

FANYON CANYON---CLEAN-UP--ADRIAN, LEANNE & KATE--DEBBIE, GREG & SUZANNE--SALVAGE-----ANTHEA, ALEXIA & JACKSON- NIGHT AT VUANA---CHRIS AND ALEX- MORE NEW SPECIES--PIPEFISH--ODDS AND ENDS

Hi, Everyone,

I'm sitting here looking out at a sparkling sea, mentally tying myself to the chair to get my computer work done instead of putting on my tank and heading under. August has been a busy, busy month, beginning with a play day exploring a new canyon on Male Male. A deep slit feathered with multi-hued fans, we promptly dubbed it "Fanyon Canyon". We have only begun to explore it's nooks and crannies, and it yielded 2 new fish on our first dive, the Black-headed file fish, and an as yet un-ID'd wrasse.

A community clean-up day saw our team armed with goody bags and wheelbarrows and support crew on shore doing the first ever underwater clean-up. The struggle was ignoring the marine life (a new pair of signal gobies in 10' of water?) and concentrating on collecting trash, but we still managed to collect 16 bags of assorted tins and cast off clothing and other jetsam of village life.

A sudden storm reduced Adrian Faccioni, Leanne Cover and Kate Voestermans' planned 2 dive day short to one dive - and a lovely visit with lovely people with a long Solomon and Marovo history. The rainy afternoon was happily spent out here with hot coffee (yes- it was chilly) sharing Solomon experiences. Debbie and Greg Conwell (translators of the Bible into SI pijin & tribal languages) and Deb's sister, Suzanne, joined us for a long weekend of exploring Toana and Male Male, where we found another as yet un-ID'd fish. They're getting ahead of me- the un-ID'd fish, that is.

A frantic radio call from a family at Tinge- inside the Lagoon- begged us to retrieve their "banana boat" (wood & masonite 22-23 footer) & 40 HP engine that had sunk in 90' of extraordinarily murky water (10-20' vis) under a too heavy load of copra. Against all odds and having zero idea of what we were doing, the A Team became the A & S(alvage) Team- we found it on the second try, and managed to coordinate our dives and bottom times to get lines on, and 20 Liter plastic water jug "lift bags" fastened and full of air. With the help of lots of muscle power on the boats, surface floats and a petrol drum, we raised both engine and boat. After a long day's work, a very tired, hungry and PROUD crew left a very grateful family and finally headed for home.

Anthea Blaikie returned with her cousin, Alexia MacPherson and Daniel Jackson and joined us for an prolific night dive right here off Vuana. Cuttlefish, octopus, sea hares, basket stars. nudibranchs, blue spotted rays, multi parrots, lobsters, hairy hermit crabs had our lights flashing in a fierce competition- come see what I've found!! Anthea discovered our first Orangutan crab at Fanyon- a tiny crab with bristle hairs that allow it to attach algae reminiscent of orang hair. Chris Ray and son Alex "dropped in" for more exploration, and were on the discovery team that documented our first ever Thin Ghost Pipefish on a night at Fanyon (Ronald has the sharp eyes that spotted it impersonating wire coral), and an oval-spot butterfly at Toana Tables . .

Monica Donahoe and Nada Krsten joined us from Honiara for a quick weekend, with surprise guest from Italy, Marco Ghilardi. More "drop -ins" Wade and Freddie- arriving in their sailboat

from a long several months filming bats and crocodiles throughout the country for BBC- joined us for a dusk-night dive at our passage which saw us skunked on flasher wrasses, but engulfed in cuttlefish from several inches to over a foot long, a "pile" of crocs- crocodile fish that is- and what I think must be the hugest nudibranch (as yet un ID'd) in the world complete with its pair of decorative shrimp.

As August rushes to its end, I have achieved, or am working on, 2 of my New Year's resolutions. With my reduced teaching load (just a few dives left to go!), I have started back singing with the village kids- an activity I have sorely missed. I'm also retraining my brain to operate our boat-it's outboard motor requires that I reverse 30 years of boat handling experience. -- I continue to be amazed at the number of surprise "drop-in" divers we're getting. This just is not the easiest place in the world to just "drop in" on- but it's happening. ----And a crew of young, teenaged artists, who transformed my shower into a colorful marine park, complete with a killer whale leaping from the "sea", are busy on our "Keep Peava Clean" project. Empty petrol drums are acquiring new identities as aquarium rubbish barrels; colorful signs will remind people of no fishing from our jetty and to keep Peava Clean. ---- And "winter" cannot make up its mind whether to stay or leave. Days of brilliant weather (like today) and shimmering, almost flat seas alternate with days punctuated with brief, but impressive storms. I am incredibly thankful for all the protected water on Mbulo and Male Male with an excellent variety of dive sites protected from all but the worst that Mother Nature chooses to honor us with, and for all the exploring we've done in the past year.

AND- I just realized- today is the second anniversary of my arrival in the Solomons. The past 2 years have been undoubtedly the most challenging in my life, as I have sought to fulfill my goals of training Solomon Islanders to own and operate their own SCUBA business and creating Solomon Island owned side businesses. But they have also been among the most rewarding, as my incredible staff and I have laughed, cried, pushed and pulled my "A Team" into professional and extremely capable almost- PADI divemasters, established the community library and Headstart pre-school program, several fledgling side businesses that still have a good way to go, health programs, introduced many, many islanders to snorkeling and SCUBA, hosted First Aid-CPR courses, built a hiking trail- and the list goes on. Not to mention the sheer adventure of falling into the water to explore where we know no one has gone before, and reveling in the endless beauty and variety of our little corner of the richest marine triangle on the planet. I've met a host of fascinating people involved in a wide range of programs here in Solomons, some of whom have already become good friends and "family" . As I sit here and occasionally look up and peek out at the sun-streaked waves breaking over Ukala Via on Male Male, I doubt I will ever tire of the almost overwhelming beauty of my adopted home. I miss my family and friends, but am so engulfed in my life and work here that it mitigates the pain of being away from them. I look forward to the next two years with the anticipation of starting marine science programs in the schools, sponsoring some of my DM's to Instructor's School, encouraging and sponsoring more health programs, especially in nutrition and exercise- and cherished visits with family and friends old and new.

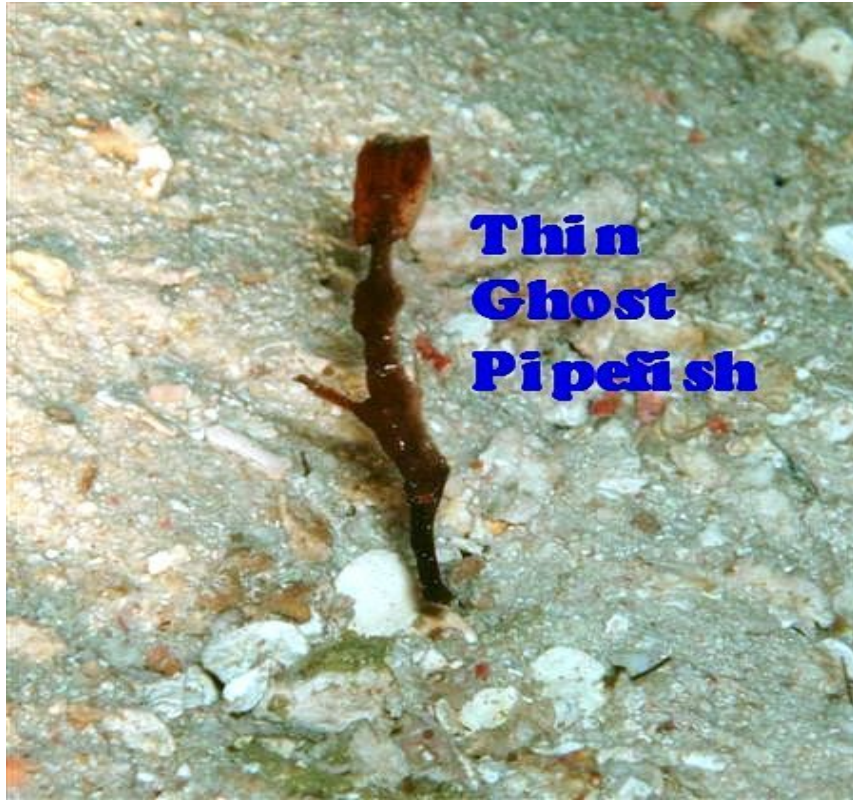
And as I bid farewell for this month, we are gearing up for a joyous reunion with young-old friend (85 yrs.), Stan Waterman, who arrives here on Sept. 1 with friends Barbara & Tim Blanton to do a video story or our project. It should be a whole lot of fun, working with this incredibly talented and entertaining gentleman. May I still be diving at 85!!

Lots of love and hugs to all,

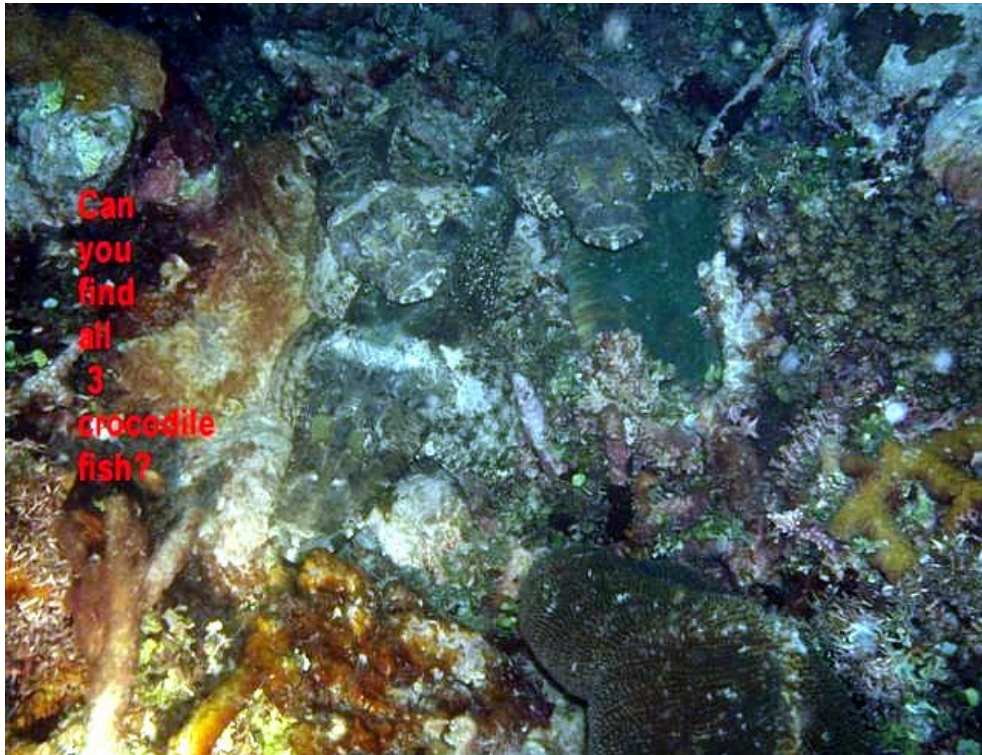
Lisa

Lisa Choquette
Solomon Dive Adventures
Peava Village-Marovo Lagoon
Solomon Islands
www.solomondiveadventures.com
lisa@solomondiveadventures.com





**Thin
Ghost
Pipefish**



**Can
you
find
all
3
crocodile
fish?**



**Our endemic white bonnets
actually snuggle at night**



artists Norlan Watts and Jack Lingisassa transform a petrol drum