



RisingTides Newsletter

www.RisingTides.org

September 2011

“Think Globally
and Act Locally”

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Membership and Donations

Become a Member

It only takes a minute to become a member of RisingTides and show your support for this important work.

Donations

As a grass roots organization every donation is important to us. Please give what you can.

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RisingTides Update

So far 2011 has been a very interesting year for RisingTides crew Brian Basura and Claudia Richardson. January through April this year the crew continued to work on s/v Skylight in preparation for the next sailing season. In early April, when the weather looked right, and cyclones had finished, the crew sailed on to Vanuatu.

Vanuatu has been an exceptional country to visit. The people are warm and friendly. The Crew took four months in Vanuatu and traveled to many of the central islands. This included Efate, Epi, Lelepa, Ambrym, Espiritu Santo, Malakula, and Awai, Avok, and Uliveo of the Maskelyne Islands.

Being that the team was able to slow down this season and spend four months in Vanuatu, it provided opportunities to meet many of the island villagers, local teachers, as well as other nonprofit volunteers working in the area. With all this interaction we have learned more specifically what the needs of the people are.

This update will highlight the year so far and will provide a new direction for RisingTides as we begin to close out this sailing season and look towards 2012.

In a separate RisingTides Expedition Report (on our website), the team reported on the coral reef survey that was performed in January in Vuda Point, Fiji. Most of the time spent in Fiji saw many maintenance projects completed, in very hot and humid weather conditions along with some humanitarian and ecological work.



Brian inspects the condition of the zinc on the hull of s/v Skylight while hauled-out for fresh antifouling bottom paint

In April the team took off for Vanuatu, a small country made up of a cluster of islands. Here the team found a real paradise that one imagines when thinking of the South Pacific, where most of the people live in small villages, made up of palm or bamboo thatched homes. The island people are very friendly. But we found that they are also in need of many basic supplies. When possible, we distributed ropes, used clothing, and mosquito netting (salvaged from a sunken freighter in Fiji).



Lucy and children of Epi Island with donated clothes and supplies

We had many opportunities to dive or snorkel in Vanuatu. Our surveys were performed on coral reefs off of Ases island and on North Espiritu Santo reefs near Champagne Beach and Hog Harbor. In the anchorages we visited, we found that because of the volcanic nature of these islands, much of the subsurface bottom consisted of black sand and rubble that were not conducive to coral surveys as coral life was scarce in many of these places. However, the selected survey locations did provide excellent reefs for surveys. These surveys, like last year will be submitted to Coral Watch, as well as available to the public when the data is tabulated.



Claudia performs a survey using a transect line



Crown of Thorns are evident upon the reefs

Traveling to Espiritu Santo (Santo) was unique in many ways, however, it is primarily known for its diving on the President Coolidge and Million Dollar Point. These are both artifacts of the WWII area. The United States Navy played a big role in these islands during the war, and in Santo one can stroll through the streets and still see the Quonset huts being used by people and businesses today.

Both the President Coolidge (a WWII troop carrier) and Million Dollar Point are now amazing artificial reefs that provide a home to many reef fish and corals. We were told that it took many years for the ocean to take care of the problems of pollution and for the reef to heal itself. In the picture below are drums that were pushed into the ocean at the end of the war. One can only wonder what they contained at the time they were disposed of here. Many drums have rusted away spilling their unknown contents. The amount of waste and “surplus material” that was pushed into the ocean during that time is mind staggering. Here on can see cranes, forklifts, bulldozers, and much more.



Rusting drums off Million Dollar Point

After Santo, the team slowly headed back towards Port Vila, Efate (one of the main ports to check out of Vanuatu). Unexpectedly, the team found themselves spending a long time in the many anchorages of western Malakula Island.

The team’s first stop was Malua Bay, where they met with the head teachers of the Seventh Day Adventist school. These teachers arranged for Brian and Claudia to come and speak with the secondary school children (7 through level 9). The topics ranged from the importance of education, geography, urbanization, pollution, health issues, and more. The teachers spoke of how hard it is to keep the children motivated to continue their education beyond primary schooling.



Brian speaks to the class

Here we learned that there are many issue pertaining to the needs of the children’s schooling. The chalk board, desks, and benches are the only equipment for learning in the classroom. Although literature on basic science labs are available, all science labs are performed “on the chalkboard” as a discussion only. At our request the teachers provided us with the science lab program for the students. It is our hope that we can help to develop a comprehensive and easy kit for demonstrating these concepts and either provide them to the teachers or return to Vanuatu in the future and work with the students again.

Traveling to South Bay Malekula, we met David, a young man who gave us a tour of his village and a large lagoon that adjoins it. He explained to us how the land is divided up to support the families of each village and that the chief ensures that each family, although they may not own the land, will have land to farm. David was also the first islander that spoke to us about the effects of global warming on his village, how the weather was increasingly getting worse each year, how the village is recently experiencing floods, and how they had to move the village back from the ocean front. As we saw where they had moved, we were concerned because this back them up to the foot of the cliffs and in a short time, there will be no place to go. David also showed us many areas where the hillside has recently collapsed in landslides.



David points to the recent landslide and it's aftermath

The team traveled on to the Maskelyne Islands off of the southern tip of Malakula Island. On Awai Island Brian helped one person by fixing his generator and this turned into a four day, all day event, as men from other islands would pull (row) their canoes across two miles of water, while balancing broken generators on the bow of their canoes. Many generators were fixed and Brian taught some of the island boys how to use the hand tools. Brian questioned the owners of the generators on the use and, where appropriate and in terms they understood (ie. Bags of Copra), urged them to look at using solar for cost savings and impact to the environment.



Brian changes a broken generator crankshaft with help from Sovereign

In addition, they would bring old fishing net transponders to see if the solar panels in these worked, and if they did, could Brian make a light for their home so that they could see at night.



Using parts found around the boat, we turn an old fishing net transponder into LED lighting for the islander's home (a couple of these were made)

In Awai Bay, the team met up with other U.S. sailing vessels from last season. When one of the boats, former school teacher, organized a Bingo game for the children of Avok Island on Children's Day, the team quickly volunteered for the fun as well as donating Frisbees and a child's life preserver to be handed out as prizes.



Crowd gathered to play Bingo



Child concentrating on her Bingo card

While in the Maskelyne Islands, RisingTides teamed up with the Butterfly Foundation which is a New Zealand based non-profit organization. Their team members had heard of Brian's efforts to help the islanders with their broken generators, and it happened that they planned a workshop on the nearby island of Uliveo, however, due to unforeseen circumstances their instructor was not able to make it to Vanuatu. They contacted Brian and he was happy to fill in as an instructor for a two day vocational course on basic troubleshooting techniques, generator and outboard motor repair, and on the design and repair of solar power installations.



Brian teaches a workshop on the internals of the outboard motor



Vocational Workshop 2011
Brian with students around the Lister Engine

We heard from the Butterfly Trust that three of these men traveled to an outer island and successfully repaired four broken generators using the troubleshooting techniques they learned in the workshop. A positive testimony to Brian's efforts in training and their desire to learn new skills.

Claudia was able to meet with Mr. John Laggette, Uliveo's Environmental Manager who is responsible for the education and the distribution of environmental awareness materials to the Maskelyne Islands. John is also actively surveying the reefs of the Maskelyne's utilizing the full Reef Check survey process as well as performing surveys on sea cucumbers and sea turtles. John was kind enough to share survey identification cards on these two species with Claudia.



Community bulletin board for posting environmental information



Information on over fishing, sustainable fishing, and turtle protection

Claudia also spent time with the volunteer ladies that run the Women's Resource Center in the village of Sangalai on Uliveo Island. The Center is new and hopes to support the needs of the island's women with programs that pertain to them.



Women's Resource Center



Domestic violence awareness

Currently, the RisingTides team is located in the developed country of New Caledonia, governed by France. The team is using good weather and calm anchorages to work on the s/v Skylight. Technically, New Caledonia is not in the South Pacific but in the Coral Sea. The weather and water temperature is now much cooler than what the team had been accustomed to as the team readies themselves for the final passage to Australia in early October.

Claudia Richardson

Plans for the Future

Originally, RisingTides had a two year mission to perform reef surveys in the South Pacific. As we come to the end of the second sailing season, the Board of Directors are evaluating our past two year's successes, and determining the focus of RisingTides in the years ahead. Our experience in 2010 and 2011 has shown us that there is a tremendous need in the South Pacific for "hands-on" science education and vocational training. With that in mind, we are working to incorporate this into our mission for the organization as well as a program to share our expedition insights and challenges with school children in the United States.

Getting RisingTides Out There!

RisingTides is always in search of interested youths to communicate with while we are underway. If you know of any teacher or student of any age interested in our efforts, please pass along our URL www.risingtides.org or email us at info@risingtides.org as we are more than happy to provide any information needed.

Fundraising and Donations

Keep RisingTides afloat! Your donations are appreciated. There are always much needed repairs and provisioning needed to s/v Skylight. You can [donate](#) directly via a secure [PayPal](#) transaction or other methods (please see our website for further information).

Help spread the word! Pass our URL along to those you know who might be interested in supporting RisingTides. www.RisingTides.org

Our sincerest thanks to the following

Ross Overstreet – RisingTides California for your continuous time and energy spent taking care of the business end of the organization and sending much needed repair parts.

Bruce Basura – Brother and Friend, for your help in obtaining repair parts, supplies, and performing Google searches for us.

Our friends and family, who provide much needed emotional support that keeps us going.

All our past and present supporters without whom we would not be able to achieve our mission.

And of course, all the wonderful islanders we have met along the way.