh's fascination with twilight and night scenes led him to paint "The Starry Night" (1889). Vincent's morning star, the white star left of center, is thought to be Venus. The March 09, 1888 morning sky is one that closely matches Vincent's painting. Another could be May 24, 1889, one month before the painting's creation.

Other works like "Starry Night on the Rhone" (1888) or "Country Road in Provence" (1890) expressed van Gogh's passion for night scenes with color, contrast and the cosmos. Van Gogh was born March 30, 1853. An asteroid named after him will pass through this month.

Sunday, March 03

The rival of Mars will be eclipsed by the Moon. As the Moon approaches third quarter it makes a pass over Antares. The red giant star will remain hidden for about an hour and one half. Don't have a compass? Did satellite hacking or spoofing affect your GPS signal? Finding one direction can be done by extending an imaginary line passing through Antares and Shaula (the scorpion's stinger). That line will point toward the southeast as shown in Image 2. In addition, the illuminated side of the Moon faces roughly east. The terminator line or the line separating the bright and dark side of the Moon can be extended to identify north and south.



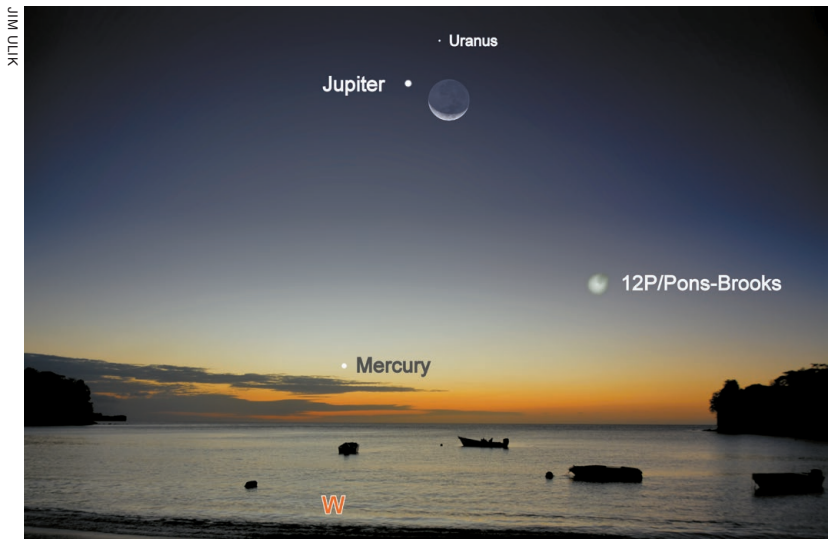
Finding direction using two stars from the constellation Scorpius

Friday, March 08

A thin crescent Moon can be seen low in the pre-dawn sky near Mars and Venus. All objects will rise between 105 and 110 degrees true around 0500.

Sunday, March 10

The Moon has reached its New Moon phase and is at perigee (the point in the orbit of the Moon when it is nearest to the earth). The Sun and Moon are in line, generating a perigean spring tide. High tides during perigean spring tides can be significantly higher than during other times of the year.



Grouping of celestial objects at sunset on March 13

Wednesday, March 13

A close approach between Jupiter and the waxing crescent Moon will become apparent as the Sun sets. The darkening sky will reveal four of Jupiter's moons. Binoculars will be an asset in their discovery. A clear view of the western horizon is necessary to catch a glimpse of Mercury.

Comet 12P/Pons-Brooks will continue to brighten low in the western sky around dusk over the next month. The comet that passes near the Sun every 71 years was first recorded back in the 1300s. It was named for the two astronomers who spotted it in the early 1800s.

Thursday, March 14

The Moon has left Jupiter behind to take up position near the Seven Sisters. Pleiades is located off the dark side of the Moon. The brightest sister Alcyone, a double star, will be the most prominent overnight.

If you are up past midnight you may notice a shooting star or two pass across the night sky. The meteors could be from the gamma Normids. This minor shower reaches its peak tonight. The shower is active February 24 – March 28.

Sunday, March 17

The constellation Gemini is the background for tonight's first quarter Moon. Tomorrow night the Moon moves to a location near Pollux, the brightest star in Gemini and twin star to Castor.

Tuesday, March 19

Today is the first day of spring. The Sun will shine directly on the equator today as it makes its way to shine above the northern hemisphere. Adjust your solar panels accordingly. Over the next few months solar panels will continue to have a better angle of attack on the Sun. There will be nearly equal amounts of day and night throughout the world. The March, Vernal or Spring Equinox moment occurs at 2306.

Wednesday, March 20

The Moon has "marched" into the claws of the crab Cancer. That puts it near the collection of over 1,000 stars named the Beehive Cluster.

Thursday, March 21

Venus and Saturn appear as one apparition in the early morning sky before sunrise. The celestial pair can be found low in the east before 0600. The planets are floating in the stream of water flowing out of the jar of Aquarius. Mars can be seen 13 degrees west of Venus and Saturn. Six degrees left or toward the north is the asteroid named after Vincent van Gogh. The International Astronomical Union (IAU) regulates the naming of asteroids.

Saturday, March 23

The Moon is at apogee or its furthest orbital distance from Earth. The Moon is gradually drifting away from Earth at the annual rate of one and one half inches. No worries. The slow drift away will not alter normal tidal ranges during perigee or apogee. However, a dinghy can still get jammed under a dock if not attended to.

Sunday, March 24

This is the best time to view Mercury since it will be at its highest point above the horizon in the evening sky. After the Sun sets Mercury will become visible for about one-half hour before it sets a few degrees directly below Jupiter.

Monday, March 25

A few minutes into March 25 the Moon will begin to darken. The darkening will increase as the Moon passes deeper into Earth's shadow. This event is a penumbral lunar eclipse where the Moon only passes through the edge of Earth's shadow. The total lunar eclipse will not occur until March 2025. The Moon reaches full phase at the halfway point of this eclipse.

Tuesday, March 26

Tonight the Moon resides in the Ear of Wheat held by Virgo. The Moon can be spotted in a close approach to Spica. Spica is the brightest star in Virgo so it should be easy to spot about two degrees above or west of the Moon.

**All times are given as Atlantic Standard Time (AST) unless otherwise noted.*





Crossing the channels between Eastern Caribbean islands, an ebb tide carries you off to leeward and a strong flood tide creates lumpy seas, so crossing with a favorable tide is faster and more comfortable. The table below, showing the local time of the meridian passage (or zenith) of the moon for this month, will help you calculate the tides.

Water generally tries to run toward the moon. The flood tide starts running eastward soon after moonrise, continues to run east until about an hour after the moon reaches its zenith (see TIME below) and then ebbs 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.

The first hour after moonrise, the westerly current is barely negated. The second hour the flood tide is stronger, the third and fourth hour it's strongest, then it eases off in the fifth and sixth hours. The maximum tide is three or four days after the new and full moons.

March 2024	
DATE	**TIME**
1	0359
2	0446
3	0537
4	0633
5	0732
6	0833
7	0934
8	1032
9	1128
10	1221
11	1321
12	1404
13	1456
14	1550
15	1645
16	1742
17	1838
18	1933
19	2024
20	2112
21	2156
22	2238
23	2317
24	2356
25	0000 FULL MOON
26	0035
27	0116
28	0158
29	0243
30	0333
31	0426

April 2024	
1	0523
2	0622
3	0721
4	0818
5	0913
6	1005
7	1056
8	1147
9	1240
10	1334
11	1430
12	1529
13	1627
14	1724
15	1818
16	1908
17	1953
18	2036
19	2116
20	2155
21	2234
22	2314
23	2356
24	0000 FULL MOON
25	0041
26	0129
27	0222
28	0318
29	0416
30	0514

CALENDAR

MARCH 2024

1-2	Bequia International Theater Festival: Sweet Dreams — the Music of Patsy Cline. tickettailor.com/events/slimgoodbodycorp/904770
1-3	ACT (Arts, Culture, Technology) Festival, Barbados. visitbarbados.org
2-1 APR	Virgin Gorda Easter Festival, BVI. facebook.com/VirginIslandsFestival
2-4	Dark & Stormy Regatta, BVI. www.westendyachtclubbvi.com
3	Carnaval Dominicano grand finale, Dominican Republic
4	Public holiday in BVI (HL Stoutt's Birthday)
5-10	Drum Fest – Fiesta del Tambor, Havana, Cuba. fiestadeltambor.cult.cu
6-9	St. Maarten Heineken Regatta. www.heinekenregatta.com
7	Taste of Rum, Puerto Rico's International Rum Festival. Puerto Rico Convention Center, San Juan
7-9	Virgin Islands Jam Fest, St. John. vijamfest.com
8	International Women's Day
9	Isle of Light Festival, Dominican Republic. isleoflight.com
9-18	St. Patrick's Festival, Montserrat
11	Public holiday in Belize (National Heroes' Day)
11	Public holiday in some places (Commonwealth Day)
11-17	Superyacht Challenge Antigua. superyachtchallengeantigua.com
11-18	SXM electronic music festival, St. Maarten. sxmfestival.com
14	Public holiday in in St. Vincent & the Grenadines (National Heroes' Day)
16	Taste of Virgin Gorda, BVI. bvifoodfete.com
16	Dinghy Championship Hoedemaker Series Day 2, St. Maarten. smyc.com/dinghy-season-championship/
16	Water World's Seminar: Power Management. Cole Bay, St. Maarten. islandwaterworld.com (provisional date—check back)
17	Public holiday in Montserrat (St. Patrick's Day). St. Patrick's Day Festival, Grenada
18	Public holiday in Aruba (Flag Day)
20	Vernal Equinox
21-24	St. Barths Bucket Regatta, St. Barths. www.BucketRegatta.com
22	Public holiday in Puerto Rico (Emancipation Day)
22-24	Moonsplash Festival, Anguilla. facebook.com/MoonsplashAnguilla
23-24	Antigua Laser and Optimist Open. antiguayachtclub.com/calendar
22-31	PAYS Dominica Yachting Festival. Paysdominica.com
24-1 Apr	Easterval on Union Island, SVG. caribbeanevents.com/event/easterval-on-union-island/
25	FULL MOON (Full Worm Moon)
28	Round the Rocks Race, St. John, USVI. stthomasyachtclub.org
28-31	Bequia Easter Regatta. bequiaregatta.com
29	Good Friday
29-31	St. Thomas International Regatta. stthomasyachtclub.org
29-31	Festival del Mar, Anguilla. anguilla-beaches.com/festival-del-mar-anguilla.html
29-1 Apr	Oistin's Fish Festival, Christ Church, Barbados
29-Apr 3	Governor's Cup Race, BVI. royalbviyc.org
30	Public holiday in Trinidad & Tobago (Spiritual Baptist 'Shouter' Liberation Day)
31	Easter Sunday
31–6 Apr	BVI Spring Regatta & Sailing Fest, Tortola. bvispringregatta.org
TBA	Foxy's Music Fest, Jost Van Dyke, BVI. foxysbvi.com

See the entire calendar of events at caribbeancompass.com/caribbean-events-calendar

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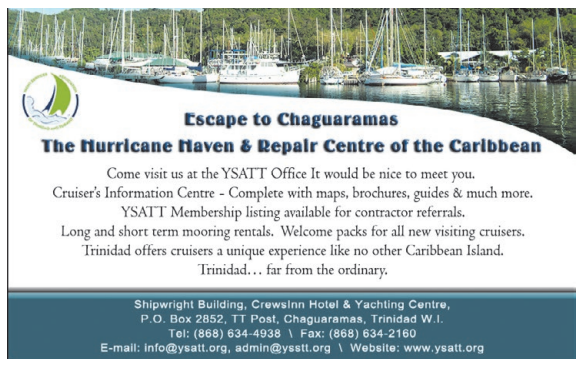
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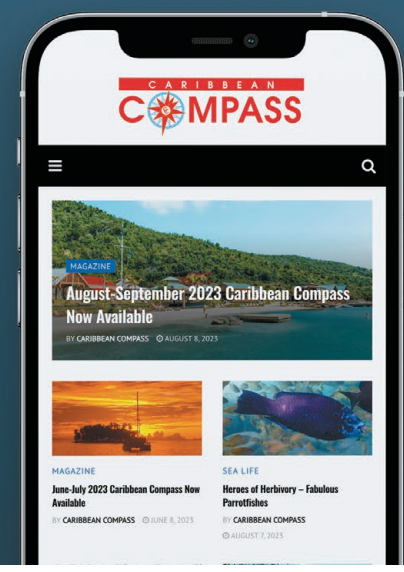
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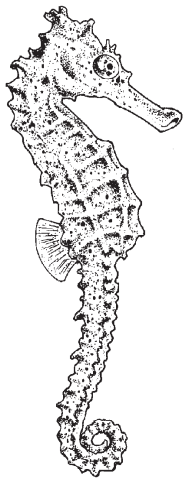


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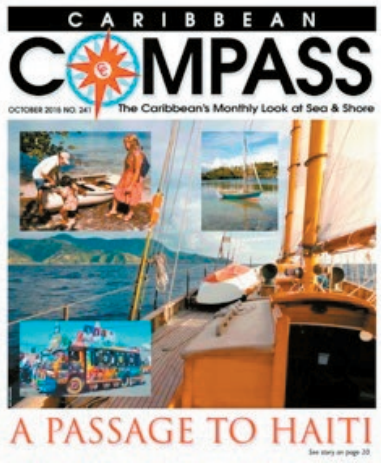
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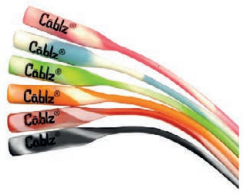
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