Photo Contest Winner

Trina Holt
Salt - Island Packet 40

Somewhere, about a hundred miles from shore, between Victoria and San Francisco, I leaned out from the cockpit and took this photo.

After days of listening to waves keep up a steady beat against the hull, and the wind playing strings in the rigging, I was nearly in a trance-state. This moment, when the horizon cut the sun in half and the clouds blushed, was a moment of pure, sailing bliss.

Currents

May 2026

Table Of Contents

WOW! An Empowering Experience 3
The Start — And When Things Break 5
Starlink Aboard: Internet Everywhere, Most of the Time 9
Navigating Starlink's Geolocation Glitches: Ensuring Accurate Positioning 19
MIST Was Marvellous 25
WOW! 2026 Report 30
Ocean Week Talks - June 2 33
Vancouver Fleet and Weather - May 2026 35
VI Chapter Summer Cruising BBQ 38
Vancouver Potluck Social: Food, Friends and… Fire Suppression! 39
Sextant Theory and Practice 41

WOW! An Empowering Experience

https://currents.bluewatercruising.org/article/wow-an-empowering-experience/

As a young woman who has been involved in boating since childhood, it’s important to me to have the skills to be independent and confident on the water.

Being thrown into a completely different world with seemingly complicated rules, and extensive experiential knowledge to be had, is hard! Learning from women who are so intelligent and driven is valuable to me. When my mother suggested we go to a Women on Water (WOW!) seminar, I worried I could end up being a little out of place. When we arrived, I did indeed seem like an outlier, being 17 while everyone else was an adult. Nevertheless, as I started talking to the women around me, I realized that the community that had come together was ready to hear my thoughts and let me contribute.

I have grappled with a certain amount of anxiety or uncertainty when it came to involving myself with sailing bigger boats. There has always been more to know or things to feel more comfortable doing. As I have grown older, I continuously realize the importance of having female role models and intelligent women to guide me. Going to the WOW! seminar and experiencing the passion that these women have for sailing was a privilege.

What comes to mind in particular is the general maintenance presentation I sat in for. Sarah White stood out as such an educated woman. I know next to nothing about how to maintain a boat, but she handled the complicated material in a way that made it less intimidating.

Another activity that brought out some interesting situations was the Bringing it All Together segment. We grouped up at our tables for a docking exercise, but my team lacked a skipper. As the scenarios played out, my whole table was hesitant to assume the role of skipper and make a plan in each round. I volunteered once, was skeptical of my method of docking, but ended up being “voluntold” to be the skipper for each round after that. I definitely did not have the most experience at the table, but simply being up for the challenge had me leading the group for the rest of the session. It was a great experience, and left me feeling empowered and knowing that I am capable – capable not only to learn more, but to be the one that steps up and takes action, even if I’m unsure.

The Women on Water seminar left me with connections, knowledge, and most importantly, the confidence to keep growing into this community and lifestyle.

About The Author

Gwynn Checketts

Blueshift -

Gwynn is a graduate of CFSA's Wet Feet (2015) sailing program and has sailed with her family in both sail and power vessels ever since, including an exceptional sailing charter trip to the British Virgin Islands in 2023 and sailing with S.A.L.T.S. in 2025. She is her father's best mate in BLUESHIFT, and continues to seek new adventures anywhere she can find them. After graduating from Royal Bay Secondary School this June, she plans to travel for a year before attending the University of Victoria's Bachelor of Science Anthropology program, where she has been accepted with a President's Scholarship.

The Start — And When Things Break

https://currents.bluewatercruising.org/article/the-start-and-when-things-break/

Our southbound journey began on September 22, 2025, departing Maple Bay aboard ***Swadeshi***, our 1971 Spencer 44, with my sister Annette on board. That same morning, we picked up my dear friend Nick, who had flown into Victoria from San Francisco. A late-September family wedding pushed our departure into what is normally considered the end of the weather window, but after watching PredictWind closely, conditions looked favourable.

As it turned out, we had an excellent passage. At one point we were about 140 nautical miles offshore before looping back in and passing under the Golden Gate Bridge at exactly 23:23:23 (really!) on day six. We logged approximately 40 hours motoring in light air, with the remainder under downwind sail. Remarkably, we had no rain for the entire six days.

Having single-handed our Spencer 44 for much of the past 13 years, I can’t say enough about how great it was to have Annette and Nick as part of the team. We all collected the mandatory bruises and bumps, but managed decent rest between watches. Our two little pups, Bear (2 kg) and Bitsy (4 kg), were less impressed and only relaxed once their paws were back on solid ground.

It was great to have Nick and Annette aboard

In retrospect, this journey really began in 2023 with a voyage to the Goose Group, and continued in 2024 when we and ***Swadeshi*** joined our friends Mary and Robert aboard ***Silken*** for a trip to Glacier Bay and back. These passages were long enough to properly test our systems, sails, rigging, spares—and ourselves.

You've likely heard the saying: it's not if things will break, but when. Preparation cannot be overstated, both in terms of carrying spares and having the ability—or willingness—to make repairs. Since 2023, our more significant failures have included a transmission, drive shaft, head gasket, impeller, transducer, water pump, hatch coaming, cutlass bearing, raw water pump, blackwater tank hatch, anchor windlass deck switches, and even a main engine mount stringer.

Oddly enough, these experiences have strengthened my confidence—in the boat, in our inventory of spares and tools, and in my ability to deal with the inevitable wear and tear. In a way, they even add to the richness of the journey, deepening our appreciation for the incredible creatures, landscapes, and people we encounter along the way.

Bitsy – happy to be on land

Now in Baja California Sur, Mexico, as we plan our Pacific crossing, I've compiled a detailed list of additional spares. In my experience, you are far ahead, both financially and in terms of time, by investing in comprehensive spare parts, tools, and repair materials rather than relying on local availability, shipping timelines, or haul-out schedules.

From here, ***Swadeshi*** will be placed in dry storage in San Carlos, Sonora, while we prepare her this winter for a Pacific crossing planned for March, 2027.

About The Author

Siggi Kemmler

Swadeshi -

After semi-retiring in December 2025 as co-owner of a British Columbia forestry company, I set out to pursue a lifelong dream: sailing around the world. My passion for the sea began more than 60 years ago, when my father first introduced me to sailing. Now, at 67, I felt a renewed sense of urgency to embrace the adventure—recognizing that health and physical ability can change in our later years. On September 22, 2025, we finally cast off, heading south to begin the journey of a lifetime.

Starlink Aboard: Internet Everywhere, Most of the Time

https://currents.bluewatercruising.org/article/starlink-aboard-internet-everywhere-most-of-the-time/

Starlink, Elon Musk's space-age internet solution, has revolutionized how we stay connected without selling our souls for spotty marina Wi-Fi or chasing remote cell towers. Cruisers don't need to hoist their cell phones up the mast to coax a dodgy hotspot from a distant cell tower anymore. Elon has us covered. When we left Vancouver over ten years ago, the very idea of Starlink was science fiction, and now it's become part of our daily cruising experience. Aboard ***Avant*** we have used the Standard Gen 2 (articulated) and Mini dishes (we snagged a Mini at the introductory price of $200USD in Panama) and have some thoughts on what works best (at least for us).

First, an 'old salt' tech history review.

Starlink vs. the Establishment: Ditching Dinosaur Tech for Space Magic

Before Starlink reset the bar, cruisers relied on systems like Inmarsat, Iridium, and SSB (Single Sideband) radio for staying connected. These traditional technologies got the job done, but in the way a telegram

beats smoke signals: barely. Let's break down how Starlink leaves them in its wake, and take a peek at the phased array antenna wizardry inside each dish.

First up, Inmarsat: This geostationary satellite system (GEO) hovers way up at 22,000 miles, beaming signals with latency that will make you nostalgic for dial-up — think 500-700ms pings, okay for voice calls or slow data but not for video chats (at least without feeling like you're living in a badly dubbed movie). It's reliable for maritime pros, with global coverage minus the poles, but hardware and airtime costs an arm and a leg. Typically used on only the largest boats, as its power requirements are huge.

Iridium: Another LEO (Low Earth Orbit) contender with 66 satellites zipping around, nails pole-to-pole coverage and shines in storms where Starlink might stutter (thanks to its lower frequency L-band vs. Starlink's Ku-band). But speeds? A sluggish 2.4-700kbps for data, suited for emails, texts, weather reports, and SOS calls, not Netflix marathons. It's bombproof for safety, with units often having long-life internal batteries, virtually no power draw and no need for a clear sky view like Starlink, but you'll pay a premium for that reliability — think $1-2 per minute for calls. We have an Iridium-based Garmin inReach aboard ***Avant*** we use for 24/7 tracking, emergency two-way use, SMS messages and as a general communications backup. An Iridium-based system can go with you in a life raft, a Starlink not so much. Starlink is for living, Iridium is for surviving.

And SSB? Ah, the granddaddy of them all — just high-frequency radio bouncing off the ionosphere for long-range voice, email, or weather faxes. Free airtime after the initial gear cost (around $2k-5k), but speeds are glacial (think 2.4kbps email), and it requires a ham license, antenna tuning, and patience for dealing with propagation whims. Great for traditional radio nets or emergencies, but forget streaming — it's like using a carrier pigeon in the jet age. We see lots of SSB rigs for sale cheap as owners move up the tech tree and NOAA discontinues SSB delivered services. (That said, we have a small SSB receive-only radio aboard ***Avant*** for listening to time ticks, weather forecasts and receiving weather faxes. We used it to listen to radio nets years ago in cell service free areas, and it will be with us a while longer.)

Starlink's low latency broadband service leaves all previous generations of technology far behind. Hundreds if not thousands of times faster, it's a brave new world. Cruisers describe it as a 'game-changer.'

A Starlink using the classic pole stuck in a fishing rod holder mount.

What makes Starlink's dishes so snazzy? Phased array antenna technology coupled with the number of satellites in the system (Starlink has over 9,600 in orbit as of February 2026). The hundreds of tiny antenna elements in the dish work in concert to steer beams electronically, with no moving parts (except in older models). The Mini packs ~590 elements into its compact frame for portability and low power consumption. The Standard ups the ante with ~1,500 elements for better throughput. And the High Performance? It boasts even more — some ~2,400 elements — for superior signal in rough seas or bad weather, justifying its higher price. More elements mean tighter beams, less interference, and Ferrari-like performance, but at the cost of a higher power draw. As any radio geek will tell you, the antenna is the key to high performance in any radio rig.

Plans for the three dishes are the same price. The plans just work better on the more expensive dishes.

In short, if previous tech was a dinghy with a broken oar, Starlink's a jetpack — faster, cheaper (flat $100-165/month unlimited high speed Roam plans depending on your home country), but keep an Iridium handy for when the waves get rowdy, and an SSB if you want to keep in touch with your cruising forbearers' way of life.

Dish Decisions: Size Matters, But So Does Your Battery Life

When it comes to Starlink dishes, it's like choosing between a cruiser and a day sailor — both get you places, but one won't sink your power reserves. Starlink currently offers several options: the Standard (aka V4 or Gen 3), the High Performance, and the pint-sized Mini.

The Standard is the workhorse for home or semi-fixed setups, using 40-100 watts while delivering speeds up to 220 Mbps (or more) download. It's bigger, bulkier, and acts like that one crew member who insists on leaving the lights on and the fridge open — great for performance, but not ideal for a boat with a limited solar and battery setup (which describes ***Avant*** to a 't').

Then there's the High Performance dish, the overachiever of the bunch, sucking down 110+ watts for top-tier speeds (up to 400+ Mbps) and better weather resistance. Perfect if you're captaining a catamaran with a terawatt solar array and don't mind the power draw, but for us mere mortals with skimpy solar arrays, it's like bringing a Ferrari to a wheelbarrow race.

Enter the hero of our story: the Starlink Mini. The smallest of the bunch is portable, compact, and sips power like a polite guest at happy hour — just 20-40 watts on average (on ***Avant***, we typically see 18-22 watts). That's half (or less) than the Standard, making it a no-brainer for boats where every amp-hour counts. Speeds supposedly top out around 100 Mbps, but we regularly see 170-220 Mbps here in Panama. Either speed is plenty for streaming or Zoom calls. Plus, it's easier to mount without turning your deck into a satellite dish display stand. Sure, it's not as speedy as its bigger siblings, but for us, low power requirement trumps raw download power.

If you're powering off of a few solar panels and a modest battery bank, the Mini's low draw means you can enjoy twice the time on the internet for the same power draw as the standard.

The Not-So-Smooth Sailing: Boat Motion and Weather Woes

Starlink isn't perfect — shocker, right? Boats rock, roll, and pitch, and weather doesn't always play nice. The biggest culprit? Movement.

When the platform supporting your Starlink is in motion, the fancy beam focussing antenna will struggle to get a 'lock' on a satellite, making establishing and maintaining a connection a real issue. A secondary problem is obstructions from masts, rigging, canvas, or the boat's own superstructures blocking the dish's view of the sky. Even small ones (2-3% of the field of view) can cause signal drops, especially underway when the boat's motion swings things around. Waves can momentarily swing a part of the rig in to block line-of-sight, leading to brief interruptions — think your Zoom call freezing mid-sentence or Netflix buffering like it's 1999.

It's even worse when you're trying to get online initially. Users at sea report difficulties getting Starlinks, particularly Minis, to initialize and establish their place on the network, especially in smaller boats and lively seas. Larger boats and catamarans are more stable platforms and make it easier for a Starlink to lock onto a satellite.

Then there's weather: Tropical downpours, thick fog, heavy low clouds or storms degrade the Ku-band signal, causing temporary outages and/or slower speeds. It's not as bad as old satellite systems (thanks to

LEO proximity), but in a real howler, expect hiccups — service might drop for minutes or until the squall passes. Aboard ***Avant*** we find this particularly annoying, as we really do want to curl up with a nice stable internet connection below decks when the weather turns nasty and life on deck isn't what we came out for. The dishes are tough (all are IP67-rated and designed to handle hurricane winds), but bad conditions will test the connection.

The High Performance dish shines here with its wider field of view and more elements, handling motion better and maintaining connections in rougher seas or marginal weather. The Standard does okay but drops more in motion-heavy or bad weather scenarios. The Mini? It's compact and low-power, but its smaller array means it's more sensitive to weather, obstructions and rocking — great for anchorages, but not a champ in big seas.

Pro tip: Mount high and clear (and closer to the boat's centre of motion to limit the high seas watusi) and use the app's obstruction scanner religiously. Many boaters keep an Iridium based device as backup for critical stuff — because when Mother Nature throws a tantrum, Starlink's space internet sulks.

f

Global Roaming: the Fine Print for Wanderers

While Starlink is a global service, the subscription model is not. Starlink's service is tied to the country where your hardware was purchased and initially registered. In most cases, users cannot freely change their home country just by updating their profile or service address online. The ability to switch countries is restricted by Starlink's policies and local regulations and is not supported for all accounts or regions. Unless you're on the pricey global roaming plan, you can only roam outside your home country for 60 days before your account is restricted.

For a global company the process of changing your country of residence is astonishingly Byzantine. If you move to a new country as you cruise over the 60 day limit, or plan to use Starlink long-term outside your registered home country, you generally must either purchase new hardware in that market or close down your existing account, remove the hardware from that account, do a factory reset on the equipment and reinitialize the hardware on a new Starlink account (under a new email and address) you set up in your new 'home country'. In effect you're selling it to yourself over the national border. In some cases this can trigger additional fees like the "Outside Region Fee." Timing can make a difference, too. Different countries have different fees, so switching early can save the cruising kitty a few bucks. If you're in a marina in your 'home country' for a while, you can temporarily switch to a residential plan, which is usually cheaper than a roaming plan. Always check with Starlink's national web pages for the country before making any plans to relocate your service internationally.

Setting Sail with Starlink: Installation Tips for the Technically Challenged

Installing Starlink on a boat isn't rocket science (wait, actually, maybe it kind of is, since it involves satellites). The key is a clear view of the northern sky (or southern, depending on your hemisphere—check the app for instructions and obstructions). Mount your dish to avoid masts, sails, or that oversized fishing rod holder from blocking the signal. For the Mini, a pole mount or flat bracket on the stern arch works wonders, keeping it stable even when the waves decide to tango. On ***Avant*** we use a cheap articulated mount we bought on Amazon for about $12, and move the dish around to get the best sky view (see featured photo). In marinas or at anchor, we often use the 'gravity mount' (the kickstand mount it came with) laid on deck. Pro tip: Use a tilt-adjustable mount to optimize the angle, like fine-tuning your sails for that extra half knot of boat speed.

A Starlink mini using the ‘gravity mount’ on deck.

Secure everything, waterproof route cables to prevent water ingress, and consider a marine-grade enclosure if you’re paranoid about salt spray turning your tech into a pricey paperweight. Once mounted, fire up the Starlink app, connect to the Roam plan (essential for mobile use), and voilà — you’re online faster than you can say “bring me that horizon!” Instead of using the supplied 120/240V power adapter and an inverter, there are various means to gain a more efficient connection to your battery bank for each Starlink dish, eschewing the inverter losses. I’ll describe how we wired our mini below.

Wiring Wizardry: Powering Up a mini with a Victron Orion Tr

Now, the fun part: wiring. Because nothing says “relaxing boat life” like fiddling with wiring. Most boats run on 12V DC systems, but Starlink’s Mini craves higher voltages for optimal performance. That’s where the Victron Orion Tr 12 | 24 – 5 DC-DC converter shines — it steps up your boat’s 12V battery to 18-30V at 5 amps, perfect for feeding the Mini. The Mini’s power cord as shipped isn’t for 12V, it’s for 30V. Trying to use the supplied cord with 12V is an exercise in frustration.

While you can use a low cost 12-24V ‘buck converter’ as a power step up, the Orion is better for a few reasons. Most buck converters are mystery brand, and their useful life is unknown. Victron is a known quantity and has a reputation for reliability. Some buck converters are ‘buzzy’ and can interfere with the

Starlink or other gear on board. The Orion is silent on that front. The Orion is also set up with a remote switch wiring point, making it easy to set up an on/off switch in a convenient place for cycling the mini on and off when you use it. It also matches your other Victron blue boxes, upping your style game.

Our Orion-Tr 12|24-5 power converter.

Here’s the step-by-step. Start by connecting the Orion’s 12V input to your boat’s positive bus bar via a fuse (5-10A recommended to protect against shorts). Now wire the negative. Wire the output to a 2.1 mm female DC adapter or direct Starlink connector. Now, the remote switch magic: The Orion has remote on/off terminal capability. Remove the factory jumper and wire in a simple 12V switch you can locate anywhere convenient (any marine toggle will do). This lets you kill power to the system at night or when not in use, saving precious electrons — because who wants Starlink sucking up your limited amp-hours while you’re asleep? Total draw? With the Mini, you’re looking at minimal impact, keeping your solar setup happy and your fridge cold. Our mini runs at 19W lately (down from ~22W a month ago, thanks Starlink wonks!), which is about 0.7 amps at 30V. If wiring it up sounds scarier than a squall, consult a marine electrician — better safe than sorry (or smoky).

Star Debug: Your Secret Weapon for Space-Age Troubleshooting

Ever wonder why your connection drops mid-Netflix cliffhanger? Enter Star Debug, the third-party

monitoring app that's like having a Starlink whisperer in your pocket. This nifty tool decodes and displays the debug data from the Starlink dish and router, letting you view expanded real-time telemetry, statuses, alerts, and stats. Need to reboot the dish remotely? Stow it during a storm? Toggle GPS? Star Debug handles it all, plus basic router tweaks like Wi-Fi setup.

Its utility on a boat is golden: Monitor power draw, spot obstructions from swaying masts, or diagnose why your signal's become as flaky as fresh croissants. Updated from your Starlink's data feed, it gives deeper insights than the stock app — think bandwidth restrictions, connection history, and even location data (if enabled). It's free (or cheap) on app stores, and for boaters juggling waves and Wi-Fi, it's a lifesaver — literally, if you rely on online data for navigation planning. In short, Star Debug turns "Why isn't this working?" into "Ah, it's the booby on the dish again."

Some of the data available in the Star Debug app.

Anchors Aweigh: Final Thoughts

There you have it — Starlink on your boat is a game-changer, especially with the power-thrifty Mini leading the charge. Ditch the dial-up doldrums, wire it smart with Victron, keep tabs via Star Debug, and brace for the occasional weather- or motion-induced hiccup (because nothing's perfect). Just remember: With great internet comes great responsibility — don't blame me if you start working from the cockpit instead of fishing.

Do you have any Starlink hacks or experiences to share? Chime in in the comments below!

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.

Navigating Starlink’s Geolocation Glitches: Ensuring Accurate Positioning

https://currents.bluewatercruising.org/article/navigating-starlinks-geolocation-glitches-ensuring-accurate-positioning/

As cruisers increasingly turn to Starlink for reliable satellite internet, a peculiar issue has surfaced: mysterious location errors on connected mobile devices. After a night of annoying anchor watch duty due to catamarans and monohulls swinging differently in the anchorage, we readied for the next night by ensuring our anchor drag alarms and positioning apps were all set should we need to refer to them in the night.

However, our Navionics Boating app on our iPads, and all other iOS apps using ‘location services’ on all of our iOS devices showed a consistent and considerable error, over 600’ (1/10 of a mile), positioning us on the wrong side of a nearby reef, in a place we had never been with ***Avant***. It was as if our devices decided we’d secretly teleported to a parallel universe. The error just didn’t go away. Our other, stand alone, GPS enabled devices did show accurate positioning. This wasn’t a sci-fi plot twist but a real-world quirk of how modern devices determine location when hooked up to Starlink (or any other) WiFi.[1]

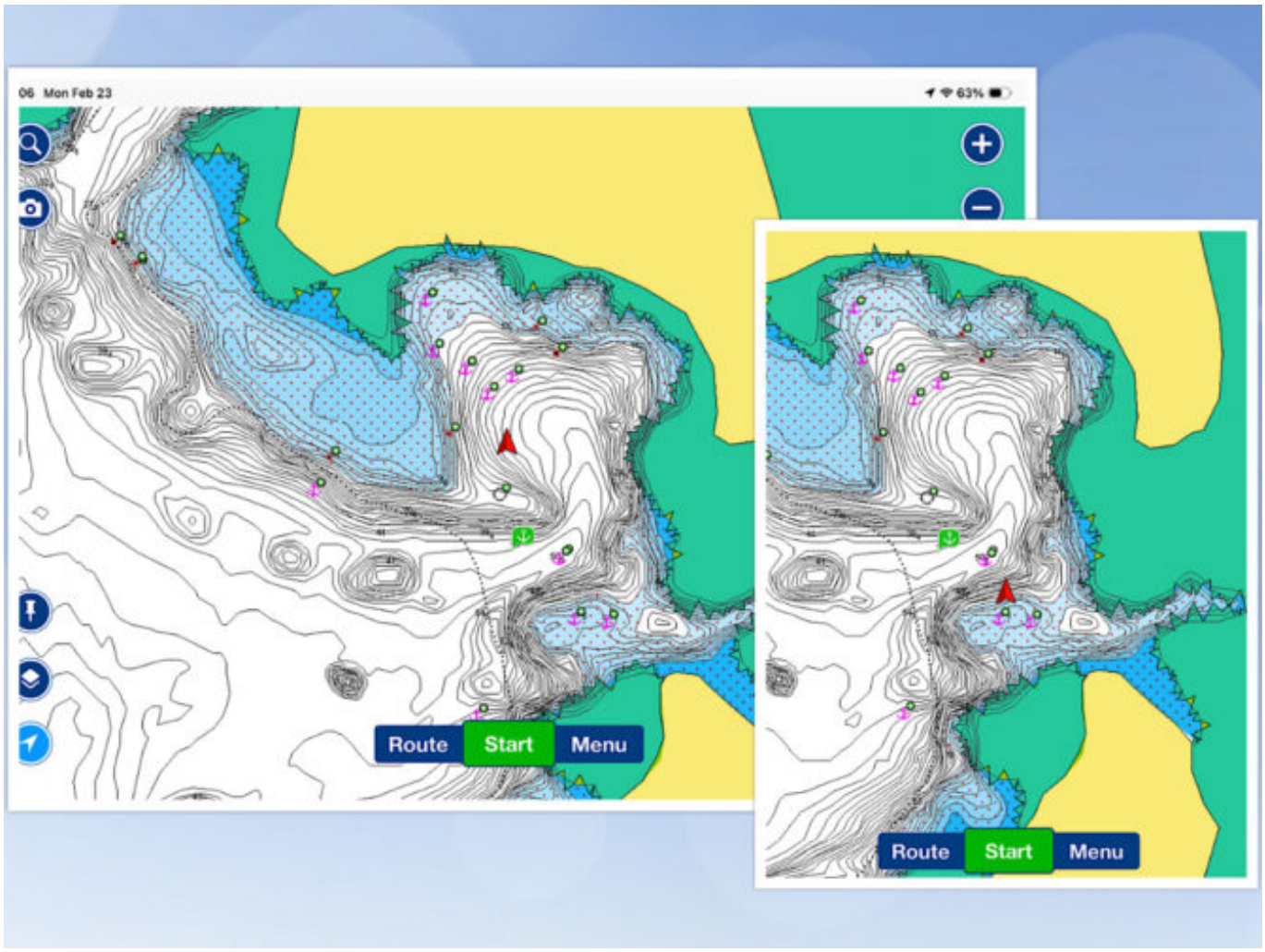
I spent some time with Apple's and Starlink's technical support teams and did some research to try to pin down the source of the error. In this article, I'll dive into the root cause of these "Starlink-induced" position errors and outline some simple setting tweaks for your Starlink hardware, iOS, and Android devices to help you keep your location accurate.

Understanding the Issue: Why Your Device Thinks You're Somewhere Else

At its core, the problem stems from how smartphones and tablets use Wi-Fi networks for positioning. Modern devices don't rely solely on GPS satellites; they employ a hybrid system that includes crowd-sourced databases of Wi-Fi access points.[2] Companies like Apple and Google maintain vast databases of router MAC addresses (unique hardware identifiers) linked to reported locations.[3] When your device connects to a Wi-Fi network, it queries this database for a quick location fix, prioritizing it over GPS for speed and battery efficiency for the first fix.[4] We have seen this aboard Avant for years with cell towers and have learned to allow our devices a couple of minutes to settle on a good GPS fix before navigating—kind of like waiting for its morning coffee to kick in. In this case, the error was persistent and didn't go away over a period of 15 minutes. If we had relied on the error-riddled data in the dark, we could have easily ended up on a reef.

The Starlink use case throws a wrench into the data. Unlike fixed home or business routers, Starlink terminals are designed for on-the-go use—perfect for cruisers. They register in the databases with a location and then the wind shifts, the boat moves anchor and the stored position is instantly wrong. However, the MAC addresses logged in these geolocation databases remain, leaving them associated with unrelated spots hundreds or thousands of feet away.[5] In effect, your devices are now navigating with an out-of-position navigation aid in the 'lights list' of Wi-Fi routers. An immediate solution is disconnecting Wi-Fi—forcing the device back to accurate GPS, which is basically telling your gadget, "Snap out of it!" For various reasons you may not want to disconnect from Wi-Fi, as it may be the source of other data you want to see like radar or AIS.

This isn't unique to Starlink; any mobile hotspot can trigger it. But Starlink's mobile nature and newfound ubiquity in the cruising fleet amplifies the issue, as its dynamic IP assignments and changing positions populate these geolocation databases.[6] The impact: Inaccurate positioning during cruises or even safety concerns if relying on location-based alerts. Fortunately, prevention is straightforward with a few targeted changes to your devices' settings.



Left: When connected to Starlink our position was shown incorrectly (too far north). Right: When not connected to Starlink, the correct location was shown.

Starlink Settings: Broadcast The Dish's Location

Start with your Starlink hardware—the dish knows its precise location via both built-in GPS and the Starlink satellite constellation (often accurate to under a meter). By enabling local sharing, you can broadcast this data to connected devices, overriding faulty database entries (not all devices and operating systems can use this, but some can).[7]

To share the Dish's location:

1 Open the Starlink app (available for iOS and Android) while connected to your network.

2 Navigate to Settings > Advanced > Debug Data (if hidden, tap the Starlink logo 10 times on the home screen to unlock developer mode).[7]

3 Scroll to "Starlink Location" and toggle on "Allow access on local network."[7]

This shares the dish's GPS coordinates over Wi-Fi, helping devices like your phone or tablet to snap to

the correct spot (if capable).[7]

Opt out of Adding Bad Data to the Database

To prevent your personal Starlink from being part of the problem by adding additional database errors, append "_nomap" to your WiFi SSID (network name) in the app under Settings > Network (ours was AVANT, now it's AVANT_nomap). This opts your router out of Apple and Google's (and hopefully others') location databases, though it will take weeks for existing errors to clear.[8] You will need to re-sign in each of your devices to the new network name after the change.

iOS Devices: Tame Wi-Fi's Overreach

Apple devices, like iPads and iPhones, are prone to this due to their heavy reliance on Wi-Fi scanning. Here's how to dial it back:

1 Go to Settings > Privacy & Security > Location Services > System Services (at the bottom).

2 Toggle off "Networking & Wireless" (previously called "Wi-Fi Networking"). This stops iOS from using WiFi networks for location data, forcing reliance on built-in GPS and cellular signals.[9] (You can re-enable "Networking & Wireless" selectively if you need it for urban areas with dense Wi-Fi, just remember to switch it back when on the water.)
3 Ensure "Precise Location" is enabled for key apps (you do this on an app-by-app basis in settings > location > [app name]), and update to the latest iOS for any bug fixes.

You need to do this for each of your devices.[10] It's like training your iPhone to trust its better instincts instead of gossip from the Wi-Fi in the neighbourhood.

Android Devices: Customize Location Modes for Precision

Also highly reliant on Wi-Fi, Android offers flexible controls, varying slightly by version (e.g., Android 12+ vs. older). Android devices from different manufacturers have different menu structures, but these settings should get you to the root of the issue. Focus on disabling Wi-Fi scanning to avoid geolocation database-driven errors.

1. Open Settings > Location > Location Services.
2. Toggle off "Wi-Fi scanning" (and "Bluetooth scanning" if desired). This prevents Android from using nearby networks for positioning.[11]

Alternatively, for broader control:

- In Settings > Location > Mode (or Advanced), select "Device only" or "GPS only." This limits sources to GNSS satellites, bypassing Wi-Fi entirely.[11]

If using Google services, check Settings > Location > Google Location Accuracy and turn it off—it 'enhances' accuracy via Wi-Fi but can introduce offsets. Reset by restarting the device (power off and on

again).[11]

In General

Always update your apps, iOS, Android, and your Starlink and its app to enable capability improvements. Make sure to update new devices with the appropriate settings as you acquire them. Cross check your position by other means frequently (Eyeball Mk I, bearings, depths, distances off, standalone GPS receivers, etc.) and particularly when about to use these devices for ‘tricky’ navigation like restricted channels, reef entries and the like. Remember, shutting off Wi-Fi on your device when using it to navigate will eliminate this source of potential error and force your device to use GPS/GNSS and cell towers.

Charting a Course Forward

These geolocation glitches highlight the growing pains of satellite internet like Starlink, which empowers cruisers to stay connected far from shore. By tweaking these settings, you can reclaim pinpoint accuracy without sacrificing connectivity. Remember, test changes in a safe spot—perhaps at the dock or in your next anchorage. Safe sailing and may your coordinates always be true.

References (click these URLs for more details):

1. Starlink showing incorrect location
2. How WiFi Positioning Works
3. Wi-Fi Positioning Can Expose Your Location and Movement, Here’s How to Stop It
4. How does turning on WiFi improve location accuracy of a smartphone?
5. My IP geolocation is incorrect or too far away.
6. Geolocation Causing Sync Issues
7. New app 2022.12.0 in developer mode has a lot more data in the debug data if you tap on the small left/right arrow in top right corner. (Note: This discusses debug features, including location sharing options)
8. Control access point inclusion in Google’s Location services
9. What is Networking & Wireless on my iPhone settings?
10. About privacy and Location Services in iOS, iPadOS, and watchOS
11. Manage your Android device’s location settings

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.

MIST Was Marvellous

https://currents.bluewatercruising.org/article/mist-was-marvellous/

On the second weekend of May, Mid Island Sail Training (MIST) happened in Montague Harbour. What follows is just one “dreamer’s” impressions. First – a good time was had by all!

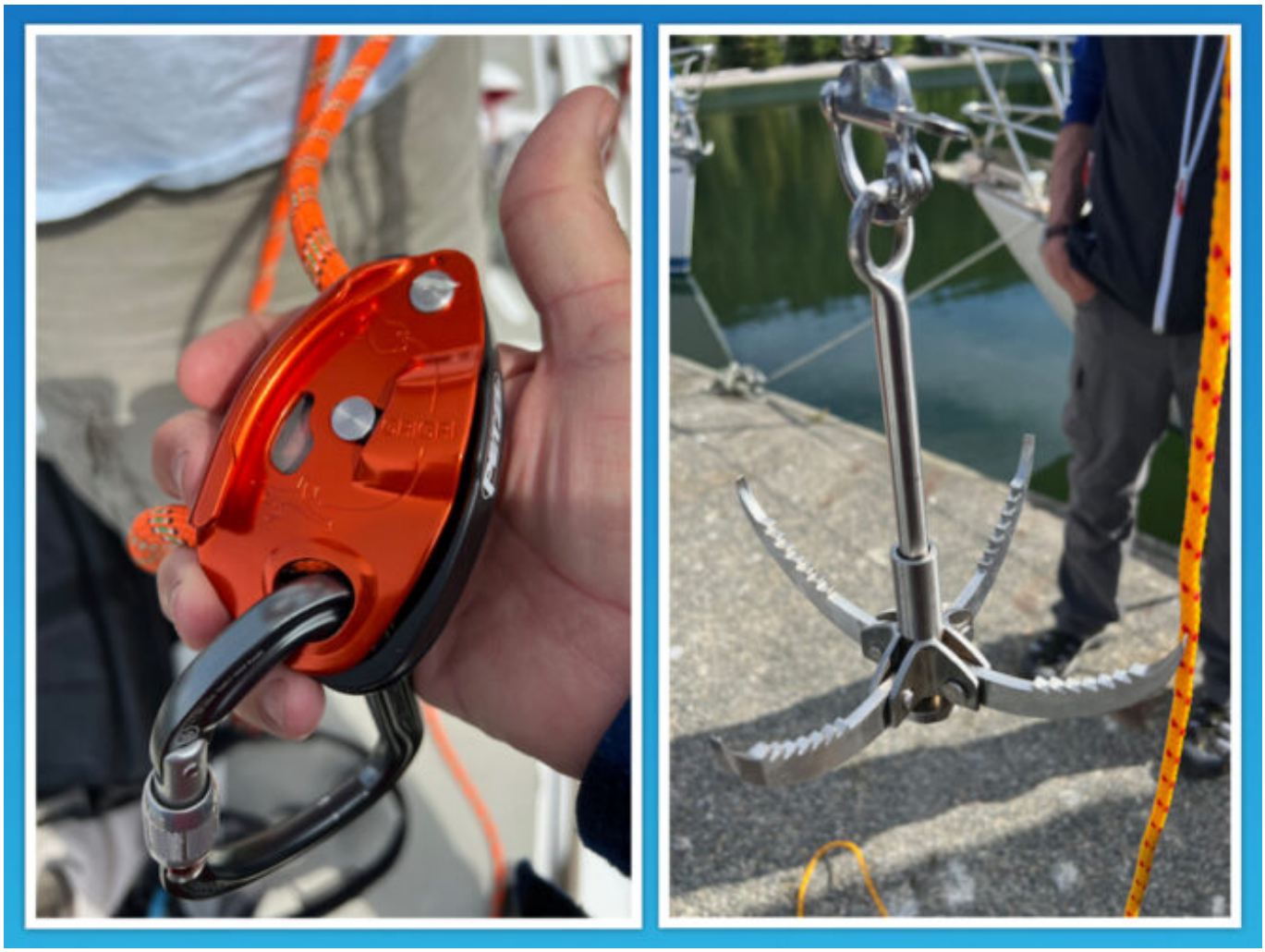
MIST is a great way for dreamers and doers to come together and share information, our choices, and stories of hard won experience. This isn’t the usual educational gathering where one “expert” lectures and the rest take notes. MIST is much more dynamic than that, with information and ideas flowing in all directions. I think this is important: much learning came not just from the wisdom of the “old salts”, as valuable as that is, but from the sharing of ideas, choices, and questions of those in the midst of preparing their boats and themselves for further adventures.

Sailing into Montague Harbour at the start of MIST

As is the case with all sailing activities, the wind dictates. There was not a lot of wind so many of our activities took place at the dock. We had a lively session with groups exploring and experiencing mast climbing, MOB recovery and heaving lines – all simultaneously. Ken even demonstrated his “rapid dingy launch” system – a clever invention (I wish it would work on our boat).

This round robin learning approach worked very well. People were free to circulate between “stations” as the opportunity and their interest took them. It was very informative and thought provoking to see, and actually try out, people’s different “rigs” for mast climbing and for recovery of someone in the water. There is nothing quite like experiencing first hand just what it’s actually like to hoist someone from the water (we cheated a bit and hoisted from a dingy), or to strap yourself into a harness and try to pull yourself up a mast! Lots of good discussion of the strengths of each system.

Oh, and throwing a heaving line – not quite as easy as one might imagine. There is a bit of technique to it and practice helps!



Left: GriGri – an assisted braking belay device manufactured by Petzl; Right: Grapple hook

We also spent a morning “crowd sourcing” and testing strategies to aid in springing a boat off the dock when the wind seeks to keep it pinned. Great sharing and learning!

Even with all the learning we did find some quiet time to enjoy the sunset.

Enjoying the sunset at MIST.

As it happens the knowledge of mast climbing has taken on a new relevance to me. Just one weekend later Lil'Ollie's upper furler bearing "somehow" managed to catch a loop of a spare halyard and now both are jammed fast with 1/3 of the fore sail still out. The only way to contain the flogging sail was to turn the boat in multiple circles until the sail wound itself in. So there will be a trip up the mast in my immediate future. This really brought home to me the importance of having an effective means of climbing the mast myself. It's one thing to have an issue close to home where gear and friends to help are close at hand, but it would be quite another had this happened while we were halfway around Vancouver island this summer!

Here are a couple of resources I am working through that I want to share:
Yachting Monthly: "How to Climb a Mast Solo"
YouTube: "A Better Way to Climb a Sailboat Mast"

About The Author

Greg Cooper

Lil' Ollie -

Greg Cooper, now a retired Electrical Engineer, power-boated with his father as a teen but didn't get back to Vancouver Island and the ocean till 2012. Still quite new to sailing, Greg purchased a 26’ Grampian in 2017, and now owns a 1986 C&C38 III on which he is carrying out a “somewhat extensive refit”.

WOW! 2026 Report

https://currents.bluewatercruising.org/news_post/wow-2026-report/

Feedback from participants at the 2026 WOW! (Women on Water) gathering made one thing clear: the event was an overwhelming success—and many felt it was even better than last year. Check out this inspiring article, describing one participant's reflections about her experience at the event. In response to the enthusiastic reviews, plans are already underway for another WOW! weekend on February 27–28, 2027. Be sure to save the date.

Held at the Mary Winspear Centre, the venue's round-table format created a welcoming atmosphere that made it easy for participants to connect and build new friendships with others who share a passion for being on the water. Among the 53 attendees were more power boaters than sailors, but the sessions offered valuable learning for everyone—after all, weather is weather whether you travel by sail or power.

The weekend's program was delivered by an outstanding lineup of presenters: Agathe Gaulin, Elaine Humphrey, Marla Hedman, Missy Gervais, Sarah White, Stefa Katamay, and Tracy Sarich. Through their sessions and shared expertise, they demonstrated how women can be competent, confident, and fully enjoy life on the water.

Opening keynote speaker Larissa Clark joined the group via Zoom from the UK on Saturday, while her family yacht ***Free Ranger*** was in New Zealand. Larissa and her husband, Duncan Copeland, departed British Columbia in 2023 with their two children to sail around the world with a unique purpose: to engage in exciting citizen science projects. She shared stories of their journey, spoke candidly about overcoming challenges such as seasickness, and described the specific family's citizen science projects. She was introduced by her mother-in-law, Lisa Copeland, a well-known BCA circumnavigator and author. More about their voyage can be found at Free Range Ocean.

The closing keynote on Saturday was delivered by Elizabeth Brown-Shaw, whose inspirational presentation provided a fitting end to the first day.

Sunday began with Tracy Sarich leading an interactive session titled *Bringing It All Together*, which wove together lessons from Saturday's seminars. Through a series of lively scenarios—starting with a humorous demonstration by Saturday's presenters—participants explored weather, skippering, docking, line handling, and the unexpected challenges that can arise when docking while the kettle is boiling. Five of the presenters also rallied around Elaine Humphrey to support her KNOTS seminar, making it possible to have an "expert" at every table.

The event relied on a dedicated team of volunteers, including Sue Morin, Leslie Hansen, Cathy Norrie, Barb Peck, Mary Anne Unrau, Sarah Rosenthal, Shannon Jones, and Heather Marshall, who supported registration, food service, the BCA table, and event setup and takedown. Special recognition also goes to Barbara Lyall, whose excellent work coordinating the food was clearly appreciated by participants—something reflected in the evaluations and perhaps a few waistlines as well. Special thanks also went to Brent Alley, VI Education Watchkeeper, for handling the on-site technology so smoothly.

With planning already underway for 2027, organizers are working to ensure fresh new content for returning participants and another memorable experience for newcomers alike. See you next February.

About The Author

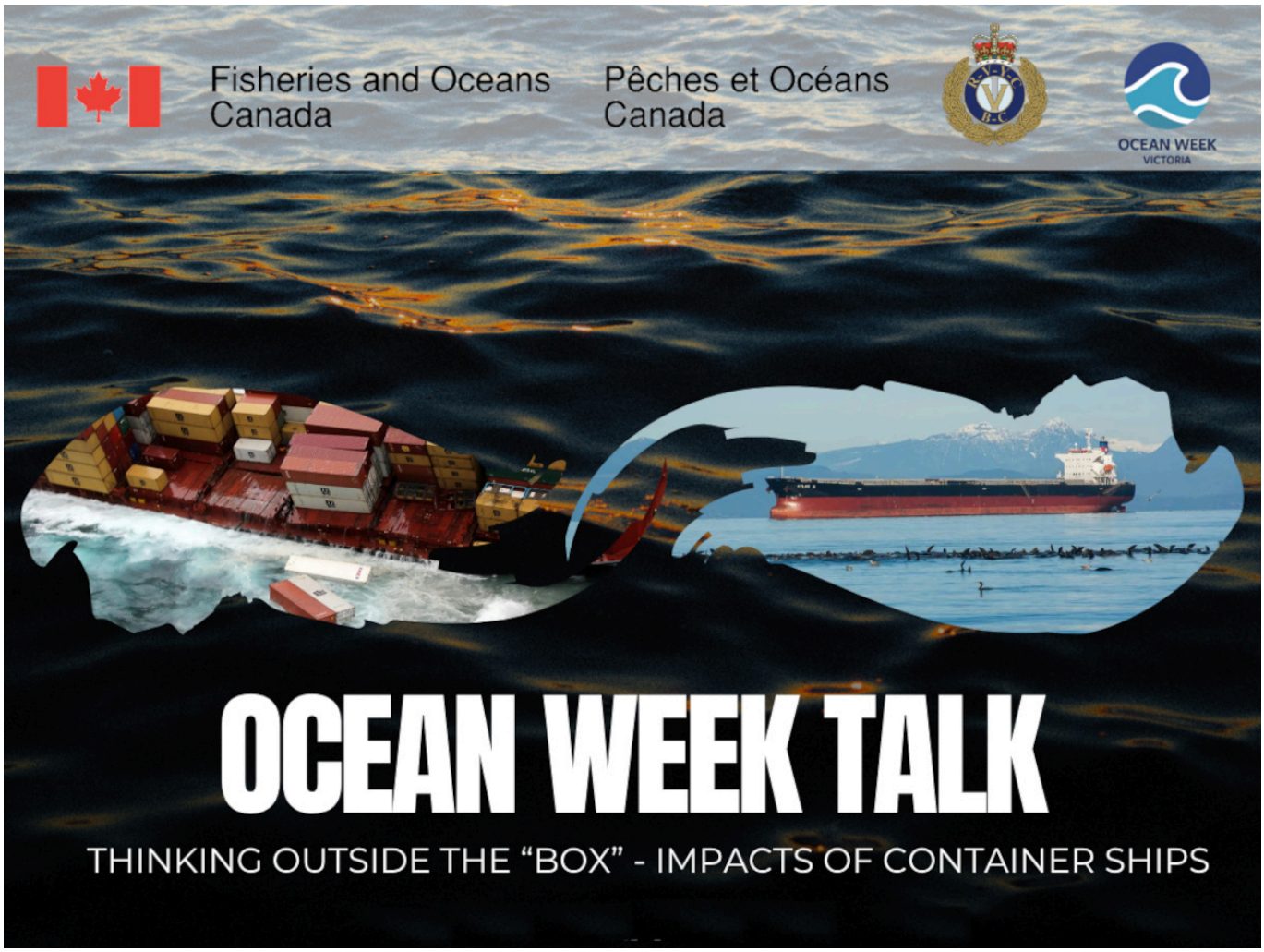
Kathryn Swangard

-

Kate and her husband Michael joined BCA in 2003 to take advantage of their offshore education courses before heading off on their 5+ year journey around the Mediterranean, Atlantic and Caribbean. Kate currently leads the Mid-Island Group within Vancouver Island Chapter, organizing club nights and education courses.

Ocean Week Talks - June 2

https://currents.bluewatercruising.org/news_post/ocean-week-talks-june-2/



The Royal Victoria Yacht Club and Fisheries and Oceans Canada are presenting a free event as part of Ocean Week: "Thinking Outside the 'Box' – Impacts of Container Ships".

Speakers

1900-1930h: Dr. Hauke Blanken – "Marine Debris and its Origins: A Look at the Impacts of Lost Shipping Containers"

1930-2000h: Dr. Cathryn Murray – "Looking Beneath the Surface at the Impacts of Commercial Ship Anchorages"

Date

June 2, 2026, 1900-2000h

Location

Royal Victoria Yacht Club.

Cost

Free

Vancouver Fleet and Weather - May 2026

https://currents.bluewatercruising.org/news_post/vancouver-fleet-and-weather-may-2026/

May 27 marked the final regular Fleet meeting of the season, with seven members joining via Zoom and twelve attending in person.

“Show and Tell” featured a range finder, a handy anchoring tool used by Dugg and Kristen to measure the distance between their vessel and neighbouring boats, helping them assess swing room while at anchor. Matt also shared that Fjällräven is **offering BCA members a 25% discount throughout June** at its Kitsilano store. He noted that the company’s gear is particularly well suited to cold-weather sailing, especially its trekking pants.

Dugg then raised the energy in the room by hosting a Kahoot! quiz based on topics covered in previous Fleet presentations. With the lead changing hands several times throughout the competition, it remained a close contest until Rhonda was ultimately declared the winner. Congratulations to Rhonda, and thanks to Dugg for organizing a fun and engaging challenge.

The evening’s presentation, *“How to Be the Crew Everyone Wants: Crewing on Someone Else’s Boat,”*

featured a panel of experienced offshore sailors: Liam Quinlan, Victor Weizmann, Rhonda Schuller, and Isabel Bliss. The panel discussed ways to find crewing opportunities through websites such as Find a Crew, Crewseekers, Crewbay, as well as yacht club networks.

Guided by Dugg's questions, the panel shared a wide range of personal experiences—both positive and challenging. An early discussion focused on their top considerations when evaluating a boat or skipper. One panellist recalled meeting a captain who did not carry a life raft because he "didn't intend to need one"—a clear indication that the crewing opportunity was not a good fit.

Some of the key lessons shared by the panel included:

- **Know yourself:** Understand how you respond under stress and be honest about your strengths and limitations.
- **Travel light:** Bring only essential gear and maintain a positive attitude.
- **Understand the skipper's role:** Skippers carry significant responsibility and often experience considerable stress. Avoid taking things personally, understand expectations, and ask questions when uncertain.
- **Clarify roles and expectations:** Establishing clear responsibilities and building rapport early helps prevent misunderstandings. Crew members are guests aboard, but they also have an important role to play.
- **Prioritize safety:** Become familiar with the vessel's safety procedures and equipment.
- **Bring appropriate personal gear:** Personal safety equipment, medications, and reliable communication devices are essential.
- **Research carefully:** Learn as much as possible about the skipper, crew, and vessel before committing to a passage.
- **Contribute to a positive culture:** The best experiences often occur when skippers encourage self-reliance and crew members take initiative while respecting safety protocols and individual preferences.
- **Maintain healthy boundaries:** Clear personal boundaries contribute to both safety and comfort onboard.

Fleet's final gathering of the season will be a celebration of new friendships, lessons learned, and the exciting adventures that lie ahead. Traditionally hosted at Cam and Marianne's home, this annual event has long been an opportunity to reconnect with returning Fleet alumni and share stories from seasons past. This year, the gathering will take place at **Spruce Harbour Marina on Wednesday, June 24**, and will welcome current and former Fleet participants, their spouses and partners, and members of the Vancouver Watch. If you are considering joining Fleet next year, this is an excellent opportunity to meet participants, learn more about the program, and experience the camaraderie that makes Fleet such a valued part of the BCA community.

About The Author

Marilyn Sanford

Windrose -

Marilyn retired from a career as an entrepreneur in the Custom Electronics Industry. She has lived on the coast all her life, always on the water, and currently lives in False Creek on her vessel in Spruce Harbour Marina, a liveaboard community.

VI Chapter Summer Cruising BBQ

https://currents.bluewatercruising.org/event/vi-chapter-members-bbq/

Come out and celebrate the start of the summer cruising season. It's also a chance for any VI leavers to attend one more BCA event before heading off.

VI volunteers will be serving a selection of BBQ meats, vegetarian options, salads, and desserts. The event is open to all VI members, Watchkeepers from other Chapters, and Board members. Advance online registration (including your meal selection) is required by **June 6**.

Volunteers for setup and cleanup are welcome—please contact any Watchkeeper if you can help.

We look forward to seeing you there.

Vancouver Potluck Social: Food, Friends and… Fire Suppression!

https://currents.bluewatercruising.org/event/vancouver-potluck-social-food-friends-and-fire-suppression/

It’s time for another potluck! Once again, the Vancouver chapter will be holding a social club night on June 10. What is a more time-honoured way to socialize, than by eating and drinking together? Please bring an appy, main dish, salad or dessert to share, as well as your appetites.

As part of BCA’s Environmentally and Socially Responsible Cruising initiative, people are encouraged to bring their own dishes to reduce waste. Also, for the benefit of those who may be on more restrictive

diets, please label your dishes with the main ingredients and any allergens they may contain.

We will not be holding a swap meet this year, but bring your fire extinguishers! The fire safety company, Earth, Wind and Fire, will be on site to inspect and re-certify your fire extinguishers, at a cost of $15 per extinguisher. They will also hold a live demonstration of how to use a fire extinguisher, something that most of us have probably (and thankfully) never needed to do!

Sextant Theory and Practice

https://currents.bluewatercruising.org/event/sextant-theory-and-practice-2/

Do you have a sextant but don’t know how to use it? Do you know want to know what MERPASS is? Do you want to learn more about Celestial Navigation? Would you like to have a back-up navigation system you can use if your GPS stops working? Then this is the course for you.

The Vancouver Island Chapter is pleased to offer a one day, in person course on the basic Theory and Practice of the Sextant including calculating latitude and longitude from a noon sight, instructed by Scott Crawshaw. Knowledge of the theory and use of the sextant provides an excellent foundation skill for all offshore sailors and can provide a trustworthy navigation tool when modern systems fail for whatever reason.

The course consists of theory in the morning followed by a practical session at Saxe Point in the early afternoon.

Instructor

Scott Crawshaw has sailed for over 40 years and has over 50,000 miles of ocean water experience. This includes skippering the Royal Canadian Navy's Tall Ship, HMCS Oriole and four years of offshore sailing with his family aboard the sailing vessel ***Peregrinata***. His qualifications include a Transport Canada Master Mariner, unlimited tonnage; a Navy Surface Command Qualification, unlimited tonnage; an ISPA instructor, a CYA Yachtmaster, and a CRYA Ocean Yachtmaster Instructor.

He lives in Victoria with his wife Sonia, where he is a part time yacht surveyor, a navigation and ship handling instructor in a world class bridge simulator, a sailing instructor, a relief skipper for the Pacific Swift, and a full-time grandpa.

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.

Currents Bluewater Cruising

The Bluewater Cruising Association

PDF generated June 01, 2026 at 3:05 PM