

Saturday, December 31. 2011

## **2011 in review**

What an exiting year, so much happened politically as well as economically. But even though the events of this year have changed the global community, they felt like reports from a different universe to us. In our current disconnected universe of sailing and travelling together 24/7 everything revolves around peak gusts, whether the anchor and lines hold, drinking water supplies, battery charge, finding wifi, budgeting, and getting along with each other. This is a month by month review of our year.

### January

Muriwai beach, NZ We start the year in New Zealand. Both of our families get together to celebrate New Year at Liz' parents house. It is a wonderful party, until Liz is hit by fireworks. For a week we visit the hospital every evening for burn treatment. It is kind of funny but then it is not. Hardly anyone sniggers. We visit beaches and go on a fishing trip and catch 58 huge red snappers, which we distribute amongst friends and family. Unfortunately my big camera falls into the sea at one point and I have to buy a new one. Then the Busch family tours the north island by car. In Wellington Mum trips over a curb and ends up in the hospital as well, with a cracked arm and a bloody nose. But a day later she is laughing again, and at least now we know that the New Zealand health care system is working well and that the nurses are friendly and competent. After returning from New Zealand, Axel and Liz fly to Las Palmas to work on Gudrun V and prepare her for the Atlantic crossing.

### February

2/3rd of the way across the Atlantic. Squall ahead. Liz reads everything about cooking on a boat and equips Gudrun V's galley with tools and food, while Axel works on the solar panels and rigging. When the boat is finally ready (enough) on February 3rd Axel throws a big Bon Voyage party for all his Las Palmas friends before he leaves the next morning. Only the next morning his hang-over is too big to do anything except drink water, so the departure is delayed for another day. February 5th Axel finally leaves Las Palmas after 7 months of repairs and upgrades, and then spends the following 21 days and 4 hours sailing alone to St. Martin in the Caribbean. The first week is nothing but bad weather, trouble, and damages. The second week the weather is better and only the furler and tiller break. The third week is very pleasant. In the meantime Liz cleans up her apartment in Berlin, sells her furniture, and says goodbye to her friends over lunches. When Axel arrives in St. Martin everybody (including himself) is very relieved that all went well. His friend Henk, who he met in Las Palmas, greets him in the bay and together they go to eat a big Burger each!

### March

Heroic attempts at rowing. Sint Maarten Axel is at anchor in the Simpson Bay Lagoon in St. Martin. He edits the movie from the crossing and repairs Gudrun V's damages in anticipation of Liz' arrival. Most importantly the head (=toilet). Then Axel flies to Berlin to pick up Liz and to get a US tourist visa, which is required when entering US territory by private yacht. Liz says a final good bye to Berlin and flies with two big bags of clothes and books to St. Martin to live on the boat and sail with Axel. Only we don't sail much in March at all, but spent our time shopping, swimming, and adjusting to living on a boat together. Axel upgrades the wind generator to keep up with the significantly higher drain on the batteries. Liz plays the guitar in the cockpit and learns how to drive a dinghy and loves the speed. Then we run out of fuel and have to row the dinghy a mile across the lagoon to the gas station. It takes a long time.

### April

Checking the rigging. Sint Maarten We decide to stay in St. Martin until Liesbet's and Mark's wedding, friends we made since arriving. Liz is still settling into the boating life, and starts writing a book. In the mornings we swim to shore for pilates and Taekown-Do exercises. When Axel is not working on the boat he is diving, preparing for a Rescue Diver certification. We take a first aid course. In the evenings we usually meet up with Liesbet, Mark, Rosie, Sim, Jon, Sam, Matt, Denise, John, or Tony. It's a nice little community, bbqing, drinking beers and trading stories. Half-way through April Harald, a sailor we met in Las Palmas, arrives with his Katamaran. Together we install a new furler system for his boat and shoot a movie for Dwarf8. The wedding comes and Axel is busy as the wedding photographer.

### May

Sailing to Puerto Rico. Among the Virgin Islands. Liz faces her great fear and goes on a shark dive with Axel and Ocean Explorers dive center. Nobody gets bitten. Then we leave St. Martin and sail to San Juan, Puerto Rico. It's Liz first offshore sail. The winds are light and Liz doesn't get seasick. During the day we hide from the sun. At night we lie on deck and watch the stars and talk. After two very nice days together on the boat we arrive in Puerto Rico and go sightseeing across the island. In between tours Axel works on the boat. He removes the traveller from the cockpit and

replaces it with a double main-sheet system. Now we can stretch out our legs and don't have to climb over the traveller all the time. We sail on from San Juan, heading for Cuba. The winds are light, and we only make it to Arecibo, where we stay at anchor for two days waiting for wind. We don't leave the boat. Liz plays plants vs Zombie on the Nintendo DS and Axel plays Galaxy on Fire II on the iPad. We feel like huge geeks. When the wind picks up again we leave the port, but need the engine soon again. In the afternoon the oil cooler breaks and we have to stop in Aguadilla for repairs. Only there are no spare parts and we have to improvise. We meet Nancy and Louis and his brothers and end up staying a week. We loose trust in the engine and decide not to sail to Cuba because we don't want to get stuck there. Instead we will head for Colombia and out of the hurricane zone for the quickly approaching season.

#### June

Attempts at repairing the starter motor. 40nm north of Colombia. We motor down the western shore of Puerto Rico, stopping in Mayaguez and Boqueron. The flies are eating us alive. We check out of Puerto Rico as fast as possible and head south-west across the Caribbean basin to Colombia. At first we have a lot of wind and Liz gets her first salt-water shower courtesy of a wave. We celebrate with rum punch. After two days the wind stops. Axel tries to start the engine to motor the last 40nm, but it doesn't start. The starter motor is broken. We drift for four days, becalmed during the day and beset by thunderstorms at night. We are scared. Then we finally make it to Santa Marta, Colombia, slowly sailing into the bay at 1.5kn. The marina sends a tug to tow us in, very kind of them. We are happy to have arrived and get off the boat. We spent the first two nights in Colombia in a hotel. Then we adjust to Colombia. This is clearly not the Caribbean anymore, this is South America. People are incredibly friendly and helpful, but everything is somehow different. There is more paperwork, people a shorter, dress more formal, listen to music with lots of accordeon in it, and the food is very basic - rice, meat, and tomatoes. And honestly, not that great. Except for the food from David's and Melissa's Cafe Lulo, which quickly becomes our favorite spot. Axel repairs the starter motor. Then we fly to Cuba on a regular tourist plane like we were sane people.

#### July

Tropicana. Havana, Cuba. We travel through Cuba. Naturally it's different from anywhere else. Not quite lost in the past and not quite arrived in the present, drifting somewhere, somehow, in a timeless state. Only the buildings are slowly crumbling, and the people are learning about the world outside of their small island and want change. Axel asks Liz whether she wants to marry him. This wasn't planned, but he feels the time has come to ask the question, so why wait. She thinks about it for a minute then says yes. Hooray! We travel some more and make friends. Then we leave again on our tourist plane and fly back to the boat and Colombia. In the meantime it got hot there, really hot. Stifling heat during the day and thunderstorms at night. The south Caribbean is no place to be in the summer. Axel's friend Andre arrives with his boat and family. Axel and Andre met when both started on their voyage in December 2009 in France, and both are very excited to meet up again. As July comes to an end we prepare the boat and lock her up and fly away again, to Germany. We hear that the summer's been horrible in Germany so far, but we bring Colombias sun with us and are happy to be back home for a while. Friends come over for Axel's birthday and it's like we've never been away.

#### August

Nebo's and Jovana's wedding. Belgrade, Serbia. We're back in Axel's apartment in Ulm. We buy engagement rings and throw a party for Axel's relatives. Liz' parents are joining over skype. We borrow Karin's car and start on a road-trip towards Belgrade, where friends are getting married. On the way we visit Liz' uncle Ian in Slovakia and spent two nights, drinking his home-made wine and playing pool in the garage. Then we drive on to Budapest and go sightseeing: old buildings and tourists with cameras. On the way to Belgrade we pick up hitchhikers. We arrive in Belgrade and fall in love with this city which is half Europe and half Balkan. So much energy, passion, lust for life, happy people, and fantastic vegetables. The wedding is great, and Axel takes a lot of photographs. It's Liz birthday as well and she gets a big birthday cake from Nebo and Jovana. We drive back via Zagreb and Pulst, Austria, where our friend Harald lives. We stay two days and he tells many stories about growing up in Austria in the 50s.

#### September

Food market in Marrakech, Morocco. We return to Ulm and then pack our suitcases again for another round of travelling and visiting friends. First we fly to Copenhagen to visit Pippin and Rilla, Liz' friends from grad school. We watch Pippin finish writing a browser game which makes headlines across the world shortly afterwards. Axel is in awe and inspired. From Copenhagen we fly to Puerto Sherry for a week to visit Antonio, who Axel met on his way to the Canary islands. Antonio shows us around Cadiz and Tarifa and we fall in love with Andalucia. We spent a day in Seville before flying on to Las Palmas where Axel wants to sell his first boat, Vespina. The sale is sucesfull and as we walk back to the hotel we talk about how easy it is to travel by plane and how nice it is to sleep in a real bed and have a comfortable bathroom and showers just next door, instead of hundreds of meters across the marina. We decide that voyaging on a boat isn't really for us and that we'll sell Gudrun V as well when we get back to Colombia. Instead we will move to Spain and work with Dwarf8 or start a new software company, maybe learning games. On the way from Las Palmas to Germany we stop over in Marrakech for four days. We are amazed at the friendliness of the people as well as their cunning and opportunism when it comes to making money. Not a culture we feel close to. We ride in a hot air balloon and Axel takes

many photographs while Liz enjoys the view. Back in Ulm we clean out the apartment and put everything into boxes ready for pick-up and shipment to New Zealand. We throw a last party and sell what we don't want to take and donate the returns to Avaaz and wikipedia. We find the perfect tenant for the apartment and then board a plane to New York.

#### October

Pizza workshop. NYC We rent an apartment in the east village, 7th and C. Axel takes a lot of photography classes and makes many new friends. Liz takes sewing classes and continues writing her book. Together we take a pizza class at Pizza A Casa and make friends with Mark and Jenny. We meet up with Liz' brother Alex and old friends from high school. Axel rents a car to chase the fall colors and takes many more photographs. We are in love with New York and think about staying for a year before we move to New Zealand. Liz looks for wedding venues near Auckland and we book a venue on Waiheke island for January 2013. We also find a photographer and a band, although our preferred choice is already booked for the date, incredible. Axel's friend Klaus comes to visit and we go sightseeing and to a Jazz club - more photographs. Liz's sister Elaine comes to visit and together with Liz' friends Renee and Tom we all dress up as a flock of penguins for Halloween. Snow falls and the power is out in many neighborhoods for days. We go to a Halloween party and in the early morning hours to a diner and eat until we hate ourselves. When we get back to Tom's and Renee's house the power is still out and it's fricking cold. We sleep under all the blankets we can find.

#### November

Empire State Building from our apt in the east village. NYC More New York. The snow melts, but the damage is done. The central park is closed until the fallen trees and broken branches are cleared up. We regularly meet up with new and old friends. Axel takes a few less photographs and starts writing Android and iOS apps instead. Liz is writing a lot. Axel's brother Ralf and mother Karin come to visit for a week. Then Liz' mother comes to visit as well. The days are full with shopping and sightseeing. Axel meets other entrepreneurs and business ideas are taking shape. In the meantime it's gotten cold. We decide that maybe New York in the winter isn't so great after all and that we should move to Buenos Aires instead. End of the month we pack our bags, leave the apartment, and fly back to Colombia with the intent to sell Gudrun V. We arrive and are relieved that the boat is still floating. But four months unattended in the humid climate have left their marks - dust and mold and funny smells. But fortunately no damages or cockroaches or other vermin. We empty the boat and start cleaning.

#### December

Penguins in the Beagle Channel, Argentina. We're still cleaning the boat and catching up on four months of missed maintenance. Axel looks at the bills and finds out that two months in New York cost more than a whole year of sailing. But we're getting used to boat life again, including a small fridge, no freezer, and long walks to the showers. We think over the selling-the-boat-and-starting-a-new-business plan and discover that we're not yet ready to end the trip. Life on the boat is incredibly inconvenient, but it would be a shame not to complete the voyage now that we're at it. And looking at the current boat prices it would also be a very bad return on the investment. We decide to sail on to New Zealand after all and make a detailed plan for the next months. Mark and Liesbet arrive and together we visit Tayrona National Park and have dinners and drinks in the evenings. After a week they sail on to Cartagena. For Christmas we fly to Buenos Aires and then down south to Ushuaia, Tierra del Fuego. Axel wants to check out the location for a possible visit by boat one day in the far future. We spent Christmas eve unceremoniously half in the plane and half at the hotel bar with burgers and a beer. We go on day trips by Landrover and boat and take many photos. Axel goes hiking in the national park and diving in the cold Beagle Channel while Liz writes on her book. For New Year's Eve we stop over in Buenos Aires on the way back to the boat. We arrive late and just manage to toast the new year with Champagne and Ferrero Rocher from the mini bar. We're happy to be together.

Writing it out like this makes it obvious that we've kept ourselves very busy but did little, if anything, of consequence. But if our impact on the world in this year of travelling, cruising, and following our passions was very little, the impact of the world on us was the bigger for it. We learned a lot, about our passions, the world, ourselves, and each other. I've stopped wondering who is the braver of us two: me, who sailed across the atlantic alone pretty much knowing what to expect. Or Liz, who gave up her beloved city and her independence for a life on the boat. With no love for the sea, no previous experience sailing, no idea what to expect, and little power over her environment. Or maybe we're just both a little bit crazy. Despite all our plans to the contrary it looks very much like the craziness is going to continue in 2012. There is an awful lot of sea area to cross between Colombia and New Zealand, and west of the Galapagos nobody speaks Spanish any more. So at the very least we'll learn some french, although I expect that life has some more lessons in store for us. Here's hoping that they're joyful ones.

Posted by Axel Busch in Gudrun V at 00:10

Saturday, December 24. 2011

**Merry Christmas and a happy new year!**

Merry Christmas and a happy new year to all our friends. We miss you a lot and wish we could party with you. Have a good time, be safe, stay healthy, and drive (or navigate) carefully. Matt took that shot of us in a completely natural pose in July, and Liz added what she wishes most for on the boat - a puppy.

Posted by Axel Busch in Gudrun V at 16:29

Thursday, December 22, 2011

## **Planning for the Pacific**

The route, more or less. All books about sailing tell you that you should spend as many days planning a trip as you expect to be under way. It sounds like overkill, but it actually makes a lot of sense. First of all there is so much to consider ... likely wind and weather, currents, route, likely stops, emergency stops, provisions, spare parts, navigational hazards, paperwork and customs, etc. Figuring all that out takes time. And then you have to make up your mind what you want to see on the way, and who you want to meet. The world is beautiful and has so much to offer, but there is only so much time. I've been thinking and reading about the Pacific crossing since I arrived in the Caribbean in March, and this month we've started planning in earnest. For background information we're mostly relying on World Cruising Routes, The Pacific Crossing Guide, South Pacific Anchorages, [www.noonsite.com](http://www.noonsite.com), Storm Tactics, How to Sail Around the world, Around the world sailing guide, and of course navigational charts. A lot of reading, and useful background information and reference when approaching a new location. But all the reading doesn't replace first-hand knowledge of a longer passage, and many hours talking with other sailors who are planning as well or have already done it. Like my friend Henk, who left Sint Maartin March 3rd in his 26ft Midget and arrived in Durban, South Africa, November 25th. Insane. You're my hero Henk, and thanks for all the information! When you plan a passage there are three things you should think of first: Where do you want to go, when is the best time for it, and when is the worst time for it. For short passages of a few days that is normally easy enough to figure out, and there are usually good weather windows spread out over the year. For a long distance trip of many thousand miles with multiple longer stops in between it's a little trickier. A good strategy is to look at the longest or most dangerous leg, and then plan backwards and forwards from there. For the Pacific crossing this is the leg from the Galapagos to Marquesas: 3000nm. Pilot charts and accounts from other sailors tell me that the best time to sail this leg should be in May. And for a trip that long you really want to sail with the best possible weather forecast if you want to have a pleasant memory of it. But the weather is nothing but unreliable, and therefore I plan to arrive in the Galapagos at the end of February. With a 90 day visa we'll have enough time to recover from the trip from Panama, see the islands, prepare the boat, and wait for a good weather window to sail the 3000nm to the Marquesas. Planning to arrive early also adds a good buffer in case something doesn't work out as expected on the way and you get delayed. Tracing further back, the trip from Panama to the Galapagos via Islas Perlas will be about two weeks, including a short stop on the Islas Perlas. That means leaving Panama City in the middle of February. In order to get to Panama City we have to pass through the Canal (2 days), and before that we have to haul out the boat in Shelter Bay Marina to check the hull and repaint the anti fouling. Add waiting time for the Canal that will be another two weeks ... start of February. The trip from Santa Marta to Shelter Bay Marina is three days, but on the way lie the beautiful San Blas Islands, where we want to stay for a week. Adding all together we should leave Santa Marta around January 15th, four months before we hope to arrive at the Marquesas islands, 4500nm away. From there onward it's relatively easy. The legs are never more than 1000nm, about a week of sailing, and there is time until November before you run the risk of encountering tropical cyclones. But since we're having our wedding in NZ in January 2013, we would like to arrive earlier than that.

Posted by Axel Busch in Gudrun V at 07:25

Wednesday, December 21, 2011

## **Down South**

Shopping for parts with Uwe from SY Venus We've made good progress with the work on Gudrun, and pretty much exhausted what Santa Marta has to offer in terms of repair facilities. For the rest of the work we have to haul Gudrun out onto the dry, which we want to do at Shelter Bay Marina in Panama. Not that there are a lot of options, especially with a draft of 2.5m. It's only three days sailing to Shelter Bay Marina, and on the way are the beautiful San Blas islands where we want to stop over for a few days and go swimming again - we haven't been swimming since we've left Puerto Rico in June. The beaches of Santa Marta with its sewage outflow and industrial port facilities are not very inviting. Maybe we're just spoiled. So we're very much looking forward to the San Blas islands. And truth be told, I can't wait to go through the Canal and sail into the Pacific. It's two years since I passed the 166 locks from Heidelberg to Port-Saint-Louis-Du-Rhone, and I'm excited to pass through the huge locks of the Panama canal. Benefits of a big cockpit: space for lots of people So ... bye, bye Santa Marta and off we go? Hmm, not quite. First of all, the weather is not too great at the moment. The wind's are up to over 40kn every night, and a little further west from Santa Marta it's pouring rain. Not the best conditions for trading the safety and comfort of a very affordable marina for an island anchorage surrounded by coral reefs. Over the last few weeks a dozen boats have come in, and all are waiting until January to sail on. And so will we. In the meantime tourists from all over Colombia are arriving in Santa Marta, and the city is gearing up for Christmas celebrations with decorations and lights everywhere. Every other night there is a christmas party at the big mansion adjacent to the marina, until well into the morning hours. And like in all Spanish speaking countries I've been to there is only one volume setting for the amplifiers: maximum. Sometimes I wish for the quiet and consideration of Germany (no to mention the efficiency, and lack of bureaucracy). And for snow! Christmas at 30C just doesn't feel right. But where to find snow in South America? The Andes of course, and ... Tierra del Fuego. Tierra del Fuego: Glaciers, the Beagle channel, and Cape Horn. I've always wanted to go there, and I'm dreaming of sailing around Cape Horn one day (in the not too distant future). It's far away from Santa Marta, 7000km, exactly at the other end of South America. But it's still a lot closer than from anywhere else we'll be going in the near future. Incidentally January is among the best times to visit, and flights are cheap on the holidays. Ushuaia we come! Bogota Buenos Aires Yesterday evening we flew to Bogota, and continued this afternoon to Buenos Aires. We will stay here until Saturday and then we're flying to Ushuaia for a week.

Posted by Axel Busch in Gudrun V at 23:55

Tuesday, December 13. 2011

### **Repairs and an emergency at sea**

Liz, washingPontoon, Gudrun VCleaning frenzySince arriving on Gudrun we've been busy with cleaning and improvement jobs. We completely emptied out the boat and cleaned all lockers, and then started on the to-do list for the Pacific crossing. Even without such a long trip ahead there is always a long backlog of to-dos for any boat. Knowing that you'll be in port for a while is a chance to start some of the bigger ones. For Gudrun this list includes stuff like (in order of importance) &bull; Repair the fridge &bull; Built and install cockpit table &bull; Rebuilt the tiller &bull; Install pressure- and temperature-gauges for the engine oil &bull; Built cages for storing the water cans and liferaft on deck &bull; Relocate solar panels to above the bimini The good thing about a country like Colombia is that people are incredibly skilled at fixing things. Nothing is thrown away. Uhm, not quite. A lot is thrown away and there is litter everywhere. But nothing that could possibly be fixed or reused is thrown away. There is no money to buy a replacement. Which means there is a good chance that something can be fixed for cheap, where everywhere else you would have to get a new part. Like with our fridge. When I had somebody look at it in St. Martin they said it's impossible to fix and that I needed a new evaporator, which would have cost \$250 plus four hours work at \$50 per hour. Here a nice guy named "Braulio" fixed it with parts for \$30 and also four hours of work - at \$10 an hour. Sweet. You don't know how much of a difference a fridge makes until you have gone without one for months - in the tropics. And it's not just the cold beer . So fixing standard things is great. Getting specific boat parts is something else. As it turned out, quite impossible. There is a small chandlery here, but they don't have what I need, and they can't get it. And Island Water World doesn't ship to Colombia. So, relocating the solar panels will have to wait until Panama, because I need some rail fittings for that which I can't get here. Or maybe I can come up with an alternative plan that only involves welding. Not sure I want that though, but it's a possible work-around. "Colombia" is a synonym for "workaround". Plan for the cockpit tableA new home for the solar panelsAnd thanks to the help of David, our friend from Cafe Lulo, I've found a stainless steel shop. Which is great for realizing all kinds of workarounds. So every week I go there twice to have stuff made for Gudrun - you've got to love the labor prices in Colombia! Tomorrow I hope to be able to pick up two stainless steel cages. I want to mount them on the deck, below the boom. The cages will take the jerry cans for water and diesel, as well as the liferaft and emergency grab bag. At the moment those things are distributed all over the boat and quite frankly are always in the way. Not to mention that in case of an emergency you really want the liferaft ready on deck, and not stowed away below. Sometimes an emergency comes up faster than you think. Yesterday a sailboat left the marina heading for Cartagena, which is only about a day away. This morning word got in by email that the boat sunk on the way. Fortunately the crew got rescued or made it to shore themselves, details are not known so far. The most likely cause is that the boat hit something in the water, maybe a large log, tree, dead cow, or whatever came down the Magdalena river. It's unbelievable what those rivers spill into the sea, and thanks to continental counter currents the floatsam stays huddled together a mile or so off shore and is a real hazard. Two years ago another boat was lost in these waters. At times I curse Gudrun's old overspecified aluminium hull. Compared to a modern fiberglass hull it's a lot harder to maintain and inconvenient to life in. But when it comes to collissions and handling bad weather I wouldn't want to trade her in. Gudrun's great.

Posted by Axel Busch in Gudrun V at 22:35

Sunday, December 4, 2011

### **Can not recommend Spreco Silentwind Wind Generator**

This is not a product review or product bashing, it's an experience report after owning the Spreco Silentwind wind generator for more than a year.

A wind generator is a good thing to have, because it provides electricity when the solar panels don't (e.g. in bad weather or at night). I bought the Silentwind because the Rutland that came with the boat was rotted away and didn't work anymore, and the guy at Island Water World said that the Silentwind is really super quiet and better at low wind speeds. I like quiet. And it is quiet. Unlike most other wind generators the Silentwind is an AC generator, not DC. Therefore you need a special charge controller, which comes with the generator. Unfortunately that charge controller has already broken twice, which led me to post an entry named "The Spreco Silentwind Wind Generator is a piece of crap".

First time the controller broke I thought that I had made a mistake during installation. I send it to the factory and they repaired it (8 weeks, 45 EUR). When it came back I installed it again, but only a week later the winds reached 30kn over night and the charge controller broke again. As a result it short-circuits the generator wires permanently. This is easy to see because when the wires are short-circuited the blades turn only very slowly. When I remove the generator wires from the controller they spin much faster. I am very frustrated and unhappy with my purchase.

I called and emailed Spreco, but couldn't get a response from them for two months. Sending it to Portugal from Panama for repair or refund would have cost me 500\$ for air freight, with uncertain outcome. So I bought an Air Breeze wind generator for \$800 instead. Cut your losses. Just as I was about to throw out the Silentwind, Spreco contacted me. Apparently they had found this blog post, which was previously called "Spreco Silentwind Wind Generator is a piece of crap".

They apologized for not responding earlier and offered to exchange the controller again. They send a new controller to Panama, and I send the broken one back (which cost \$180 in shipment).

I switched the controllers and so far (3 months down the line) the wind generator is still working. But the wind has never been more than 30kn apparent, so I don't know whether they fixed the problem or this controller will break again when the windspeeds go up. I now always tie the blades down now when the wind threatens to increase over 25kn. Below 13kn of wind the Silentwind produces no output, and above 25kn you have to turn it off because it might break. That doesn't leave an awfully big window of operation. But the problem really is that nothing's happening below 13kn. And the wind speed for the last months was mostly between 8 and 12 kn.

The charge controller tells you the total Ah it contributed to charging the batteries, and that count is for me 580Ah after 3 months of use. Compared to more than 12.000 Ah I got out of my solar panels this is not a lot, almost not worth it. Next time I'm in a marina I'll switch the Silentwind for my backup Air Breeze, which starts up much earlier. So, independently of the issues with the breakage, I cannot recommend the Silentwind.

My recommendation would be to go for the Superwind 350. It has the same output as the excellent D400, but is much lighter and quieter. A friend of mine, Uwe, has both on his boat Venus for a few years now and he clearly favors the Superwind. Both give good output at 10kn already. Not an awful lot, but at least it's contributing a few dozen Ah almost every day. Unlike the Silentwind, which is not contributing at all most of the days. The Extreme Wind, or AIR Breeze generators would work too, or AIR X with the Spreco blades. On my old boat I had the Aero4Gen, and that worked wonderful too and is also quiet. Actually, get any wind generator except the Silentwind, it's just not worth the money.

Posted by Axel Busch in Gudrun V at 11:25