
Latitude 38

LIFE-CHANGING LANDFALLS —

PACIFIC PUDDLE JUMP RECAP

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"Our long passage to French Polynesia was rewarded by incredible beauty when we arrived at Nuku Hiva," recalls Robbie Baxter of the Australia-based Orana 44 *Catwagon*. "The entrance to



IB SVANE

Just for the record, Aussie Yadranka Svane of the Hans Christian 38 'Aeolus' strikes a pose at latitude zero.

the bay was amazingly dramatic, with two giant rocks guarding each side of the entrance — just an awesome sight. And the bay was surrounded by rugged, lush, green mountains."

After enduring any extended ocean passage, making landfall is almost always exhilarating. But completing the crossing from the West Coast of the Americas to French Polynesia — a minimum of 2,800 miles — is a particularly

Doug Scott of 'Moondance' finally got to hoist the courtesy flag in anticipation of his Marquesan landfall, after 15 years of pipedreaming.



CARLA SCOTT

good cause for celebration. Because, as veteran circumnavigators know, that's the longest patch of open water a sailor has to face when rounding the globe via the tropics.

Knowing that, we expend lots of time and ink every year celebrating the springtime migration of each new fleet of westbound cruisers, whom we like to call Pacific Puddle Jumpers. Ever since coining that phrase many years ago, we've been co-hosting PPJ Sendoff Parties with the Vallarta YC, at Nuevo Vallarta's Paradise Village Resort, and in recent years also with the Balboa YC on the Pacific side of the Panama Canal.

During the past few seasons, boats that registered with us have been eligible for a special low-cost package that includes clearance in and out, immigration bond exemptions (a substantial saving of time and money), and duty-free fuel access as soon as they arrive in the Marquesas. Now that the word is out about these 'bennies' our Puddle Jump rally has drawn entrants from dozens of countries — 193 registered this year.

We should be clear that unlike the Baja Ha-Ha or the ARC, this is a rally in the loosest possible terms, as boats leave from many different places at different times throughout the spring. But they share tips through seminars before setting out, and keep in touch en route via radio nets. Upon arrival, many Jumpers meet face-to-face for the first time at the Tahiti-Moorea Sailing Rendezvous, which we put on with the support of several Tahitian partners. (See our report in the August edition.)

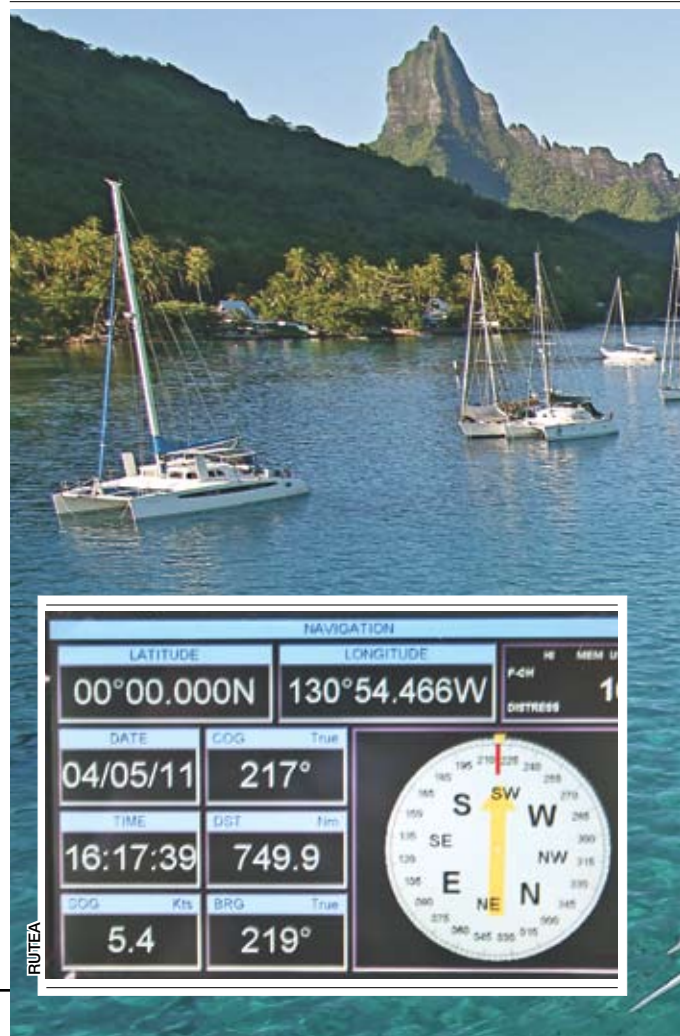
We weren't able to study the experiences of every crew that crossed this year, but the consensus seems to be that 2011 was a mighty fine year to make the jump. Generally speaking, many boats enjoyed good sailing breezes in the 12- to 20-knot range most of the way across, except within the Intertropical Convergence Zone (ITCZ). And — whether by luck or smart planning — many boats found the Zone was relatively narrow where they crossed it, thereby ex-

posing them to relatively short periods of squalls and/or dead air. We're happy to report also that there were no mid-ocean rescues this season, whereas last year there were two that we know of.

At least a half dozen boats left La Cruz, on Mexico's Banderas Bay, on the

"We had a storybook crossing. It was much easier than I anticipated."

same day in late March, and as Neal Schneider of the San Diego-based Contest 48 *Rutea* describes, "We had a storybook crossing. It was much easier than I anticipated. Before we actually 'jumped', I was bracing myself for everything from gales to slatting sails. While we did have short periods of no wind in the doldrums (ITCZ), we had fantastic sailing almost everywhere else. If I had to say what



RUTEA

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surprised me the most, it would be how much I enjoyed the terrific sailing."

New Zealanders Jo and Rob Woollacott left La Cruz two weeks later aboard their home-built 42-ft ketch *Blue Moon*. "We thought we would have doldrums and/or Convergence Zone for days," says Jo, "but we only had a few hours without wind, and a day of squalls in the ITCZ. We know it is all just luck, but we were happily surprised by our weather." They made the trip in an impressive 18 days.

Although no two boats ever experience identical conditions, this year those who stayed longer in the northern hemisphere reported better winds and less sloppy sea conditions than those crossing via the Galapagos, who were typically south of the equator for their entire trip.

Spread: The only time you'll find so many boats in a Tahitian bay is during our annual Rendezvous in Moorea. Insets: Proof of 'Rutea's equator crossing; Fun-loving kids like Francois of 'Calou' (front) always make friends quickly.

As you'll read, the half-dozen boats that crossed from Hawaii this year — which is relatively uncommon — had a challenging crossing, to say the least, with winds forward of the beam for much of the 2,500-mile trip.

As always, the preconceived expectations of many crews differed from the reality of their crossing, sometimes for the better, sometimes for the worse.

"It was much calmer, relaxing and more enjoyable than I thought it would be," reports first-time ocean-crosser Monica McKaskle of the Hawaii-based Easton 40 cat *Savannah*. "The seas really weren't that big and scary."

"I thought three weeks of night watches would be tough," admits Chet Chauhan, skipper of the San Francisco-based Beneteau First 38s5 *Sudden Stops Necessary*. "But we quickly settled into



After 13 years of cruising San Franciscans Vaughn and Sharon Hampton of 'Reality' have learned many 'survival techniques.'

a routine. I was surprised I enjoyed the ocean crossing experience so much, and I'm looking forward to the next one."

"We were surprised at the lack of other vessels en route," recalls Australian Mike Drury of the Fremantle-based IP 420 *Fully Involved*. "We only saw one fishing boat in 24 days and no yachts. There was also a distinct lack of sea life except for birds and the one school of fish we encountered."

"For some reason, we pictured that crossing the doldrums would entail cocktails with umbrellas, and getting lots of jobs done because we'd be in such calm seas," says Shelly Heaslip of the Gulfstar 68 *Imagine* (which is based in Hawaii, but departed from Mexico). "As it turned out, we really didn't experience much of a change in sailing conditions. Most of the squalls were north of the equator and the swell was a continuation of a somewhat confused sea which basically hit us on the beam the whole way."

As is typical year after year, more boats left from Puerto Vallarta and Panama (many of these passing via the Galapagos) than from elsewhere. But others jumped off from a variety of other West Coast locations. "We left Cabo San Lucas," explains Carla Scott of the Albuquerque, NM-based Tayana 42 *Moondance*, "hoping the winds would be in our favor



MEREKAVA



MOONDANCE

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and let us sail to the Gambiers (archipelago). They weren't, so we changed course and headed to the Marquesas. Good choice — we loved Nuku Hiva!"

With this year's generally moderate conditions, the strain on crews was arguably less than in some years. But any way you slice it, crossing 3,000 miles of open water is a long, long trip. "I was surprised at the monotony of the voyage," says Diana Hudson of the Denver-based Shin Fa 45 *Zephyr*. "It was a test not only of the gear on board, but also of the human spirit."

Misery at sea is relative, however. The San Francisco-based Valiant 37 *Reflections* was one of the Hawaii contingent: "Neither of us believed it would be as rough as it was," admits Sheri Seybold.

"It was a wet and wild trip. In fact, this passage has been added to our list of Passages We'd Rather Not Do Again. On

"It was a test not only of the gear on board, but also of the human spirit."

the bright side, we averaged 5.49 knots! That's a pretty respectable speed for two old sailors that hadn't made a long passage in seven years."

Regardless of which year you set sail, just about any major ocean crossing tends to be a series of highs and lows. This year's migration to French Polynesia was no different. Under the heading of 'lows', Bill Campbell and Benita Richardson of the Van de Stadt 44 *Alcheringa II* had some of the worst luck in the fleet. Four days after leaving the Galapagos they were booming along en route to Easter Island when they heard "an almighty bang!" The toggle at the upper end of their forestay had failed. Luckily, jib halyard tension kept the rig up, but the couple was forced to abandon their dreams of seeing the curious monoliths of Easter Island, and instead headed



PHAMBILI



MERKAVA



NEW MORNING

Clockwise from upper left: Looking for landfall on 'Phambili'; Dolphins off the bow of 'Merkava'; Neptune slays a mermaid aboard 'New Morning'; shellbacks pop the champers on 'Sarah Jean II'; equatorial silliness on 'Savannah'; Corie picks a tune aboard 'Rutea'; 'Infini's big catch; swimming with tame rays at Moorea.



ANDY MCKASKLE / SAVANNAH



INFINI

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straight to Tahiti for repairs. "Now we are creeping along at about 3 to 4 knots — walking speed — with about 3,200 miles to go 'til we get a break!" Benita wrote in her blog. Fortunately, the wind angle to Papeete was close to dead astern, so they were able to limp along successfully under main alone, finally arriving after 34 days at sea.

Having sailed far and wide during their 16 years of cruising, Rob and Jo Woollacott are certainly the among most experienced cruisers in this year's fleet. But that didn't make them immune to bad luck. At some point during their passage, Rob jumped overboard to tighten an overly-active rudder bearing

and was stung by a potentially deadly Portuguese man-of-war. As Jo explains, he recovered after downing "massive doses of vitamin C and antihistamines."

Other lows? *Moondance*: "Trying to avoid a big squall that chased us around all night. We were soaked and exhausted when it finally passed us." *Narama*: "A couple of squally days where we constantly had to change sails, or furl and unfurl the jib to deal with the wind changes. It seemed like it would never end." *Savannah*: "Trying to keep up with the energy of a five-year-old on a boat for 21 days."

Calou: "About a week after leaving Mexico our 12-year-old son, Antoine, tried to free something from the freezer by chipping at the ice with a sharp knife, and he pierced the evaporator. Also, *twice* having to physically remove the (full) holding tank and dump it overboard when it refused to empty itself." *Champagne*: "Low points were when repairs caused us to think the voyage might have to be abandoned." They'd intended to cross directly from Long Beach, but had to divert twice to make a variety of repairs (see table on page 102).

When a crewmember aboard *Imagine* was asked why she would want to make this crossing more than once, she aptly observed, "It's like childbirth: You forget." Fortunately, with time most sailors tend to forget about the low points, while the highs remain etched in their memories.

"The star gazing at night was definitely a high point," says Canadian Heidi Krajewsky of the Victoria, B.C.-based *Brolga 33 Narama*. "Another was catching a large tuna and seeing a sperm whale."

"For us, the high point was when we found out we are competent sailors!" says Krister Bowman of the San Francisco-based CS36 *Britannia*. He and his wife Amanda had only been sailing for two years before entering the cruising life last fall. (See last month's *Sightings*.)

"For us the highlight was reaching the most remote islands in the world — Pitcairn and Easter," recalls Noel Parry of the Australia-based Aleutian 51 *Pyewacket II*.

"The awesome moonlit skies and many glorious rainbows were a delight, as were the many gorgeous sunrises and sunsets," remembers Robbie of



Catwagon. "We experienced great sailing in 20-knot winds and flat seas near the equator, but actually crossing it was the highest point for us, as it was a first."

Not only is an equator crossing the ultimate mid-ocean milestone of such a trip, but it gives crews a much-needed excuse to take a break from their usual routines to celebrate and/or get a little silly. Those who've crossed before (called shellbacks) typically perform good-natured initiation ceremonies on first-timers (called pollywogs). Every fun-loving crew had a variation on the ritual, from smearing ketchup or shaving cream in the hair of pollywogs, to dressing in full costume and sharing a toast with King Neptune (or Poseidon, depending on your favorite version of ancient mythology).

The veterans aboard *Blue Moon* initiated their neophyte crewman, Colin, by dressing him in "a skirt made from the

"For us, the high point was when we found out we are competent sailors!"

finest seaweed; he was crowned with urchin spines and adorned with a fresh squid necklace."

The Powell family aboard the Tiburon-based Jeanneau 45 *Calou* got into the act by sharing cake and champagne with Poseidon, then swimming around the boat. Sixteen-year-old Francois and crewman John Thompson actually swam over the equatorial line, as did the crew of *Sudden Stops Necessary*, all three of whom were pollywogs. Their self-initiation ceremony may have been the most elaborate in the fleet, as friends had supplied them with



SARAH JEAN II



SAVANNAH



RUTEA

2011 PACIFIC PUDDLE JUMP PASSAGE DATA

Although many more sailors did the Puddle Jump this year, those who responded to our questionnaire give a representative sampling of passage data.

Boat Name	Boat Make & Length	Captain & Crew	Boat's Homeport	Departed From & Date	Landfall & Date	Days of Xing	Miles of Xing	Equator X Long	Engine Hours	Best 24 Hours	Worst 24 Hours	High Wd Speed	# of Fish Caught	Breakage & Breakdowns
<i>Alcheringa II</i>	Van de Stadt 44	B. Campbell & B. Richardson	Edmonton, AB	Galapagos 5/25	Papeete 6/27	34	3,815	N/A	120 hrs	180	37	25 k	3	forestay toggle, autopilot, gooseneck, backstay frayed
<i>Blue Moon</i>	Woollacott 45	Rob & Jo Woollacott	Devonport, NZ	PV 4/9	Hiva Oa 4/28	18	2,814	128W	4 hrs	175	117	25 k	3	Windex failed (booby), rudder fitting
<i>Britannia</i>	CS 36	Krister & Amanda Bowman	San Francisco, CA	PV 4/9	Nuka Hiva 4/29	19.5	3,000	130W	0 hrs	175	100	< 35 k	0	autopilot belt, torn spinnny clew
<i>Catwagon</i>	F-P 44	Neville Slee & Robbie Baxter	Port Adelaide, AUS	San Diego 4/10	Nuku Hiva 5/11	22	3,200	133W	36 hrs	160	85	35 k	0	spinnaker blowout, leaks
<i>Champagne</i>	Beneteau 42	Clark Hamm & Marga Bakker	Long Beach, CA	Cabo 5/19	Nuku Hiva 6/12	35	3,835	134W	91 hrs	161	97	36 k	5	watermaker, AIS, SSB, autopilot, generator, holding tank, engine, stove
<i>Calou</i>	Jeanneau 47	Powell family	Tiburon, CA	PV 3/25	Fatu Hiva 4/18	23	2,881	128W	30 hrs	154	92	40 k	0	radar, refrigeration, holding tank
<i>Don Quixote</i>	Lagoon 380 cat	Conger family	Seattle, WA	La Paz 4/10	Hiva Oa 5/9	22	2,642	152W	5 hrs	152	74	30 k	1	SS tang, spinnaker hardware
<i>Fully Involved</i>	Island Packet 420	Mike & Jan Drury	Fremantle, AUS	Ensenada 3/8	Nuku Hiva 4/2	26	3,466	133W	42 hrs	191	95	40 k	3	tear in mainsail, voltage regulator
<i>Georgia J</i>	Passport 47	Kim & Sharon Barr	Tiburon, CA	San Diego 4/5	Hiva Oa 4/25	19.5	3,000	135W	200 hrs	208	100	38 k	0	lost nut, dropped lower shrouds, polluted water & fuel, generator
<i>Imagine</i>	Gulfstar 68	David & Shelley Heaslip	Hilo, HI	La Paz 4/17	Hiva Oa 5/6	19	N/A	129W	75 hrs	189	117	25 k	3	blown gennaker & jib, broke outhaul, hydraulics, fridge
<i>Kite</i>	Valliant 42	Jack & Zdenka Griswold	Portland, MN	Galapagos 4/29	Hiva Oa 5/17	18	3,055	N/A	45 hrs	196	138	25 k	N/A	none
<i>Madrona</i>	Tayana 37	O Caddy & C O'Donoghue	Edmonds, WA	Cabo 5/9	Hiva Oa 6/17	38	3,000	130W	22 hrs	147	-7	37 k	N/A	control line on Monitor vane
<i>Merkava</i>	Fraser 41	Mark & Yuka Aisbett	Vancouver, BC	Manzanillo, MX	Hiva Oa 4/12	25	2,986	131W	140 hrs	162	82	25 k	6	voltage regulator, halyard parted
<i>Moondance</i>	Tayana V-42	Doug & Carla Scott	Albuquerque, NM	Cabo 4/6	Nuka Hiva 4/28	22	2,804	129W	34 hrs	168	96	32 k	5	halyard, jib stitching
<i>Narama</i>	Brolga 33	S Anstee & H Krajewsky	Sydney, AUS	Galapagos 4/14	Hiva Oa 5/8	25	2,941	90W	16.3 hrs	155	84	30 k	1	mainsail stitching
<i>Nicone</i>	Contest 41	Peter & Leena Baeni	Helsinki, FIN	Galapagos 4/22	Fatu Hiva 5/15	23	3,132	87W	77 hrs	161	75	22 k	0	topping lift, roller bearing
<i>Pyewacket II</i>	Aleutian 51	Noel & Jackie Parry	Jervis Bay, AUS	Galapagos 2/?	Easter Is	16	2,200	86W	36 hrs	204	50	N/A	3	reefing block exploded
<i>Reflections</i>	Valliant Esprit 37	Gene & Sheri Seybold	San Francisco, CA	Honolulu, HI 4/27	Manihi, Tua 5/16	19	2,509	143W	35 hrs	158	107	46 k	0	leaks, leaks, leaks!
<i>Rutea</i>	Contest 48	Schneider / Sandven family	San Diego, CA	PV 3/23	Hiva Oa 4/10	18	3,076	130W	36 hrs	166	128	< 30 k	N/A	none
<i>Sarah Jean II</i>	Saga 43	Norm & Beth Cooper	Vancouver, BC	PV 3/19	Hiva Oa 4/7	19	2,806	131W	79 hrs	182	100	25 k	N/A	main halyard chafe, whisker pole
<i>Savannah</i>	O Easton 40 cat	Andy & Monica McKaskle	Hilo, HI	PV 3/17	Hiva Oa 4/7	21.5	2,920	130W	50 hrs	188	30	30 k	3	autopilot belt broke
<i>Shango</i>	Pac Seacraft 40	Amy Jordan & Roger Block	Newburyport, MA	Galapagos 3/18	Fatu Hiva 4/8	21	3,075	88W	44 hrs	177	80	30 k	0	none
<i>Sudden Stops Nec</i>	Beneteau 38	Chet Chauhan	San Francisco, CA	PV 3/23	Nuku Hiva 4/15	23	2,900	131W	65 hrs	170	95	30 k	10	rudder play
<i>Tomboy</i>	Alajuela 33	Tom & Janis Bell	Nogales, AZ	PV 3/16	Nuka Hiva 4/8	24	2,975	30W	55 hrs	145	86	35 k	0	Aries gear slipped
<i>Zephyr</i>	ShinFa 45	Bill & Tracy Hudson	Denver, CO	PV 4/9	Nuku Hiva 5/6	27	3,208	130W	51 hrs	150	65	45 k	N/A	roller furler bearing, chafe, vang blocks

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a full kit of accessories before they set sail. It included: "instructions, costumes, champagne, diapers, snacks, and a framed, custom-made equator crossing certificate. We will never forget that day!" insists Captain Chet.

Even after crossing the equator (typically around longitude 130° W) there's still a lot of ocean to cover before making landfall. We won't bore you with details of all the breakage that can

"I remember the wet, smoky smell of land from several miles away."

happen out there. But we can't resist sharing this report from our charming Austrian friend Helmut Supper of the Jeanneau 37 *Anna X*: "We had lots of damage. The first *vorstag* breaks at its base to the ship, the *genuafall* breaks,

blister and *genua* get a bright cut. On the last day also the second *vorstag* was broken. We made the last 60 miles to Hiva Oa with the engine." And you thought you had problems!

Whether limping into the anchorage under torn sails, sputtering in under engine power, or blasting in under spinnaker, making landfall after so many days at sea almost always yields special memories.

We asked fleet members if they recalled the feelings they had at the time: "Elation, excitement, satisfaction, as well as some incredulity that we sailed all that distance," says Jack Griswold of the Maine-based Valiant 42 *Kite*. "I remember the wet, smoky smell of land from several miles away, and a tiny feeling by 'one of us' that we weren't quite ready for it to end."



YADRANKA SVANE

Is Ib Svane being chased by pirates? No way. They're just friendly Polynesian paddlers using 'Aeolus' as a 'pace car' for their workout.

"Our nerves vibrated for days," recalls Toast Conger of the Seattle-based Lagoon 38 *Don Quixote*. "I found myself getting landsick when I climbed out of the dinghy the first time."

"We saw Nuku Hiva in the distance at sunrise. It was like a dream come true," says Tom Bell of the Arizona-based Alajuela 33 *Tomboy*. He and his wife Janis bought the boat in '84 and their South

LIFE-CHANGING LANDFALLS

Pacific charts in '85, but, "life got in the way" of making the trip before now.

Crossing the Pacific to the fabled isles of Polynesia is a dream shared by thousands of sailors all over the world. If you count yourself among them, you may be interested to hear some advice from these 'newly experienced' passage-makers:

Sudden Stops Necessary: "Get a self-steering windvane. Monty, our Monitor windvane steered the boat all the way with no failures and drew no amps!"

Champagne: Consider hiring an exorcist to minimize the breakdown demons! Carry every spare part and tool possible, and make sure people are on board who know how to use them."

Don Quixote: "Wrap your citrus in aluminum foil. And only buy dark panties for all the ladies on the boat."

Anna X: "Forget your provisioning plans, bring as much beer and Tetra Pak



NEW MORNING

The primeval topography of the Marquesas make landfalls there unforgettable. Many Jumpers first meet in such anchorages.

wine as you can. Both are expensive in the islands."

Merkava: "Do it! It is sooo much better than I could have ever imagined. Being out there, and then living here among all these gorgeous islands and friendly local smiles. Every day is a new and exciting adventure, exploring and expanding our understanding of this new world, both above and below the surface."

That lyrical reminiscence is an apt place to end our little recap. As you read this, most of the 2011 fleet has now sailed beyond French Polynesia to the Cook Islands, Samoa and Tonga. And the discovery of each amazing new landfall undoubtedly brings adjustments to their original game plans, that is, if they were silly enough to make schedules in the first place.

For adventurous sailors, the Pacific islands comprise one of the planet's most spectacular playgrounds, and making 'the jump' is only the beginning of a bounty of life-altering discoveries. We wish the Puddle Jump Class of 2011 the best of luck as they journey onward.

— **latitude/andy**

For more info on the annual PPJ rally, visit www.pacificpuddlejumps.com. Online registration for the 2012 crossing will begin in December.