

Monday, April 30. 2012

Sail up, sail down, sail up, sail down

Day 16, Monday, 2012-04-30, 11:50boat (17:50UTC), 8:32.6S, 122:56.2W, COG 230, SOG 5kn, Wind 15kn NW, rainy

Last night I fell out of my bunk. No kidding. There had been no wind for hours, we were just drifting along, lying in our bunks waiting, and suddenly I find myself lying on the floor. Liz head pops up from behind the table on the other side of the boat. "Are you ok?". "Uhm yes, sure. Everything ok."

Another squall had come along and rocked the boat. They've been doing that all afternoon. No wind, then suddenly a gust and some waves from some crazy direction. SE, NW, N, S. For 30minutes or an hour, then nothing again. A wonderful exercise in setting and shifting sails. From 3am to 5am boat time (sth like 1am to 3am local) I could make out a small solitary light bopping up and down over the horizon. At first green, but when tried to get closer it turned white and ran away. Must have been another sailboat. Unfortunately it was too dark to see anything but the light, and in the morning it was gone again. I had hoped for a photo of a sailboat in the morning light. Photographic opportunities have ben very scarce so far, not counting clouds and waves.

Today will not enter the records as the most beautiful day in Pacific history. Overcast, drizzling on and off. But at least there is a little wind now and we're moving. The weather forecast predicst no real wind until Wednesday. But it's wrong all the time anyway, nice weather and steady winds might be just an hour away! Also Liz is baking bread, which is another thing I'm really looking forward to.

Posted by Axel Busch in Gudrun V at 13:13

Sunday, April 29. 2012

Calm, so calm.

Day 16, Sunday, 2012-04-29, 11:40 boat (17:40 UTC), 08:21S, 121:48W, COG 270, SOG 3.5kn, Wind 6-8kn SE, muggy, hot

Oh, yes, today is Sunday. Yesterday was of course Saturday, I totally got that wrong in my blog entry. So difficult to keep track of the time on the boat ...

Distance is easier. We came 92nm in the last 24 hours, thanks to a nice breeze of 16kn that came up yesterday afternoon and pushed us along at 8kn. With sunset the wind left, and I had to take the sail down so it wouldn't get wrapped around the shrouds and get damaged. All night no wind, and we just drifted along with the current. With sunrise some wind came up again, 6-8kn, just enough to sail, and now we're moving ahead with 3 to 4kn again. Slowly, slowly.

Which means that the program for today is the same as yesterday: We hide from the sun until sunset. Liz writes on her book. I write another iPad game. Both working on our next careers . Well, more like following our passions. My first program ever was a text adventure I wrote on the C64, loooooong time ago. I'm very excited that I now have some time to get back into that domain. Not text adventures, hehe, writing games. I bought a dozen (e)books in Panama about game design, -theory, -algorithms, and -development. With no escape and distraction on the boat I read them all. I hadn't expected that I could start coding so early, because there is usually too much movement (and things to do) on the boat to sit down in front of the computer for more than half an hour. But this weather is perfect for it.

Programming on the boat reminds me very much of the early 90s, before the internet was widely available, and all the programming forums and tutorial websites sprang up. You have your development environment, a book, and your brains. Go figure it out.

Posted by Axel Busch in Gudrun V at 13:19

Saturday, April 28. 2012

Becalmed

Day 15, Sunday, 2012-04-28, 12:10 boat (18:10 UTC), 08:08S, 120:16W, COG
270, SOG 1.8, Wind

Posted by Axel Busch in Gudrun V at 14:02

Thursday, April 26. 2012

Better weather

Thursday, 2012-04-26, 12:00 boat (18:00 UTC), 7:13S, 116:00W, COG 265, SOG 6kn, Wind 20kn SE, sunny

Good news, the sun is out again! After two days and three nights of rain and overcast sky a very welcome change. We're out in the cockpit, washing and drying our clothes and soaking up the rays - who knows how long it lasts. The watermaker is also running, filling up the jerry cans, which then go into the tank. I don't want to risk a malfunction and spoil my tanked water with salty seawater.

All through yesterday the wind kept shifting again from SE to NE, as one squall after the other went past. But you couldn't really tell whether a squall was approaching or not, because the sky looked the same all over. Winds increased to 38kn at one point, and waves got as big as 4m. Then we were in the center of a squall and the wind stopped. But the waves kept coming. Wohoooo! What a ride. We ran the engine for half an hour until the wind had picked up again, because sitting dead in the water the boat was swinging all over the place. Anchor under water, Anchor in the air, starboard side under water, port side under water, ...

After the wind was back the situation improved a little, but not a lot. I didn't dare set the mainsail because the winds were so unpredictable, and the boom would just have banged all over the place in the heavy sea. We hid in the cabin and couldn't do anything but lie there and wonder why somebody would even dream of doing this. We talked about the trip and our future and what we are going to do when we get to NZ, and that cheered us up. In the night the wind steadied and since then it's improving. We both slept through most of the night, looking out only ever few hours, counting on the radar warner and AIS. We were so tired. But now everything is fine again. Bad weather? Don't remember anything. This is the pacific, always nice and quiet!

Posted by Axel Busch in Gudrun V at 12:50

Wednesday, April 25, 2012

Treasure

Wednesday, 2012-04-25, 12:15 boat (18:15 UTC), 07:15.4S, 113:31.6W, COG 280, SOG 5kn, Wind 15kn NE, very rainy

On a voyage of three weeks you can of course expect to encounter all kinds of days. The calm, the sunny with steady winds, the rainy with fluky winds, the stormy, and everything in between. You get the most out of the voyage when you accept them as they come, and treasure them for what they are. The sunny for their happiness, the rainy for their melancholy. The stormy maybe for the physical exercise.

But the truth is, the sunny ones are a lot easier to treasure than the rainy ones. Especially when fluky winds make you work on deck every half hour. Today is such a day. What a good day to practice treasuring all things in life, let that be the motto of the day. Fortunately there are good news too to make it easier: we're half way there! Only 1500nm more to go. And my french learning game for the iPad is finished. Tres bien!

Posted by Axel Busch in Gudrun V at 13:48

Tuesday, April 24. 2012

Battle of the squalls

Tuesday, 2012-04-24, 12:00 boat (18:00 UTC), 7:03.2S, 111:11.7W, COG 255, SOG 7kn, Wind 20-25kn ESE, overcast & rainy

Liz says it was the longest night. Especially the time between 3am and 7am felt very long. At least we had the Parasailor down by 3am. 35kn of wind isn't a lot, but with a Spinnaker-type sail up it can get a little hairy.

The squalls had started coming around 5pm. Rainclouds dotted the eastern and southern horizon in intervals of only a few miles, and I knew it wouldn't be a dry night. But the clouds were small and only light grey, just like all the other nights before. So I left the Parasailor up, not wanting to give up the stability it gives the boat as Liz lay down to sleep.

Until 10pm everything was business as usual. Without a moon and a pretty complete cloud cover it was almost impossible to make out incoming squalls, just spots of deeper darkness in the dark. And because they were so small, holding little rain, they didn't show up on the radar either. But squalls bring their own distinctive wind pattern with them, and I knew one was coming close when the wind started to shift. Then I changed course higher to the wind and tucked in behind them, such avoiding most of the rain and wind. The anemometer barely went up to 20kn. Easy. It's when you feel like you are in control when it hits you hardest.

The sudden increase in wind speed to over 30kn came as a complete surprise. I had just passed one small squall and had run squarely into a big one. Torrential rain splattered down, and the wind hauled in my ears. Usually not an issue, but with 90sqm of sail up in the air ... ups. There's no way I could get the sail down other than dropping it into the water or cutting the lines. But it wasn't time yet for such desperate measures, there was a way out, and it meant: hand on the rudder, straight downwind, and fly the sail as high as possible. With the cleats 8m above deck the boat speed was a manageable 9 to 10kn, but keeping the boat straight was hard work. But it was impossible to see the incoming waves from the back, and two times I reacted to slowly and the waves turned the boat 40 degrees and heeled it over hard. Then the speed increased to 12kn, and the lee fence went under water. First time we lost the barbecue. Second time we had thrown everything from the cockpit down the companionway.

Usually it only takes about 20min for a squall to pass through, and there is a distinct lull in the wind behind it. I was waiting for that lull to head into the wind a bit and take the parasailor down. But the lull didn't come, instead we got hit by squall after squall with little respite. For five hours. I'm full of respect for Liz, no tear or complaint, instead she watched out and helped where she could, and didn't get in the way where she couldn't. The city girl is turning into a true sailor after all!

When the lull in the wind finally came a little past 3am it was about time. As much as I like adventures, they're so much more fun when you're not wet, tired and hungry. But the good thing about this route is that getting wet doesn't matter, because it's warm. The rest of the night passed, very rolly and very slowly. When the sun came up I cleaned up the mess of lines and assorted cockpit stuff, and when I was about done I smelled baking. Liz' head popped up in the companionway with a smile, and looking past her I could see pancakes on the oven. Fantastic!

Today the sky is overcast and it's raining frequently, winds between 20 and 25kn. Waves are 1.5 to 2m. But every half hour a 3m wave hits the boat and everything slides to one side. According to the weather forecast it's going to be like this for the rest of the week. But the forecast is usually wrong anyway, so I'm getting my hopes up that tomorrow will be nice again

Posted by Axel Busch in Gudrun V at 13:13

Monday, April 23. 2012

On the right course

Monday, 2012-04-23, 12:00 boat (18:00 UTC), 7:06.2S, 108:53.3W, COG 260, SOG 7kn, Wind 15-20kn ESE, sunny

What a lovely Sunday afternoon we had! Perfect weather, calm seas, good progress. Liz had a nap, then wrote on her book for a few hours. I learned some French, then read more about celestial navigation, and started to code a little iPad game to help me learn French. Liz calls it "French for attention impaired people". Pffff ...

Later we enjoyed a(nother) beautiful sunset with a cold beer in our hand then I took the first watch as the stars came up in a clear sky. Over the last days I had practiced my direction finding by the stars, with the help of the "Emergency Navigation" book and the "Star Walk" app. The book is quite good once you get to the meat. There is a lot of cross-referencing to later chapters and mentioning of different concepts which I find disorienting. I would have liked the book to be more focused on the lesson and hand and more concise overall.

This night I was putting everything I've learned to the test with only a stick, and verified my findings with a handheld compass. To my big surprise I could reliably point north, south, and west with an accuracy of 1 degree over the course of many hours. Only finding south by Scorpio didn't work so well and I was always 10 degrees off towards the east. I think it's easier from the northern hemisphere, where Scorpio is lower in the sky.

After midnight squalls came up and we were busy dodging them. What works quite well for us with this wind and course is to let them come close, almost overhead, then tuck in behind them. This way we avoided the rain and only had small wind changes of 20 degrees. I'm glad the Parasailor is good for up to a beam reach, otherwise we couldn't have done it without changing the sails. As it is, we haven't changed the sails since Wednesday, when we dropped the main and pulled the Parasailor up. We only pull a little at the sheet or downhaul every few hours, or adjust the course when the wind changes to Ethe ast again and it gets too roilly. But I also have to say that the squalls are very small and gentle, the wind never increased to much more than 20kn. Sailing in the Pacific is really nice.

Today the wind is blowing a little stronger than yesterday, 20kn, and changes between 90 and 100 degrees. Not ideal, but not too bad. We are trying not to go much more south for a while because we prefer lighter winds, 10 to 15kn, and the grib files as well as other boats report winds up to 30kn further south. No need for that, the stronger winds don't make the Gudrun go faster, they only put strain on the gear - and the crew. Safety first! And comfort not far behind.

We get frequent updates by email from our friends Gisela and Uwe on S/V Venus, who are a few days behind. And also from Andy on S/V Impiana, who left a day earlier and is 140nm ahead (speed freak!). Andy got punished for his hastiness with a chinese gybe in a sudden wind change, which tore the sheet from the boom. Ouch. Other than that everybody is enjoying themselves and are having a good trip. Gisela always makes my mouth water when she writes about the goodies she pulls out of her fridges and freezer. After eight years at sea they have their priorities figured out

Blog Export: S/V Gudrun V, <http://www.gudrunv.com/>

Posted by Axel Busch in Gudrun V at 13:33

Sunday, April 22. 2012

One week - one third

Sunday, 2012-04-22, 12:00 (18:00 UTC), 6:39.6S, 106:29.5W, COG 260, SOG 6.5kn, Wind 14kn ESE

Yesterday afternoon we passed the 1/3rd "mark" - only 2000nm to go. I remember how I always checked the GPS for distance and time-to-target when I started on this voyage in 2009. Typical over-eager newbie behavior. Now I hardly check the distances, and only keep a close look at course, wind angle, wind strength, and speed. We'll get there when we get there, and as long as I keep the sails trimmed and the course straight it'll be in good time. Checking the GPS every hour does not speed up anything, only makes you nervous and worried. Like checking your emails every 5 minutes keeps you from getting any work done.

But 1/3rd is, psychologically, an important milestone. Especially for a journey of three weeks or more. A decent progress has been made, and many difficulties and weather patterns have already been met successfully. Confidence grows. Now it's only a short leap to 1/2 the distance, then 2/3, 3/4, and then it's already time to plan the final approach. So, basically we're already there, break out the champagne

Well, not quite - stay sharp. But the last 24 hours have been special in more ways: We saw dolphins (only the second pod), a turtle (the first), and another boat (also the first). The boat announced itself at 4am this morning as a bright sheen on the horizon, due west. I knew it wasn't a star, or the moon, and the next island is 1000nm away. So it must be a boat. Half an hour later I saw it's lights, and thought it must be a cruise ship because it looked so big and bright. I looked at the AIS display to find out it's name, and was surprised to not see it on the target list. No AIS signal? All boats with more than 300 tons have to transmit an AIS signal. AIS is an invaluable tool for collision avoidance, especially in crowded sea areas - or for short-handed sailboats. Many sailors rely on it more than on their eyes. We don't, but it's still slightly disturbing. Then I noticed that our radar warner also hadn't beeped, meaning the vessel was under way without radar too. What kind of commercial boat does that? I took out my camera, mounted my brightest tele-lens (135mm f/2.0) and took a photo. Zooming in on the photo revealed my suspicion: a fishing boat. What else.

Then this morning I got an email from "Anni Nad", the boat of Ulli and Rita. They are five days or so ahead of us, and warned us that they've encountered two large fishing boats without AIS signal. As I said - stay sharp!

Rita also told us that their desalinator stopped producing fresh water, and that Ulli can't find the fault. I had the same problem two times and send them an email back how I fixed it. Here's brief summary.

Watermaker produces no fresh water:

If the pump runs, and salt-water is ejected but no fresh-water, then it's almost certain that the intake hose isn't 100% air tight. Often the fault is at the connection between pre-filter and pump, because this hose moves about quite a lot as the pump cycles. You can also hear a different pumping noise - usually it's a hard tacking sound. This sound loses its hard edge when air is in the chamber. Because the chamber is very small it only takes a little air and the pump is unable to produce the necessary pressure to push water through the membrane. Instead all water is ejected, and therefor

no fresh water is produced. Resolution: make sure the hose connectors between seacock, strainer, pre-filter, and pump, are 100% air-tight. Prefer flexible sealant over teflon tape.

So much for that. Fortunately our water maker has been behaving very nicely this last week. It's so great to be able to make your own fresh water, one less worry. And have I mentioned that the weather is great today? The weather is great today . I hope you've got good weather too, wherever you are. Have a nice sunday!

Posted by Axel Busch in Gudrun V at 13:40

Saturday, April 21. 2012

No damages!

Saturday, 2012-04-21, 11:40 (17:40 UTC), 06:19S, 103:47W, COG 260, SOG 8kn, Wind 18kn E

The weather is changing daily, today for the better, hurray! Clear skies, nice wind from the east, and the sea not too bad. Liz is lying in the cockpit sleeping while her iPad is charging. She's got a looong list of books to read for the trip. Very tiring. Gudrun is rolling a little, but not too jerky. The autopilot is doing fine.

I'm very glad for our self-steering gear. I remember very well the 1000nm I had to hand-steer single-handed through the Mediterranean, and it was no fun. In good conditions it's just great to be able to do something else then sit on the helm. And in bad conditions it's invaluable to be able to hide below deck. As self-steering systems go, there is the choice of a windvane, or an autopilot.

The windvane is big mechanical contraption bolted to the stern of the boat. It has a little vane that sticks up into the wind, and a rudder that sticks down into the water. The vane is adjusted to a certain angle to the wind, and through gears, levers, and ropes the rudder part keeps the boat on that course. Once it's set up it's very simple and reliable, and requires no battery. The autopilot is either an electrical or hydraulic system that gets it's direction from an electronic compass and works on the rudder of the boat. Nothing to set up, just switch it on. But depending on the model, boat size, and balance it can draw a lot of power. The important thing about using self-steering gear is to always have a good sail trim, and not too much heel. Otherwise the gear gets quickly overloaded and then it fails, which is almost impossible to repair at sea.

Gudrun has both, a windvane and an (electrical) autopilot (and a spare drive for the main autopilot and another whole spare autopilot. You can see how important self-steering gear is to me). The windvane came with the boat, but it's a pain to set up and requires a bit of attention every few hours. The autopilot also came with the boat, and is easy to set up, requires no attention, and is very robust. Partly because the whole steering system for Gudrun is simple, efficient, and robust. And because Gudrun is a very well balanced boat, the autopilot draws only about 1,5 Ampere per hour (20Watt). That is very little, and so we're exclusively using the autopilot and have the windvane as backup stowed away in the lockers. I used the windvane across the atlantic for a few days, and it works well, but why bother.

Also I have to say, we're almost a week into the journey now and no damages at all. That's the longest time in 2 1/2 years that I didn't have to repair anything, and that even at sea! Hurray and knock on wood! Simpy fantastic. I'm so happy I gotta go hug Liz now

Posted by Axel Busch in Gudrun V at 13:42

Friday, April 20. 2012

Big seas

Friday, 2012-04-20, 11:40 (17:40 UTC), 5:50.1S, 101:07.2W, COG 240, SOG 7kn, Wind 18kn NE

Yesterday was one of those rare great sailing days. A day that makes you quickly forget that most days are not at all like that, and that some days are not nice at all. Like today.

The change came in the early morning hours, when the wind turned from E to NE and brought rain and stronger winds with it. Soon the waves came from the back as well, and Gudrun started to roll left and right again. And so far hasn't stopped. We're flying the parasailor high now, trading speed for more lift and stability, which improves things a little. Safety first! But the seas have gotten bigger as well, with the biggest being about 2.5m. Not dramatic, but enough to give the autopilot a hard time trouble keeping course as t. Every now and then a wave rolls underneath Gudrun, and the boat makes a quick dash to port or starboard and heels over mightily as the autopilot is too slow to respond. I'm sure somebody has built an autopilot with gyro- and acceleration sensors, which would do a much better job in these conditions. Maybe even with a little aft-looking radar or laser unit to register incoming waves? I'm certain it would sell very well on big yachts:

"I have a gyro-stablized steering system on my 70ft ketch, with three acceleration sensors that keep the boat always on a straights course."

"That's nothing. My latest 80ft sloop is equipped with the new 360degree waveaware (TM) unit, which detects incoming waves up to 50m away and automatically adjusts the sail trim. Our heel never varies more than 2 degrees!".

On Gudrun, however, I'm afraid this job falls to me. Time for some hand-steering after this blog entry. At least that solves the question of "what do do with yourself", which always comes up on dreary days like these. There is only so much reading and sleeping you can do before you feel like you're wasting your time. But the weather and movement don't permit much else. Today would be a great day for office work, or to meet friends in a cafe. Hope you're doing well at land! Liz says hi too, with a big hug to the Whitworths around the globe.

Posted by Axel Busch in Gudrun V at 13:27

Thursday, April 19, 2012

Yummy

Thursday, 2012-04-19, 11:30 (17:30 UTC), 4:53.5S, 99:06.0W, COG 245, SOG 4.5, Wind 7kn E

Yesterday afternoon was wonderful sailing: calm seas, blues sky, wind 10kn, boat speed 6-7kn, and no rolling. Couldn't be much better, and Liz enjoyed it. We spent the afternoon in the cockpit under the sunshades, and then sat mesmerized as the sun went down and the stars became visible. The sky was absolutely clear, incredible visibility. I applied my newly acquired knowledge about astronavigation to figure out the compass directions (they are all there!), and pointed out a few stars and constellations. But soon Liz' curiosity exceeded my knowledge and I had to get help from ESA's "Star Walk" app for the iPad. Fantastic piece of software, don't go looking at the sky without it.

We sat for many hours, talking and gazing at the stars. What a wonderful experience. Then I went to sleep below and Liz kept watch in the cockpit, learning french and reading. At 2am we switched, and an hour later the wind started to drop. 8kn, 6kn, 4kn. Everybody has his personal hell of things that drive him to the brink of insanity. Mine is having just not enough wind to sail properly. The boat rolls, the sails flap, the boom bangs, and there's nothing you can do. But it is too much wind to ignore it and sit still in the water! So I have to try, and I pull sheets and adjust course until the boat sails just enough to not make those horrible sounds. And half an hour later the wind changes slightly, and the whole procedure starts again. Torture!

After three hours of "torment" the wind changed to east, and I could pull the parasailor up. Ha! Liz says there are three ways to deal with stress: remove the cause, change your believes and values, or your reaction. My favorite is removing the cause. Now we're sailing along slowly with 4.5kn, pretty much pointed at our destination.

Pilot charts and gib files say there is more wind south, 20kn at about 8:00S. But 20kn means going fast, and Liz doesn't like that. Other parts of the crew like sailing fast very much, but they also like to keep the other part of the crew happy. Even more than sailing fast. So we want 10 to 15kn. With 5kn at 5:00S, and 20kn at 8:00S, I reckon a little south of 6:00S would be a good place to be. We'll know tomorrow or the day after if that's correct.

In the matter of the broken kindle there is good news: Thanks to the software Calibre I could remove the digital rights management from my purchased books and re-format them, and now I can read them on the iPad and my old Sony reader. Yay! And the "Emergency Navigation" book is getting better towards the end, especially the sketches are quite nice.

But even better than that is the fact that Liz is right now making a batch of her world famous "Twix" cookies. Maybe little wind has it's merits, too. Twix. Yummy ...

Posted by Axel Busch in Gudrun V at 14:12

Wednesday, April 18, 2012

Laundry

Wednesday, 2012-04-18, 11:35 (17:35 UTC), 3:51.2S, 97:05.1W, COG 245, SOG 7.2kn, Wind 13kn SE

Not much change here. We're still heading SW, and the south equatorial current and the wind are still moving us NW off course, about 15 degrees from our heading. Yesterday afternoon it got so roly that I changed the heading to due west while we cooked dinner (curry with rice, potato, tomato, onion, carrot, and cabbage). While we ate the sun set spectacularly behind a herd of dark, low rain clouds. But fortunately we were spared rain during the night. The wind calmed down too a little, and in the morning the sea followed. So until a few minutes ago it was actually nice sailing, and Liz said that she's almost happy! But now the wind is picking up again, and it's getting more roly. Well, that's life on the boat. We're looking forward to getting the wind and current from further east in a few days. But for the moment all we can do is hold on. Something I didn't do very well yesterday, and as I toppled over I broke the screen of my kindle ebook reader. Not good. That's definitely something where paper books are still way ahead. Only problem is carrying them all, we read a lot.

But there's good news too: with all the wind and sun we have power to spare, and so we can run watermaker and fridge. The batteries and tanks are full and the beer is cold. Definitely three very positive things! Almost makes me forget about the kindle. Maybe if I drink enough beer, hehe. Better not. With enough power to run the desalinator we have so much water that I even started to do the laundry this morning (what else do you do without a book). Laundry on Gudrun works like this: All the clothes go into a big bucket of water, plus detergent, and then stomp it madly with a big plunger.

Liz has her watch set to ring the alarm every twenty minutes. Then she jumps up, shouts "Check for boats and dolphins", and looks around. Very commendable and cute, but other than a few flying fish and squid on the deck every morning we haven't seen any marine life since Sunday. And no boats either. I tried to listen to the shortwave cruiser's net yesterday to learn where all the other boats that left the Galapagos (maybe ten last week) are, but got only static. Anyway: greetings to everybody out there. Have a great day, whether on boat or ashore.

Posted by Axel Busch in Gudrun V at 13:08

Tuesday, April 17. 2012

More squalls

Tuesday, 2012-04-17, 11:30 local (17:30 UTC), 3:00 S, 94:23 W, COG 250, SOG 7.5kn, Wind 15kn SE

Yesterday afternoon passed completely uneventful. We were mostly busy holding on to things and not getting tossed all over the rolling boat. At night squalls passed by and pushed us further west, though at least we managed to avoid the rains this time by adjusting the course in time - so much for sleeping. The mainsail is (still) in the 2nd reef and my guess is that it'll stay like this for a while. We're trying to head further south, but wind, waves, and current don't let us. I asked Liz how she's feeling and she says pretty shitty. I replied that to me she looks as beautiful as ever, which made her laugh, so I don't think it's all that bad. Cheap trick, I know.

It's just that the heel and jerky movements of the boat discourages any activities, so we kind of don't know what to do with ourselves other than read, sleep, and watch out. I started on the book "Emergency Navigation", which is full of useful advice, so the reviews at Amazon told me. Only I'm 40% through the book now and all I'm reading is what awesome things you can do with just a watch and sticks and that I'll learn in later chapters exactly how to do it. I wonder how much later, because I'm running out of patience with the author David Burch. Didactically very disappointing, but I'm determined to make it to those magical chapters and finish the book. And then I guess I'll have to write it out in some recipes of my own that I understand and start practicing. And don't forget about the French of course

But now I have to dig out my shortwave radio and tune in to 8137kHz, where apparently some German sailors set up a radio network. I won't be able to actively participate because we only have a receiver, but I guess it will be interesting to hear where the other boats are and what they are up to.

Posted by Axel Busch in Gudrun V at 11:50

Monday, April 16. 2012

wind and rain

Monday, 2012-04-16, 11:45 local (17:45 UTC), 91:58.7W, 2:00.4S, COG 215, SOG 7kn

Everything fine on board of Gudrun! Liz is lying in the cockpit, repeating French phrases from her iPod language class, and I just finished catching up on the sleep I missed last night during my watch. Changing winds and lots of rain kept me busy from 11pm until 6am this morning, when Liz took over again.

Yes, there is Wind! And quite a lot of it too, we even had to put in a reef last night. It's not very steady though, varying between 4kn and 20kn of strength and changing from SE to SW as we make our way from raincloud to raincloud. I've long stopped adjusting sails to the wind in these conditions, especially at night. It takes too much energy, and any change is good for only a few minutes at best. Instead we simply adjust the course to 50 degrees AWA (apparent wind angle), which means we wriggle our way south-westerly-ish. Sometimes more south, sometimes more west, at times a little north. Beggars can't be choosers. The idea is to get between 4 and 6 degrees south rather quickly, because the trade winds should blow more steadily there. Then we turn west, put the parasailor up, and take it down three weeks later when we arrive in Hiva Oa. One can dream

Liz asked what she's going to do with herself for three weeks on the boat with only me as company. No Cafes, no internet, and not much chance to write on her book because she gets seasick when looking at the screen. "Learn French!" I said, and that's what she's doing. And I will too ... Je peux laisser mon dinghy ici? Je voudrais verifier l'alternateur. Stuff like that

A demain

Posted by Axel Busch in Gudrun V at 13:14

Sunday, April 15. 2012

On the way to the Marquesas

Sunday, 2012-04-15, 11:39 local (17:30 UTC), 90:29.1W, 0:55.2S, COG 230, SOG 5kn

After shopping for fruit and veggies at the local market yesterday we had breakfast in Cafe Hernan, one of our favorite places. Then we went back to the boat to stow everything away and get ready for the voyage. As usual, item after item that wasn't on the list popped up and it was 4pm by the time we were ready to haul the dinghy up onto the deck. That is usually the last thing we do before leaving other than weighing the anchor (of course).

But first I had to take the outboard engine off the dinghy. Because we don't have a lift for that I usually push it from the dinghy onto the bathing platform at the back. Because the outboard weighs a little more than 50kg and the dinghy keeps moving about it's a little awkward, and the mantra "don't drop it into the water" is on an endless loop in my mind. Guess what? Of course, I dropped it.

The outboard was already half-way on the bathing platform when a wave jerked the dinghy away and pulled the outboard from the platform. That gave me the choice of letting go of the outboard, or going into the water with it. Of course held on to it! Don't want to lose my precious outboard. I threw both my arms around the housing, hugged the outboard with all my strength and splash!

Fully expecting to be pulled to the bottom of the bay by the 50-something-kg outboard I was determined to give it a fight nevertheless. I could always let go later, right?. To my big surprise I managed to resurface and keep us more or less afloat, long enough to get close to the boat and hold on to the bathing platform with one hand. With the other arm and both legs wrapped around the outboard I hung at the platform, mouth barely above the water surface, and called "LIIIIIIIIZ, LIIIIIIIIIIZ!".

Liz came, and to her credit she didn't start laughing but tied a rope to the boat and handed it to me. So glad she practiced knots so well! Together we got the outboard back onto the boat.

I heard once that the best thing to do when your outboard went overboard is to clean it and put it back on the dinghy and run it. So I rinsed the thing off and cleaned it, and also took out the spark plugs and cleaned them and cycled the engine a few dozen times. Then I put it back on the dinghy, attached the fuel hose, and ran it for a few minutes. After putting it onto Gudrun (this time without dropping it into the water) I thoroughly sprayed it with WD40. Hope it still runs when we get to the Marquesas!

Then we decided that it's probably better to leave the leaving until the next day. Instead we went out for happy-hour-drinks with the New Zealanders from the next boat, and then went back to Gudrun early.

After a long night's sleep we got up early this morning and weighed the anchor at 8am. Now we're on our way SW under engine, because there's only 3kn of wind. If the weather is anything like the last days we can expect some wind later and will be able to sail a few hours. But we won't get decent wind until we're at least 4 degrees south, so the plan is to go south-west or even south at first, and then mostly west.

Blog Export: S/V Gudrun V, <http://www.gudrunv.com/>

Posted by Axel Busch in Gudrun V at 13:00

Saturday, April 14, 2012

Good Morning Galapagos, last time

So, this is our last day here! It's six in the morning and after this blog post we're off to the farmer's market for fresh fruit and veggies. Then stowing everything away, another look around the boat and around noon we're planning to head out to sea. Hopefully with a little wind, because at the moment there's absolutely none.

Good morning Galapagos!

Posted by Axel Busch in Gudrun V at 07:04

Friday, April 13. 2012

Easter egg hunt / Gudrun on the rocks / Bye Galapagos

Last weekend was Easter weekend, and tradition demands that you hunt for eggs. This time, however, the eggs were already broken and all over the floor, and walls, of Gudrun. So the "hunt" was a little different, and not half as much fun.

Question is, how did the eggs get there? Weeeeell ... lying on the rocks for four hours and getting pummed by rollers does that. Fortunately we got off the rocks again before the rollers pushed us all the way to the shore or pounded Gudrun to pieces. Not by ourselves, the water was only 1.5m deep instead of the required 2.5m. But thanks to the water taxis, who did an enthusiastic job of trying to pull us off the rocks.

Snapshot during the rescue operation. Lots of action.

So, how did Gudrun end up on the rocks? Long story. Friday was full moon, which means moon tide, very low. We knew that, but we've been in the same spot for two weeks and had enough water under our keel.

But seeing the water drop deeper and deeper still made me nervous. So I thought it might be a good idea to change the anchor spot, just to be safe. So far so good. Unfortunately (and this is where it all went slightly wrong), I was alone on the boat, and the water level was already pretty low, and the wind came from the side (which it hadn't done before), and the sea was also rougher than usual.

So I turned on the engine, pulled up the anchor by hand (anchor winch is broken), and hurried back into the cockpit to drive away. Only the wind and rollers had already pushed Gudrun to the side (and back), and by the time the boat got going I felt a slight jolt and that was it: no more going anywhere.

Usually not such a big problem, just push the boat sideways with the dinghy. When it's only a matter of a centimeter, and it couldn't have been much more at that time, that works. But because we hadn't used our dinghy, it wasn't ready for that - the motor was still on the boat. And I was alone anyway. Jon from "Evergreen" saw I had problems and came over with his dinghy, but also without engine. By the time he had his engine on the dinghy, the water was already 5cm deeper and there was no going anywhere anymore. We tried to heel the boat over with the halyard attached to Jon's dinghy, but because the rollers were already swinging Gudrun left and right that didn't work - Jon's dinghy got pulled all over the place and he ended in the water, fortunately unharmed.

Then the water taxis started arriving, and pulling. But for some reason they wouldn't take the halyard, and without heel there was no way Gudrun could be pulled off the rocks. And the rollers kept on coming, and we got pushed more and more towards the shore.

Then my phone rang - Liz. I missed the call, but I called her back.

"Hey Axel, could you please come and pick me up? There is no water taxi coming."

"Yeah, that's because they are all here at Gudrun".

"What are they doing at Gudrun?"

"They are trying to pull us off the rocks."

At this time I was very glad that Liz wasn't on board, because the situation looked very bad. The noise as Gudrun was slammed onto the rocks again and again was heart-breaking, and because the water was only 1.5m deep (at 2.5m draft) the boat was lying on its side. And then another roller came, lifted the boat up, dumped it on the rocks, and it fell to the other side. People later told me that they had no idea how I managed to hold on. I don't know myself, but I'm sure the adrenalin helped a lot.

After two hours the tide was at its lowest, and started to rise again. But it would have been many, many more hours until it was high enough to be able to float free. I wasn't sure at all whether the boat would survive that long. All the time I tried to convince the water taxis to take the halyard, and heel the boat over so that we could float free. Finally a taxi took the halyard, but after the driver tied the line to the taxi and realized that it went to the top of our mast, he got scared and quickly cut it!

Other cruisers (Henry, Ken) started to arrive and talked to the taxi drivers, but they wouldn't listen. Well, half of the time they were busy freeing their own lines from their propellers. A for effort, but there is room for improvement in the coordination department.

Once another water taxi full of tourists came alongside, maybe 10m away. Everybody was looking, laughing, and taking photos and videos. Then another roller came and thre the boat their way, and as the mast seemed to come down on them they all let out a mighty scream. That cheered me up a lot, stupid rubbernecked gawpers .

Then the rescue coordinator from the Navy arrived and came on the boat. I explained the thing with the halyard to him, and then he took over and finally the rescue effort became more focused. I had tied a spare main-sheet to the halyard, and when I handed it over to a taxi it didn't get cut off but attached and the driver started pulling. Ten minutes later we were floating again.

They tied us to a buoy and then we went below deck to check for leaks. The whole floor was littered with dishes and food from the galley. We lifted the floor boards and found a little crack on the keel where water came in, maybe 500l an hour, not a problem for the bilge pump. With epoxy putty we were able to seal most of the crack until maybe 100l an hour came in, judging by the amount of time the bilge pump ran. That was ok.

Everybody left, Liz and I hugged each other, happy to be still afloat, and then we started cleaning.

Next morning I dived to survey the damage to keel, hull, and rudder, and to seal the hole from the outside (after some underwater sanding action). Surprisingly the rudder was still there, and even more surprisingly it didn't look like it had taken much damage. Scratches and a small dent, but everything straight. Incredible!

The keel hadn't been so lucky, and a big chunk was missing. No way to fix that here, since Gudrun's draft is too deep to haul out or fall dry. But the keel is compartmentalized, and only one compartment was missing. Looks horrible, but is fortunately not a voyage stopper. I hammered, bent, and sawed the parts that were sticking out back into shape, and we're confident that we can make it to New Zealand like that. We'll maybe go half a knot slower, but Liz likes slow anyway.

Damage to the keel

We also checked the rigg, but no damage there. One water taxi hit the bimini and bent a tube, but I can repair that (6m of spare tubing on the boat). We lost the dinghy pump, a dive boot, and the saltwater hose, but that's about it. Lucky, lucky, lucky!

Sunday we went diving to take our minds off the matter. We went to Floreana, which is known for the sea lion colony, and after diving with them for an hour we weren't depressed anymore at all. They are so playful and happy, how can you be sad?

Sea lion in the water

Liz and Axel in the water

And here's the movie - very cheesy, but worth watching because of the sea lions. And the music, thanks to M's Grace for the music. Go buy the album, it's called "Refurnish my heart".

Anyway. Tomorrow we'll say bye to the Galapagos. Destination: Marquesas, three weeks by sailboat.

Thursday, April 5, 2012

Crop robbers!

After concerns about having enough food for the three-week trip to the Marquesas we thought about growing our own food to become totally self-sufficient. Regular crops not being an option obviously, we settled for fast-growing algae on the hull. We planted the seeds two weeks ago after arriving in the Galapagos, and were looking forward to our first harvest this weekend. Imagine our shock when we found a turtle feeding on our precious food supplies today!

Turtle eating algae of Gudrun V's hull

We tried to scare the turtle off by shouting oh! and ah! and rapidly clicking the shutter on Axel's camera. But the turtle, obviously an experienced crop robber, wasn't impressed at all and continued grazing our produce. The sea lion that we'd hired as security guard was equally useless, as he was simply sleeping on the bathing platform. Probably digesting as well!

Parasitic turtle fleeing and lazy sea lion security guard doing nothing

Posted by Axel Busch in Gudrun V at 22:13

Tuesday, April 3. 2012

Hammerhead sharks

Yesterday one of the best dives ever. Came upon a group of more than 50 hammerhead sharks, amazing.

Posted by Axel Busch in Gudrun V at 14:42

Sunday, April 1. 2012

Galapagos

We're a week in the Galapagos now, but I can't come to rest and feel in limbo. I think the long trip to the Marquesas is already on my mind. Although this island is rather nice! I brought Rappala lures from Panama for a local fisherman, and he invited us over for dinner. A fantastic evening with great food, music, and a birthday cake for Valerie (Andre's daughter). Then, as is the local custom, her face got smashed into the cake:

Valerie with artfully applied birthday cake makeup

But the event Liz still talks about was a little sea lion trying to take over our boat:

Then, this being the Galapagos, there is a lot of wildlife to be seen on Land:

Crabs

Iguanas

"Lonesome George" having lunch

And in the water, too. Just yesterday we had a fantastic diving trip to the other side of the island:

Turtles!

Hi from the Galapagos

We're going again on Monday, hoping to see more turtles, sharks, and sea lions. They are amazing to watch in the water.

Then we hope to have the fridge fixed, which is leaking gas again, buy fruit and veggies at the local market, and leave end of the week on the three-week trip to the Marquesas.

Liz at the local market

Posted by Axel Busch in Gudrun V at 05:09