

Vanua Levu to Vuda Marina

October 31st.
We set sail on a stiff easterly breeze and headed south with our next destination Makogai Island about 40 miles away. With the O2 on a broad reach we positively flew in a sea that was not too uncomfortable but you sure wouldn't want to try to decorate a wedding cake onboard right now.

By 10 am we had left Namena Reef well to starboard and did a slight course change to the western entrance of Makogai lagoon now just 20 miles distant.

As we turned the corner beyond Namena Reef the wind fell slightly more aft and provided us with a more comfortable ride all be it, a knot or 2 slower.

At midday we were at the north entrance of Makogai lagoon at 17° 25.147' S 178° 55.763' E, Notice our longitude has gone E again. Thats what happens when you sail along the international date line.

The reef on this side of Makogai is more a collection of random coral heads than a barrier reef and navigating between them using eyeballs was easy. We then motored over to a tiny village called Dalice.

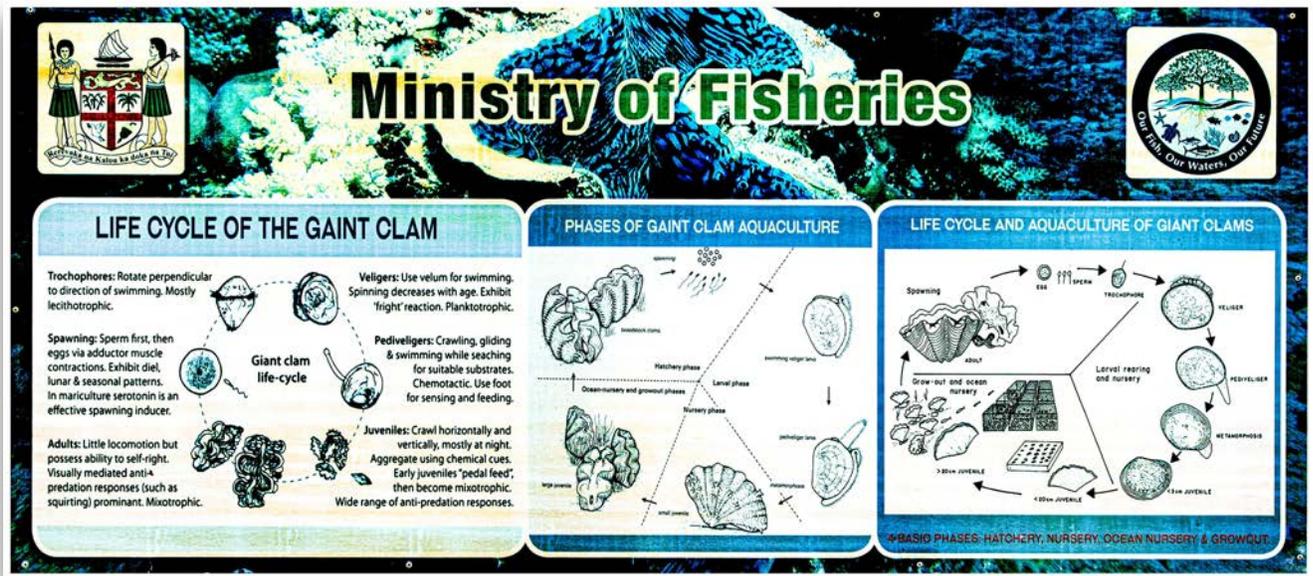


The island of Makogai

It turns out that the community was a Fijian Government facility run by the Dept of Fisheries to breed giant clams. They had several tanks full of miniature versions that are about 2 years from being placed in the ocean.



These tiny clams will one day be giant clams but not for a while yet. They live in these tanks for up to 2 years before being placed in the ocean.



A sign on the beach in front of the facility

These are the projects that we at Ocean Soldiers love to see.

The Fijian Government has seen the need to protect this endangered species and is actually doing something about it.

Unfortunately serious problems exist in the operation. The water in the juvenile turtle tank is putrid and in bad need of changing and the turtles are covered with sea lice that must be torture for these poor little guys. The sea lice bite sea critters like mosquitos or flee's bite us on land.

Normally nature takes care of this in the ocean. Turtles will receive a thorough cleaning by small cleaning wrasse and shrimp which feed on the lice.

Tomorrow the crew of the O2 has volunteered to give their tank a thorough scrub out and change of water, and to de-lice the poor turtles.

With 6 families in the community there is going to be a lot of kids and they are always interested so we were quickly surrounded.

Soon they had bought us coconuts for a cool drink and more papaya than we could possible eat in a month.



Joseva in particular stood out with his ginger hair and clear eyes.



Miriama



Salome



Usa



Waisaki



Karalaimi



Miriami



Biliame

Waisake is apparently the head of the project here and leads a team of 6 other men. What they do all day is certainly not apparent with the badly maintained facility but you would at least think they could maintain their small charge in better shape.

It was so sad to see the turtles swimming in such putrid water and PVC fittings broken and spouting more water than they were delivering to their tanks. Fijians are warm and giving people but here at least they lack the responsibility of their charge.



Joseva trying to lift a very big fish

November 1st
Sunday morning and the team from the O2 headed in to the beach for the turtle tank scrub.

When we arrived one of the unused tanks had already been cleaned so it fell on the ocean soldiers to de-lice the poor little turtles



The clam tanks



We had plenty of volunteers to scrub tanks but Kenny and Ofelia cleaned the turtles.



Kenny scrubs a turtle with a very soft brush



Ofelia removes scores of sea lice from the turtles

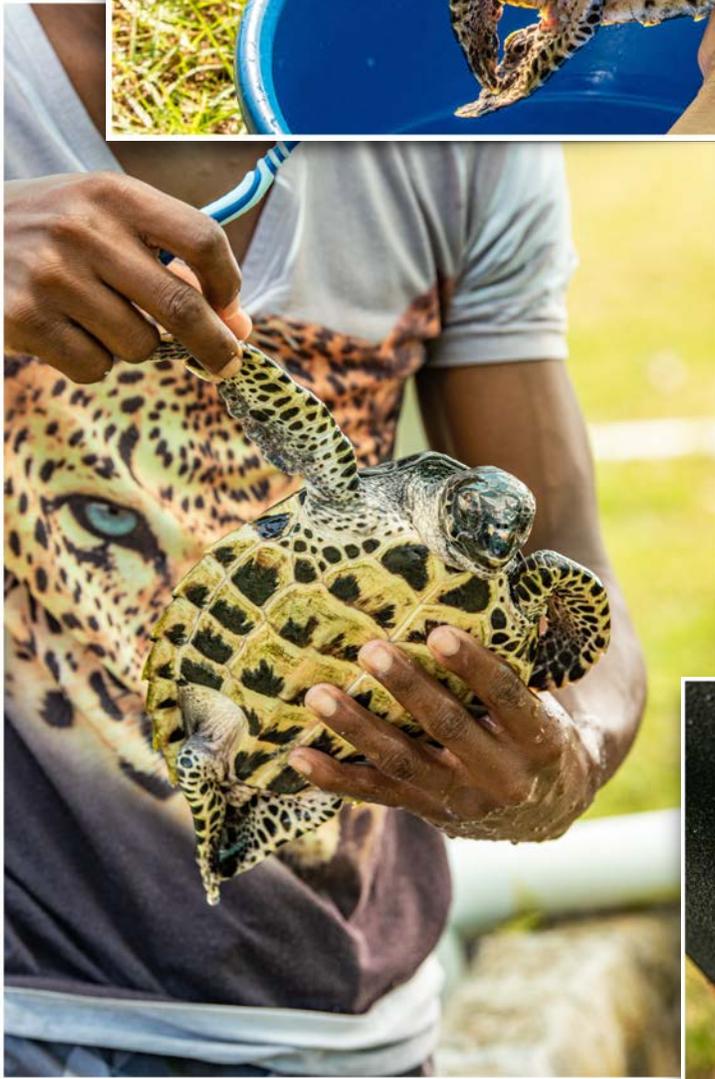


All cleaned of lice its time to go back to a nice clean tank



Next month these little guys will be tagged and released into the bay.

The turtles that is, not the kids.



Kenny checking for sea lice.

A good clean under the arm pits never hurt anyone and the number of lice removed was astounding. Once completed the turtles were returned to a nicely cleaned scrubbed tank which had just been filled with fresh seawater.



On Ofelia's shirt the lice removed from one little turtle armpit.

November 2nd
This morning both Ofelia and myself woke up with the same idea.

Our minds are now entering the refit mode and so we decided that it may be a good idea to get back to Vuda Marina a little ahead of schedule giving us more time to prep spares.

At 8am we started up the engines and lifted anchor sailing out through the reef into the Makogai Channel where we met a 3 knot counter current. After exiting the channel we entered Broad Passage and set the S/V O2 to sail wing in wing and headed NW at about 7 knots. Hopefully the tide will change and we will get a push later in the day.

So it seems the adventures for this year are coming to a close and what lies before us is an intensive couple of weeks repairing, replacing, painting and restocking for the next cruise.

Cyclone season is once again upon us and we will be working with last years defensive plan and keeping our fingers crossed that it will be a quiet season but every sailor in Fiji in fact every one in this region is hesitantly optimistic of a cyclone free summer.

Back to the present and we are on a beautiful downwind sail up Broad Passage with following seas and a true wind speed of about 12 knots cruising along at 7 very comfortably thank you.

So nice I've started a new book and sitting in the shade on the foredeck is just beautiful.

Ofelia is below and has already cooked banana pancakes like we had a few islands back and is now preparing chicken for lunch. Kenny is dosing peacefully in the shade of the mainsail.

We passed a nice reef out in the middle of nowhere that would have to be a great dive. Ive put this on our to do list. At 3PM we sailed into Nananu Passage which was wide open and crossed to Nananu Island where we found a nice comfortable anchorage for the night. Tomorrow the final 54 miles to Vuda Marina where the party is over boys and girls.



Vuda Marina

November 3rd.

Well as it was the anchorage was not as comfortable as I'd hoped and I spent all night with one eye on our position as the wind cranked in at over 27 knots.

This morning we set out early for Vuda Marina and for the first part we used just the genoa which still gave us 7 to 8 knots in this strong wind. After lunch we set the main and genoa in wing in wing and then finished of the last 8 miles to the marina with engines.

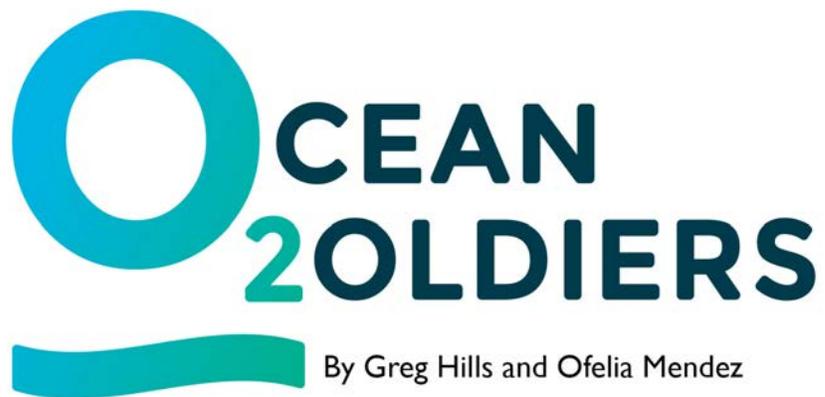


The O2 along side.

At 4pm we were tied up alongside the dock we had left from all those months ago. Lots of miles under our keels, lots of fantastic places and new friends and most of all lots and lots of new stories to tell and images to show.



The view from our dock in Vuda Marina.



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