



*Photo Contest Winner*

**Tara Donley**

*Solstice Tide - Van de Stadt  
Zehond*

*You know you are in paradise  
when this is the view as you walk  
along the road to dinner.  
Savusavu took our breath in so  
many ways and the sunsets  
certainly never let us down!*

*I couldn't resist stopping to take  
this pic when I saw the palm tree  
set against the sunset. Just one of  
our many wonderful memories  
from Savusavu, Fiji!*



# Currents

March 2026

## Table Of Contents

<b>The Peterson Cup Cruising Rally: Together on the Salish Sea</b> . . . . .	3
<b>Cruising in Northern Mexico – Utopia and Upkeep</b> . . . . .	9
<b>Navigating the Central American Gap Winds - Part 1: The Tehuantepecs</b> . . . . .	14
<b>Cutting Board Cockpit Grate: From Teak Tragedy to Kitchen Hack Heroics</b> . . . . .	21
<b>Staging Safety Equipment for Offshore Cruising: Being Ready When Seconds Count</b> . . . . .	27
<b>OpenCPN: The Free ‘Swiss Army Knife’ of Navigation Software</b> . . . . .	38
<b>Vancouver Fleet - Open CPN Course</b> . . . . .	40
<b>Invitation to Royal Victoria Yacht Club Open House</b> . . . . .	42
<b>Going Offshore in 2026? Don’t Forget to Apply for Your Leaver Package!</b> . . . . .	44
<b>Vancouver Fleet Weather Group - March 2026</b> . . . . .	47
<b>Calgary Hybrid Club Night - Sailing in the UK</b> . . . . .	49
<b>VI Mid-Island Club Night - Under Wide and Starry Skies</b> . . . . .	51
<b>VI South Hybrid Club Night - Under Wide and Starry Skies</b> . . . . .	52
<b>Vancouver Hybrid Club Night — Beyond the Horizon: A Pacific Circuit</b> . . . . .	54
<b>Advanced Marine Radar and Navigation</b> . . . . .	57
<b>Basic and Intermediate Diesel Operation and Maintenance</b> . . . . .	59

## The Peterson Cup Cruising Rally: Together on the Salish Sea

<https://currents.bluewatercruising.org/article/the-peterson-cup-cruising-rally-together-on-the-salish-sea/>



I described the Peterson Cup Cruising Rally to a BCA member whose boat is currently in Mexico. His response was, “It sounds like cruising when you go offshore”. You are exploring new areas and moving from place to place with a group of like-minded sailors. It sounded like a fun event to tie into our summer plans and turned into an incredible week of sailing, meeting new friends, and exploring the Gulf Islands together.

### The Rally

The group met at the Dinghy Dock Pub on Protection Island near Nanaimo on the first day to decide our time of departure and the destination for the first night. As a group, we determined departure time and destination for the first night based on the conditions. Our timing also allowed us to watch the start of the famous Bathtub Race leaving from Nanaimo Harbour the next morning.

As planned, we set out the next day with the goal to rendezvous with the group at Kendrick Island just off

Gabriola Island that evening. One of the ideas behind the Peterson Cup is to sail as much as possible and we love to sail. Up went the sails the moment we were out of the anchorage in an attempt to get to a good spot to watch the start of the Bathtub Race. Unfortunately, the winds were light and we struggled to make way and instead watched the racers from a distance.



Blake single-handing *Sea Fever*

In the meantime, those who motored out a bit farther were able to catch some great wind. Once we finally made it to Snake Island, the winds picked up and we joined in the fun with steady winds for the remainder of the day. It was a great beginning to the rally and when we gathered that evening, there were lots of smiles, but pure exhaustion from our single-handers, especially for those who crossed Georgia Strait the day before. After that day of good (read 'breezy') sailing, the group decided on two alternate routes to get to our next destination, either through Gabriola Passage or into Georgia Strait and then through Porlier Passage. About half the fleet decided to go each way.



*Cookie Cutter* and *Dobro Dani* crossing on the way to Porlier Pass

We were excited to go the outside route through Porlier Pass, a passage we hadn't taken before. The winds were a bit lighter and we needed to motor out to find the wind and stay with the group. It was another beautiful day and the fleet set off with *Salt* taking the long route with big tacks (we thought they were headed to Vancouver), *Dobro Dani* taking the route along shore and the remaining fleet staying somewhere in between. Each of these strategies worked and we all came together at the passage at nearly the same time.



### *Salt* taking a long tack

That night, after anchoring in Clam Bay, we took our dinghies through the cut and gathered at Telegraph Harbour Marina for our onshore get together. Each fleet member shared their thoughts on the day's sail and we decided upon the next legs of the rally: to Montague Harbour, Beaumont Marine Park and then on to Winter Cove. Our final leg was to end up at Port Browning to join the August BCA Rendezvous.

In the true spirit of cruising, rally members had a few quick repairs to make along the way. For us, this was a rip on the UV strip on our Genoa. After a sail repair kit was borrowed from *Cookie Cutter*, down came the sail, and after a bit of time on the foredeck the sail was ready to go again.

## **Reflections**

One of the biggest takeaways for us was that socializing together was great, but sailing together was amazing and resulted in the best stories when we got to shore. We met new friends and gained a taste of what it would be like to cruise with others offshore, with the bonus that we were doing it in the comfort of our very own Salish Sea.

I want to thank Connie and Peter for doing such a great job organizing and leading the rally in 2025, and everyone who participated.



Evening gathering at Winter Cove

## About the Peterson Cup Cruising Rally

The Peterson Cup is more than just a rally, it's a celebration of sailing, friendship, and exploring the Salish Sea. Inspired by Past Commodore Lex Peterson, who encouraged BCA members to "Do it and get out there while you can," the event is all about creating unforgettable memories, fostering good seamanship and building lasting friendships while sailing. In 2025, the rally was hosted by Connie Morahan and Peter McMartin on *Cookie Cutter*. A total of 12 boats participated including three single-handers, 8 couples, two cats and one family. The cup was presented to [Shannon & Doran Jones](#), *Lunetta* at the August Rendezvous.

## About The Author

**Shannon & Doran Jones**

**Lunetta -**

Shannon and Doran have been BCA members for three years. They are co-skippers on SV Lunetta, a Nordic 40 they purchased in February 2023.



## Cruising in Northern Mexico – Utopia and Upkeep

<https://currents.bluewatercruising.org/article/cruising-in-northern-mexico-utopia-and-upkeep/>



After arriving in Mexico in October, following our passage down the Pacific West Coast, we settled into Ensenada for a month to address the many glitches our extended shakedown cruise had generated. In addition to a leaking prop seal, the rudder bearing had started knocking and needed replacing. We also wanted to sort out an intermittent fault with the engine starter, fix a generator problem, sort out a fuel problem that had started as we approached Ensenada, try to resolve an issue with our roller furling main, fix our broken bow thruster, commission the water maker, service the engine, and go up the mast to check everything out. This was all in addition to trying to have a sunshade made and fixing a few broken bits on our enclosure.

To be clear, when we left Victoria, only a couple of these issues were known. We had spent over six months of hard work preparing to leave – most of the problems had developed on our journey south.

Needless to say, the month went quickly. With the weather cooling and us having to find our jumpers again (we had been in shorts and T-shirts since Los Angeles, three months before), once nearly all the issues had been addressed we headed off south in search of warmer climes.

The journey south was pretty challenging (not helped by ongoing fuel issues), but by the time we reached Cabo San Lucas we were starting to get into the swing of some proper cruising.



Top: Cocktails by the pool!; Bottom: Charles in his “man-cave”.

We had stopped in some wonderful, isolated bays such as Bahia Santa Maria, Los Fralles, and Bahia de los Muertos, and met many cruisers on similar journeys on the way. Arriving in La Paz in mid-December, we felt we were truly on our way to cruising utopia. By then, of course, we had created a new to-do list. But at least now we were mostly making improvements rather than fixing things.

La Paz was an amazing cruising hub with a mix of cruisers that were either planning to spend the winter in the Sea of Cortez, prepping for crossing to the South Pacific, or those, like us, who were destined for Mainland Mexico and points further south. In talking with the other cruisers, our experience of a [pretty hairy trip](#) down the Pacific west coast followed by a massive list of stuff to fix, was pretty normal. Indeed, on reaching La Paz, many of the cruisers realized that they had a lot more work to do to get ready for the next stage of their journey.



Preparing for Christmas in La Paz

Over Christmas and into January, we explored the southern areas of the Sea of Cortez as well as doing more upkeep on the boat. Even with things in good order, we still had breakages (our throttle cable broke unexpectedly in a very isolated anchorage, for example), which gave us a serious case of ‘engine anxiety’ whenever we were in a situation where we had to rely on it. We had also torn a gash in our dinghy on some rocks and were struggling to properly fix it.

In addition, there was (as usual) a long list of checks and maintenance chores to do. Of additional note, we found that in January, La Paz and the Sea of Cortez is a very windy place with almost constant northerly winds of 15 to 25 knots, making even the best anchorages lively places. All this was becoming fairly wearing on us. As we talked to others, we realized that we had all hit a ‘post-Christmas slump’, sick of working so hard on the boat and fighting to find the spares needed, and not having the idyllic anchorages that we had dreamt of.

Luckily for us, as February came around, we could start heading off to the mainland. As we made progress down to Puerta Vallarta and beyond, the weather improved dramatically, the boat started to perform way better and with fewer issues, and the sailing conditions improved.

Another thing had changed with us too: our attitude to broken stuff on the boat. Previously, with our BC

cruising mindset and readily available chandleries and boatyards, we were freaked out every time something wasn't working right, and we *had* to get it fixed. Now, in Mexico, we have embraced the fact that things will break (now fully buying into the adage that if it's working, it just hasn't broken yet) and are learning to take this in our stride. We now also understand that things can often stay broken for a while, without significantly disadvantaging us.

As we cruise down the Gold Coast in Mexico (Chamela, Tenacatita, Manzanillo), we are getting into the groove of things more, and looking forward (!) to the next phase as we confront the Tehuantepec and Papagayo weather systems on our way to summer in Costa Rica and Panama.



Over the hump, perfect cruising grounds

Some key take aways from our last six months:

- Ensenada gets cool in November. It is best to move off early in the month to follow the good weather.
- In the Sea of Cortez, the Northerly winds of winter can put a real crimp on cruising plans and enjoyment. The locals who cruise down here tend to spend the winter on the mainland (Mazatlán and South) and head up to the Sea of Cortez only in March when the northerly winds abate.
- When doners joke about cruising being “boat maintenance in exotic locations”, it’s not a joke – it

is life. If you can't handle this as a significant part of your life while cruising, think hard about going!

- There is no such thing as a perfectly prepared boat that will not give you trouble. Every system is just waiting to break and expertise to fix things is difficult to find. Knowing how to fix it yourself is vital once past the US.
- Spares are very hard to source and much more expensive once you leave the US (to say nothing of the challenge of importing spares if you need them from another country). If you think you might need something, buy two before you leave Canada and/or the US. Leaving slightly poorer but with a massive set of spares is better than being stuck trying to import something to a faraway location to get you moving again.
- Get a really good quality set of wheels for your dingy, and a professional grade dingy repair kit before you leave – these will pay dividends over your trip.
- Having a dry sack(s) for your shore bag is a great idea – saves everything getting wet on the ride in or out.

## **About The Author**

### **Charles and Heidi Aram**

**SV BeTrue 2 -**

Charlie and Heidi have set off on a 5-year journey to go “half way round the world and back again” aiming to see North and Central America, The Caribbean and Europe. You can follow their adventures (from the start of their sailing experience in 2020) at [svbetrue.com](http://svbetrue.com)

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## Navigating the Central American Gap Winds - Part 1: The Tehuantepecs

<https://currents.bluewatercruising.org/article/navigating-the-central-american-gap-winds-part-1-the-tehuantepecs/>



The Pacific coast from southern Mexico to Panama serves up dramatic volcanic landscapes, safe anchorages, and warm welcomes. When travelling in either direction, two notorious gap winds keep sailors honest on this journey: the Tehuantepecers on the Southern Coast of Mexico, and the Papagayos, which affect the coasts of Nicaragua and Costa Rica. These funneled northerlies can snap from zephyr to gale with almost no notice, whipping up steep, square waves that can make you question your life choices. Thanks to modern forecasts and the “one foot on the beach” tactic, the passage has gone from “legendary terror” to “perfectly doable with patience.” Many crews wait days (or weeks) for the right weather window. Fortunately, this can be time well spent exploring ashore instead of staring at the marina pilings for days on end.

In Part 1 of this article we will discuss tips and tricks for navigating the Tehuantepec winds. Part 2 will cover the Papagayo winds and offer general passage tips.

## The Tehuantepec Winds

Cold fronts over the Gulf of Mexico shove air through the narrow Chivela Pass, creating the infamous northerly Tehuantepecers (affectionately nicknamed “T-peckers” by sailors who’ve survived them). These winds rule the Gulf of Tehuantepec (Huatulco to Puerto Chiapas) from October to April, with peak nastiness from December to February: 50+ knot winds and seas that can be felt up to 250 miles offshore. From May to September the winds are almost unheard of (fewer than one day a month). The classic warning is brief squalls followed by skies so clear you can see tomorrow, while the barometer stays suspiciously stable.

### Seasonality

Mid-December to February is prime time for the biggest blows. The winter season (October to March) usually delivers 15 to 20 gale-force or stronger events, each lasting a day to a week. July sometimes throws a weak tantrum, but it’s more of a grumpy sigh than a roar.

Here’s a sample NOAA/NHC weather forecast for a T-pecker:

*A Storm Warning is in effect for the Gulf of Tehuantepec. The next gap wind event across the Tehuantepec region is expected by Sun morning as a ridge builds across the eastern slopes of the Sierra Madre Mountains in Mexico, behind a cold front moving across the Gulf of [Mexico]. Winds are forecast to suddenly increase to 35 to 40 kn, with seas building to 9 to 12 ft on Sun. Winds will further increase to near storm force by Sun evening, with seas building to 12 to 18 ft. Gusty winds exceeding 50 kn are possible late Sun into Mon. Then, winds are forecast to strengthen to storm force by Mon morning with seas building to 20 to 24 ft. Storm conditions and very rough seas are expected to persist through Mon night, then winds will diminish to strong gale force on Tue. Large seas generated from this very strong gap wind event will spread well away from the Tehuantepec area, with seas 8 ft or greater reaching as far west as 105W by Mon night. Marine interests transiting across or in the Gulf of Tehuantepec Sun through Tue should be aware of this upcoming gap wind event and take the necessary action to avoid hazardous marine conditions over the affected waters. Winds are forecast to diminish below gale force early on Wed. High pressure over the Great Basin will induce fresh to strong NW winds across the entire Gulf of California tonight into Mon with seas building to 6 to 8 ft across the central and southern parts of the Gulf tonight and Sun.*

We spent over two weeks in Huatulco waiting for our weather window, exploring locally and then renting a car with some other cruisers to do a road trip to Oaxaca (home of mole, a Mexican specialty) and see the Monte Alban ruins.



One of the many spectacular waterfalls in Chiapas, this one at Tzimol.

## **Tips for Crossing the Gulf of Tehuantepec**

### **Southbound (Huatulco to Chiapas)**

Stage the passage in the Bays of Huatulco (Marina Chahué or sheltered anchorages). The crossing to Marina Chiapas is ~240 NM, and the recommended coastal route adds 30–50 nautical miles.

### **Northbound (Chiapas to Huatulco)**

Stage at Marina Chiapas, where you can get fuel, a haul-out, and full services. The crossing is the same distance in reverse. Wait for a solid window since you will need at least 48 hours of light air for the direct shot. It is possible to time a passage with a shorter window, but make sure you're not caught out in the area around Salina Cruz, which typically sees the worst wave action. PredictWind, [NOAA offshore forecasts](#), Windy, and PassageWeather are your new best friends.

Hug the coast (“one foot on the beach”) by sailing  $\frac{1}{4}$  to  $\frac{1}{2}$  mile offshore (closer on safe sandy stretches) or follow the 10-fathom (60 ft / 18 m) depth contour. Either method works but by staying in relatively shallow water close to the beach limits, the fetch and bottom friction dramatically reduce wave height.

The detour buys cell service, the ability to bail out and anchor (you can drop the hook just about anywhere along the beach), and the smug satisfaction of watching the big seas rage offshore while you sip coffee in peace should the forecast be wrong. A helpful coastal current usually assists southbound boats; northbound crews lose a bit but still benefit from the reduced seas. Typical run: 30 to 40 hours either way.

Cruisers swear by this route in both directions. On their blog, [Peregrina](#) says, “We were told that the key to a safe passage is to sail with ‘one foot on the beach.’” [Pacific Mystic](#) agrees, stating that, “We decided to follow the recommended approach... with one foot on the beach.”

While in Chiapas, consider taking advantage of your downtime. We rented a car to tour inland for a two-week road trip. Chiapas delivers Palenque’s Maya ruins, spectacular natural wonders like the Agua Azul waterfalls, rainbow colonial San Cristóbal de las Casas, coffee fincas, and chocolate workshops — far better than polishing the same winch for the tenth day in a row.

## From the Gulf of Tehuantepec to the Papagayo Zone

Winds lighten noticeably once you pass the gulf. The 100 to 150 NM hops take you past Guatemala, which most cruisers skip in either direction. Guatemala has few protected anchorages, minimal facilities, expensive clearing and port fees, and is therefore not a highlight. The typical play is an overnight passage straight to (southbound) or from (northbound) Bahía del Sol.



foreboding Maya ruins at Palenque

The

## **El Salvador Highlight**

Bahía del Sol is pure cruiser catnip, thanks to Bill and Jean, former cruisers who have lived on Cordoncillo island for over 20 years and call themselves “campground hosts for cruisers.” [Email](#) them in advance of your arrival. Bill charts the surf daily and gives you the exact safe crossing window; he rides in the panga with the pilot and talks you across the bar on VHF. His calm voice is legendary in both directions.

Inside the estuary, tie up, anchor, or pick up a mooring ball. Then head to Vidri Hardware: “almost any hardware, plumbing, and electrical item you want... plus a small but dangerous boat section.” Many sailors walk in for one fitting and walk out with a backpack full of hardware-store treasure — a real treat after the slim pickings in Mexico. Super Selectos supermarket likely has a few foods you haven’t seen in a while, too.

Don’t miss the legendary Pupusa Saturdays, organized by Bill and Jean — homemade pupusas, cold Pilsener, cruiser stories, and that unbeatable El Salvador hospitality. Crews in both directions often stay weeks, using the safe moorings to explore inland or just enjoy the vibe.

While here, take advantage of the CA-4 free-movement agreement (El Salvador–Guatemala–Honduras–Nicaragua). Rent a cheap car, leave the boat, and road-trip four countries on one car rental.

## **Nicaragua Bonus**

From Marina Puesta del Sol, grab a 40-minute taxi to the Flor de Caña distillery in Chichigalpa. Take a tour: Regular \$10; VIP \$100 with private barrel tastings. Many crews call it the perfect “we survived/are challenging the Papagayos” reward in either direction.



Debra getting in the spirit for our Flor de Caña rum tour.

Join us in Part 2 for tips on navigating the Papagayo winds, which affect the Nicaraguan and Costa Rican coasts.

## **About The Author**

**Rob Murray**

Avant -

Rob Murray and Debra Zhou are doers currently on the Caribbean coast of Panama aboard Avant, their Beneteau First 435.

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## Cutting Board Cockpit Grate: From Teak Tragedy to Kitchen Hack Heroics

<https://currents.bluewatercruising.org/article/cutting-board-cockpit-grate-from-teak-tragedy-to-kitchen-hack-heroics/>



Before *Avant* ditched the rainy Pacific Northwest for sunnier southern climes in 2013, we had to tackle replacing the cockpit grate. It wasn't just a fancy footrest – it was essential to the cockpit's design. Without the grate, the floor's molded support ridges turned into trip hazards; there was no non-skid; and aft of the wheel you'd be standing on thin air since behind the helm there was nothing but a yawning, foot-deep hole with the rudder head at the bottom. The original teak grate was on its last legs, cracking like an old sailor's knees and splintering at the edges from sheer exhaustion.

Hunting for materials in Vancouver, I struck out on teak – probably a temporary shortage. Even if I'd found it, the price would've sunk my budget faster than a lead keel. I pivoted to alternatives and landed on Trex synthetic decking from Home Depot. It boasted a 25-year warranty, looked convincingly wood-like, played nice with standard tools, held fasteners like a champ, glued up well with epoxy, and didn't require selling a kidney. Over a week of evenings, I built a replacement using the old grate as a template.



In addition to warping, the glued joints all failed in the heat and moisture in Panama.

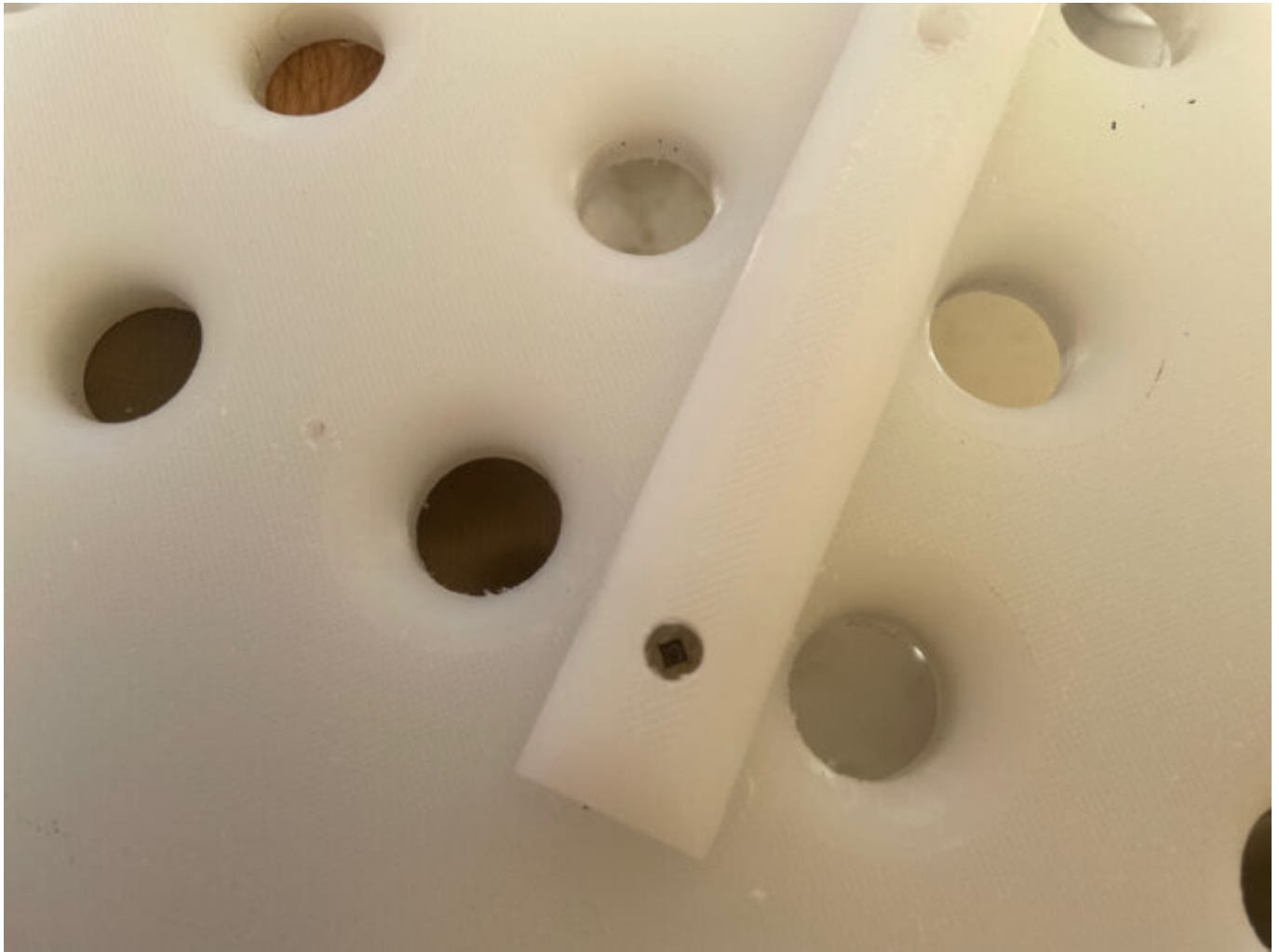
We cruised with the Trex grate through Canadian waters and down the coast to Panama, clocking a solid 10 years without drama. It wore like iron and felt great underfoot – until Panama’s tropical steam bath revealed Trex’s villainous alter ego. Trex, a mix of recycled plastics, sawdust, and wood fibers, decided high humidity was party time. The wood bits inside the composite swelled up like they’d hit the free beer buffet, leading to a slow-motion meltdown: splits, warps, and curves that would make a banana jealous. The only parts that held up were the epoxy glue joints, although they ripped away from the rest of the Trex. We tried playing hero with drying sessions and slathering on Thompson’s Water Seal, but it was doomed: we would need to open the third chapter in *Avant*’s cockpit grate saga.

Needing a fix in Panama, we daydreamed of teak again (given the local plantations, we were hopeful), but suppliers were elusive. Trex, or knockoffs? Nope, and good riddance considering the climate’s grudge against them. Marine King Starboard? Might as well ask for unicorn hides. Then, inspiration struck in a commercial kitchen supply store: large 25mm-thick HDPE cutting boards. Thick, textured for nonskid, tough as nails, moisture-proof, and saltwater-savvy. Standard food-grade HDPE might lack UV stabilizers, risking fade or brittleness in the sun, but after a year aboard *Avant*, it’s still looking fresh: no signs of solar surrender yet.



Debra drilling one of the hundreds of drainage/weight-reducing holes in the new grates.

We snagged a few boards and traced the old grate's pattern. Ditching the fancy dado joints of yore, we went simple and drilled a grid of holes for weight reduction, drainage, and grip. A one-inch spade bit handled hundreds of holes without showing any sign of wear, spinning off decorative spirals of HDPE like Christmas tree decorations. We routed the holes' edges with a rounded bottom and a small 45° rebate on top to banish sharp edges and keep them barefoot friendly. The panels were cut to size with the router (we used a small cordless 'trim router', which proved to have all the power we needed), guided by the other boards or offcuts used as straight-edges, and finished with matching rebates atop and rounds under the outer edges just like the original. We placed a bit of rubber between the board to be cut and the board used as a straight edge when clamping, as the HDPE-on-HDPE surfaces tended to slip.



The underside, showing rounded holes and a spacer to limit sag when the grate is stepped on.

HDPE cuts and drills like wood, but you need to keep your blades razor-sharp to avoid melty messes or rough, grime-grabbing surfaces. Buying new, factory sharp bits is likely a worthwhile investment. Sanding works, but clean cuts rule. Gluing? Forget it: HDPE laughs at adhesives. Plastic welding? Above our DIY capability range. So, we went mechanical: 316 stainless nuts, bolts, and screws for assembly. The section behind the wheel needed an aluminum L-beam on its underside for support, since the 24-inch span caused the HDPE to flex like a trampoline under the weight of the person at the helm. We added an HDPE slat to buffer the metals and prevent any electrolytic drama. Board sizes meant the main floor became three pieces instead of one, but butted tight, it's seamless – unless you're a perfectionist with a micrometer.



The aluminum L-beam, with a slat of HDPE to limit sag, isolate the aluminum and stainless, and hide the sharp edges.

This HDPE board is versatile: perfect for shower grates, duckboards, or anywhere aboard needing durable flooring. Indoors, UV worries vanish. Bonus: the white surface stays cooler than teak in the tropics, and it's literally made for chopping – ideal for filleting that fresh catch without switching tools. Materials were dirt-cheap (less than \$200 for everything), and it's holding strong, proving that sometimes the best boat hack comes from hardware store, not the chandlery.



Cutting boards, cheap and cheerful building materials for our cockpit grate replacement

*Avant*'s cutting board cockpit grate: an unconventional win that's kept us steady on our feet, without the high-seas heartbreak of its predecessors (so far). Who knew kitchen essentials could outsmart the elements?

## **About The Author**

### **Rob Murray**

**Avant -**

Rob Murray and Debra Zhou are doers currently on the Caribbean coast of Panama aboard *Avant*, their Beneteau First 435.

## Staging Safety Equipment for Offshore Cruising: Being Ready When Seconds Count

<https://currents.bluewatercruising.org/article/staging-safety-equipment-for-offshore-cruising-being-ready-when-seconds-count/>



As bluewater cruisers, we venture far from the safety nets of coastal waters, where self-reliance isn't just a mindset – it's our reality. In the vast expanse of the ocean, emergencies can escalate rapidly, from a man overboard to a sudden fire or a need to send a distress signal in the dead of night. That's where "staging" your safety equipment comes into play. Staging isn't merely storing gear. It's about strategically positioning, enhancing, and preparing items for immediate, effective deployment. By adding simple modifications like reflective tape, lights, whistles, and lanyards, you transform standard equipment into lifesaving tools optimized for the real-world chaos of extreme events.

In this article, I will discuss some common safety gear – flares, electronic flares (eFlares), Lifesling-style rescue collars, heaving lines in throw bags, fire extinguishers and man overboard poles – focusing on practical staging ideas and techniques. These insights draw from our and other seasoned cruisers' experiences and align with standards like those from the ISAF offshore sailing regulations, the

International Maritime Organization (IMO), and other authoritative sources such as US Sailing's Safety at Sea program and The Sailing Foundation (developers of the original Lifesling® system), ensuring your setup is effective, compliant and quick to use.

## **The Fundamentals of Staging: Accessibility, Visibility, Security, and Maintenance**

Before diving into specifics, remember the core principles of staging:

- 1. Accessibility:** Gear must be identifiable and reachable in seconds, even in rough seas or low light. Mount or store items near high-access areas like the cockpit, companionway, galley, or navigation station. Gear should be secured such that it will not move from its allotted spot in rough seas or get bumped out of place.
- 2. Visibility:** Use labels, glow-in-the-dark markings, or SOLAS tape (high-intensity reflective material that shines under searchlights) to make equipment stand out. Where appropriate, add water- or manually-activated lights.
- 3. Security:** Attach lanyards or clips to your items, to prevent loss of gear overboard. That nice new eFlare will not be much use if it rolls off the deck and floats away.
- 4. Maintenance:** Regularly inspect for expiration dates (e.g., flares, batteries in battery powered equipment) and reduced functionality. Set reminders in your phone's calendar app for expiry dates. Check equipment for wear and tear, and aging from sun/UV exposure.



*Avant*'s companionway, with a heaving line, white collision avoidance flare, small fire extinguisher, and flashlight, all instantly visible and available.

The international standard for EPIRBs is a useful example. All EPIRBs have an integrated light, an integrated lanyard, a secure wall-mountable storage system or automatic water activated storage, easy to check expiry dates, and are marked with SOLAS tape.

Staging starts with an inventory audit: list your gear, note storage locations, and create a quick-reference chart to post in the saloon or at the navigation station. In an emergency, it is easy for you or your crew to forget exactly where that gizmo is.

## **Item by Item**

Now, let's break it down by item.

### **Flares and eFlares: Signalling for Help**

Pyrotechnic flares and their modern electronic counterparts (eFlares) are your lifeline for attracting rescuers. Traditional flares expire after a few years, while eFlares offer reusable, battery-powered LED distress signals that are compliant with most national regulations (if you keep the batteries fresh). We

carry both aboard *Avant*.

### **Staging Tips**

- Store pyrotechnic flares in a dedicated, waterproof grab bag, waterproof case, or locker in or near the cockpit for instant access. Label the container clearly. Add a lanyard and a snap to the container so you can secure it on deck, in the cockpit, or clip it to your PFD harness. Position the bag/case on a quick-release mount to grab and go (a simple quick release buckle on a strap screwed to a strong point will do).
- For eFlares, store them in some form of clearly labelled case, bag, or mount so they will not get damaged rolling around, cannot accidentally activate, and won't shift out of place in rough seas and be hard to find when you need them. Most eFlares come with a distress flag as a daytime signalling device: the ties for the four corners of the flag are often woefully short and usually not attached to the flag as shipped, so obtain and attach appropriate tie-downs before you stow it (you don't want to be looking for bits of string to secure it if you need to deploy it in a hurry). The flags themselves are often flimsy, so consider adding a spare or two.

### **Enhancements**

- Apply SOLAS tape strips around flare bags/cases or eFlare housings to make them visible if dropped at night.
- Attach a high-decibel whistle via a short lanyard – whistles are lightweight, cheap, don't expire, and can signal nearby rescuers without depleting flare supplies.
- Add a lanyard to an eFlare so you can secure it in place when deployed (paracord with reflective traces makes for a good lanyard).
- Add a pair of sturdy leather gloves in the case/bag with traditional pyrotechnic flares to protect users' hands.

The lead photo shows *Avant's* two eFlares, one US coast guard approved (longer useful life), and one that is both US Coast Guard and Canadian Coast Guard approved (shorter useful life, but brighter and IR visible). Each is in a custom built mount with a shock cord 'seatbelt', and lanyard and whistle attached.

### **Lifeslings: Man Overboard Recovery**

The most common rescue collar is the patented Lifesling®, developed by The Sailing Foundation and widely endorsed by US Sailing's Safety at Sea program. This, and the many different copies of the design (which sell under other names) remain one of the most effective and compact tools for man-overboard (MOB) recovery in offshore conditions. It provides flotation via a horseshoe-shaped buoyant sling, connected to the boat by ~150 feet of floating polypropylene line, allowing a single crew member to rescue a victim by bringing them alongside and potentially hoisting them aboard.

### **Staging Tips**

- Mount the Lifesling storage bag prominently on the inside of the stern pulpit or pushpit, as recommended in The Sailing Foundation guidelines. Ensure the bag is mounted with the opening accessible for an easy one-handed throw or drop. The line should be 'stuffed' or flaked inside

with no tangles, so it will pay out smoothly when the sling is deployed. Close the bag or case so the sling is not exposed to the sun (paying attention to any internal flaps), as it will age quickly from too much UV exposure. The bitter end of the sling's recovery line must be attached to a solid fitting on deck, and that attachment should be secure (seize the knot) so it can't come adrift.

### **Lifesling Preparation and Setup Best Practices**

(drawn from The Sailing Foundation's Owner's Preparation Guide and US Sailing Safety at Sea resources)

- **Inspect and Repack Regularly.** Periodically open the bag to verify the line deploys freely; practice tossing it on the dock or in calm water during drills to confirm no snags. Check for UV degradation (fading, brittleness) or weakness on the line, webbing, stitching, and horseshoe float. Any degradation requires full replacement. Repack by feeding the line back smoothly without twists to prevent kinks. Think of it like a parachute: if you don't pack it well, it's useless.

### **Custom Enhancements:**

- Size and seize the 'closing loop' on the sling (the one that goes through the lifting rings) to match your vessel's freeboard, to make it easier to grab the line and attach to a halyard or other lifting mechanism.
- Add figure eight knots every 24 inches or so along the last 10-15 feet of the line (starting from the sling end) for better grip during hauling and a tactile confirmation you are getting close when hauling it in.
- Apply reflective SOLAS tape generously around the horseshoe for nighttime visibility.
- For night use, attach a water activated light to the end of the sling that will face the boat when it is towed (not in the light pocket on the back of some models, the designers now admit that was a design flaw).
- Add a webbing loop, line, or adjustable strap to the attachment rings on the sling (about same length as the sling) to support under arms and knees simultaneously for safer lifting; secure these with seizing or stitching.
- Clip a whistle to the sling's webbing for signalling by the victim. Attach with a lanyard to keep the whistle from slipping away.



Equipment map: have an easy to access reference of where to find emergency equipment.

### Man Overboard Poles (Dan Buoys or MOB Markers): Marking the Position

A man overboard pole – often called a Dan buoy – is a tall, buoyant marker (typically 5-9 feet high) with a flag (code flag “O”), sometimes a light, and sometimes a drogue, designed to create a highly visible reference point in the water. It dramatically improves the chances of finding a person in waves, especially when the initial sighting is lost. Traditional rigid poles (e.g., Forespar, Scotty) are ballasted and flag-topped, while inflatable versions (e.g., SOS Dan Buoy or Switlik MOM 9) deploy via a pull cord or water activation for more compact storage. ISAF and US Sailing’s Safety Equipment Requirements often mandate a MOB pole or equivalent (including self-inflating devices) for offshore categories, emphasizing immediate deployment to “litter the water” with visible aids to mark the location of a MOB.

### Staging Tips

- Mount the pole on the stern rail, pushpit, backstay, or arch for instant access from the helm or cockpit—within reach for quick release. For rigid poles, secure vertically with quick-release clips or lashings to avoid obstruction while allowing one-handed deployment.
- Inflatable models store in a compact canister mounted near the Lifesling or throwable gear; ensure the activation handle or pin is accessible and labeled “MOB MARKER – PULL TO DEPLOY.”

## **Preparation and Setup Best Practices**

(gathered from US Sailing, ISAF Special Regulations, and cruiser experiences)

- **Inspect Regularly:** Check for UV damage on the pole, flag, reflective tape, and line; test the light battery/activation (water or manual); verify the drogue deploys freely. For inflatables, inspect the CO2 cartridge and inflation mechanism—rearm or repack as needed (mock deployments help without full cost).
- Practice throwing or dropping during drills to ensure tangle-free release.

### **Custom Enhancements:**

- Apply generous SOLAS reflective tape to the pole shaft (applying like a barber pole stripe works), flag, and/or flotation base for superior nighttime visibility. Add a whistle attached via lanyard to the float for audible signalling if the victim reaches it.
- For rigid poles, add a lanyard or tether along the lower section so a MOB can grab the pole and keep contact with it if they reach it.

### **Light and Drogue Integration**

- Ensure a self-igniting or water-activated strobe is mounted high or attached; add fixed white lights if needed for redundancy. A drogue stabilizes the pole in wind and current. Without a drogue, the pole will drift at a different speed than the MOB (the pole has a lot more windage than a person in the water), defeating its purpose.
- If you have more than one device (e.g. multiple MOB poles, an MOB pole and a life ring, etc.), consider different lights on each (i.e. one with a solid light, one with a strobe/flashing light) so that when they are both deployed they form a range, and you can tell one end of the range from the other at night.



A HemiLight water activated light and whistle attached to a heaving line's case.

## **Heaving Lines in Throw Bags: Precision Rescue Throws**

Heaving lines – lightweight ropes in compact throw bags – are essential for pulling someone alongside without entering the water yourself. They are compact but extremely useful when staged correctly. Unlike a Lifesling, they can be tossed some distance.

### **Staging Tips**

- Secure throw bags to lifelines, stanchions, or cockpit coamings for instant access. Ensure there is a secure loop at each end of the line (one for the thrower to hold onto, one for the catcher to grab).

### **Enhancements**

- Add SOLAS tape to the bag's exterior for better spotting at night. Attach a whistle to the bag's handle. Attach a water activated light for use at night
- Opt for bags with 70-75 feet of floating line, at least 5/16 – 3/8" (lighter line is punishing on the hands). Consider staging multiple bags: one for immediate use, another as backup.

## **Fire Extinguishers: Containing Onboard Blazes**

Fires at sea are terrifying, often starting in the galley or engine space. Dry chemical extinguishers (ABC-rated for multiple fire types) are standard, but staging amplifies their effectiveness.

### **Staging Tips**

- Mount extinguishers in brackets at key spots: one in the galley, one near the engine, and at least one in the cockpit. Ensure they're upright, highly visible, and have pins that are easily removable even with cold or wet hands. Stowing extinguishers in their cardboard boxes in a locker (and I have seen that done) slows access when you need it most.

### **Enhancements**

- Apply SOLAS tape to the cylinder for quick location in smoke-filled cabins.
- If the ring seems small, consider adding a lanyard to the pin for one-handed operation.
- Stage a fire blanket in the galley, a quick and easy fire suppression tool useful for most galley fires.
- Buy quality. In a recent fire aboard a catamaran in the San Blas Islands, their (brand new) Colombian purchased/Chinese manufactured extinguishers did not work at all.



*Avant's* galley showing the prominent fire extinguisher and fire blanket.

## **Final Thoughts: A Culture of Preparedness**

Staging safety equipment is not a one-time task – it is an ongoing commitment that could mean the difference between a narrow escape and catastrophe. By using thoughtful storage and mounting locations, incorporating SOLAS tape and lights for visibility, whistles for signalling, and lanyards for security – plus targeted prep like regular inspections and enhancements from trusted sources – you elevate your gear from passive storage to active defence. As cruisers know, bluewater rewards the prepared (or at least does not punish them as badly). Review your setup before every passage, involve your crew in drills, and share your innovations. Fair winds and may you never need to use what you have staged. But if you do, it will be ready.

### **About The Author**

#### **Rob Murray**

**Avant -**

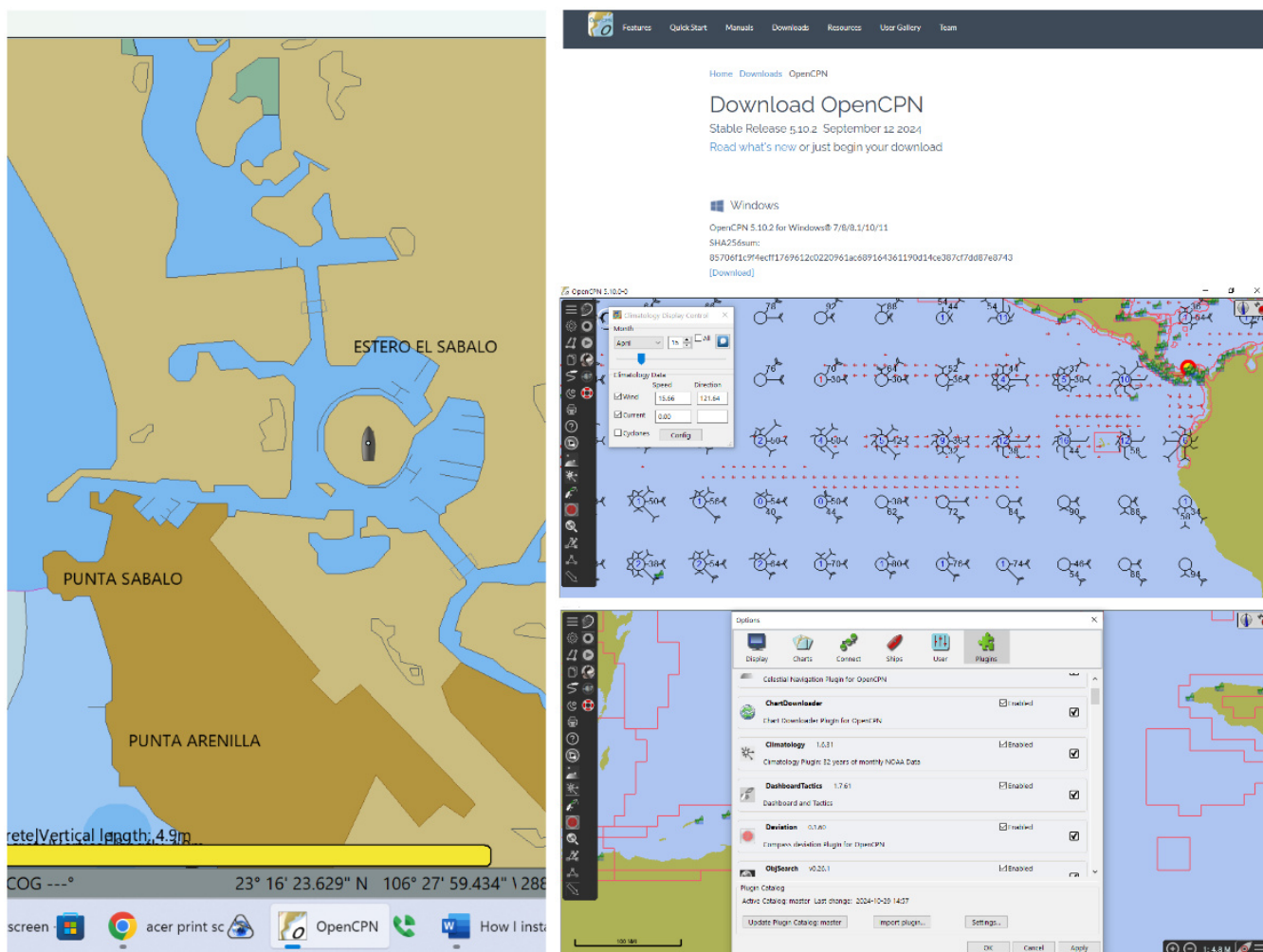
Rob Murray and Debra Zhou are doers currently on the Caribbean coast of Panama aboard *Avant*, their

Beneteau First 435.

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# OpenCPN: The Free ‘Swiss Army Knife’ of Navigation Software

<https://currents.bluewatercruising.org/article/opencpn-the-free-swiss-army-knife-of-navigation-software-every-cruiser-needs/>



Let’s be honest, half the time we’re out there, we’re one bad navigation decision away from becoming a cautionary tale on some forum. Expensive plotters work great until the subscription expires or the screen blacks out from sun or salt, but who has the space or cash to carry a spare? Enter OpenCPN – the free, sailor-built chart plotter that does everything most fancy gear does, plus a few party tricks.

Developed by actual cruisers who test it in real conditions, OpenCPN is basically the Swiss Army knife of navigation software. It runs vector charts, raster charts, satellite MBTiles or KAPs, CM93 (yes, those gloriously unofficial worldwide wonders), and even pilot charts that tell you when the trades will feel grumpy. Many chart sets are available free of charge, and there are paid options too. Add the Climatology plugin (one of many) and suddenly you’re staring at historic wind roses like a weather nerd with superpowers. Need to switch from NOAA vectors to Pacific Mexico satellite pictures mid-passage? One keystroke. Want to declutter the screen so you can actually see the reef you’re about to kiss? Done. And it runs on the same wheezing Windows laptop you’ve had since the Obama administration – no fancy graphics card, no drama. It’s perfect for boats running on 12 volts.

This is where the snack-powered [guide](#) comes in. Written by someone who has taught this exact method to hundreds of cruisers in seminars from Canada to Panama over ten years, it's not a dry manual — it's a proper passage plan. You'll prep your machine, wrestle Windows into submission, install OpenCPN and a killer plugin (Climatology alone is worth the price of admission: zero), organize your charts so they actually make sense, and discover the Chart Groups feature that lets you flip between chart types faster than you can say “where's the rum?”

You'll start by “preparing delicious snacks” (because waiting for Windows Update can be like a long ocean crossing). Then defrag, clean, update, and finally install while overcoming the Windows “unknown publisher” panic attack. The guide walks you through plugin installation (Climatology is used as the example, and it is pure magic), chart organization that actually makes sense (the C:CHARTS directory on your boat computer will become a digital compendium of neatly arranged worldwide charts), and the genius Chart Groups feature that lets you flip between chart types faster than you can say “pass the rum.”

Follow the guide and you'll end up with a setup that's fast, flexible, and easy to use. From there you can explore the software, add optional modules (plugins), and focus on using it rather than the installation process.

A cruiser-circumnavigator who took the workshop with me in Panama said, “Your introduction to OpenCPN that you gave me and others in Shelter Bay was the foundation for our safe cruising in the Pacific.”

Bottom line: OpenCPN is free, battle-tested, and smarter than many paid options. Every cruiser owes it to their future self (and their insurance company) to get it up and running, for primary use, as a backup, or for a few of its unique features. So grab some of your favourite snacks, settle in, and follow the [guide](#). Your voyages – if not your waistline – will thank you.

## **About The Author**

### **Rob Murray**

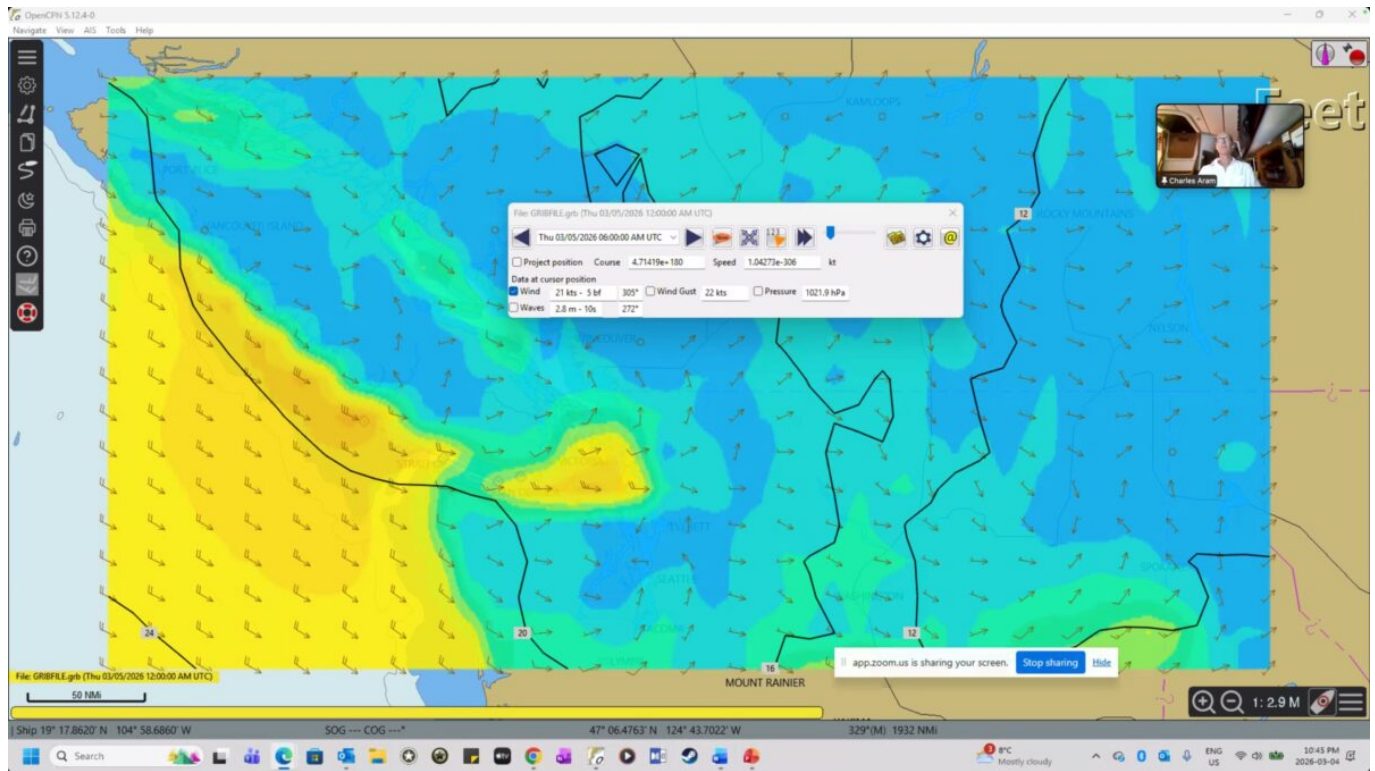
**Avant -**

Rob Murray and Debra Zhou are doers currently on the Caribbean coast of Panama aboard Avant, their Beneteau First 435.

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## Vancouver Fleet - Open CPN Course

[https://currents.bluewatercruising.org/news\\_post/vancouver-fleet-open-cpn-course/](https://currents.bluewatercruising.org/news_post/vancouver-fleet-open-cpn-course/)



The introductory **OpenCPN** course offered via Zoom by Charlie Aram and the Vancouver Fleet on March 4 went swimmingly. Charlie's dedication to learning the program and its many nuances—along with the considerable effort he put into creating a clear and comprehensive presentation—was appreciated by everyone in attendance.

Participants learned how OpenCPN allows cruisers to view charts, satellite imagery, and weather data layered together on a single screen. With the click of a button, users can show or hide any combination of these layers. Charlie also explained how to access charts, GRIB files, and other useful data sources from around the world.

Joining us from Zihuantanejo, Mexico, Charlie shared valuable real-world experience using the program. He uses OpenCPN as a backup to Navionics, and noted that while traveling in Mexico he has found the charts to be less accurate than those in Canada and the United States. In those situations, the satellite-image overlay feature becomes particularly useful for examining bays and coastal areas.

There were 14 computers on the call—some with two people sharing a screen. For those eager to learn more about this powerful navigation tool, we are grateful for Charlie's time, effort, and expertise. Bravo!

### About The Author

**Trina Holt**

**Salt -**

Whether working, playing, or living on them, boats have been the focus of most of Trina's adult life. She's managed several marinas and worked aboard elegant cruise ships, a grungy research vessel and with the Coast Guard. After living aboard a Cal 2-29 for 7 years, Trina now lives on a beautiful Island Packet 40 with her husband. The plan is to go offshore; in the meantime they enjoy exploring their backyard, the spectacular Salish Sea.

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## Invitation to Royal Victoria Yacht Club Open House

[https://currents.bluewatercruising.org/news\\_post/invitation-to-royal-victoria-yacht-club-open-house/](https://currents.bluewatercruising.org/news_post/invitation-to-royal-victoria-yacht-club-open-house/)

ROYAL VICTORIA YACHT CLUB  
**OPEN HOUSE**  
APRIL 10, 2026  
4PM-6PM

- Games & Prizes
- Credits on Membership
- Information Booths & More

Scan the QR code to **Register**

**ALL AGES WELCOME!**

**Jules Lewis**  
Member Relations & Communications Coordinator

- +250-592-2441 (ext. 115)
- [marketing@rvyc.ca](mailto:marketing@rvyc.ca)
- 3475 Ripon Road, Victoria BC, V8R 6H1
- [rvyc.bc.ca](http://rvyc.bc.ca)

Royal Victoria Yacht Club

The [Royal Victoria Yacht Club](https://www.rvyc.bc.ca/) (RVYC) is hosting a free Open House Expo between 1600-1800h on April 10, 2026 and you are invited!

As you may know, RVYC is a member-only club, but for one day only, the Club is transforming itself into a BIG welcome fair for curious potential members. Round up your friends and family and register for free to receive a welcome pack and learn more about the benefits of membership, get all your questions about joining the yacht club answered and maybe even win a T-shirt.

### Open House Expo Activities

- ‘Welcome Aboard’ photobooth
- Activities and games to play with RVYC merch to be won
- 15 information booths to answer any of your questions
- Colouring-in competition, Mario Kart tournament and Scavenger Hunt with a prize for the kids

- Free tea/coffee, candy floss & cookies
- Credits and gifts for new members who apply for membership on the day
- Radio controlled mini boat racing
- ‘Skippers on duty’ who are current members happy to chat or offer to be your proposer or seconder for your application if needed
- A chance to win a free sailing lesson
- Welcome speech from the Commodore, guided tours & more

It’s a great chance to see the Club in full swing and either bring along some friends who are thinking of joining, or just bring yourself or your kids to be a part of the day celebrating RVYC.

To register for free, [click here](#). All ages welcome.

It’s going to be a lot of fun and we would love to see you there.

Timetable:	Entry Foyer	Cadboro Lounge	Chart Room Bar	Swiftsure Dining Room	Kids Room	On Site	Hallway
4.00pm							
4.15pm		Commodore's Welcome Speech					
4.30pm	Welcome Table ↓	Expo ↓	Skipper on Duty ↓	Game Zone & Photobooth ↓	Mario Kart Tournament ↓	Tour	Events Hall of Fame ↓
5.15pm						Tour	
6.00pm	Closing Remarks & Scavenger Hunt Winner Announced						

Key			
Commodore's Speech	Join us to kick off the Open House Expo with a welcome speech from our Commodore, Heather Brazier	Events Hall of Fame	Walk through the halls of fame! See what's coming up and look back on some of the great events we've had at the club over the years
Expo	Walk around, get your questions answered and win prizes. Chat to cruising, sailing, committees, reciprocal clubs, outstations, events, food & beverage, racing, membership, moorage, social clubs, swiftsure & more	Mario Kart Tournament	Send the kids up to the junior room for supervised popcorn and a Mario tournament or walk around the expo and they can 'colour the sailor' at a table set up for them
Welcome Table	Grab your welcome pack & gift, hear about RVYC Membership and apply on the spot with gifts & credits towards your Membership!	Skipper on Duty	Sit down with our 'skippers on duty' to have a drink with current members in our walk-in pub on site, hear about the club, win a sail along guest spot or secure a proposer for your Membership application
Game Zone	Play around at the sailing knot challenge table to win a t-shirt, jump in to play 'vote with your feet' game or take some snaps at our photobooth	Tour	Schedule your Membership Tour when you register to walk around with a current RVYC member to see the Club's grounds

Schedule of events for the RVYC Open House

## Going Offshore in 2026? Don't Forget to Apply for Your Leaver Package!

[https://currents.bluewatercruising.org/news\\_post/going-offshore-in-2026-dont-forget-to-apply-for-your-leaver-package/](https://currents.bluewatercruising.org/news_post/going-offshore-in-2026-dont-forget-to-apply-for-your-leaver-package/)



Not only are Vancouver Fleet members busy preparing themselves and their boats for offshore, but a small committee within that group is researching, sourcing and assembling “leaver” packages for BCA members who plan to cast off their lines in 2026. This package is a farewell presentation from BCA given to all members in good standing who are leaving for offshore, no matter where they plan to leave from. Please note that leavers do not have to be a member of a Fleet Group in order to apply.

If you are heading south or departing for offshore from a foreign port and have not yet “applied” for your package, please email [Vancouver Fleet](#) and provide the following details about your plans:

- Boat name
- Skipper and crew names
- Call signs

- MMSI
- Leaving date
- Date/location for presentation, ie May Rendezvous, August Rendezvous, June BBQ, Club Night (identify which chapter)
- Offshore/cruising email address



A sample of contents of the Leavers Package. Items vary from year to year.

Deadline for the leaver package application is **April 15, 2026**, but the committee would prefer to receive your application sooner rather than later. Requests received after April 15 are not guaranteed a package.

Congratulations to all BCA members who are counting down the days to their departure! May fair winds and following seas be yours; and please stay in touch with your BCA friends.

## About The Author

**Jennifer Handley**

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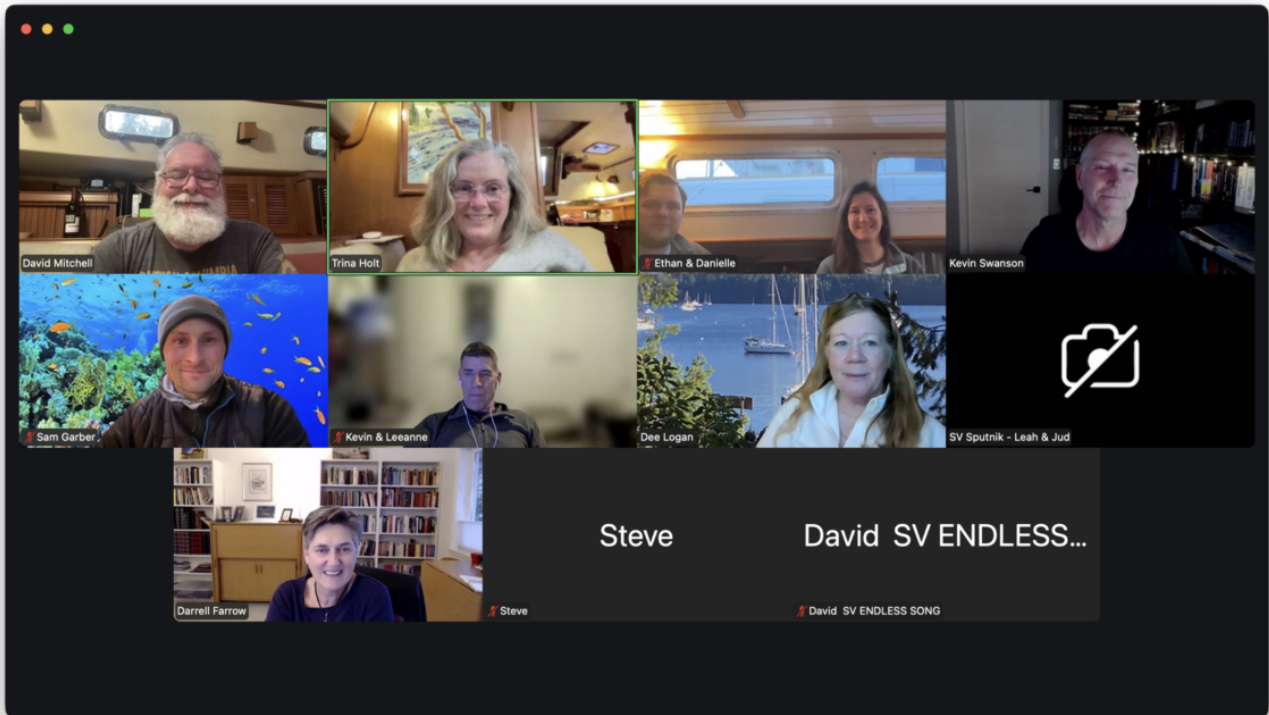
Jennifer and her husband, Campbell Good, sailed Camdeboo to the South Pacific in 2006 with their two

daughters, a niece, nephew and Jennifer's brother. By the time Camdeboo returned to Victoria in 2011, she had 25,000nm under her keel, visited 14 countries and 27 people had come aboard as crew. Jennifer served as BCA Commodore 2014-2016, Past Commodore from 2017-2019 and now volunteers on the BCA Member Directory and the Currents editorial teams.

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## Vancouver Fleet Weather Group - March 2026

[https://currents.bluewatercruising.org/news\\_post/vancouver-fleet-weather-group-march-2026/](https://currents.bluewatercruising.org/news_post/vancouver-fleet-weather-group-march-2026/)



This month’s Vancouver Weather session was an absolute blast! We had a great turnout with 14 connections and about 18 people joining the conversation.

After months of grinding through the “hard work”—learning weather principles, reading cloud signs, decoding charts, and mastering the tech we need at sea—we finally pulled it all together. We shifted from theory to practice, blending our physical senses (the wind, rain, and smell of a storm) with our digital tools (GRIBs, PredictWind, OpenCPN, and Starlink).

By keeping the PowerPoints short, the floor was opened for more genuine discussion. The breakout sessions were relaxed and free-flowing, filled with great questions, insightful comments, and plenty of laughter.

The Homework: We’re now applying everything to a realistic voyage. Each of us is planning a minimum two-day trip anywhere in the world. We’ll use pilot charts for the big picture, weather models to nail the departure window, and routing tools to manage the trek—all while keeping a detailed weather log.

Our final wrap-up is on April 15th, where we’ll share our routes, victories, and lessons learned. Stay tuned!

### About The Author

**Trina Holt****Salt -**

Whether working, playing, or living on them, boats have been the focus of most of Trina's adult life. She's managed several marinas and worked aboard elegant cruise ships, a grungy research vessel and with the Coast Guard. After living aboard a Cal 2-29 for 7 years, Trina now lives on a beautiful Island Packet 40 with her husband. The plan is to go offshore; in the meantime they enjoy exploring their backyard, the spectacular Salish Sea.

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## Calgary Hybrid Club Night - Sailing in the UK

<https://currents.bluewatercruising.org/event/calgary-hybrid-club-night-sailing-in-the-uk/>



The Calgary Chapter welcomes everyone on Tuesday March 10, 2026 for their third club night of the year, held in partnership with CanBoat.

Ever wonder about sailing in the UK? David Evans & Bertha Fischer did and rented a charter boat to find out what it would be like. Their presentation will be all about their adventures and Bertha, who had never been on a sailboat, will talk about what that experience was like too.

This will be a hybrid meeting; if you would like to attend via Zoom, please register by clicking the register button above. Everyone attending in person is also welcome to come to a quick dinner at the Legion between 17:30 and 19:00.

The Club Night will commence at 19:00 sharp.

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## **Hybrid Meeting Format**

**In-Person Attendees:** The meeting starts at 7:00pm MST sharp.

Cost: \$5/Members, \$10/Non-Members, payable at the door.

**Virtual (Zoom) Attendees:**

Cost: Members – \$5.00 per connected device; Non-Members, \$10 per connected device, payable online.

*Note: Due to the small cost of virtual tickets, and an equal or greater cost to BCA of issuing refunds, no refunds will be issued.*

Please note that you must be signed in to the BCA website to get the member price.

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## VI Mid-Island Club Night - Under Wide and Starry Skies

<https://currents.bluewatercruising.org/event/vi-mid-island-club-night-under-wide-and-starry-skies/>



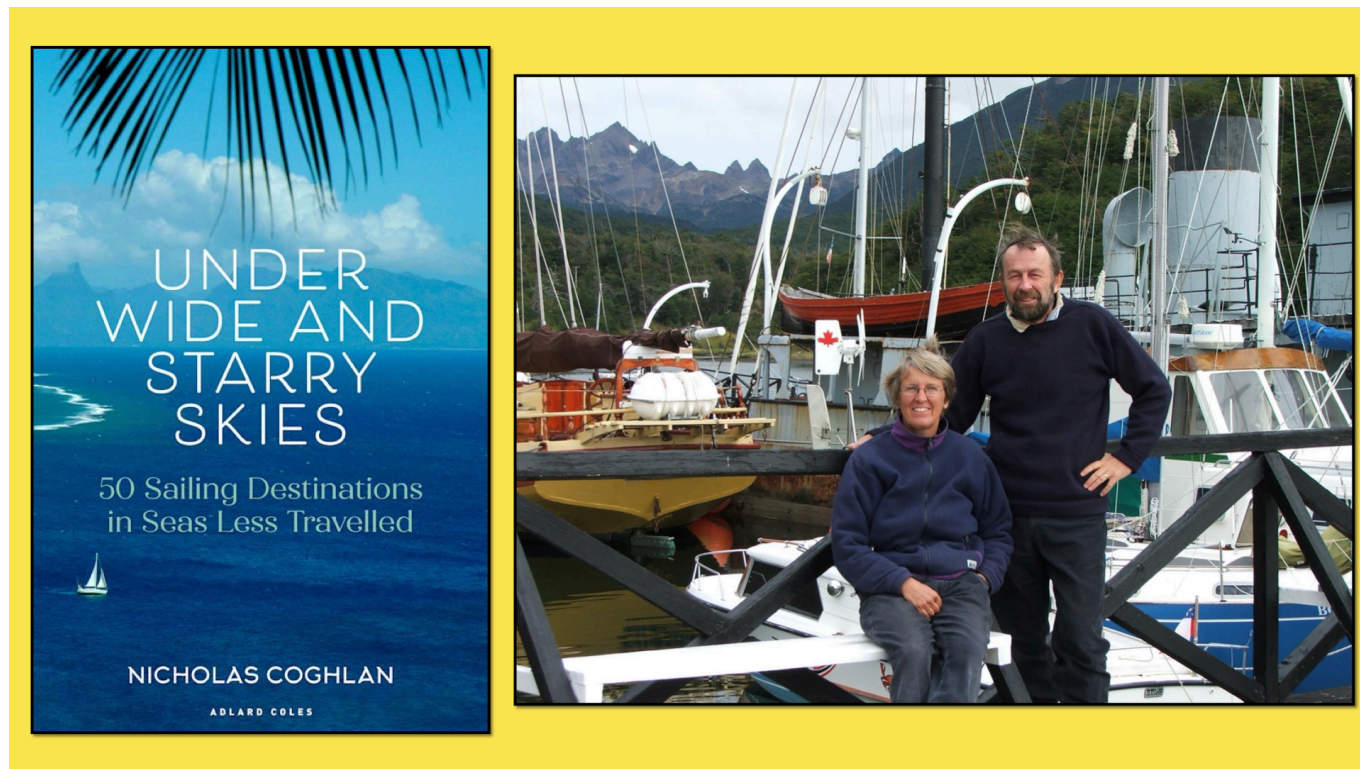
Nick and Jenny Coughlan will present Nick's latest book: *Under Wide and Starry Skies – Fifty Sailing Destinations in Seas Less Travelled*, which was published in early 2025 by Bloomsbury/Adlard Coles (UK). As Nick explains in the introduction, this is a book for offshore cruisers who wish to stray from the well-populated cruisers' milk run – away from the BVIs, the Windwards, Tahiti and Tonga – and find solitude (but in safety, and without venturing to extreme latitudes). They'll pick half a dozen or so of the locations featured, which range from fabled Robinson Crusoe Island to the remote fortress of Saint Helena and – least travelled of all – Crocodile Island, on war-torn Sudan's Blue Nile.

Nick is the author of three “serious” political books covering Colombia, Sudan and South Sudan, and three sailing-related books: *Winter in Fireland – A Patagonian Sailing Adventure* (2011); *Sailing to the Heart of Japan* (2024); and *Under Wide and Starry Skies – Fifty Sailing Destinations in Seas Less Travelled* (2025).

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## VI South Hybrid Club Night - Under Wide and Starry Skies

<https://currents.bluewatercruising.org/event/vi-south-hybrid-club-night-under-wide-and-starry-skies/>



Nick and Jenny Coghlan will present Nick’s latest book: *Under Wide and Starry Skies – Fifty Sailing Destinations in Seas Less Travelled*, which was published in early 2025 by Bloomsbury/Adlard Coles (UK).

As Nick explains in the introduction, this is a book for offshore cruisers who wish to stray from the well-populated cruisers’ milk run – away from the BVIs, the Windwards, Tahiti and Tonga – and find solitude (but in safety, and without venturing to extreme latitudes). They’ll pick half a dozen or so of the locations featured, which range from fabled Robinson Crusoe Island to the remote fortress of Saint Helena and – least travelled of all – Crocodile Island, on war-torn Sudan’s Blue Nile.

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### Hybrid Meeting Format: March 17, 2026

**In-Person Attendees** (Check-in and Pay **Cash** at the door):

- Doors open: 7:00 pm, meeting starts at 7:30 pm, presentation to follow
- Cost: \$5/Members, \$10/Non-Members

**Virtual Attendees: via ZOOM**

- After you register, you will receive the Zoom meeting invitation by email which will arrive pretty well right away. If you don't receive it in a few minutes, please check your SPAM/JUNK folder. If you still don't see it, please [contact us](#).
- Members – \$5 per connected device (if signed in)
- Non-Members – \$10 per connected device.
- If you have any questions, please [contact us](#).

**Note to Zoom Attendees:** Due to the small cost of virtual tickets, and an equal or greater cost to BCA of issuing refunds, no refunds will be issued unless VI Chapter is unable to deliver the Club Night via Zoom. The Zoom room opens at 7 pm for social time, with the meeting at 7:30 pm and the presentation to follow.

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## Vancouver Hybrid Club Night — Beyond the Horizon: A Pacific Circuit

<https://currents.bluewatercruising.org/event/vancouver-hybrid-club-night-beyond-the-horizon-a-pacific-circuit/>



As retirement approached, Bill Bourlet decided it was time to learn how to sail on English Bay. His love for boats had begun in childhood during summer holidays in Weymouth, England, where his family spent time aboard motorboats and later motorsailors. Waking up on a boat at anchor and hearing the rhythmic slap of waves against a wooden hull was a magical and unforgettable experience for him.

Bill's first experience as a boat owner was through a shared Cooper Mark I (a Catalina 27 built locally under license). The vessel was equipped with both a 9.9 hp and a 4 hp motor—neither particularly reliable. In those early days, he kept the Burrard Bridge in sight at all times to ensure he could navigate safely back to Burrard Civic Marina.

Keen to improve his seamanship, Bill completed the Power Squadron Chart and Navigation Course, followed by the Marine Radio Course. With his growing confidence, he purchased a 1995 Catalina 32,

enhancing his sailing techniques with the guidance of Yvonne Harwood, a long-time member of BCA and a past circumnavigator.

After being introduced to BCA, Bill attended a presentation by Will and Sarah Curry, who shared their inspiring story of buying a yacht locally and sailing it to Australia within two years. “It’s all downwind sailing,” they said—it sounded so simple. Encouraged by their story, Bill began his own search for an offshore yacht. Armed with a list of prospective boats, he soon found *Music* and it wasn’t long before the vessel became his own.

Join Bill as he recounts the culmination of his dream: his own offshore voyage, down the coast to Mexico, and across the Pacific to the South Pacific, New Zealand and Australia.

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## Hybrid Meeting Format

### In-Person Attendees (Check-in and Pay Cash at the door):

- **Doors open:** 7:00 pm, meeting starts at 7:30 pm.
- **Cost:** \$5/Members, \$10/Non-Members.

### Virtual Attendees via ZOOM:

Click [here](#) to register for and purchase your virtual meeting ticket and receive the Zoom meeting invitation. Please note that you must be signed in to the BCA website to get the member price.

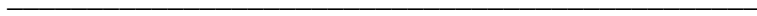
- **Virtual doors open:** 7:00 and meeting starts at 7:30.
- **Cost:** Members – \$5.00 per connected device; Non-Members, \$10 per connected device, payable online (see link above).
- **Note:** Due to the small cost of virtual tickets, and an equal or greater cost to BCA of issuing refunds, no refunds will be issued unless Vancouver Chapter is unable to deliver the Club Night via Zoom.

## About The Author

### Heather Marshall

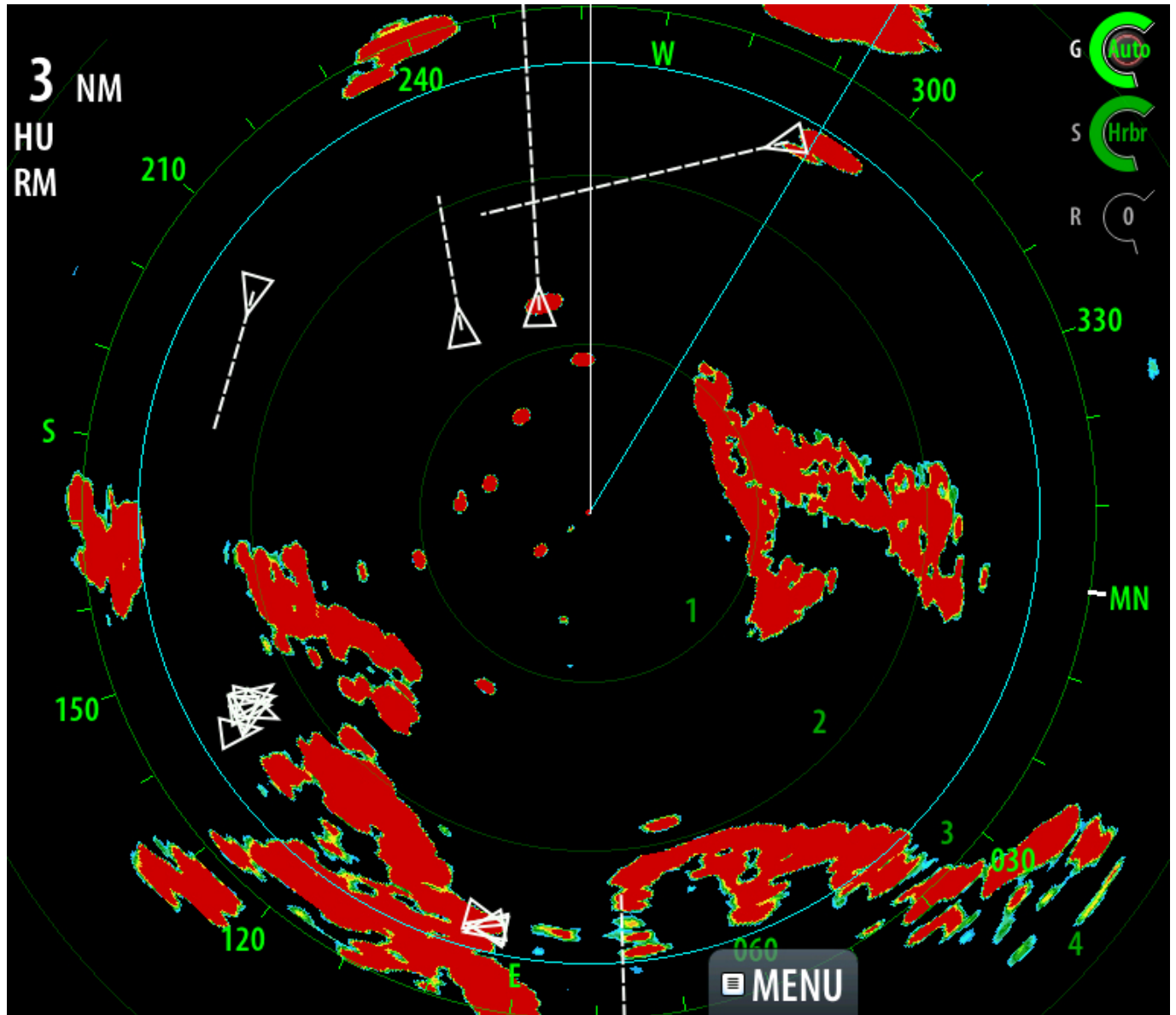
#### Mischief -

Bluewater BCA member Heather Marshall first fell in love with sailing as a teenager. She sailed to the Mediterranean and back aboard a Bavaria 38 sloop, 'Sea Otter of Canada', with her former husband. Heather single-hands 'Mischief' to destinations in the Salish Sea.



## Advanced Marine Radar and Navigation

<https://currents.bluewatercruising.org/event/advanced-marine-radar-and-navigation/>



The Advanced Marine Radar seminar is for those who have taken [Basic Marine Radar](#) with Kevin Monahan and wish to learn about:

- Advanced techniques in collision avoidance
- Navigation using radar as an alternative to electronic charts in areas that do not have accurate electronic charts
- Managing interactions between radar and other electronic technologies such as AIS, GPS, digital compasses
- Causes and cures of radar overlay errors.

As Kevin's Basic Marine Radar course is a desirable prerequisite for this course, we assume that you

already have [The Radar Book: Effective Navigation and Collision Avoidance](#). If you would like to order another copy for \$38.58, please [email](#) the VI Education Watchkeepers well before the course begins to allow for shipping time.

## Course Format

The Advanced Marine Radar seminar is presented over two morning sessions via Zoom, with extensive visuals and simulations. It will best suit those who have taken Basic Marine Radar with Kevin Monahan or those with a basic understanding of radar and wish to learn more about it. There is no need to subscribe to Zoom, just register for Advanced Marine Radar and we'll send a link to you a couple of days before the course.

## Instructor

Kevin Monahan is a retired Canadian Coast Guard officer with more than 20 years experience navigating the British Columbia coast as a patrol vessel captain. He has also worked on fishing boats, ferries, and coastal transports. Retiring from public service in 2012, Kevin split his time between publishing (*Ports and Passes*, *The Radar Book*, etc.) and teaching nautical subjects to commercial and recreational mariners. In 2022 he retired from publishing but continues to teach nautical subjects and is working on a second edition of his popular *Local Knowledge*. In 2013 he was awarded the Queen Elizabeth Diamond Jubilee Medal.

## About The Author

### Brent Alley

#### Pegasus II -

Brent has been member of Bluewater Cruising Association since 2014. Since joining BCA he and Barbara have sailed to Desolation Sound, Alaska, Haida Gwaii and most recently to Mexico.

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## Basic and Intermediate Diesel Operation and Maintenance

<https://currents.bluewatercruising.org/event/basic-and-intermediate-diesel-operation-and-maintenance-6/>



This classroom-based 1-day course is intended for those who own and maintain their own boat or those who want to understand Diesel Engines, including proper operation and maintenance. Attendance in the Basic and Intermediate course is a prerequisite for any advanced coursework.

### Course Topics

- Lubrication
- Cooling
- Fuel
- Electrical
- Stuffing boxes / Shaft seals / Bearings
- Review of fuel, cooling and lubrication system
- Electrical system: batteries, alternators, AC chargers & inverters
- Battery servicing
- Various charging systems

- Drives: straight drive, v-drive, sail drives
- Shaft seals and proper installation / inspection

The class room will show samples of the Diesel Engine parts and the handouts include diagrams of the Diesel Engine internals and related.

## **Instructor**

Peter Derviller started his career as an apprentice at the Royal Air Force No1 School of Technical Training at RAF Halton in the UK. He subsequently moved on to pilot training and flew many types of single engine aircraft. Later on, he engaged in the design, construction and operation of race cars. He has two US patents related to aspects of race car design and one for a novel type of sailboat rigging. Over the past 25 years he has been involved in the maintenance and operation of a wide range of sail boats equipped with gas powered outboards and auxiliary diesel engines. In this one-day course, Peter will pass on his knowledge of the operating principles and basic maintenance and repair issues related to diesel engines and their associated accessories and subsystems..

*Image Attribution: Model Engine B Luc Viatour” by I, Luc Viatour. Licensed under CC BY-SA 3.0 via Commons.*

## **About The Author**

### **Kit Griffin**

SWAN -

Christopher "Kit" Griffin is a retired adventure equipment consultant and photographer living in Vancouver, Canada. He's lived in Australia for most of his life, however his childhood was spent on Vancouver Island as his grandfather (and father) worked for Cable and Wireless until the Cable Station closed in 1959. Kit credits his family and Bamfield for a deep affection for the ocean, diving, and sailing. At the start of 2020 Kit bought SWAN, a Pacific Seacraft 34, in Tahiti which he'll be sailing back to Canada in April 2022 COVID-19 permitting. In the meantime, Kit volunteers for Bluewater Cruising Association in Vancouver Education Watch and sails a Catalina 28 locally.

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