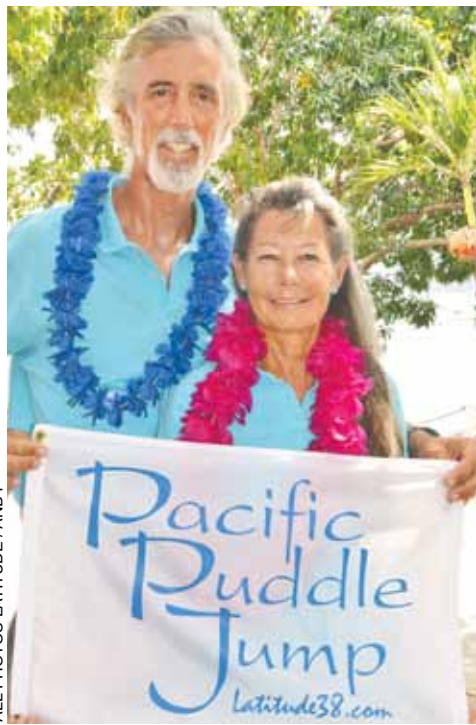


# PACIFIC PUDDLE JUMP PROFILES, PT II —

In 1513, when Spanish explorer Vasco Núñez de Balboa became the first European to lay eyes on the Pacific Ocean, he was actually looking for gold. Today, many of the sailors who reach the Pacific via the Panama Canal are seeing it for the first time also. But they're traveling in search of a different sort of 'precious commodity': access to storied isles of the South Pacific.



The 'French Curve' crew shows off their new PPJ burgee. Every boat crew who attends our sendoff parties gets one.

On any day at this time of year you can find dozens of international cruising boats in the anchorages and marinas of Panama, most of which will soon jump off on the long passage to French Polynesia that we like to call the Pacific Puddle Jump.

In addition to the continuous stream of westbound yachts arriving from Europe, Africa, the Caribbean and the Eastern Seaboard of the US, many West Coast cruisers stage for the Jump here also, having completed stints of cruising in Mexico and Central America.

The sailors you'll meet in these pages were all guests at our two Pacific Puddle Jump Sendoff Parties at the Balboa YC (on the Pacific side of the Ditch) and the Shelter Bay Marina (on the Caribbean side). As you'll learn, their backgrounds and the ultimate destinations they seek are as varied as their nationalities. We wish them all the best of luck on the crossing.

## French Curve — Beneteau First 47.7 Mark & Cheryl Mitchell, San Diego, CA

After sailing south with the 2013 Baja Ha-Ha rally, Mark and Cheryl have spent the past year and a half exploring Mexico and Central America. Probably the most exciting — if not terrifying — experience thus far was when a 50-knot *Papagayo* wind piped up as they were rounding Cabo Santa Elena, Costa Rica. They clocked 17 knots under main alone going DDW. "It was insane; an 'E ticket'," says Mark.

Twenty-five years ago, the couple 'sailed' the Society islands on a *Wind-song* cruise for their honeymoon. And as Cheryl puts it, "Mark's been wanting to go back and relive that honeymoon ever since." They wisely secured six-month, long-stay visas, and their schedule is open-ended.

## Nauti Nauti — Leopard 40 Allen & Patricia Valkie Fond du Lac, WI

"Forty or 50 years ago I went to Tahiti three times by air, and those were some of the best experiences of my life," says Allen. "Ever since then I've dreamed of getting back to it." Patricia chimes in, "I married him when I heard what he wanted to do."



This crew is 'Nauti Nauti'.

It's taken them 10 years to put all the pieces of their plan together, but now they're finally heading west with an open-ended timetable.

## Sea Angel — Lagoon 42 TPI David Lawn, San Francisco, CA

"We're actually headed for Tonga to work for a nonprofit called Sea Mercy," explains David. The two-year-old organization provides "floating health care clinics" in outlying areas of Tonga, Fiji and



'Sea Angel' Samaritans.

Vanuatu. "I wanted to buy a boat and give back a bit with the skills I have," explains David. "I'll do it for as long as I feel compelled."

Ironically, only a few days after that conversation Cyclone Pam clobbered Vanuatu, leaving those sparsely developed islands in a terrible state. Sea Mercy quickly became involved with the relief effort. (See: [www.seamercy.org](http://www.seamercy.org).)

Wes Williams will crew on the passage to French Polynesia.

## Antara — Westsail 42 Don Russell, Oakland, CA

Talk about a longtime plan. Don claims he's been pipedreaming about making an extended South Pacific voyage since his teen years when he read about Robin Lee Graham's adventures aboard *Dove*. Now, decades later, he'll follow Graham's lead. Don often sails singlehanded, but on the crossing he'll be joined by his son-in-law and friend Tom Abbott.



Buddies aboard 'Antara'.

## Maluhia — Catana 42s David & Kim Wegesend, Aiea, HI

After a long stint exploring Mexican waters and upgrading their boat, David and Kim began heading south toward Central America on New Year's Eve 2013 and were promptly greeted by a ferocious rainstorm complete with thunder and lightning. Their route to Panama was an unusual one: After Costa Rica they sailed to the Galapagos for a two-month visit, then to the Ecuadorian coast where they left *Maluhia* for several months to travel inland. They absolutely loved 'Darwin's islands'. So much so, in fact, that they'll make another stopover there while en route to Polynesia.



Hawaiians on 'Maluhia'.

ALL PHOTOS LATITUDE / ANDY

# ALL THE BEST IS WEST

## **Guinevere I — Hallberg-Rassy**

**Ben & Marian Gendre, Edmonton, AB**

"If things go as planned," say Ben and Marian, "we'll probably go to French Polynesia, then up to the Line Islands



*The 'Guinevere I' crew.*

and Hawaii. If we really like Tahiti the first time through, we might sail back there again from Hawaii for another visit the next season.

"We actually started out with a plan to circumnavigate

the globe in the other direction, but since arriving in Panama we've become convinced that all the best is west, so why would you want to go east?"

## **Vimy — Beneteau First 47.7**

**Darryl Laurin, Vancouver, BC**

It's pretty obvious that Darryl enjoys singlehanded, as he's sailed mostly solo since buying this boat in Barcelona. He did two circuits around the Med, crossed the Atlantic, then explored the Caribbean. Now it's off to Tahiti alone and on around the world.



*Darryl of 'Vimy'.*

It's not that he doesn't enjoy traveling partners, though. As he explains, "My girlfriend doesn't like sailing. She likes British Airlines tickets to visit me wherever I go." Yeah, he's a retired pilot.



*The 'Orient' crew is on the home stretch.*

## **Orient — Beneteau Oceanis 473**

**Maurice Cross, Auckland, NZL**

When we met Maurice and his two strapping young crewmen, Patrick and Adam, they were about to set off on the final sprint of a very fast lap around the planet. They'd departed from their homeport, Auckland, only seven months earlier. Why the rush? Who knows? Perhaps because fast is fun.

As you might imagine, the toughest sailing was going around Africa, and some of the sweetest was sailing up the South Atlantic to Brazil and the Caribbean. Once back home, Maurice will definitely keep the boat. "I'll be back here again one day," he predicts.

## **Sail la Vie — Catalina/Morgan 45**

**Lars Larsen & Laura Crowell**  
**Park City, UT**

We were happy to hear Frank confirm that our South Pacific seminars had a positive influence on his cruising plans. "I went to the Seattle Boat Show a year ago and heard about all this," recalls the Utah native, "then bought a boat in Gig Harbor not long afterward." There, he met Laura, as her boat was in the

*Attendees to our Balboa YC fiesta strike a pose. Far right, out of frame, is the end of the Canal.*

neighboring slip. They hit it off, and he soon convinced her to quit her job, sell her boat and sail around the world with him. So far, he says, we're having nothing but fun.

Seems that Lars definitely found the right shipmate. Laura has been sailing inshore waters since she was 13, but had never been out on the open ocean. Now that she's been initiated she says, "I'm in love with sailing offshore."



*Matched up on 'Sail La Vie'.*

## **Suluk — Tradewind 35**

**Pieter Bokhoven, Gouda, NED**

As Peter explains, "When I was 16 I started sailing on the North Sea, and after a while I started dreaming about far-

off destinations." These days, he's become a very experienced singlehander. In 1994 and '95 he did a solo circuit around the Atlantic. Then eight years later he set out to pursue what he considers to be the dream of his life: to sail to New Zealand in his own boat. With any luck, he'll make landfall there in a few months, and will begin extensive travels in that island nation.



*Pieter of 'Suluk'.*

## **Hot Lips —F-P 40 cat**

**Richard Selby, NZL**

Richard bought this lovely Fountaine-Pajot cat almost three years ago out of a charter fleet in Turkey. Having



# PACIFIC PUDDLE JUMP PROFILES, PT II —



**Our PPJ party at Shelter Bay Marina was a huge success, with boats from many nations.**

vacationed in Tahiti 40 years ago, he's anxious to get back there for a second look. Afterward, he hopes to reach his New Zealand homeport by Christmas.

**Cattiva — Beneteau 39  
Maurice Graff  
& Maria Di Giandomenico  
Toronto, CAN**

As Maurice explains, "We waited until late in life to buy a boat." Before officially becoming full-time cruisers this year, Maurice and Maria were part-timers for five years, doing stints of sailing in the Bahamas and Trinidad.



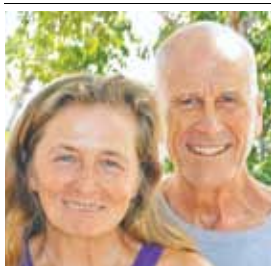
**Canadians on 'Cattiva'.**

"I eventually got a little bored with the Caribbean," admits Maria. "I said, 'I need more.'" Maurice wasn't ready to stop cruising, so they evolved their current plan to head west to French Polynesia.

**Ednbal — Beneteau 393  
Roger Boxall & Sasa Barac  
Fremantle, AUS**

Often when we meet Aussie cruisers in Panama, they've just bought a boat and are beelining home with it. But that's not Roger and Sasa's story. They bought this comfy Beneteau on the East Coast of the US nine years ago and have been sailing the heck out of her ever since. "We sailed around the Caribbean — both east and west — for three years, then over to the Med for three or four years, then back here (Western Carib) for a couple more years," says Roger, "and now we're off to the South Pacific."

"We think we'll be out in the Pacific for another three or four year — heading back home gently and slowly."



**Sasa & Roger of 'Ednbal'.**

"We went to Tahiti years ago on a bareboat charter cruise," explains Sasa, "but only 10 days there was much too short." One of the things they're looking forward to most is kiteboarding — a sport they both took up only recently — on the flat water of the Tahitian lagoons.

**Joalea — Hylas 54  
Tony Monteiro & Margaret de Araujo  
Vancouver, B.C.**

Due to a recording glitch, we lost most of our interview with Tony and Margaret, but we do recall that since buying this boat four years ago, they've put plenty of miles on her, and are thrilled to be heading out to the islands



**The 'Joalea' crew.**

now, with their 24-year-old daughter Jessica along as crew, in addition to friend George Sandor.

Evidently the couple secured long-stay visas, as their game plan is to cruise French Polynesia for a year.

**Continuum — Caliber 40 LRC  
Bob & Mona Jankowski,  
New Bern, NC**

Although Bob and Mona, are actually

from Valparaiso, Indiana — not exactly a major sailing center — they are seasoned sailors, who've been out cruising for two years. Unlike most of the folks we meet at our Sendoff Parties, they had no intention of heading to Tahiti until they got swept up in the enthusiasm of the many west-bound cruisers whom they met in Panama.

The decision to follow their lead proved to be truly serendipitous, because about 3/4



**'Continuum' to the rescue.**

of the way across they found themselves answering a mayday call from another PPJ boat, the Canadian-flagged S&S 42 *Nirvana Now*. Because that boat had both a disabled rudder and headstay problems, owners Randy and Dawn Ortiz made the tough decision to scuttle their floating home and accept a ride to the Marquesas from *Continuum*.

**SeaKey — Lagoon 380 S2  
Rick Naugler & Lara Basbas  
Key West, FL**

"For 30 years I've been dreaming of next week, when I'll set sail for Tahiti," says Rick. Part of the reinforcement for that dream — and the general idea of vagabonding around by boat — was due to his working for years as a manager at Jimmy Buffet's famous Margaritaville



**The international 'SeaKey' crew.**

bar and restaurant in Key West.

After that, Rick made a radical change and lived for six years in the Philippines, where he met lovely Lara. They bought

# ALL THE BEST IS WEST

this boat last year, and somewhere along the way picked up two Swiss crew, Lorraina and Nicco. *SeaKey's* future is wide open, but the Philippines is definitely on the destination list.

## **Anahata — Passport 42** **David Hartman, Toronto, ON**

Inspired by the writings of Bernard Moitessier and other classic sailing authors, David says, "The Caribbean was nice, but I'm *really* looking forward to getting out to the South Pacific." He claims he's dreamed of sailing there for 35 years.



'Anahata' David.

A Canadian, originally from South Africa, David learned to sail at age 12. Perhaps that's why he's comfortable singlehandedly this 42-footer. On the crossing to the Marquesas, however, he will have several crew. David's long-term cruising plan: "Getting lost in the Pacific."

## **Il Sogno — Oyster 56** **Craig & Karene White, Newport, RI**

After busy careers in the Big Apple (New York City), Craig and Karene are thrilled with the cruising lifestyle they've had for the past four years — mostly in the Caribbean.



'Il Sogno' is westbound.

"I've been to many places in the world," says Craig, a former journalist, "but I haven't really spent much time in any of them. Now I really enjoy seeing the world at seven knots rather than 700."

For Karene, who is relatively new to sailing, meeting new people along the way has been the highlight so far. After French Polynesia, the couple's plans are flexible — as well they should be, given the nature of the cruising lifestyle.

## **Ambler — Self-built Ferro 40** **Tom Olson & Jan Holbrook** **Olympia, WA**

Unlike many cruisers who spend years building up a nest egg before finally going cruising, Tom and Jan have

their own approach: "We sail a while, then we stop and work for a while,"

says Tom, "then we sail a bit and we work some more. We've been on our boat since 1982." Prior to that, explains Jan, "We spent nine years building it."

Their first crossing to French Polynesia was 30 years ago — back when the islanders raced in the lagoons aboard wooden outrigger canoes rather than the sleek fiberglass boats used today, and the raucous and raunchy Quinn's Bar still raged every night, just a short stumble from where yachts stern-tied along the Papeete quay.

As you'll read in our *Sightings* profile of Tom and Jan, they've had more than a few adventures during their 33 years aboard *Ambler* — a well-named boat, if ever there was one.

## **Oceanna — Lagoon 410 cat** **Greg & Kaycee Evans, Victoria, BC**

Ironically, in our interview lineup behind the vastly experienced *Ambler* crew, were some of the fleet's greenest ocean voyagers, Canadians Greg and Kaycee. What they lack in experience, though, they make up for with enthusiasm.

During a surf trip to Fiji a few years ago, Greg was first exposed to the cruising lifestyle, and despite the fact that he'd never sailed before, he immediately decided that traveling under sail would fit perfectly with his twin passions: surfing and spearfishing. If we've got the story straight, not long after the Fiji trip, while working in the Canadian oil fields to put together a cruising kitty, he met Kaycee.

They bought *Oceanna* sight-unseen, and when they arrived in North Carolina to inspect their purchase they found her in pretty rough shape. But after five months of hard work, they had her back in seaworthy condition again. And after "loading up with spearguns and surfboards," they took off last April on the big adventure.



The ambling 'Ambler' crew.



Surf's up on 'Oceanna'.

## **Boxing Kangaroo — Van de Stadt 34** **Bregt & Lynn Swinnen, Antwerp, BEL**

Some European sailors we meet in Panama have never heard of *Latitude*, but we were pleased to learn that Bregt is a longtime reader of the online version.

"Circumnavigating is a longtime dream for me," he explains. But Lynn claims she had never sailed before departing Belgium in 2013 — and the first leg was in the notoriously rowdy Bay of Biscayne. So far, she is "hanging on" with no threats of jumping ship. Their eventual plan is to sail all the way back home via the Cape of Good Hope. As Bregt puts it, "Only three more oceans to cross."



'Boxing Kangaroo' crew.

## **Palarran — Hans Christian 38T** **CB & Tawn Midkiff, Seattle, WA**

"I didn't even know this was a thing," recalls CB, explaining that Tawn, who is a lifelong sailor, introduced him to the sport with an unforgettable experience.



The 'Palarran' pals.

"His first time sailing," she says with a laugh, "was on a Chicago to Mac Race during one of the worst storms in 75 years."

Born into a sailing family, Tawn says she's wanted to cross oceans on her own boat since she was a kid. Having now amassed a cruising kitty that will hopefully last for four or five years, the couple refers to their current status as "pre-tirement." (Actually, they'd like to go all the way around the world, but don't want to jinx it by saying so.) By the way, in case you're wondering, the name *Palarran* was borrowed from JRR Tolkien and means 'far wanderer'.

## **Wairua — Freedom 33** **Andy & Megan Vance, Kerikeri, NZL**

Andy, a native New Zealander, bought

# PACIFIC PUDDLE JUMP PROFILES, PT II —



'Wairua' is NZ bound.

*Wairua* in Hawaii 10 years ago and sailed her to Seattle. There, he met Megan, then a grad student, who is originally from Southern California. It was definitely a fortunate matchup, as she grew up in a sailing family — "My parents threw me in a Sabot when I was six" — and she raced FJs for UCSB during her college years.

The couple has already had plenty of adventures aboard *Wairua*, including a trip up to Alaska. But the goal now is to island-hop west to her official homeport, Kerikeri, New Zealand.

## **Dora — Custom Van der Stat 37 The Horvath family, HUN**

It's rare enough to find a sailing family who comes from a landlocked country such as Hungary, but the Horvaths actually built their own boat over a seven-year period — out of aluminum, no less.



Being landlocked didn't stop the 'Dora' crew.

We're not sure where they got the inspiration to pursue the cruising life, but Attila (dad), Erika, (mom), and their kids Dora and Daniel all seemed psyched up to be about to jump off for the islands. They intend to circumnavigate.

## **Jenny — Jeanneau 45 Alan Franklin & Lynne Gane Southampton, GBR**

"The boat has already done one global circuit," explains Lynne, "and we're about to embark on the second." Since leaving England, she and Alan cruised with the OCC East Atlantic Rally before crossing to the Caribbean. Before crossing to Panama, they thoroughly explored the Windward Antilles islands.



Lynne of 'Jenny'.

Their game plan now is to island-hop to Australia, then eventually up to Indonesia and Japan, then east across the Pacific to British Columbia.

## **Mezzaluna — Tashiba 40 Jeff Anderson & Katie Lauritzen Bay View, WI**

We didn't get to know Jeff and Katie very well, but we do know that they are both longtime sailors who retired early to pursue their cruising dreams. They bought this boat — a former Caribbean 1500 winner — six years ago. Their goal this season is to reach New Zealand, but after that *Mezzaluna's* schedule is wide open.



'Mezzaluna' Midwesterners.

## **Firefly — Contest 33 Drew Morant & Shelly Tennyson AUS**

"This is literally the third time we've left to do this — on the third boat," says Drew, an Australian who works professionally aboard yachts with his American girlfriend Shelly. "This time we're pretty determined to actually get across to the other side."

Their previous attempt at jumping the puddle was two years ago, when they bought a boat on the West Coast with the intention of taking her into the Pacific. But they liked Mexico so much that they stayed for five months and screwed up their timetable. Drew and Shelly eventually sold that boat, then bought and sold another, and now they're cruising aboard *Firefly*, a Dutch-built sloop that they picked up recently in Florida.

"We've been wanting to do this together for six years," explains Shelly. "So it's time to stop screwing around and do it!"



Third-timers Drew & Shelly.

## **Falshator — Hanse 445 John & Shelly Colebourne Auckland, NZL**

For John, who is a former racer, the

transition to the cruising life hasn't been easy, but after nearly a year and a half he is definitely warming up to it. He and Shelly bought this boat in Croatia, cruised the *Med* for nine months, then crossed to the Caribbean last December.

Now they're excited to be heading west into the Pacific, but their trip home might be a little rushed, as they hope to reach Auckland by October, when their eldest daughter is due to have a baby. John offers these thoughtful words to would-be cruisers who have yet to leave the dock: "Your dreams are what give you strength. But you never know if you have the strength to realize your dreams — unless you try."

## **Fanny Fisher — Jeanneau 42 DS David & Dimity McMurtrie Sydney, AUS**

This spirited Aussie couple subscribe to the six-on, six-off plan. That is, since buying the boat in the *Med* in 2011, they've spent six months a year sailing and six months at their home, 500 kilometers inland of Sydney.

The Jeanneau sloop takes her name from one of the first two boats built Down Under. Launched in the 1820s, the original *Fanny Fisher* was owned by Dimity's great grandfather, who famously won the first race between the two boats, from the Manning River build site to Sydney. He went on to be harbormaster of the port.

## **Phileas — Lagoon 450 The Erodiades family, Toulon, FRA**

The handsome Erodiades family left Europe four years ago, and judging by their upbeat attitude, they seem to be thoroughly enjoying the cruising life.

"It was a longtime dream for us to cruise the world with our family," says Nicolas (dad). "Yes," adds Virginie (mom), "it was his idea was to leave our country, and my idea to cross the Canal and sail to French Polynesia."

"And we are very happy that we will



John of 'Falshator'.



Aussies on 'Fanny Fisher'.

# ALL THE BEST IS WEST



**The family on 'Phileas' may circumnavigate.**

meet not only French people there," adds Nicolas. Their daughter Etina and son Oscar are always on the lookout for other 'kid boats'.

**Toccata — Najad 440  
Anne Lomax & Peter Kemp  
Cape Town, RSA**

You might say that Brad and Saskia Stemmet were testing the waters of the cruising life when we met them. They are taking 10 months to crew aboard this Swedish-built 44-footer for her parents (who were out of town at the time of our Shelter Bay fiesta.) The young couple races cats back home in South Africa, and they have dreams of retracing this voyage before too long in their own boat. As we often observe, learning a route while aboard OPBs (other people's boats), is a great preparation for doing it on your own.



**'Toccata' is from Africa.**

**Unwind — Simonis Voogd 48  
Niels & Margret Hendriks  
Barendrecht, NED**

Having bought this custom-built aluminum sloop in South Africa, where they own a business, Dutch citizens Niels and Margret are now headed around the world. Or should we say the rest of the way around the world. They've already sailed up the South Atlantic, of course, and have bounced all around both sides of the Caribbean



**Planning to 'Unwind'.**

basin.

Having done lots of sailing in Holland before moving to Africa, it was tough for them to be boatless there for 10 years, so they were itching to get back out on the water and pursue their longtime dream of circumnavigating. After 10 years there, when their dogs died they took it as a signal that it was finally time to go.

**Imoogi — Catalina 470  
Dean & Sally Johns, Brisbane, AUS**

Now that many if not most international boat listings are available on the Internet, customers sometimes come from halfway around the world to make a sweet deal. That was the case with Dean and Sally. When they bought this boat in Daytona Beach, FL — we assume for a very good price — she had never been sailed. A 2001 model, she had suffered some internal fire damage before ever being sold, then sat in a yard for a decade before she was bought by a group who repaired the fire damage, then ran out of money.



**They got 'Imoogi' sailing.**

After Dean and Sally took possession, they did a nine-week refit, which included equipping her with up-to-date nav and communications gear. Once home in Brisbane, they'll start building a kitty for their next extended cruise. "Maybe we'll see you back here in about five years," says Dean.

**Ocean Star — Beneteau 50  
Steve & Alice O'Brien, Kemah, TX**

Since buying this boat in Virginia five years ago, Steve and Alice have explored much of the US East Coast, as well as both sides of the Caribbean Basin.

They share a longtime dream of circumnavigating, and while they're not making any promises that they'll complete a full lap, Steve says, "We'll get at least as far as Indonesia and Thailand." Two highlights thus far have been Roatan, where they loved the diving, and



**Texans on 'Ocean Star'.**



Grenada, which is home to a "wonderful cruising community."

Unfortunately, Steve was due to have two surgeries in Panama when we met him. But, typical of a Texan, he was stoic about his situation, and hopeful to still make the crossing this season, albeit a bit later than originally planned.

**Flying Cloud — Taswell 44  
Walter & Meryl Conner, Seattle, WA**

We first met Walt and Meryl Conner at a Tahiti seminar years ago, but their cruising dreams had been sparked long before that. "We've sailed and read *Latitude* our whole lives," explains Walt, "so an extended cruise like this has been on the horizon for a long time."



**Seattelites on 'Flying Cloud'.**

They picked up this comfy cruiser in Florida four years ago, and since then have cruised the Caribbean extensively — all up and down the Antilles chain and across the north coast of South America to Panama.

Having secured one-year long-stay visas at the French consulate in Panama — where the staff is reputed to be very friendly and helpful — their French Polynesian cruising options are completely flexible.

We'll suspend our coverage of the 2015 Puddle Jump here, but in the coming months look for our report on the Tahiti-Moorea Sailing Rendezvous plus the complete PPJ Recap on this year's westward migration.

— andy