

KREG & MARGARET, MATING CUTTLEFISH, JOHN & MARY, PILOT WHALES & NUDIBRANCHS, NUDIBRANCHS, NUDIBRANCHS, PYGMIES, BABIES, TOM & NANCY, NEW SITES, HEADSTART GRADUATION!

Hi, Everyone,

WHEW!! And another month has swum by filled with new folks, new critters, new sites and lots of fun. Kreg and Margaret finished out their stay with a full day up near Mbili village checking out muck diving in the inner lagoon. We discovered close to a dozen fish unknown to us. A dusk dive in the passage yielded Kreg magnificent photos of mating cuttlefish. We bid them a reluctant good-bye, thanking them profusely for turning our focus to the rare and unusual.

A few days to catch up on maintenance and a couple of exploratory dives, and we greeted John and Mary Munch, who delightfully educated us on the discovery of nudibranchs, their prime field of interest. Jane Chandler and her brother Luke joined us for their first day, featuring a brief romp with a massive bull pilot whale and his cohorts.

With John and Mary we found a long list of new nudi species, including 4 unidentified ones. They also helped us fulfill one of our goals- finding the tiny (smaller than your little fingernail) pink pygmy seahorses that live on- guess what- pink sea fans. We knew they were there, but hadn't spent an entire dive devoted to finding them. I haven't the patience (or, if I'm being really truthful, the eyesight) to hunt them down. Mary and John asked to do a sea horse dive, and we leaped at the chance. 5 of the lovely, minute creatures rewarded our scrutiny. On their last dive in the Lagoon Passage, I was praying to find the "ultimate" nudibranch- and I did. Quite unlike anything any of us had seen before. We learned an important truth about nudibranchs- do not judge by appearance. We were passing over ones we were sure we'd ID'd, only to discover that the difference of a few spots or rings, or stripes here and there could mean an entirely different species.

And too soon we were bidding them safe travel, and welcoming Tom Shockley and Nancy Kainoa, 2 very special guests. For those new to the Niusletter, Tom and I were married for 24 years, and owned and operated Dive Makai Charters for 29 years. Tom is still working for Dive Makai, and now acts as our US Agent and a very close friend. Nancy worked for us as divemaster and captain. We shared 9 days of diving, story-ing (Tom LOVES to talk story, and had no shortage of villagers for an audience), sharing our morning passage of the dolphins, evening bat shows, walking the magical path of fireflies (pinopino) at dusk. While Nancy dove every dive she could, Tom kept the hammock under the palm trees from blowing away (a serious job) and

recovered from a bit of flu. He joined us for their last day at Kicha, fulfilling a dream of doing another "fishfall" dive.

Tom taught my divemasters a course in regulator repair- not my field of expertise. We were a bit teary-eyed sharing with my crew that Tom taught me to dive with a standard of excellence; I am endeavoring to pass his legacy of excellence to them, and hope that they will carry it on to future generations of Solomon Islanders. With their luggage loaded with choice carvings and

Nancy swearing she was NOT going to get into any little plane that could land on a grass strip, quick hugs good-bye kept the tears at bay.

ODDS AND ENDS- baby season is in full swing in the sea- at Kicha, juvenile anthias and damsels rise in glittering clouds 3-4 feet off their resident coral heads. Blues, pinks, purples & yellows.

Rubble patches zoom with baby wrasses. The guessing game of "Who are you going to be when you grow up" is underway in earnest. -----Our Headstart kids held closing ceremonies and graduation for those headed for primary school; they're out for the summer, and we're planning summer camp programs for all the kids. Again, so many thanks for those who have donated to support these programs.

And we continue to ever explore new dive sites- Male Male FANtasy; Male Male Sandfall join our permanent roster.

And I must confess- today we were supposed to resume classes, but we awoke to a morning of brilliant sunshine and flat seas- and easily gave into the temptation to play. Tanks, food, dogs and divers headed for Kicha and "End Of The World"- a favorite that requires excellent conditions and features endless fish of every description, huge bumphead parrots, curious sharks, and walls of yellow and white soft corals. A lunch onshore of fresh caught rainbow runner, papaya, coconut, etc refueled our energy stocks. A short trek into the bush found me in a cacaphony of dove calls; looking up to the forest canopy, I could see them by the hundreds. Fantastic Fans fulfilled it's promise of gorgeous scenery and myriad fish of every hue imaginable. Our ride home was interrupted by sightings of small, as yet in ID'd whales ( or big dolphins). our resident spinners, a flocks of frigates wheeling after bait schools in the azure sky. I sat on my deck with 2 pooped pups and inhaled the sunset tapestry. A perfect day.

And with that, I will leave you with all our best wishes from the whole gang here at Vuana. May your holidays bring peace, and adventure, and reunions with loved ones,

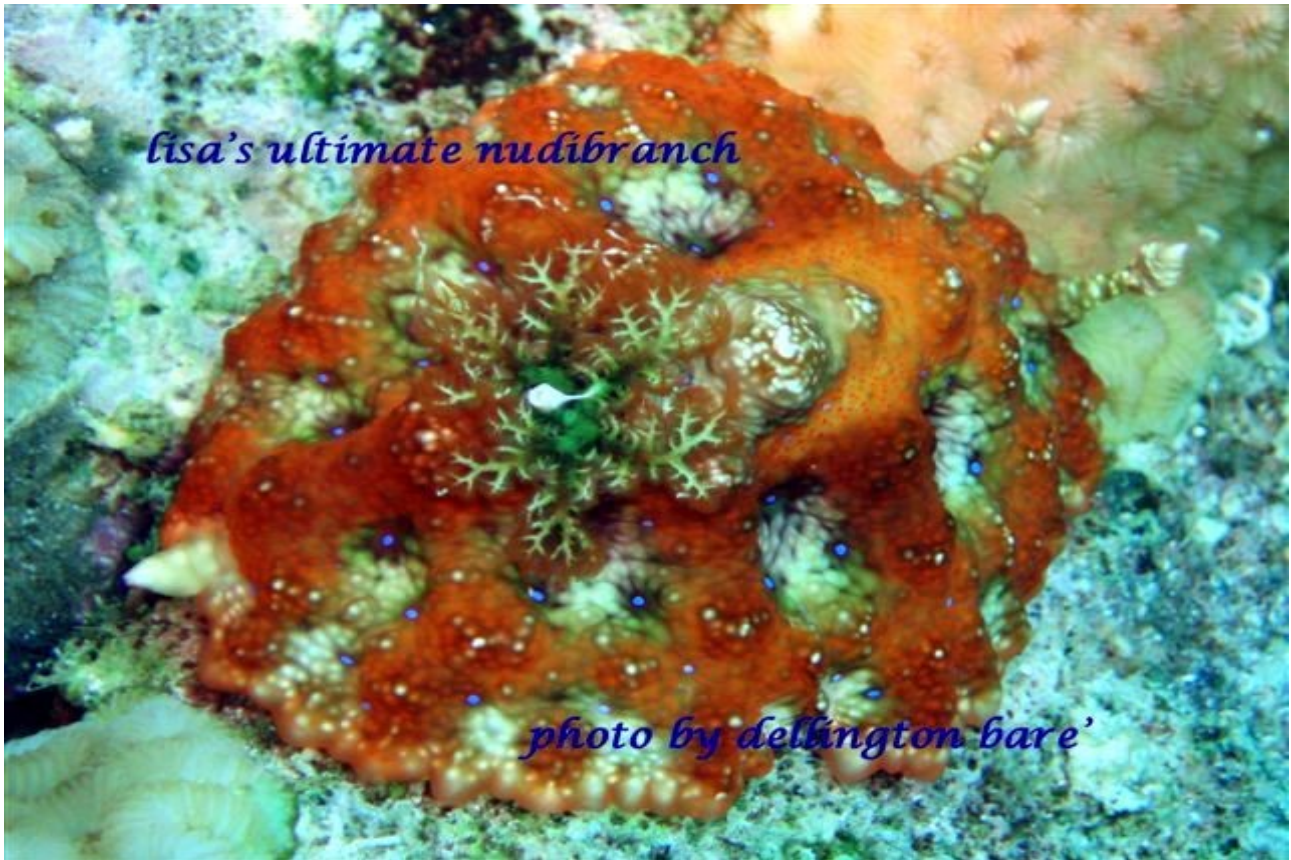
Lots love and hugs,  
Lisa

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"Lose yourself in the adventure-find yourself in the richness".





*lisa's ultimate nudibranch*

*photo by dellington bare'*



*head start graduate jacklyn*

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*learning about marine life---*



*pygmy sea horse*

*photo by dellington bare*

