

& S TEAM SCORES AGAIN; DISCOVER SCUBA WEDNESDAYS; TIM GEORGE 3 NEW CERTIFIED DIVERS; KICHA AGAIN; ; MAKING SOLOMON ISLANDS HISTORY; END OF THE WORLD; JAMES AND ROSE; CREATION; BICHE BAY; CHRISTMAS DRAMA; DROWNING IN PINEAPPLES; HAPPY HOLIDAYS

Hi, Everyone,

November, November- a very quiet month business-wise, so it's been on to new projects- and- I confess- a good deal of PLAYING. Summer has finally decided to touch down and stay, and we awake morning after morning to flat seas just far too tempting. Let's see- decisions- stay home and do computer work and cleaning and repairing?? or pack picnic and dive gear and head to Kicha. A difficult choice. but, of course, I make the responsible decision- PLAY!

We started out, though, with an SOS to find another 40 HP engine that parted company from the boat it was propelling and ended up at the bottom of the inner lagoon. Armed with a little more knowledge and technique than the first time, off we went. This time it was in 65ft. and again, 10' (barely) visibility. We are perfecting our "Circle sweep search method"- lower the anchor, attach a 50' line to it, station 5 of us along it, drop something bright colored at our starting point, and swim around in a circle. On our 3rd sweep, there it lay, a forlorn, sand covered mound. Our 3 25 liter water containers, filled with air, brought it swiftly to the surface, to the joy of its owners.

All that work required a playday. Packed up Kicha with 2 tanks each and a picnic lunch, grabbed a couple of our new divers for crew, and headed for Kicha for the day. Kavachi Korner was Sharksville - 7 grays, 3 SILVERTIPS zipping in and out of view. The resident cast of characters- a million jacks, rainbow runners, dogtooth tuna, midnight snappers performed as if on cue. Our computers evicted us from the depths, to shallow beds of hard corals, juvenile laden rubble patches, & quiet caverns housing sleepy white tips lazing the afternoon away. .

Tim George joined us for an afternoon dive at Toana, reveling in its stunning fans, glittering ledges and massive, butterfly laden table corals, while his wife and friends snorkeled above.

Part of my mission here is to open the underwater world to as many islanders as I can; to this end, we have dubbed Wednesdays as "Discover SCUBA days"; each week we introduce 4 new islanders to diving, with my divemasters doing most of the briefings and prep work, helping with exercises, and guiding them on their tours. The villagers are entranced with the experience, and my Divemasters gain invaluable teaching and guiding experience with new divers. We are also building a base for our next classes, with, hopefully, a few more divemaster aspirants, especially among the women.

We also finished Open Water classes with John Wood, Kido Jeffrey and Ronex Marence. Thursdays are now designated as "Certified Divers Days", encouraging our certified divers to keep on diving for fun and pleasure, and possibly motivating a few to go on. On 20 Nov., we made Solomon Island SCUBA history, with 10 of our 16 certs geared up and headed out here off Vuana wall for a play dive. Crocodile fish, lionfish, white capped shrimp goby, blue spotted rays, 4 species of anemone fish kept us more than entertained. Now they want to charter Spirit of Solomon (liveaboard dive boat) for a week-----!

Flat water beckons us to sites we haven't been able to get into for 8-9 months. The urge to

play is completely irresistible. End of The World is a wild, current and surge prone point sticking way off the SE end of Kicha- with nothing between it and Mari Island, 35 miles away. And wild it was- we battled the current over the edge through a thick school of midnight snappers to be thoroughly inspected by a sizeable male hawksbill turtle. Rainbow runners poured in from the left, and then the sharks came. 3 big silvertips and 2 grays zoomed in and out of our vision; 1 silver broke off and came straight towards me- coming, coming, coming- I'm going to get the photo of a lifetime- it filled my view finder- I clicked- and nothing happened. I cried. With our computers coercing us upwards, we rose into hundreds of circling barracuda. WOW! We're finding our reef hooks most useful for our long shallow "safety dives" atop these current prone points.

And, unbelievably, more drop-ins! James Barr and Rose Mellor joined us for another Kicha wonder day, with Kavachi corner performing its busy magic. A few minutes trek immersed us in the lushness of the cool and green island's center, and enveloped us in a chorus of hundreds of doves crying Kuru-kuru (language name for the birds) to the accompaniment of a low OOOH- almost a moan- made by some of the birds. After a luscious picnic and nap on the pebble and shell strewn beach, we donned our gear and rolled into Creation. Down, down, down to a sand shelf at 80 feet swaying with a colony of as yet unidentified garden eels. Drifting slowly along cliff's edge, ruing our lack of bottom time, we pointed downward at 5 rare Three spot angels and a rarer lyretail hogfish, already vowing in our minds to return on a bottom time richer first dive. We ascended slowly to a scenic sensual assault; some cataclysmic event, a massive earthquake perhaps, ripped massive chunks from the island face, heaved them seaward, and deposited them precariously on the shelf, forming colorful shelters for sleeping white tips, scarlet squirrels and drowsy snappers. Every possible hard coral filled the open spaces, with fusiliers being busily cleaned, opal-blue clams nudging for precious space, and chevron butterflies guarding their tabletops. Viso and I settled in a rubble patch to watch a fascinating show of a goat fish vigorously digging up the bottom in search of food, with a flagtail tile fish and checkerboard wrasse hovering on its back, awaiting spoils- and hastily evicting any other fish with the same idea.

The next day, it was off to Biche village for their memorable cultural tour, river (black, blue-eyed conger) eel feeding and handling show, and waterfall trek. While my staff ladies accompanied James and Rose on the land tour, the guys and I explored Biche Bay and discovered a rare species mecca. A garden eel patch at 80 feet leads to acres of branching hard corals, providing food and shelter for flame angels, leopard wrasses, 7 species of anemone fish, including a gorgeous specimen of our endemic White Bonnet, an unidentified razor fish, bluestriped pipefish, 7 lined soap fish, cuttlefish, octopus- and that's just for starters. 85 minutes later, hunger and thirst, not boredom, drove us up. What a great day trip that will make- Culture tour, waterfall trip, picnic at Magoutu Beach, and a dive at Biche' Bay.

And it's RAMOSO (pineapple) and opiti season, and we are drowning in sweetness. In July, I have to send out search parties to find ramoso, but they are now in season, plentiful, and achingly sweet. Opiti is an oval fruit that comes closest to a pear in taste and texture. I brought home a whole 20 K rice sack of opiti plus 4 watermelon and 5 ramoso on Wed. The watermelon is gone; I hid the last half of the ramoso and last 3rd of the opiti. they seem to fly from the sack of their own accord----! -----Our first 2 read and sing throughs of the script for "A Christmas Drama" have been overwhelmingly successful. I've written a very simple play of the Christmas story, adapted for Peava, including talking animals and the carol of "The

Friendly Beasts". Do NOT have to worry about any kind of perfection- just parts for everyone who wants to take part ; the choir, shepherds and villagers should soak up all Hollywood wannabes. Villagers are really into it- tonight is final try outs and cast assignments for speaking parts. The school kids on holidays can work on sets, scenery and costumes. This, my friends, is going to be a professional production by the Vuana Community Players. And the best part??? It's going to be a whole lot of FUN!!

And with that I will leave you, sending warmest holiday greetings to you, my friends and family all over the world; my greatest wish, as always, is for peace throughout the world, that people will truly embrace the message of that tiny child born so long ago whose birth we celebrate----
"LOVE ONE ANOTHER, AS I HAVE LOVED YOU "
Happy Krismas

Lots of love and hugs,
Lisa

and the whole Vuana crew!!

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"Loose yourself in the adventure, Find yourself in the richness."





Our next diver??

Dellington's son, Bare'



Four ladies take the plunge---

-on Discover SCUBA Wednesday!



Gray Reef shark in photo studio !

photo by John Viso Timothy



***Dellington & Bryan showing new divers
Kido and Romex—***

—their 1st pygmy seahorse at Toana

