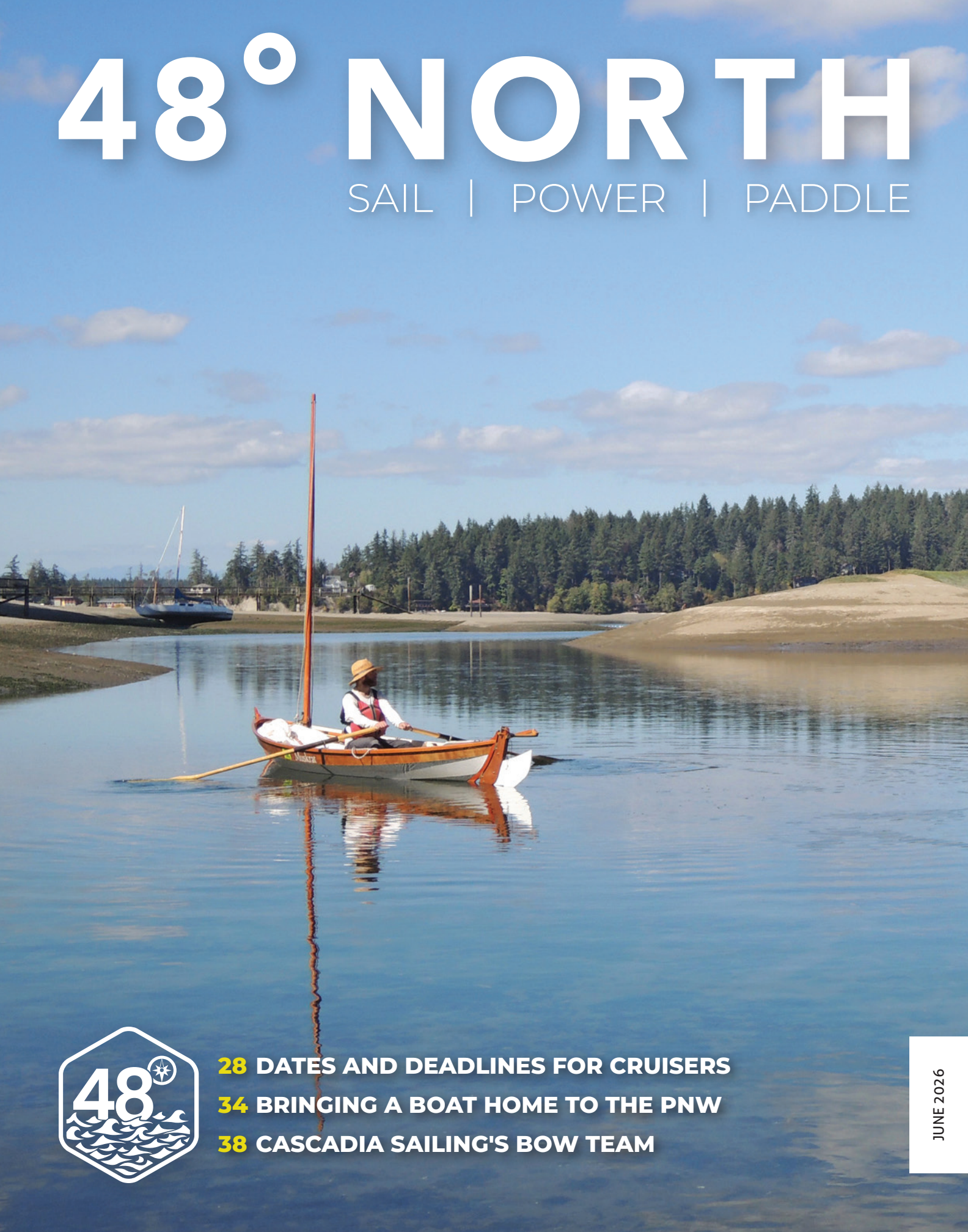


48° NORTH

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JUNE 2026



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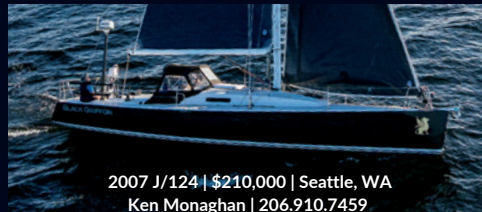
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All-time conditions for this sold-out fleet of fun seekers.

ON THE COVER: Woodworker and boatbuilder, Bill Wessinger, rows through a tidewater cove along Dana Passage, in his Joel White-designed Shearwater. Especially on small boats in narrow waterways, accurate tidal information is essential (page 22). Just beneath him is a bed of sand dollars! Photo by Bruce Bateau.

Background photo by Karen Johnson.

6 Editor

NORTHBOUND

As a devoted summer camp kid growing up in Minnesota, I can easily recall every sensory input—scents, sounds, and sights—that instinctively readied me for my annual journey to the northwoods and border lakes. Decades later on the shores of Puget Sound, it's a different seasonal northward call, but it's similarly powerful.

June is a month of action for some sizable and ambitious contingents of the Pacific Northwest boating community. Whereas those taking the "Big Left Turn" south often circle August as go-time; if you're headed north, especially far north, you've got to be underway in June or you're likely to miss this year's reasonable window for a round-trip to Southeast Alaska via the Inside Passage. For those who prize flexibility and want to see as much as possible along the way, June might even feel on the late side—but it's the most common departure month for northbound Salish Sea sailors by a fairly wide margin. The combination of daylight hours, increasingly warm and dry weather, and the time to get north, explore while you're there, and return safely home validates the conventional wisdom.

Of course, cruising north isn't the only way mariners will traverse these wondrous waterways this month. After its first off-year of the new every-other-year schedule, Race to Alaska (R2AK) is making its triumphant return to the Inside Passage, starting June 14. If registrations are any indication, the draw to this year's R2AK will be strong. I know I'm feeling it—there's a community-wide electricity with so many more sailors and boats undertaking this massive engineless adventure to parts north than ever before.

The dream of Alaska is alluring, whether you're racing there or cruising. However, I frequently encounter friends and cruisers who talk about what they're doing now that they've decided Alaska *is not* going to work this year. And as you know, that's hardly a compromise. Whether your bearings point you in the direction of the San Juan and Gulf islands for a few sublime summer weeks, or perhaps Desolation Sound or the Octopus Islands; the Broughton Archipelago or a circumnavigation of Vancouver Island; on a transit to Haida Gwaii or meandering through the infinite coves and fjords of the Central and North Coast of British Columbia—none of it is Alaska, but every single possibility makes a PNW boat-nut swoon.

With springtime weather fluctuations on the wane and the solstice on the horizon, if there was ever a time to go north, this is it. And in this month's potpourri of editorial content, you'll find a number of nods to northbounders: hikes to hit in the San Juans if you're passing through (page 24), some thoughtful digital resources (tidal tools on page 22 and advice about a digital spares kit on page 32), as well as some worthy food for thought about the risks and occasional rewards of schedules and deadlines for cruisers (page 28).

Here at *48° North*, we make a concerted effort to honor the unsung and unambiguously great cruising found in south Puget Sound, but there's no mistaking it—the cruising "headliners" tend to be north of my editor's desk in the Central Sound. This June, when so many compasses will be pointed at 0°, I too sense the northward pull. And until I'm able to cast off docklines a little later this season, I hope you'll join me in cheering on all of our friends, neighbors, and fellow community members who, one way or another, are chasing big dreams in the water-wilderness that lies to the north. Cheers to your safe and happy passages!



Joe Cline
Managing Editor,
48° North

I'll see you on the water,



Volume XLV, Number 11, June 2026

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48° North has been published by the nonprofit Northwest Maritime since 2018. We are continually amazed and inspired by the important work of our colleagues and organization, and dedicate this page to sharing more about these activities with you.

CELEBRATING MARITIME HIGH SCHOOL'S CLASS OF 2026

The Class of 2026 has truly left its mark on Maritime High School (MHS). This year, we proudly celebrate 26 graduating seniors who have spent the last four years challenging themselves academically, professionally, and personally through hands-on maritime education. From long days in the classroom and the shop to time spent on the water and in the community, these students have shown resilience, leadership, and dedication every step of the way. We could not be prouder of all they have accomplished.

Over the past four years, this class has embraced every opportunity to grow. They have built strong technical skills, formed lasting friendships, and developed the confidence to take on whatever comes next. Their hard work and determination have helped shape not only their futures, but also the culture and spirit of Maritime High School. They have represented our school with professionalism, curiosity, and pride, and their positive influence will continue to be felt long after graduation.

Among the graduating class are 16 Marine Science students who are preparing to continue their education at colleges and universities across the country. Students will attend institutions such as Western Washington University, Temple University, and Northeastern University, as well as other outstanding programs. These students have spent their time at Maritime High School exploring marine ecosystems, environmental stewardship, and scientific research, and we are excited to see the impact they will make in the years ahead. Whether pursuing careers in conservation, research, policy, or education, they are well prepared to continue making waves

in the maritime and scientific communities.

Our 10 Vessel Operations students are also charting exciting paths forward as they work toward earning their QMED (Qualified Member of the Engine Department) certifications. Through rigorous hands-on training and industry experience, these students are preparing for careers directly within the maritime workforce. Many are currently exploring internship opportunities with organizations such as Washington State Ferries, Western Towboat, and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. Their commitment, work ethic, and technical skills are opening doors to meaningful careers on the water and throughout the maritime industry.

As this incredible group of seniors prepares to graduate, we applaud what they have achieved and celebrate the bright futures ahead of them. The Class of 2026 has shown what it means to lead with determination, teamwork, and purpose. We are honored to have been part of their journey and cannot wait to see where the tides take them next. Fair winds and following seas to each of these wonderful soon-to-be MHS grads!

Nalani O'Brien, MHS Maritime Education Instructor

» www.nwmaritime.org



RACE TO ALASKA STARTS THIS MONTH AND YOU'RE INVITED

The long wait is over. The wonderful weirdos of the R2AK fleet will be charging north—sometimes fast, sometimes at a snail's pace—as of June 14, 2026. The beloved pastime of following the adventures from your armchair is good, but did you know you can join the fun in person? Come rub elbows with your heroes, and bid them bon voyage!

- **R2AK Ruckus:** Sat., June 13, 3 p.m. - 7 p.m., Northwest Maritime, Port Townsend
- **R2AK Port Townsend Start:** Sunday, June 14, 5 a.m. Northwest Maritime Dock
- **Victoria Racer Arrivals:** Sun. and Mon., June 14 and 15, Victoria Causeway Marina
- **Victoria Open Docks:** Tuesday, June 16, Victoria Causeway Marina
- **R2AK Stage Two Start:** Wednesday, June 17, noon, Victoria Causeway Marina

» www.r2ak.com



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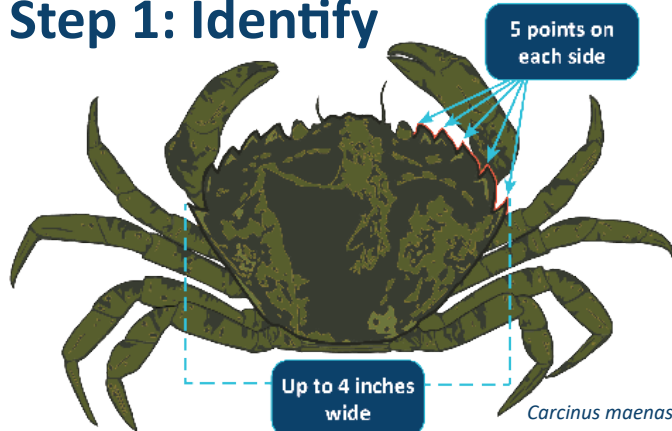
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If you find a suspected European green crab or their shell, photograph it, note the location, and report it.



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wdfw.wa.gov/greencrab

The European green crab is a damaging invasive species that poses a threat to native shellfish and habitat for salmon and many other species. They are not always green and may be orange, red or yellow. These shore crabs are found in less than 25 feet of water often in estuaries, mudflats, and intertidal zones. They are not likely to be caught in deeper water, but may be encountered by beach anglers, waders, clam and oyster harvesters, or those crabbing off docks or piers in shallow areas. **As a Prohibited species, it is illegal to possess or transport live European green crabs in Washington.** Shellfish growers and private tidelands owners in areas with European green crabs should contact WDFW for management support or permits. Please email at ais@dfw.wa.gov.

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Photo by Jeff Betz



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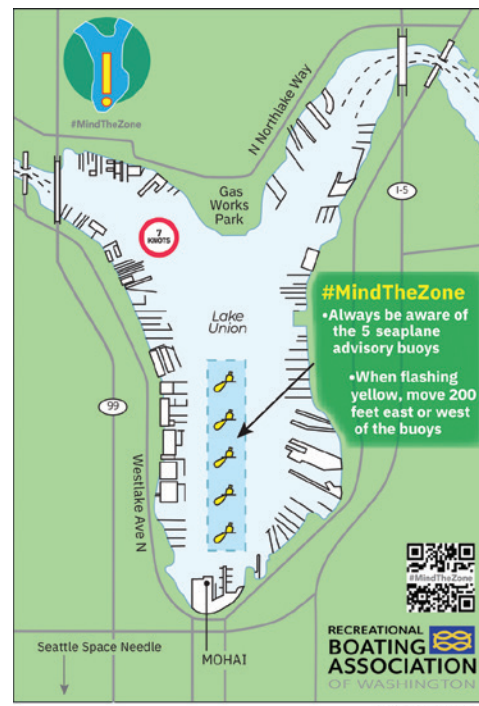
LAKE UNION SEAPLANE ADVISORY BUOYS GO IN ON MEMORIAL DAY, PLEASE 'MIND THE ZONE'

With a warm, busy summer on Lake Union approaching, thousands of extra visitors coming to the Seattle area for FIFA World Cup games, and more outdoor recreators on the lake than ever, RBAW is gearing up its MindTheZone campaign for another summer of increasing awareness, courtesy, and safety on the Lake.

If you've been out on Lake Union on a beautiful summer's day, you know what a recreational gem it is, but also just how busy it can be. In fact, usage on the lake has increased dramatically in recent years. In an effort to manage seaplane, boat, and other watercraft traffic during the busy summer months, the City of Seattle annually installs five seaplane advisory buoys that are in place from Memorial Day through Labor Day. The buoys run in a north-south

line on the lake and are visible day and night. When the buoys' yellow lights are flashing, a seaplane is about to take off or land, and all lake users are asked to move 200 feet east or west of the buoy line. Yet many new (and even long-time) sailors, powerboaters, kayakers, and paddleboarders are unaware of the purpose of the buoys.

The Recreational Boating Association of Washington (RBAW), a volunteer organization run by boaters for boaters, is leading an effort to raise awareness of the seaplane landing advisory zone among all groups of boaters. The campaign is dubbed #MindTheZone and the RBAW would appreciate recreational boater's help spreading the word.



For more information, visit:
» rbaw.org/mindthezone

PORT OF EVERETT AWARDED \$11.25 MILLION FEDERAL PORT INFRASTRUCTURE GRANT

The U.S. Department of Transportation Maritime Administration recently announced that the Port of Everett has been awarded an \$11.25 million grant from the federal Port Infrastructure Development Program to modernize and strengthen Pier 3 at its international seaport.

The project will allow the Port to better serve and support the safe, efficient, and reliable freight movement and maritime commerce at Washington's third largest container port. The Pier 3 Strengthening Safety and Commerce project will diversify the types of cargo that can be handled at the site, permitting for operation of cargo-handling equipment on the pier, maintaining the safety of this valuable part of supply chain infrastructure for maritime users and port operations.

This funding will support the full scope of the project, including planning and engineering, environmental review, permitting, and construction. The project includes installing new vertical piles beneath the pier and restoring other damaged piles, adding new life to the structure.

» www.portofeverett.com/seaport



JOIN THE RACING FUN AT THE WHIDBEY SUMMER CLASSIC REGATTA JULY 10-12

The waters of Penn Cove are about to come alive again as the Whidbey Summer Classic Regatta (WSCR, Whisker for short) returns for another unforgettable weekend of racing, July 10-12. The regatta is quickly becoming one of the must-race events of the summer calendar, with ideal sailing conditions, competitive racing, and the kind of atmosphere that will keep sailors talking well after crossing the finish line.

The Whidbey Summer Classic Regatta is designed to feel like a true sailing celebration including seasoned veterans to newer crews looking for their next challenge. This event welcomes a wide range of racers who all share the same passion for getting on the water. Whether you're chasing the podium or looking for an unforgettable weekend with friends and family, this regatta delivers an experience that will blend high-level racing with laid-back Northwest culture.

Competitors can expect exciting courses, scenic sailing, shifting currents, and tactical opportunities, meaning no race will ever be decided early.

Off the water, the energy continues shoreside at the Oak Harbor Yacht Club, with live music, food and drinks. Laugh, share stories, reconnect with old friends, and be a part of a community that continues to grow every year.

» www.whidbeyclassic.com

WESTERN FLYER RETURNING TO PORT TOWNSEND FOR STUDENT PROGRAMS AND COMMUNITY EVENTS

The historic fishing vessel *Western Flyer* will return to Port Townsend this spring for a week-long schedule of student programs and community events.

Originally built in Tacoma in 1937, the *Western Flyer* is best known for carrying John Steinbeck and Ed Ricketts on their 1940 Gulf of California expedition, later chronicled in *The Log from the Sea of Cortez*. After decades of fishing, two sinkings, and a full restoration in Port Townsend, the vessel now serves as a platform for ocean science, education, and storytelling.

During its Port Townsend visit from May 27 to June 8, the *Western Flyer* will be moored at the Northwest Maritime Center dock, where the Western Flyer Foundation will partner with Northwest Maritime and other local organizations to deliver hands-on education programs for students from around the region. The visit is part of a broader pilot voyage to the Pacific Northwest, with additional stops in Charleston and Newport, Oregon.

Aboard this iconic vessel, participants will deploy scientific instruments, collect real-time ocean data, study marine ecosystems, and work alongside scientists, educators, and mariners—while also engaging with the vessel's remarkable history, from its fishing roots to the Steinbeck-Ricketts expedition.

"This is where the *Western Flyer* was brought back to life," said John Gregg, founder of the Western Flyer Foundation. "Bringing her back now, in service of students and science, means a great deal to all of us."

The Port Townsend Shipwrights Co-Op, which led the vessel's restoration, remains a key partner and supporter of the *Western Flyer* and this voyage.

"The *Western Flyer* holds a special place in Port Townsend," said Tim Lee, Owner/Partner at the Shipwrights Co-op. "Seeing her return as a working vessel for science and education is very meaningful for our community. We all have a lot of years invested in this boat and we'll be happy to have her come back again."

The expedition is also supported by UnCruise Adventures, Northwest Maritime, and a growing network of community partners helping bring programs to life across the region.

The public is invited to a community event at Northwest Maritime Center on June 7, featuring free tours of the *Western Flyer*, opportunities to meet crew and educators, and learn more about the vessel's mission.

» www.westernflyer.org



COME SAILING IN THE SUMMER TWILIGHT SERIES ON LUDLOW BAY

Set your calendars for Thursday, June 18, the first outing of the 2026 Twilight Sailing Series, brought to you by the Port Ludlow Yacht Club (PLYC) and Port Ludlow Marina. On four Thursday afternoons this summer, sailors and crews will gather to enjoy informal racing, fellowship, and vibrant social gatherings at Port Ludlow Marina.

The event welcomes vessels of all types from the greater Port Ludlow area to traverse a scenic 90-minute course, followed by a festive BBQ "Under the Tent." Boaters, crews, and guests participate at no cost, and all participating boats are eligible for a drawing to win Swag Bags filled with memorable items. No registration is required; participants are encouraged to just show up and sail. Motor vessels are also encouraged to attend and

spectate.

This year's dates are on Thursdays, June 18, July 9, July 23, and August 13. The sailing will last from 5:00 to 6:30 p.m., with post-race festivities from 6:30 – 8 p.m.

The Twilight Sailing Series directly benefits the North Olympic Salmon Coalition (NOSC), a respected non-profit dedicated to salmon habitat restoration on the North Olympic Peninsula. NOSC is one of fourteen Regional Fisheries Enhancement Groups in Washington State working with landowners and volunteers to ensure the future of wild salmon populations on the Olympic Peninsula.

If you would like to participate as crew on a boat, or are a captain who needs crew, or just have a general question, please contact Derek du Nann at » plc18sc@plyc.us

24TH ANNUAL PNW PIRATES BASH AUGUST 21-23 IN POULSBO

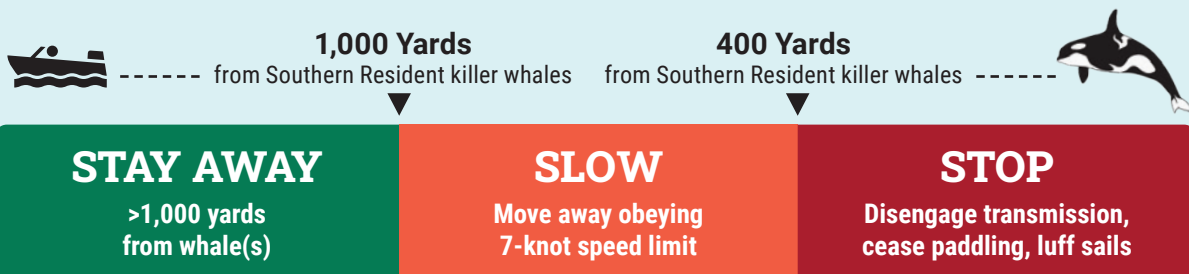
Join your fellow boaters at the gathering that is less of a formal event and more of a reunion for those Pirates who prefer life on the water. The PNW Pirates Bash begins on Friday afternoon as the fleet—typically numbering between 25 and 30 boats—arrives at the Port of Poulsbo. As the lines are secured, the "Grog and Camaraderie" begin.

Saturday is the heart of the gathering, packed with activities that celebrate the pirate spirit including the Treasure Scavenger Hunt, Blindman Dinghy Races, Best Pirate and Decorated Boat Awards, Afternoon Cannons, a potluck dinner, and live music by Soul Purpose.

Sunday morning is a potluck breakfast send off. Come join the Celebration!

Find out more at the Facebook group: PNW Poulsbo Pirates Bash 2026 Poulsbo Aug. 21-23, 2026 or call or text Sheri (206) 693-0002.

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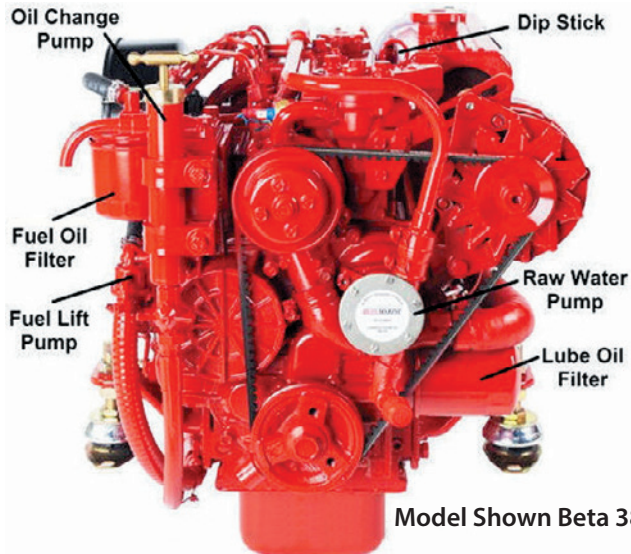
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16

LETTERS

Social Media Response to William Kelly and Anne Vipond's Article and Imagery in "Getting Beyond Desolation Sound" from the May 2026 Issue

Charlie Doyle: My first time through Surge, I didn't know that the current tables were standard time rather than daylight savings. I was an hour early and couldn't understand why boats were still coming towards me!

Robert Mc Millan: Yep, this is real Canada, and we have lots more just like it. Eat your hearts out!

Kurt Ritter: Love the passage from Desolation up to the Broughtons. Some crazy rapids along the way, but just adds to the journey. Have done this three times in a Hobie 33.

Daniel Jantzen: Five years ago, I nearly drowned while kayaking Surge Narrows. We were hit suddenly and unexpectedly hit by a storm and the exact spot that I went under is in this picture. This is the first time since the incident that I have seen the spot... instantly brought up what I went through.

Jim Gillette: I watched a 34-foot Tolly put its salon windows in the green water following me through against the current in Surge Narrows. Watched the same boat go backwards in Seymour at 3,500 rpm.

Terry Krook: When salmon farms were in their infancy, I towed some floats through there. In our shop there was a guy that would bulls**t about anything to make himself look important. He said, "Oh yeah, lots of room." I was towing with a 54-foot seine boat. We had a power skiff and a seine skiff with an outboard. We waited in Yeatman Bay until the end of the ebb and headed through. By time we realized it was going to be tight, it was too late to turn back. We were committed. I got two of the crew into the skiffs to keep the tow straight. One on each side. We made it, but there was less than 6 feet on either side when we went through. The skiffs had to back and follow. With hundreds of thousands of dollars of someone else's property. Did he get an earful when we got back.

Dave Leech: First time through Surge, I misread the current chart, and was doing 9.5 knots through the water, zero over ground. Finally got through—didn't need coffee for two days. Learned to look at the compass courses on the page in the old CHS current tables...



PENDING

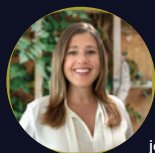
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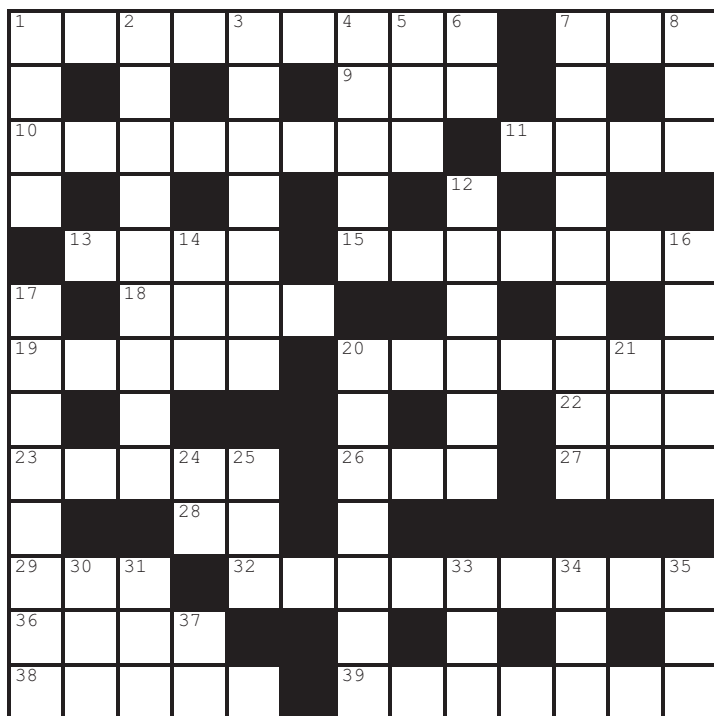


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18 CROSSWORD *AND* TRIVIA



ACROSS

- 1 It's what an anchor chain passes through
- 7 Islet
- 9 Naught
- 10 Distance north or south of the equator measured in degrees
- 11 Spar used to extend the foot of a sail
- 13 Killer whale
- 15 ____ Ship! - last resort when a ship's in trouble
- 18 Handed-down history
- 19 Wet
- 20 Single-masted vessels with two or more headsails
- 22 Take a break
- 23 Intersects
- 26 Natural light source
- 27 Cry for assistance at sea
- 28 ____ address
- 29 ____ aground
- 32 Tide that is rising or coming in
- 36 Astronaut Shepard
- 38 The "N" of U.S.N.A.
- 39 Nautical units of measurement equal to six feet

» See solution on page 51

DOWN

- 1 Steering mechanism of a vessel
- 2 Line where a vessel's hull meets the water's surface
- 3 Where the river meets the sea
- 4 Signal meaning "I am directing my course to port"
- 5 Cobbler, e.g.
- 6 ____ Capitan
- 7 Completely clear, as a sky
- 8 Thanksgiving serving
- 12 Secure down the hatches, for example
- 14 Conduct or direct the steering of a ship
- 16 Crows' ____ (high areas on ships)
- 17 Boat with three parallel hulls
- 20 Start out on a voyage, 2 words
- 21 ____ de Janeiro
- 24 Titanium symbol
- 25 Sunblock-bottle initials
- 30 According to, 2 words
- 31 Part of U.S.N.A., abbr.
- 33 Part of an E-mail address
- 34 Wedding vow, 2 words
- 35 Electric vehicles, abbr.
- 37 Sodium symbol

DID YOU KNOW?

by Bryan Henry

Hagfishes have neither jaws nor stomachs and are parasites of larger fishes. They defend themselves by exuding copious amounts of slime and can tie their bodies into knots.

There are right-handed and left-handed flatfishes. The flounder, plaice, dab, halibut, witch, and sole have eyes on the right side, while the turbot, megrim and brill have eyes on the left side of the body.

When we think of crustaceans, crabs, lobsters, and shrimp come to mind, but there are more than 31,000 species ranging from giant spider crabs with leg spans of 12 feet and weighing 30 pounds, to tiny copepods, no larger than the head of a pin. They live in fresh and saltwater, and some live on land and even climb trees. Some even live in—believe it or not—the Sahara.

The arrowhead crab's eyes give it nearly a 360° view.

The horseshoe crab has four eyes—two simple eyes and two compound eyes—located on the top of its carapace.

The Japanese giant spider crab is the world's largest crustacean and the largest living arthropod.

The large openings on the heads of skates and rays that are sometimes mistaken for eyes are part of the fish's respiratory system and are called spiracles.

Schools of migrating mullet form chains that stretch for more than 60 miles.

About half of all fish species spend part of their lives schooling, and a quarter school throughout life.

Many of the creatures found in the deep sea depend on "marine snow" for their survival—a constant shower of plant and animal material that sinks from the ocean's surface.

The popular aquarium fish known as the guppy was named for the naturalist who discovered it in Trinidad in 1876.

The brain of an adult sperm whale weighs approximately 20-pounds. Humans, by comparison, have 3-pound brains.

The American sperm whale fishery flourished from about 1750 to 1850, reaching its zenith in the 1840s.



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36' Grand Banks Classic 1974
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33' Sea Ray 330 2008
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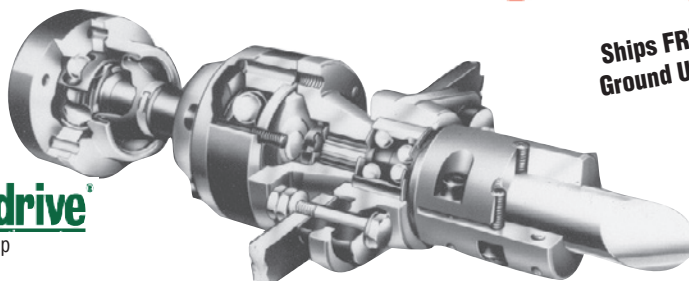
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by Bruce Bateau

DIGITAL TIDES AND CURRENTS

When it comes to small boat sailing, I lean luddite. I like to feel the wind, experience the changing conditions of the water, and consult my paper charts. In my last column (see *Riding the Tide* in the April 2026 issue), I wrote about my fascination with the highly useful *Current Atlas - Juan de Fuca Strait to Strait of Georgia*, a reference I turn to regularly. But when I want to get somewhere in a small boat with an additional margin of knowledge and safety, without doing all the work, I confess that I lean on three digital tools.

TOOL #1

"Currents are a fact of life in the Pacific Northwest," sailor David Jade told me recently. "Using them wisely is the difference between arriving well before sunset, or dropping anchor in the dark."

Jade, who sails a keelboat, encountered the *Current Atlas* early in his time in our region. He had a great deal of respect and admiration for the information in its pages. As for the format, "it was obvious there was a better way to do it."

An app developer who runs TinyOctopus.net, Jade told me that at some point, the *Current Atlas* fell out of print and was no longer easy to find. The Canadian Hydrographic Service (CHS), which has rights to the book and all the data that creates it, didn't seem interested in reprinting it. But David had ideas for an app that would make the information easier to use.

An app based on the *Current Atlas* seemed an obvious idea to me, but I had never seen one until Jade's version, PNW Current Atlas, appeared a few years ago. Creating the app required perseverance. "It took me two years to negotiate with CHS to use the info in the book," Jade explained.

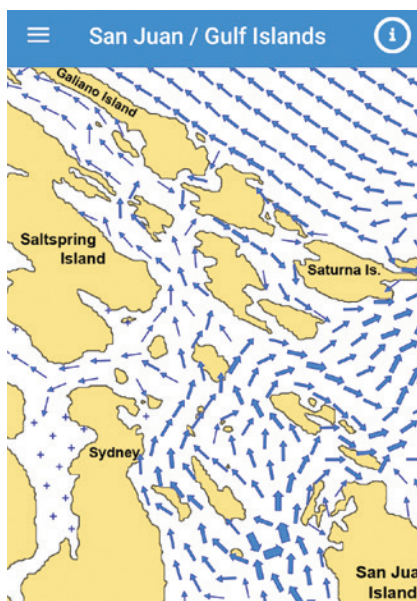
As far as I'm concerned, those two years were well spent. Open PNW Current Atlas, and with the tap of a finger, a basic map of the San Juan and Gulf Islands appears

on your device. An array of animated blue arrows swirl across the screen, showing the present pattern of currents or future configurations, with arrow thickness representing relative current strength. PNW Current Atlas works without an internet connection, making it useful for remote locations, or just for unplugging. Part of me was enchanted to see one of my favorite navigation books come to life. Another part gave me pause.

TOOL #2

For navigating to points outside of the San Juans and Gulf Islands, most boaters know about the free NOAA or CHS prediction tables for tidal passes like Agate Passage or Seymour Narrows. But those tables only tell a partial story: the broader patterns of water movement are critical for small boat navigation—and for making a trip fun and tenable, instead of a slog.

While helpful, the numbers on those tables aren't always intuitive, so when I want to visualize the bones of a future trip from my home computer, I might turn to DeepZoom.com, which provides basic animation of currents for the major United States passes (using NOAA's data). It's a helpful, free, and no-frills approach. It won't give enough detail to get me perfectly from my beloved Hope Island to Woodard Bay, but it will give me the gist of where currents are flowing throughout a



The arrows on the PNW Current Atlas App show current direction and speed.

DeepZoom is helpful, free, and easy to use.



day.

When sails and oars are the primary means of propulsion, navigational details matter. Waiting out a tidal pass is easy, but beating into the wind against an unexpected current for an entire afternoon is just a drag, especially when my cockpit has a freeboard of less than a foot.

TOOL #3

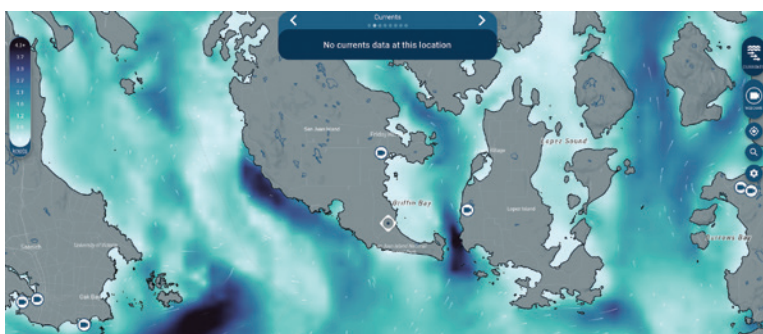
A third digital resource captures the magic and utility of the original *Current Atlas*—and adds more. The OceanConnect.ca website works on a desktop computer or a smartphone with a data connection. It provides a two-day forecast of currents, wind, and waves, using a combination of computer models and live data from monitoring stations. On my screen, its images feel like a mash up of the northern lights and an armada of shooting stars superimposed on a chart of the Salish Sea and beyond. Blues and greens indicate intensity and speed, helpful animated white arrows show direction. OceanConnect covers an area from Olympia, Washington, through coastal British Columbia, to Southeast Alaska.

I'm slow to adopt any new technology, and it took me several trips using OceanConnect to feel confident that I could trust it. On a two-week San Juan Islands meander, I double checked it against my *Current Atlas* and found it strikingly helpful. It displayed all the critical detail provided by the *Atlas* for a given moment—and additional detail that I wouldn't otherwise have gotten. That information let me move from one place to another with minimal effort.

But how could such a helpful resource be free? To find out, I caught up with OceanConnect software developers Nate Rosenstock and Jorin Weatherston by email. "OceanConnect began as a collaboration between the Canadian Integrated Ocean Observing System's (CIOOS) Pacific node and the Hakai Institute," they told me.

The Hakai Institute is a non-profit that conducts long-term ecological research in BC's coastal and forest ecosystems. It operates laboratories on Calvert and Quadra Islands. CIOOS is a Canadian government service that intends to "make ocean data openly discoverable and accessible."

OceanConnect is useful for a wide variety of water borne activities in the PNW.



OceanConnect staff described the website as intended "for anyone who interacts with the BC waters—sailors, kayakers, swimmers, surfers, divers, and recreational boaters."

This partnership and process feels like a DNA connection to my old friend the *Current Atlas*, which was also created via collaboration between scientists from the Canadian government and from the University of British Columbia (among others).

While OceanConnect only works with a data connection, I've found it useful for thinking through the day ahead and potentially for a quick check of conditions once underway. It doesn't replace the long-term planning that the *Atlas* fosters, but it definitely makes it easy to quickly see what's happening at the moment and over a broad geographic area.

OVERALL

Novice sailors may find it tempting to navigate solely by using OceanConnect or other digital tools, but they don't meet Canadian or American standards for navigation. More importantly, looking at a chart and the world around you allows for a better understanding of the bigger picture. As OceanConnect staff explained, their program is "meant to complement, not replace, official navigation methods and charts."

I'm on the water for the beauty of the sea, for the adventure, and the way I can clear my mind of land-based responsibilities. I have a duty to return home safely to friends and family, so I choose my timing and tools carefully. But when the tools have too much allure, when I am distracted by them, I revert to using my reliable and basic paper aids.

Even with the best of digital tools, the effect of wind, water movement, waves and activity from larger craft, as well as random stuff like floating debris or my own energy level mean that every tool is a piece of information that might help me get to my anchorage before dark. But only one combines them all into making sound judgment: me.

Bruce Bateau sails and rows traditional boats with a modern twist in Portland, Oregon. His stories and adventures can be found at www.terrapintales.wordpress.com.



EVEN *MORE* SAN JUAN ISLANDS

by Michael Boyd

Photos by Karen Johnson



No reader of this publication needs to be told that the San Juan Islands are one of the great treasures for boaters in the Pacific Northwest. Still, if you're a cruiser who likes to go hiking, the walkable riches provided by the San Juans are a trove beyond one's wildest imagination. At the dawn of this Salish Sea summer, most boaters are at the apex of their opportunity to venture far beyond our local islands. And yet, we all have a great reason to stay "home" and enjoy yet more of the exquisite boat-accessed hikes to be found in the San Juan Islands.

We've already shared several articles with some of our favorite hikes in the San Juan Islands—pointing you toward trails on Sucia, Cypress, San Juan, Matia, Stuart, and Lopez islands—and the hits just keep on coming with the following set. Get out there, soak up the sunshine underway, and lace up your boots for some more splendid San Juan Islands strolls.



Entrance to the San Juan Island Sculpture Park on the author's first visit.



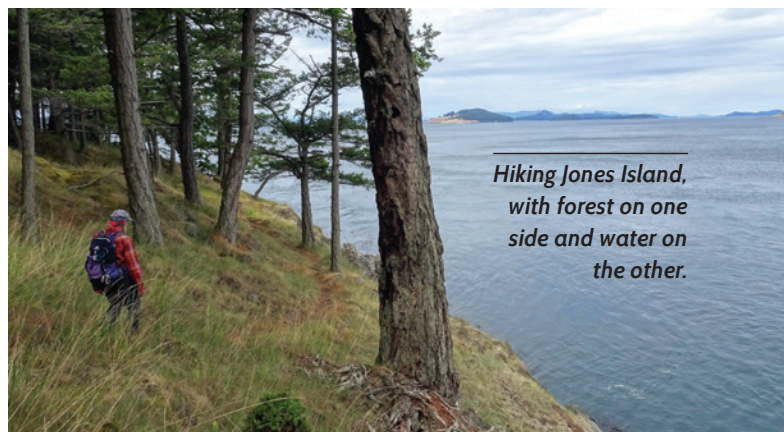
Sculpture Park herons by the lake shore.

ROCHE HARBOR

Roche Harbor is one of the places we go to treat ourselves when we are in the San Juans. It has a well protected anchorage but, with lots of boat traffic and wakes, we usually prefer to spend the night at the dock. The marina is truly "full service" and comes with a well-equipped store and a luxury hotel including amenities like a swimming pool, tennis courts, and a nice restaurant. In the high season it is always busy, so we have to plan ahead. There used to be a US Customs inspection station here, which has since been closed with the proliferation of the app-based check-in for most boats.



The Jones Island hiking trail passes many developed campsites.



Hiking Jones Island, with forest on one side and water on the other.

There are several possible hikes here, but one stands out. Up the street from the hotel and across the main road near the airfield is the San Juan Island Sculpture Park. This is a network of trails around a small lake and through grasslands, woodlands, and wetlands. It would be a fine hike if that were it, but there is much more. Everywhere you turn there are sculptures by contemporary artists, some small and intimate, hiding among the trees, others large and monumental overlooking the lake or up on a hill with a view of Westcott Bay. It's a wonderful walk with discovery at every turn, as long or short as you want to make it. And the best part is when you return a few years later, there will be new sculptures to discover; it's like a new hiking experience all over again.

JONES ISLAND

Jones Island State Park is an entire island in the western part of the San Juans. It has two small bays with possible anchorage. The south bay is open to the more frequent weather and wakes from

the many passing boats; it has little to recommend it. The north bay is smaller, has a state park dock and mooring buoys with some anchoring space, and is well protected. It is also extremely popular. Our strategy whenever we are in the neighborhood is to swing by the north bay to see if there is a buoy available or sufficient space at the dock. If there is, we stay, otherwise we go somewhere else and come back another time.

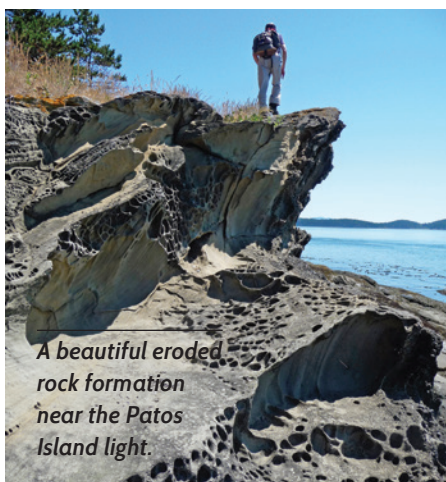
Should you be lucky enough to find yourself settling in for a stop at Jones for a day or two this summer, there is a short hike across the isthmus to the south bay. But a much nicer hike of about 3.9 miles goes around the perimeter of the island with views of the water all along the way. There are camping sites here as well, should you wish to stay on land, some of which are accessible to kayakers.

PATOS ISLAND

At the far northwest corner of the San Juan Islands, Patos Island State Park feels remote. There is only one protected anchorage, Active Cove, a narrow bay on

the south side of the island and even that is open at both ends allowing current to flow through. There are usually two State Park mooring buoys, but they at least used to be suspect. We saw a 40 foot boat tie to one then back down gently across the whole bay; clearly the connection to its anchor had broken and the ball was left floating free. [Editor's note: WA State Parks reports that Patos Island is one of the locations where mooring buoy anchors have been replaced as of early 2026.] We usually anchor, though a stern tie may be necessary because of the width of the bay and other boats—an orientation that likely puts you across whatever current may be running. There just isn't a lot of space but, if you get a settled spot, there's a high likelihood for solitude and a great sunset.

At the head of the bay is the State Park kiosk and the start of an easy trail going through the western portion of the island out to the light station. The view from the Patos Island light is truly outstanding. You can look across the Strait of Georgia to Vancouver in the distance and watch all



A beautiful eroded rock formation near the Patos Island light.



Returning to the Patos Island anchorage in Active Cove from the trail to the light.



Hiking the shoreline of Spencer Spit.



On a lovely summer day, it's hard to beat the surroundings at Spencer Spit.

the commercial traffic as it passes close by. The hike is an easy 3 miles or so; and with limited accommodations and access, you may well have it to yourself.

SPENCER SPIT

A long sand spit jutting from the eastern side of Lopez Island, Spencer Spit State Park is a popular destination for area boaters for good reasons: it's close to Anacortes, it has many mooring buoys along both its north and south sides, there's plenty of anchoring space with a good sand bottom, and it has great walks. We tend to prefer the south side since it is protected from ferry wakes and prevailing northerly winds but, other than that, there isn't much difference between them.

Natural sand beaches are rare in the Pacific Northwest, where most beaches are gravel, so we come here just to walk on the sand; out to the tip on one side and back in on the other. All that sand walking can be tedious so we usually take a break and walk up the hill through the campground and the woods that comprise the upland portion of the

park. Sometimes we even venture out of the park along the roads through the bordering rural farmland and find ourselves wishing there was a nearby coffee shop before heading back to the sand. This hike has so many variations it can be as long or short as you want.

JAMES ISLAND

James Island State Park, at the junction of Rosario Strait and Thatcher Pass, is very similar to Jones Island in shape and layout. There are two small bays, one on the east side opening onto Rosario Strait with mooring buoys and one on the west side facing Decatur Island with a small dock and possibly buoys. There is a low isthmus between them. We stayed in the east bay once, and wouldn't do so again. It was not a comfortable night. This would be a good place to moor your boat if you plan to camp on shore, and we saw several people doing just that. We've stayed at the small dock in the west bay and find it delightful, if there is room. Over the years, the mooring buoys in the bay have come and gone and the bottom appears too irregular for

secure anchoring. As with Jones Island, we usually pass by the west bay and stay only if there is room at the dock.

But once you are secure, there is a very nice hike. The short walk across the isthmus is part of a loop around the southern half of the island, a short couple of miles. The hike along the south shore, looking out into Rosario Strait, is really lovely, well worth the stop at the dock.

As we've tried to show through multiple installments of this column, almost everywhere boaters go in the San Juan Islands they can find opportunities to get off the boat, take a hike, and explore the land as well as the water. It's dream-worthy stuff, and what fine fortune that it's right here in our collective backyard for all to enjoy!

Michael and Karen have been cruising the Salish Sea and beyond for more than 20 years, hiking every chance they get. For more resources for hikers visit their web site at <https://mvmischief.com/library/>

For additional hiking information in this area Michael and Karen also recommend: Hiking the San Juan Islands by Ken Wilcox.



Scrambling off the James Island trail looking for tidepools.



James Island campers arriving.

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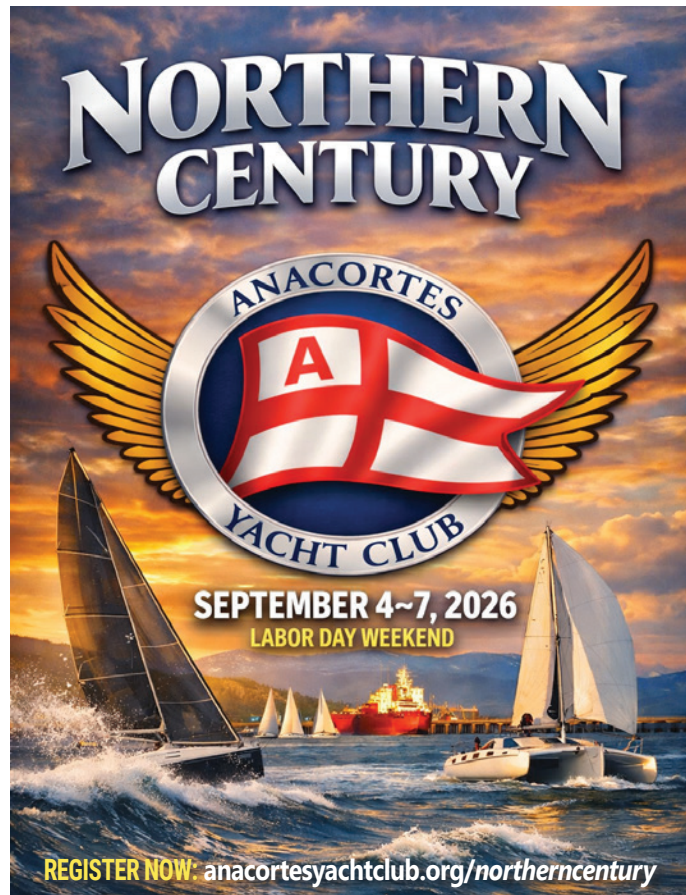
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DATES AND DEADLINES

by Julie and Gio Cappelli

We've all heard the saying that when it comes to cruising there is nothing more dangerous than being on a schedule. The temptation to adopt one is rampant and relentless. Rendezvousing with friends and family in exotic ports, arriving at anchor in time for a business call, or maintaining a full calendar of social obligations within the cruising fleet. There's no doubt about it, schedules can be dangerous and counterproductive. Before you take off cruising, it feels fun and easy to daydream about all the places you'll visit, drawing up draft itineraries and scrupulous plans to pack it all in so you don't miss a thing. It's especially tricky here in the Pacific Northwest, which offers incredible cruising grounds, and its long dark winters give us ample time to anticipate and dream about exploring them.

But once you take off cruising, whether it be for weeks or for years, it can be tempting to linger a little longer in some of those wonderfully serene places. Sometimes weather or ocean conditions will even mandate that you do. Or at least you should. Before you know it, the comfortable couple of nights you carefully crafted into your dream cruise itinerary turn into a week with all the sights, activities, and people you meet. Who wants to leave early when there is still so much to experience, and even more on the horizon?

Attempting to maintain too strict of a schedule can mean departing or sailing in suboptimal conditions, which risks safe passage of both vessel and crew, not to mention drains the joy out of cruising. Failing to reef when you first think of it and eschewing comfortable sleeping conditions at night in favor of chasing VMG come to mind. It's also never fun to feel obligated to flip on the engine rather than enjoy working the flippant zephyrs on a bluebird light air sailing day for the sake of meeting a deadline. Prudent seamanship dictates making judgement calls aimed at preserving the well-being of the boat and crew, not the homeostasis of the calendar. Besides, most of us love cruising because it gives us a chance to slow down, not speed up. We're out here because we want to savor experiences and relationships, unplug and reconnect with the natural world, and allow our days to be dictated (in a good way) by the wind and waves rather than the frenetic pace of land life.

You can probably guess the punchline here: that a schedule is totally not necessary and just barely makes the cut for the nice list with numerous caveats. But what if we told you there actually is a stage in preparing to go cruising where having dates and deadlines is, in fact, very necessary?

It has to do with the process of refitting and outfitting your boat. The term "refit" refers to the process of updating, repairing, or rebuilding parts of a boat's systems. This is different from simple repairs, which focus on fixing broken components, or routine maintenance such as engine fluid changes. A refit





Refinishing teak decks, including sanding, cleaning, resealing, and replacing bungs improves the external appearance of your boat but also keeps it watertight.



Messy, invasive projects that are integral to your safety at sea, such as dropping your rudder for inspection and reinforcement should be tackled early in your haulout.

typically involves a more comprehensive overhaul, addressing aging systems, structural integrity, and the boat's livability for long-term cruising. A refit ensures that critical systems like the engine, rigging, and electrical systems are in top condition. For example, replacing a tired engine or overhauling an aging fuel system can prevent potentially catastrophic failures during a voyage. And while overly strict schedules typically don't make sense when you're out cruising, strategic dates and deadlines that help you complete your refit and achieve your cruising goals absolutely do.

The deadline should be for completing refit and outfitting tasks. This will help prevent leaving too many big projects until the last minute and risk not getting them done at all, which in many cases will delay, curtail, or cancel your cruise. Your go-date is when you will set sail. Weather dependent, of course, but this is the date that will keep you motivated and on-track through the gray winter months when summer cruising feels infinitely far away, or through the years of preparation before taking off on a grand global cruise. Far too often we meet people whose go-date is "someday", and "someday" usually doesn't come for them. Big dreams, big goals, and big adventures demand and deserve more than "someday." Setting a go-date will keep you honest and realistic about your timeline while helping you keep the promises you made to go play. To go explore. To go cruising. It will force you to continuously rebalance your refit priority list, not just in the context of monetary budget but also time, our most precious resource.

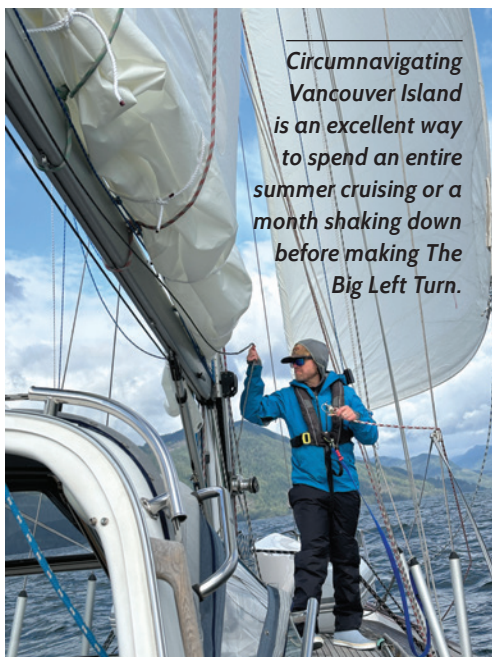
Dates and deadlines also help you plan and execute refit projects in a stepwise fashion and avoid the annual bottleneck of quality marine service technicians. Much of the marine service industry experiences a slowdown over the holidays and associated winter months. This lull can really work to your advantage if you plan your dates and deadlines right. Most technicians are happy to take on new work during their slow months and won't feel rushed to get your project out the door so they can get the next last-minute job. It also means you'll

miss the spring rush on technicians who suddenly become swamped on the first sunny day in April when boaters seem to remember all of last season's unfinished projects. Wait until then to inquire about scheduling and you may be shocked to hear that, within a matter of weeks, technicians have jobs booked until October.

If your plans include heading north for the summer, it's best to be ready to leave earlier than risk having to hurry through the season. Or worse, miss it altogether. If you had a bunch of work done on your boat over the winter, be sure to factor in time to adequately sea trial your new or upgraded systems before you go. Your selected deadline should allow for the completion of all engine maintenance and service points, plus stockpiling the spare parts, fluids, and tools you will need along the way. Believe it or not, even engine oil can be extremely hard to find close to the start of the cruising season. And neither of the two alternatives—not doing the service or not taking the trip due to maintenance deficiencies—are ideal outcomes.

If this is the year you plan to make "The Big Left Turn" and follow the migrating birds and whales to warmer weather for the winter, allow ample time for a solid shakedown followed by a period to regroup and make adjustments before heading south. Even if you've done all your homework and dialed-in your systems precisely how you think you want them, there simply is no substitute for going out and using your boat to show you what you may have overlooked. July tends to be a great time for a shakedown cruise. Our favorite is circumnavigating Vancouver Island, which can comfortably be done in three to four weeks while leaving you plenty of time to fix what broke, modify what didn't work, and enjoy the fleeting Pacific Northwest summer before a southbound go-date sometime in August or September.

Of course, the big question you must answer is when is enough enough? The refit list could go on forever if you aren't careful, and it will never truly all be done. There's always something new to discover, a surprise you'll uncover in a bilge, a cabinet, or down the back of a settee cushion. We try to think



Circumnavigating Vancouver Island is an excellent way to spend an entire summer cruising or a month shaking down before making The Big Left Turn.



Leave time to optimize your sailing systems post-shakedown cruise, ideally with the guidance of the marine professionals who helped put them in place.

of those as the exciting surprises of cruising. If you try to finish *everything* before departure you may never leave. In fact, it's highly likely that you'll stay dockside indefinitely unless you set your go-date, work back your refit deadline, and stay laser-focused on what truly is necessary to complete before your planned departure.

What you consider necessities will depend largely on your cruising plans and goals. Where are you going, for how long, what's your cruising style? Will you spend most of your time at anchor, marina hop, make primarily short coastal passages, or cross oceans on the regular? Do you plan to follow an established cruising route or join a rally? Or will you eschew cruising guides in favor of pilot charts and strike out on your own, bound for the most remote, self-guided destinations? Your answers to all these questions will influence the extent to which you should plan to refit your boat and, therefore, how much time to allow. By and large, it's important to keep in mind that you, in fact, need very little to go cruising and the highest priorities are ubiquitous regardless of your plans, goals, or boat. While everyone's goals, boats, and refits are unique, we confidently recommend working the following five components into your budget and refit timeline with priority.

Ocean proof your boat. Keeping the water out should always be your number one priority and you've got to stay on top of it. The most expensive and invasive repairs usually involve unresolved water ingress. And who wants to sleep in a saltwater soaked bunk? Water related damages are huge contributors to depreciated values and destroyed hardware. Track down and immediately mitigate all signs of water intrusion you find, no matter how small. This will be an ongoing process. It took us four years to finally track down and stop all of the leaks on *Sea Fox*. This process will make the reward of a dry clean bilge truly the sweetest.

Bulletproof sails are the engines that keep you riding the wind mile after mile, so give them the attention they deserve. Inspect them carefully for signs of abrasion, chafe, or tears that

may signal the need for reinforcing patches, improved chafe protection, or more efficient running rigging. Before setting off on a major cruise, consider investing in high-quality new sails and take the time to learn how to care for them so they last as long as possible. If you're unsure how to evaluate their condition, hire a sailmaker for a professional assessment. Many sail lofts offer low-cost inspections that include a thorough review of both sail condition and your overall sail inventory in consideration of your cruising plans. If you're debating whether to replace your sails now or wait until after another season, this can be a smart and informative step.

Rock solid rigging is what will keep your mast up and your sails full, among other often overlooked yet critical tasks. If your boat's standing rigging is old or original, replace it. Insurance companies typically require new standing rigging at least every ten years, so consider that when evaluating your boat's insurance needs. It's wise to get a rig inspection and, ideally, learn how to conduct one yourself. A comprehensive rigging refit involves inspecting key components including the gooseneck, sheaves, vang, and masthead fittings while also evaluating potential upgrades like more efficient or electric winches, and refining fairlead and clutch layouts to ensure smooth, safe sail handling.

A simple, robust, redundant electrical system can be a far more powerful asset to you than an overly complex one. Truthfully, we can all reduce our overall energy consumption with just a few lifestyle and hardware modifications. Before adding solar panels or upgrading batteries, critically assess your power demands based on your cruising lifestyle. Reducing your need for inverted power, or alternating current (AC) loads is a great way to simplify your power demands and reduce overall system complexity. Focus on streamlining and updating your system to match your needs, particularly if your boat is older or has not been brought up to current marine electrical standards. Proper wiring and fusing, safe electrical distribution, and installing quality components are crucial for safe, enjoyable cruising.

Whether you're sailing offshore or spending most of your time coastal cruising, self-steering quickly becomes one of your most valuable crew members. It's rarely realistic for two or even three people to hand-steer for extended passages, and even day-long coastal runs are far more enjoyable when the helm can be shared with reliable equipment. As part of any refit, make sure to evaluate the condition and capability of the self-steering systems already aboard. You will rely on them heavily when you take off. Many coastal sailors rely primarily on electric autopilots, which can perform exceptionally well inshore, but a failure offshore could leave you hand-steering for days or even weeks. For more ambitious cruising plans to distant shores, consider a windvane for its reliability, energy conservation, and redundancy in steering.

As with all things boat and cruising related, flexibility is the glue that holds it altogether. Even if you've done your diligence in setting your refit deadline and go-date, delays due to parts or projects are often a reality. That's ok. And even more reason to be forgiving in your departure planning rather than try to fill every single minute up until you sail away. This is all supposed to be fun, and if the project list is too daunting or the date you hope to take off stops making sense, that's a sign to revisit your project list, rebalance your priorities, and let it be ok to leave

some things undone. Tackle the necessities with tenacity and then perhaps spend some time acquiring parts and materials to stow away so you can complete lower priority projects once you take off. Oftentimes, tedious projects are a lot more fun when done at anchor somewhere scenic and peaceful anyway.

Start by prioritizing the most critical systems for safety and functionality. Once these basics are covered, you can consider upgrades that will improve comfort and livability as your dates, deadlines, and budget allow. But regardless of how you choose to incorporate schedules, deadlines, and dates into your refit and cruising preparations, the most important and necessary thing you can do is *GO*. Go play. Go use your boat. Go enjoy the fruits of your labors and the freedom of sailing into the blue and the solitude of the sea. And always remember: the boat will never be perfect, the projects will never all be done at the same time, but as long as you've prepared yourself with quality education and tools, you'll be just fine. Now go have fun!

***Gio and Julie** of Pelagic Blue lead offshore sail training expeditions, flotillas, and teach cruising skills classes focused on preparing aspiring cruisers for safe, self-sufficient world cruising on their own boats. Details and sailing schedule at www.pelagicbluecruising.com.*



Once you are finally at sea, the frustrations of schedules, deadlines, and dates will all melt away into the endless horizon.

32 TECH TALK WITH SEABITS



by Steve Mitchell

Ask any experienced cruiser what they carry for self-sufficiency and they'll talk about impellers, belts, zincs, and hose clamps. That kind of mechanical preparedness is drilled into us from day one, and for good reason. But so much of what keeps a modern boat running isn't mechanical anymore, and the failures that cut cruises short have quietly shifted in the same direction. A lot of what I troubleshoot for customers these days is systems or is data-related and, in many cases, it comes down to not having the right parts or tools aboard to fix it on the spot. Here's what I'd put in a digital spares kit before heading out for the season.

THE DIAGNOSTIC DUO

Every boat should have a multimeter and, if you're reading this column, you probably do. But most cruisers I talk to don't own a DC clamp meter, and that's the tool that actually helps you trace down more complex issues. A clamp meter measures current by clamping around a wire without breaking the circuit. That means you can go hunting for a parasitic draw while the boat is still powered up, check whether your alternator is actually putting out what it should, or verify the real load on a circuit without pulling anything apart. A good Fluke or Klein model runs around \$150 and is one of the most useful tools I carry aboard my steel trawler, *Aruna*.

NMEA 2000 FIRST AID

NMEA 2000 networks are great until they're not, and when they go down they tend to affect your ability to navigate safely. In most cases, the culprit is a single device that's gone bad and is dragging down the whole backbone. The

fix involves isolating the failed element, but you need the right parts on hand to do that at anchor.

A small bag with a spare drop cable, field-attachable connector, two spare terminators (one for each end) and a



NMEA 2000 spare components: Left is the components of a field installable NMEA 2000 end. Right—tee, terminator.

T-connector will handle most of what can go wrong with an N2K backbone. Those few parts let you fix a flakey connection, restore the bus, and get back underway. Without them, a single bad transducer or display can leave you running blind for the rest of the trip. These parts are cheap and weigh almost nothing. There's no good reason not to have them.

PHYSICAL CONNECTIONS DONE RIGHT

If you're still reaching for electrical tape when something needs fixing aboard, it's time to upgrade your repair kit. Heat-shrink butt connectors and a good ratcheting crimper give you a waterproof, mechanically solid connection that will actually hold up in a marine environment. They're not hard to use and they make a real difference in the longevity of any repair you do underway. Make sure your crimpers are appropriate for heat shrink—many standard double crimp sets will damage the heat shrink. You'll also want a heat gun so you can finish the connection by melting that heat shrink

correctly around the wire.

For fuses, carry the ones you can't buy at a marina. Blade fuses are everywhere. MEGA, ANL, and Class-T fuses—the ones protecting your high-current DC runs, inverter output, and alternator circuits—are a different story. I've had clients stuck because a high-current fuse blew in a remote anchorage and there was simply no replacement to be found. A handful of spares in the right sizes costs less than the stress from being hobbled.

DIGITAL MANUALS AND LOGGING

This is the one people skip because it feels less tangible, but it's saved me on more than one occasion. Put a ruggedized USB drive aboard with offline copies of every manual for every system on your boat. Then add the exported configuration files for your critical equipment like inverters, router, etc. Having these files on a computer or cloud drive is great for every day use, but if you have a significant failure, having them on a USB stick could be a huge time saver.

I also keep a series of documents on that drive with non-obvious settings, configuration notes, and the kind of hard-won details I'd otherwise have to dig through old emails or forum posts to find. Serial numbers, warranty info, the setting that took three hours to figure out the first time. The goal is that if something fails in a remote anchorage, I can fix it without needing to remember anything or have an internet connection to look it up.

BACKUP CONNECTIVITY

Starlink has become the go-to for connectivity afloat, and for good reason,

but it's a single point of failure in a way that's easy to overlook. The service has outages like any other but, more importantly, if the hardware itself fails you have nothing. A cellular router with an appropriate data plan solves both problems. Routers like those in the Peplink lineup are what I run on *Aruna*, and they give you cellular as a true independent backup, plus the ability to pull in marina WiFi as another source when it's available.

If you plan on cruising the coast of British Columbia this summer, Canadian eSIMs are worth setting up before you leave. Services like Airalo or PhoneBox give you a Canadian data plan without roaming charges, and they work on both phones and cellular routers. The catch is they need to be downloaded and activated while you still have a reliable connection. Do it at the dock, not after you've crossed the border and your US plan stops working.

THE OVERLOOKED HANDFUL

A few smaller things worth having. A couple of short CAT6 patch cables take up almost no space and are useful any time WiFi isn't working and you want a direct wired connection to your router or chartplotter. A quality, sizable power bank with an inverter is something I think of as a necessary spare too. If your inverter dies, or you have a complete electrical failure, this power bank can allow you to power up a Starlink to call for help or look up troubleshooting, as well as continue to charge things like tablets for temporary navigation use.

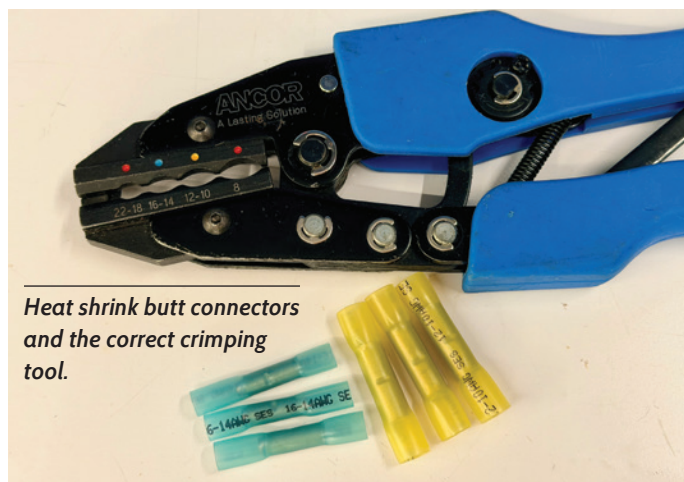
And finally: electrical contact cleaner

and dielectric grease should be aboard too. These might sound like maintenance items rather than emergency supplies, but I can't tell you how many intermittent electrical problems I've traced back to a corroded or poorly seated connector rather than a failed component. A shot of contact cleaner and fresh dielectric grease on a suspect connection has fixed more "electrical gremlins" than any replacement part I've carried.

PREPARED, NOT LUCKY

The boats that turn around early aren't always the ones with the worst luck. Too often, they're the ones that didn't have what they needed to fix what broke. None of this kit takes up much space, and none of it costs much. Most of it you'll never touch on any given cruise, and when that's the case—hurrah! But when something fails in a remote location, the difference between a problem that can be solved at anchor and a premature end to the trip is usually whether you stocked your boat with the right things before you left the slip at your home marina.

Steve Mitchell is a year-round Pacific Northwest cruiser aboard his 54-foot steel trawler Aruna and a lifelong boater with experience in both sail and power. With decades in the technology industry and over 20 years of hands-on experience designing and installing marine electronics, electrical systems, he blends technical expertise with real-world cruising insight. As founder of SeaBits, he tests, reviews, and consults on the latest marine technology, and contributes to numerous boating publications.



Heat shrink butt connectors and the correct crimping tool.



Yeti 400 lithium power bank with 300W inverter —great for serious power emergencies.



BRINGING *COOKIE CUTTER* HOME

by Dan Wierman

WHY WOULD I BUY A BOAT SO FAR AWAY?

In the early morning darkness, I left the campground in East Grand Forks, Minnesota and drove my camper van—"The Flying Brick"—on the bridge over the Red River into Grand Forks, North Dakota, looking for a McDonalds to grab breakfast and some coffee. I came across one and, since I was pulling a trailer and not able to use the drive thru, I parked in an open area along the side of the restaurant. As I was walking across the parking lot, a young lady leaned out of the drive thru window and yelled, "What are you towing?" I answered, "A sailboat!" I had finally reached an area far enough from a large body of water that a sailboat wasn't all that recognizable.

Why was I towing a sailboat in North Dakota? The answer is a project that started in early 2025, but had been on my mind for several years. In March of that year, I was approached by someone who was interested in buying my J/35, *Great White*, a boat I have owned for 26 years. I had been thinking of downsizing to a smaller, trailerable boat with ideas of exploring and racing on big inland lakes. That potential buyer dropped out, but it got me thinking again about a smaller boat. When I started researching trailerable boats, I really gravitated towards the Rocket 22.

The Rocket 22 is a light sport boat built in British Columbia

starting in 2007. It checked all the boxes for what I thought would fit my needs: small, light, easily trailable, ramp launchable, and fast. Only 16 were built, so they are not readily available, but I found a Facebook page for Rocket 22 owners. I joined the group and my first post was to ask if anyone knew of a Rocket 22 for sale. Within a week, I got an answer from a guy that lives in Kenora, Ontario, Canada, on the shores of Lake of the Woods. He actually owned hull number 16, the last to be built. We negotiated by phone and text and soon agreed on terms, and I committed to buy the boat.

With the commitment made, I started to plan how I would actually get the boat. I decided that I could drive to Ontario with my camper van and tow the boat home to Bremerton while camping along the way. It was about 1,800 miles to Kenora, which I figured would be doable in about three or four days. And it could be a great adventure!

I prepared the van for the trip: maintenance, installed a hitch, loaded tools and spares, and got provisions. I investigated what I needed for importing the boat, motor, and trailer into the United States and I was able to transfer a down payment to the seller.

My departure date was May 5 with an itinerary to arrive in



After a bit of work on the boat and trailer, the author was ready to begin his homeward adventure.



The author's co-pilots, Larry and Moe —a.k.a. "The Boys".

Ontario on May 8; that is, until a problem with the transfer service delayed the plan. I found out my transaction was declined on May 5 just as I was getting ready to start my drive. With help from a friend, I found another service to transfer the funds. Even though I had no guarantee that the money would be transferred on time, my two cats Larry and Moe (The Boys) and I left home around noon heading for our first stop in Idaho.

It was good to be on our way. The Boys sang about their displeasure for a while before settling down. I drove east on Interstate 90, the traffic was light and the weather nice. Just past Moses Lake, though, the van started acting up. After looking for an open parts store and trying to go back to Moses Lake, I rolled into a rest stop with an overheating engine and a dead battery. That evening, I wound up talking with a guy from Moses Lake at the rest stop and it turned out we had some friends in common. He offered to help me the following morning.

The next morning—after my first night ever camping in a rest stop—I started working on the van. I found out that the alternator was seized, which broke the serpentine belt. I called my "road angel" and asked him to pick up the parts I needed. He arrived a few hours later and I installed the alternator. Unfortunately, the serpentine belt was too long and it took two

more trips to Moses Lake before we found one that fit.

With the van fixed I was finally underway again at around 6:30 p.m. and I drove to my intended first destination, a campground east of Coeur d' Alene, Idaho. The campground had a closed sign saying it would not be open until mid-May, which became a theme of the trip with numerous campground closures. No problem, I camped in a small parking area outside the gate.

The next day I drove across Montana on I-90 and I-94. It was tough driving with strong winds, but the mountain views were impressive and the plains more interesting than you might think. That evening at a National Forest Service campground just across the border in North Dakota, I got some good news—the boat seller had received the money transfer. So now I was the owner of a Rocket 22, sight unseen.

I set out driving east across North Dakota on I-94 and then north on I-29 to the Canadian border at Emerson. The border crossing into Canada included a few strange questions from the customs agent. She asked, "What is the purpose of your visit?" To which I responded, "To buy a boat." She then wondered, "Why drive so far for a boat?" I explained that it was the only one for sale in North America and she seemed ok with that answer.

Once I passed muster at the border, it was another 150 miles



Visiting the presidents at Mt. Rushmore.



The stop at Devils Tower involved sightseeing and camping.

to the seller's home in Kenora. I was greeted with a nice dinner, a hot shower, and a level parking place for the van. There, I got my first look at my Rocket 22.

The next morning, the work began. I had planned ahead and bought mounted tires and wheels before I left home; which I installed to replace the badly cracked and dry-rotted old set. The seller and I wrapped the mast with plastic. I loaded all the parts and sails in the boat, and lashed everything securely. It all went smoothly and by noon, I was on the road headed home.

I was pleased that the van could easily pull the boat and trailer, but I could always tell it was behind me. By the time I reached the US Border I was getting more comfortable driving with it in tow. The border crossing was pretty easy. I presented all the forms and the bill of sale for the boat, motor, and trailer to the agent who told me, "I have never cleared a boat into the country before." I was instructed to pull ahead and another agent came out, looked at the boat, asked a few questions, stamped my papers, and sent me on my way. No tariffs or duties. I continued south on I-29 to East Grand Forks, Minnesota where my story began.

The next day and for the rest of the trip, I became a tourist. I drove south to where I-29 intersected I-90 and headed west across South Dakota. I made a lot of stops at various attractions. Some prominent ones were the Badlands, the town of Wall where I got breakfast at the famous Wall Drug, Mount Rushmore, Sturgis, and Devils Tower in Wyoming, camping near the Badlands and at Devils Tower. Everywhere I went, my new Rocket 22 brought lots of questions.

From Devils Tower, I drove north to Montana on two lane roads and then west on I-90. Driving on the backroads that wound through the prairies and fields was nice. I had to stop three times in Montana for boat inspections checking for invasive species like zebra mussels. This happened again once each in Idaho and Washington. With many mountain campgrounds still closed, I decided to stop at the same rest stop east of Moses Lake, but it was closed too! So, I found an alternative near George. It was late when I arrived and I parked with the big rigs. After this long day, I was tired, as were The Boys. Sleep came easily.

The final day was driving home on familiar roads over Snoqualmie Pass. The closer I got to Puget Sound, the stronger the van seemed to run. Or maybe the boat was pushing us along when it could smell the water!

I parked the boat in front of my house for a couple weeks. After sorting things out and doing some rerigging, I splashed it in late May for the first time ever in seawater. I found the Rocket 22 is easy to rig, fun to sail, and that it accelerates quickly. It was a good start! I named the boat *Cookie Cutter*.

In the year that followed, I've been enjoying and learning a lot with *Cookie Cutter*. The boat is definitely a lot different than *Great White*, a boat I still really love. It hasn't all been sailing—after being dismasted late in the season (a story for another day), I had to scramble to get the boat ready for this year's Race to the Straits. I have sailed *Great White* in all but four editions of this race since 2002, and was always proud to do well in the singlehanded division.

This year with *Cookie Cutter* was different, as I was one of

the smaller boats in the entire fleet. After a hectic week of preparation, I started racing toward Port Townsend in northerly wind and short, steep wind waves. *Cookie Cutter* was not happy pounding into waves and burying the bow. I reefed and it seemed to do better.

As the wind lightened later, I started passing a few boats, but my performance was dismal—a couple hours off the pace of other boats. After drying things out, I spent the night aboard *Cookie Cutter*, which was surprisingly comfortable for such a small boat.

I was looking forward to Sunday's return to Seattle. The wind was still blowing from the north and it would be a nice downwind run. I had been told that this was the Rocket 22's forte and it was fun! With the spinnaker flying, I was hitting impressive speeds, often planing in the gusts and on the larger waves. *Cookie Cutter* was a pleasure to sail like this—light on the helm and responsive to inputs. Only a couple times did I let the boat start to get overpowered, then I was warned by the "stick shaker" that the rudder was going to stall. A little bit of easing the sheet and things returned to normal. The sense of speed is greater in a small boat than it is in a larger boat.

Sailing a small boat is a thrill, possibly even more fun among big boats. And that's where my boat's name comes from. The cookiecutter shark is a small, tropical shark that preys on much larger mammals, whales, and other sharks.

Getting to sail *Cookie Cutter*, a boat with its origin in this region, in Race to the Straits felt like an inflection point. It was a great adventure to bring the boat from Canada and across much



Cookie Cutter tasting seawater for the first time.

of this country; but taking it sailing in one of my favorite races on Puget Sound was the purpose and inspiration for that big journey and truly began this new sailing chapter for me. I'm looking forward to many more adventures with *Cookie Cutter*.

Dan Wierman is a retired Mechanical Engineering Technician who resides in Bremerton, WA. In addition to being an avid shorthanded sailor, he's also a self-proclaimed bicycle junkie.



Cookie Cutter on Puget Sound during Race to the Straits. Photo by Sean Trew.

CASCADIA BOW TEAM



by Zoe Folsetter

The author handles the pit position on the IC37.



If you've been following along on social media or through our monthly updates published in print and online by *48° North*, the latest article by our skipper, Chris Wolfe, took you on a deep dive into the IC37 that we will be racing in the Women's Invitational Championship this September hosted by New York Yacht Club. Recent articles and interviews have shared some of the team-building work that's brought us closer together, as well as perspectives from our tactician, and updates about our training sessions.

Now, we're taking you forward on the boat to share what life is like from the pit to the bow on the IC37—the good, the bad, and everything in between.

The front end of the boat—or as we like to call it “Adventure Land”—has some quirks that bow teams on other boats might not experience. The IC37 was designed with efficiency in mind for

course racing, with each crew member on the boat playing an integral role in the execution of each maneuver. The bow team is broken up into specific jobs that must be completed at the right moment and in the right order. Our bow team consists of four regular players: pit, me (Zoe); mast, Becky Kelly; bow, Kate Sargent; and floater, Sarah Turpie. Each is responsible for specific aspects of any maneuver, but all work in concert towards the same outcome.

The pit manages halyards and the bow sprit, controlling timing during hoists and douses, while the mast person focuses on physically hoisting sails. The bow handles the jib and spinnaker forward, with the floater supporting the bow and filling in where needed. While these roles are defined, many of their jobs are small portions of the same goal and overlap constantly. For example, during a hoist, the bow might guide



When racing was canceled on the first day of PSSR, the Cascadia team went for a hike together. Building trust ashore can contribute to cohesion on the boat.



The author (right) and mast crew Becky Kelly organize halyards in the pit.

the spinnaker tack forward to the pole while the floater guides the head of the spinnaker into a position to avoid a snag, working together to complete the step efficiently. The bow team is required to be very process-oriented, trusting each other—and being trusted by the rest of the crew—to complete their portion of the job before moving on to the next. If that order breaks down, the result is immediate, with the team getting out of sync, maneuvers slowing down, or the spinnaker ending up in the water.

The addition of the drop line, a line attached to the “belly button” of the spinnaker that runs through the hatch to the back of the boat, then back to the base of the companionway, adds another feature to be managed that other boats often don’t have. The drop line is a highly effective tool, when used properly, and a risky one if things go awry. Certain conditions need to be met for the drop

line to succeed in its job: good timing, preparation, and communication. If those conditions are not met—including the synchronous release of the three corners (halyard, tack, sheet), while speed and strength is employed to haul-in the drop line, bringing the spinnaker into the boat through the hatch belly-first—then the efficacy of the drop line can revert into more of a hindrance for a douse. The drop line is normally the culprit of both “good” maneuvers, and also for those ranging from “bad” to “ugly.”

Though the influences on racing outcomes from the course environment and competitors are infinite, the actual mechanics of sailing any boat involves a limited set of controllable variables. As such, the bow team must be able to adapt and problem-solve with the available tools when issues arise. The spinnaker on the IC37 is large, meaning mistakes during jibes and sets can

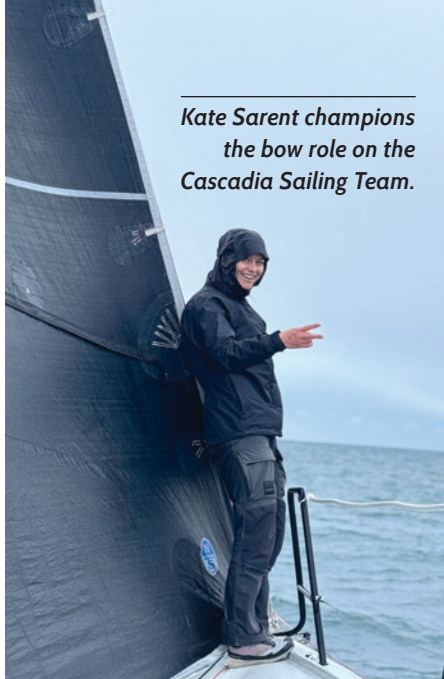
be catastrophic to a race. As the wind increases, the margin for error decreases, as the load on the spinnaker can become too much to manage in the case of a mistake. Rapid-fire adaptations require both accuracy and concurrent execution. A bow team that knows each other well can work at maximum efficiency and solve any adversity that might occur at the front of the boat. This is where the previously mentioned trust comes into play. The bow team has to know each other’s strengths and weaknesses so that contingency plans can be developed on the fly. Team Cascadia’s bow team has been spending a lot of their training time and regattas ironing out how to problem-solve together, a focus that will surely be a strength throughout this campaign.

In order to put all our training to the test, we delivered our IC37, *Westerly*, down to Seattle the weekend of April 18-19 to compete in the Puget Sound Spring Regatta (PSSR), hosted by the Corinthian Yacht Club. This regatta gave us a chance to apply what we had been working on in a race environment against other boats.

The weekend delivered exactly what we needed at this stage in our journey: a mix of valuable race experience, lots of opportunity for team building and, as always, a steep and rewarding learning curve.

On Saturday, we were treated to some beautiful, spring-like conditions, but unfortunately the wind was light and shifty, so after drifting around for a few hours with no steady breeze in the forecast, racing was canceled for the day. Still, it wasn’t time wasted. A

*Kate Sarent champions
the bow role on the
Cascadia Sailing Team.*



*Becky's role of "mast"
on team Cascadia also
involves management of the
mast stack of electronics.*



*There is a lot of independence
in "Adventure Land" and the
team is trusted with a great
deal of responsibility for
preparation and maneuvers.*



few brief wisps of wind rolled through in the morning, giving us just enough opportunity to work on our light-air maneuvers. With Carl Buchan onboard sharing insight and guidance, we were able to take full advantage of our time on the water, and we focused on weight movement, communication, and techniques for building and maintaining speed in light conditions.

Saturday afternoon, we swapped sailing gear for T-shirts and runners and headed out for a five-mile hike through Discovery Park. It was a perfect reset, time to connect as a team off the water and recharge ahead of what we hoped would be a more promising day two.

Sunday did not disappoint. We arrived at the dock to find a steady breeze already filling in across the bay. What followed was a spectacular day of racing: five races in classic champagne sailing conditions, with sunshine and a steady 12 to 15 knots, providing the perfect platform to push our performance. It would prove to be an all-hands-on-deck day in Adventure Land!

The conditions allowed us to focus on refining our bow teamwork and build confidence in more dynamic maneuvers. As previously mentioned, the success of each maneuver relies on each team member completing their specific job at the right moment. One mistake and the whole maneuver can be compromised. From jumping halyards at the mast, to managing the drop line, to pulling the kite through during jibes (or "tractoring"), every position demands a high level of athleticism, coordination, and precision.

The pit position also includes the role of "crew boss," tying it all together and relaying key information from the back of the boat, and vice versa, as well as calling weight movement to always ensure the boat is at its optimal heeling angle. Whether it's the call to move to windward out of a tack to flatten the boat, or quick adjustments mid-leg, that coordination is what keeps everything running smoothly. The pit also helps control the timing of hoists and douses, managing the halyard, tack, and bow sprit while adjusting the speed of the drop to keep the sail under control.

Our tactician, Jen Glass, kept us sharp throughout the day, calling for several

jibe-sets at the windward mark. The repetition over five races helped solidify our teamwork on the bow and gave us a chance to work through challenges, particularly managing the drop line below and keeping it clear of the "spinnaker-eating" mast step. We definitely had a few ugly maneuvers along the way, but it gave us the reps we needed to smooth things out.

Those challenges showed up in real time. At one point, after a douse, we found the drop line on the wrong side of the kite. With no time to reset before the next maneuver, we had to fix it on the fly, using a boat hook to reroute the line and get everything back in sequence. It was not clean, but it worked, and it reinforced how quickly small setup errors can escalate, and how important it is to recover just as quickly.

On the other end of that spectrum, we also had a more controlled moment with a mid-race kite swap as the "spinnaker-eating" mast step had its day. This was not a simple three-corner swap from a bag and the entire sequence had to be completed during the upwind leg, with limited awareness of time. It meant going into the boat, derigging the old kite, rigging the new one, and rerunning the drop line, all while managing large sails and ensuring every line was led correctly. The drop line, as a fourth control line, made the setup less forgiving, with little margin for error.

Rigging it demands a certain level of agility, as the cleat sits in the very aft, narrowest part of the port hull, turning the task into a contortionist's exercise at the best of times, let alone in the middle of a race. While the situation came out of a messy moment, the swap was fast, controlled, and executed cleanly under pressure.

That experience carried into some of the adjustments we made throughout the day. One key adjustment was putting a crew member in charge of managing the excess drop line during the hoist, which made the whole sequence smoother with less tangles. Another refinement was assigning one person to "tractor" the spinnaker through the jibes. With one person dedicated to pulling the kite around, the rest of the bow team could stay focused on timing and weight

movement. The result was a noticeably smoother, more controlled transition through each maneuver.

On Sunday, we were joined by Jonathan McKee, whose input helped us further refine both our maneuvers and our onboard communication. His approach was simple: less is best. We focused on keeping the boat quiet, with clear, concise calls focused only on the information needed to execute each maneuver. It was a subtle shift, but one that made an immediate difference in our timing and overall flow.

PSSR allowed us to take a strong step forward. We were happy to come away with the win in our division, but the more important outcome was how much we improved as a team over the course of the day. By the final races, maneuvers were more controlled, communication was clearer, and the team was working in sync.

The regatta reinforced that success on the bow is less about any one role and more about how well the team functions together. It's a collective effort. As we continue toward the Championship, the focus will be on building consistency and continuing to refine how we move and communicate as a unit. **48**

Cascadia Sailing continues their fundraising effort with an ultimate goal of \$120,000, helping fund top-level coaching before and at the event, team travel, and participation in a lead-up NYYC regatta on a chartered IC37 in July. Learn more and contribute to the team's exciting endeavor at: www.cascadiasailing.org



The immensely talented Cascadia Sailing Team continues to grow and improve as they work toward this fall's big event.



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A MOST SPECIAL RACE!

Photo by Maxine Damore.

by Peter Salusbury

The 50th Anniversary running of the Pacific Northwest Offshore Race was a memorable one, largely for two reasons. First, Race Captain Denny Damore and his energetic volunteer team did an amazing job promoting the event through last fall and winter, getting a lot of first-time entrants to register. This event is not an easy one given the long delivery required to get to Ilwaco, Washington for boats from Seattle, Victoria, and Vancouver, along with the added challenge of the tricky timing required to cross the infamous Columbia River Bar. But Denny's promotional team never let up and a record-setting group of 43 boats started the race on May 14, 2026.

The ORC fleet consisted of 31 boats with many strong Pacific Northwest teams participating; the Cruising Division consisted of eight boats; and the race also attracted a four boat multihull fleet. The organizer's 'northern emissary' Charlotte Gann worked her magic and persuaded eight Canadian boats to enter, most notably Dan Sinclair's Andrews 77, *Mach II*.

The second element of success was the weather—conditions were exceptional for a fast transit. Bruce Hedrick's pre-race weather briefing promised an off-wind race all the way to Victoria, and what we saw on the water did not disappoint. Most boats reported no upwind sailing at all and the three Paul Bieker designed lightweight flyers—Jonathan McKee's 44-foot *Dark Star*, Peter Heppel's 30-foot *Baby Blue*, and my 35-foot *Longboard*—looked like strong contenders by the time the race got underway.

The race started at 1:00 p.m. on Thursday afternoon, so there was enough tide to get from Ilwaco across the bar to the virtual start line at the mouth of the Columbia River. A cold, gray rain

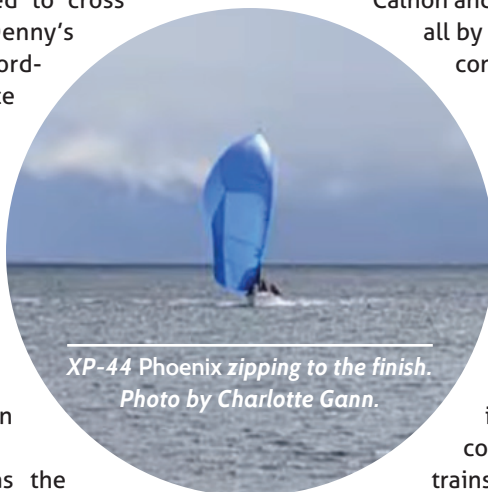
greeted us, and we found it really disorienting attempting a virtual start with no land or marks in sight. The fleet set off on a power jib reach in a 15-knot west-southwest wind, which backed to the southwest and then south-southwest range shortly after the start, as winds built into the 20 to 25 knot range, kites were getting hoisted and the downwind fun began.

Mach II, the Mark McCuddy and Kent Picknell skipped Wylie 70, *Rage*, Kim Alfred's F-45RC, *Cheekee Monkee*, along with the three Bieker boats quickly separated from the heavier displacement pack. The trick was to avoid sailing too high and stay as close to the rhumb line as possible. Race veteran Jim Calnon and crew on the J/120 *Pathfinder* schooled us all by diligently sticking to the rhumbline which contributed to winning Division C.

As Bruce Hedrick predicted, after 4 hours of power running, a weak front washed in from the west and the wind veered that direction. Those who changed gears quickly by getting their kites down and getting back to reaching jibs tended to step out a bit on anyone for whom managing the transition took a little more time. That set the stage for a long evening and night of power reaching in 18 to 25 knots combined with a very confused sea state and competing wave trains—all in pitch black darkness. It was a fast and wet night and was a good test of how good your foul weather gear and boots were.

Once the fleet got to Cape Alava, it was possible to crack off 20 degrees for a more comfortable stretch to Duntze Rock with the windspeed moderating somewhere between 15 to 20 knots. Eventually, this allowed spinnakers to make their second appearance of the race before Duntze Rock, which resulted in a fast approach to the Strait of Juan de Fuca. While we all anticipated a nice traditional downwind slide down the Strait, the reality proved to be far from straight forward!

Not long after entering the Strait on the westerly, the wind



XP-44 Phoenix zipping to the finish.
Photo by Charlotte Gann.

backed significantly into the southwest and at times south-southwest, which resulted in hard kite reaching down the middle of the Strait.

One more pothole awaited—the pre-race weather models showed an emerging and expanding band of light air in the central Strait on Friday morning. The key for the leaders was to press east as fast as possible to avoid being gobbled up by this light air. *Mach II*, *Cheekee Monkee*, *Dark Star*, *Rage*, and *Longboard* all avoided the light air and had relatively fast runs to the virtual finish line off Brotchie Ledge. *Baby Blue* was slowed a bit by the lighter conditions, but the rest of the heavier displacement boats were significantly impacted by the lighter conditions.

After the race, there were reports of mal de mer, foil damage, sprit's breaking, sail failures, and the occasional snagged crab pot buoy. But all the crews seemed to make it to Victoria safely, if not a little tired, wet, and achy. No one was complaining about the fast pace.

The fast off the wind conditions set up the possibility that the Perry 66 *Icon's* 2014 record of 14 hours 56 minutes might be broken by *Mach II*. Alas, it was not to be as Dan Sinclair reported they lost time backing down in the night to remove some crab pot buoys that got tangled on their keel, which was later followed by a light air patch off Neah Bay that slowed them further. Nonetheless, *Mach II* completed the course in an impressive 18 hours at 7:07 Friday morning to take the Line Honors win.

Dark Star narrowly crossed the finish line ahead of *Rage* at 11:30 on Friday morning and corrected ahead of *Mach II*, winning Division A and ending up third overall.

In Division B, *Longboard* finished at 12:11 on Friday to win Division B and the Overall ORC win. *Baby Blue* finished 2.5 hours later and was second overall and in Division B. The three Bieker boats enjoyed the conditions, were all sailed well by experienced crews, and took home each of the steps on the overall podium.

In Division C ORC, *Pathfinder* beat out race veteran Ged McLean's Wylie 43 *Hana Mari* to take the win in the 11-boat division. Chad Stenwick's J/35 *The Boss* won Division D handily over Ben Emery's C&C 99 *Penelope* in a nine boat division.

In the Multihull Division, Joe Grosjean's Light 55 catamaran *Ceres* sailed a strong race to win the division by two hours over John Neidig's Dragonfly 35 *Lykke*. And in the Cruising Division, Rich Elstrom's Ericson 35-2 *Aja* won the very competitive eight boat fleet. Huge kudos to the last boat who hung in there to finish, J. Grant Loomis' Albin Ballad *Highlander* with an elapsed time of 63 hours and 5 minutes—admirable determination and resilience!

The Pacific Northwest Offshore Race (formerly known as the Oregon Offshore) has a long and storied history in our part of the world and the success of this year's 50th anniversary event is a direct result of the dedication, passion, energy, and hard work by the event organizing committee, Portland Yacht Club, Corinthian Yacht Club of Portland, and by the title sponsor Schooner Creek Boat Works. All the participants are grateful for making this year's edition one for the ages.

Full results at www.pacificnwoffshore.org



Cape Dory 33 Sea Sponge enjoying the conditions on the way to 3rd in the Cruising Division. Photo by Dan Cole.



Mach II crew raising a glass to a great race and a Line Honors win. Photo by Charlotte Gann.



Longboard crew celebrating their overall victory.

SYC TRI-ISLAND SERIES #1 AND #2



Photo by Sean Trew

SMITH AND VASHON ISLAND RACES

Seattle Yacht Club's (SYC) Tri-Island Series is a pillar of the spring racing calendar, drawing large fleets for rewarding challenges on some of Puget Sound's longest courses. The 2026 series is off to a start that's true to form and expectation—there's been glorious sailing as well as some conditions that required sailing skill be accompanied by grit and persistence. At the time of publication, two of the three races have been run: late April's Smith Island Race and mid-May's Vashon Island Race. The series-capping Blake Island Race takes place on Saturday, May 30.

SMITH ISLAND

A tantalizing forecast greeted the sailors for the Smith Island Race. Not only was there going to be lots of warm sunshine, but also a solid bit of breeze was likely as the day went on. Both forecast and reality aligned for some pretty classic Puget Sound conditions on a fair weather northerly spring day. The Long Course is 85-miles out and back from Shilshole Bay around Smith Island in the eastern Strait of Juan de Fuca, and 24 boats came out for the long-haul across four ORC classes. The 35-mile shorter-course option turns back toward Seattle after rounding the Double Bluff buoy and

drew 17 boats—J/105s and two PHRF classes. The 26-mile Cruiser/Racer class was seven boats strong.

The wind didn't arrive right away but, after a short postponement, patches of breeze filled in and the SYC committee got things underway as soon as the opportunity presented itself—leaving a few of the biggest, fastest boats with a bit of a scramble drill to get sails up and trimmed in time for their the day's first start.

Heading north, the fleet started out in very light breeze under 5 knots, which built to the high single digits by the time boats were approaching Kingston.

Though the earliest hints of the filling breeze actually materialized on the east side of the course, the west side was the place to be. The breeze filled and shifted left, and was into the low-to-mid teens by Double Bluff when the Short Course boats turned south.

Typical of the conditions on a day like this, the breeze continued to strengthen entering the bigger water of the Strait. The beat north gave way to a reach near Smith Island, before running kites were set for the trip south. Among the big and fast boats of Class 1, new-to-town Ker 52 *Ryujin* and TP52 *Glory* were battling tightly at the front of the fleet on the way north with *Glory* having jumped to a lead and maintaining it most of the way. When the time came to bear off near Smith Island, veteran skipper Greg Slyngstad and his savvy *Ryujin* crew quickly executed a three-headsail reach, passing and extending on *Glory*.

Running south, it turned out to be a race against time. The farther south you were when the sun went down and the breeze shut off, the better. Passing Point No Point and entering the Central Sound, the Class 1 boats were still in touch and it was all to play for. At that time, *Glory* was just ahead, but as boat speeds dropped under 2 knots in the twilight, *Ryujin* was able to turn a couple-hundred-yard lead into 40 minutes and they won handily on corrected time, taking the ORC overall win along with class and line honors.

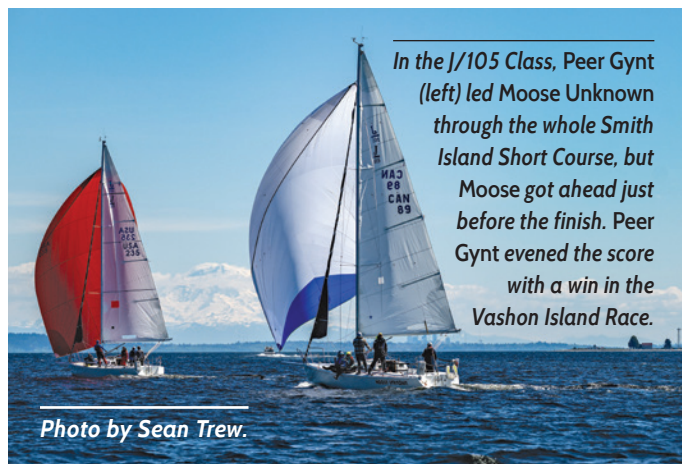
Many of the other Long Course boats, fast but not quite as fast, had a great deal more white-knuckle tedium in the nighttime absence of breeze, many finishing in the wee hours and a few into the next day.

Class winners on the Long Course, in addition to *Ryujin*, were Riptide 44 *Dark Star*, Farr 39ML *Absolutely*, and J/111 *Hooligan*.

Among the Short Course boats, the overall victory went to Wauquiez Centurion 40s *Different Drummer*, who also topped their class. Other class winners were Ranger 33 *Aurora*, and J/105 *Moose Unknown* who trailed *Peer Gynt* nearly the whole race and managed to make the pass just before the finish. Cal 40 *White Squall* took home the Cruiser/Racer trophy.



ORC Class 1 competitors beat toward Smith Island in the beautiful northerly. Photo by Sean Trew.



In the J/105 Class, Peer Gynt (left) led Moose Unknown through the whole Smith Island Short Course, but Moose got ahead just before the finish. Peer Gynt evened the score with a win in the Vashon Island Race.

Photo by Sean Trew.

VASHON ISLAND

The second installment of the Tri-Island Series, the Vashon Island Race, had a less promising forecast than the first race, and brought sailors south into an area that typically has lighter breeze. With the light northerly that started the day, concerns about the prospects of getting around Vashon's south end were present before the race even began.

There was a more significant postponement for the Vashon Race than Smith Island, and it was near 11 a.m. when the sequences got off and the fleet headed south in about 4 knots of northerly wind. Similar to the first event in the series, there were three course options: Long Course at about 47 miles (17 boats), Short Course turning back north after Point Robinson for approximately 35 miles (18 boats), and the Cruiser/Racers with a round trip of 15 miles (7 boats).

Once underway with spinnakers flying, the fleet spread wide across the Sound, with boats spanning all the way from the Bainbridge side to near

rhumb line down Elliott Bay—and there weren't big advantages to either.

Consolidating back around the entrance to East Passage, the breeze stayed fairly consistent. The fleet stayed mostly in touch until around Point Robinson when they saw a perpendicular line of glass. The wind just turned off, and a handful of Long Course boats pulled the plug soon after.

Those that continued connected the dots in the calm south end, before breaking into a bit of breeze again while heading north in Colvos Passage. TP52 *Mist* came through the south end ahead among the Class 1 boats, holding off *Ryujin* all the way north until just before the finish, with *Mist* taking the class and overall wins in the last light of the evening's brilliant sunset. Others continued well into the night and, in the end, only seven boats completed the whole course. In addition to *Mist*, class honors went to Riptide 41 *Blue*, Aerodyne 43 *Freja*, and J/111 *Hooligan*.

Among the Short Course boats, the turn back north after Point Robinson

yielded some more fluky sailing on the beat, but mostly this fleet was able to find enough breeze to keep moving. As there was in the first event, a battle between *Peer Gynt* and *Moose Unknown* ensued once again at the front of the J/105 fleet, with *Peer Gynt* prevailing this time for class and Short Course overall honors. Short Course class honors also went to J/109 *Eclipse* and J/80 *Jolly Green*. Of additional note among the Short Course contingent is Davidson 29 *Madame Pele*, who hasn't brought home a class win, but their consistent overall performances leave them atop the overall leaderboard for the series.

With fun and challenge aplenty, these were two pleasant days of spring racing. On long distance courses, there's bound to be some ups and downs, but the light air portions of each race proved decisive. It's sure to be another round of fun competition and camaraderie to finish out the series with the Blake Island Race.

Full results at www.seattleyachtclub.org



Davidson 29 *Madame Pele*'s consistently great performances put them at the top of the overall Short Course leaderboard heading into the final event of the series. Photo by Sean Trew.



Two excellent showings for new-to-town Ker 52 *Ryujin*, shown here at sunset during the challenging Vashon Island Race, put them in pole position for the Long Course overall after two events. Photo by Derek DeCouteau.

MEMORABLY *FUN*



RACE TO THE STRAITS 2026

Photo by Sean Trew

I'm sure most *48° North* readers are already aware of Race To the Straits (RTTS). In short, RTTS is an annual doublehanded or singlehanded event organized by Sloop Tavern Yacht Club (STYC). This event is one of my favorite races in the Pacific Northwest; and it appears the sentiment holds true for many other local sailors. One could argue the race really started at 8:00 a.m. on March 13 when the race registration opened and all 90 initial spots sold out in under 22 minutes, leading to a waitlist that was reportedly 45+ boats strong. Thanks to the STYC volunteers that worked to secure additional moorage, the total registered boats grew beyond the initial cap. This year had 107 registered boats at the time of the Friday skippers meeting. The nice weather made it all the better, with warm sunshine and wind providing two days of amazing sailing.

Saturday's course was from Shilshole Bay Marina to Port Townsend, with Double Bluff buoy just beyond halfway to be kept to port. Sunday was the reverse, keeping Double Bluff buoy to starboard. In total, it's approximately 30 miles each way. RTTS uses a rating adjusted, time-specific chase start, meaning each boat's handicap determines their exact start time and then whoever crosses the finish line first wins.

To be competitive on this course, boats need to factor in currents, wind, water depths, clean air, and always have a good look out for other competitors as well as commercial traffic. From our perspective, the fleet did a good job avoiding commercial traffic and I hope that was the case across the whole fleet. Races in Puget Sound often cross the shipping lanes, and this weekend crossed twice each day; we need to be good partners following COLREGS so event organizers like STYC

by Kirk Fraser

and other clubs can keep securing race permits from the USCG. Unfortunately, the record wasn't quite so clean for competitor traffic, with one collision between competitors (sidebar on page 48). At least one boat sustained major damage, but thankfully I heard all sailors are ok.

When we arrived at my J/109 *Eclipse* on Saturday, there was zero wind with no signs of immediate change. Chatter on P-Dock turned to start delay concerns and laughing about how much work there was for the skipper without the full crew there. To all of our relief and excitement, the wind quickly built to about 10



The intrepid Eclipse crew on their way to Port Townsend.
Photo by Chris Zenner.

knots in the marina just prior to the first boat's start at 8:03 am.

We favored the west side of the course for presumed better wind pressure and expected shifts to the left as we made our way to Port Townsend. I later heard some boats that stayed east, sailing up to Edmonds before crossing, made out extremely well bucking the typical wisdom. As the day went on, wind increased to a sustained 18 to 20 knots before reaching Point No Point. The higher wind with only one crew for the rail made it hard work to keep the boat flat and point well. We discussed reefing a couple times, but it always seemed like the wind was going to ease back, and we were able to maintain control. Each tack was hard work for the jib trimmer, especially for the boats using overlapping genoas.

By the time we approached Marrowstone Point, the flood tide had started running against us and the wind began to ease. Taking some tacks into the beach before reaching the point delivered some nice eddies that paid off relative to the boats who were farther out. After rounding Marrowstone Point, the wind got lighter with the current still on the nose, making the next challenge loosening things up to keep the boat moving. Staying in race mode, we tried to pick off the J/105 *Moose Unknown* on the final leg, but they stayed ahead of us across the finish. In the end, we finished around 3:30 Saturday and were first to cross the line in our class.

Spending the afternoon in Port Townsend is part of the magic of this weekend. We switched to the other assigned channel for docking assignments, took our slip, and ended up chatting with a handful of other sailors before finally getting the boat



Sailing south under spinnaker on day two, and staying well clear of commercial traffic.

put away and officially switching to social mode. Unlike the fully crewed races where you might stay circled up with your own boat's crew, the shorthanded element of this race lends to a great mix of re-connecting with old friends from other boats and meeting many other sailors for the first time. The party at the Northwest Maritime Center was as good as always, from standing outside on the deck with a cold beverage to sitting down to the catered BBQ dinner sharing stories of the day or life off the water. The STYC Race Committee thanked sponsors and provided a quick update on results, including "halfway hat" awards to the first boat to finish in each class.

Sunday dawned with more sunshine and offered the fleet a 30-mile spinnaker ride from Port Townsend back to Ballard. The current was against us from the beginning, which traditionally



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can make it very hard to get around Marrowstone Point in the often-light morning wind. Thankfully, the day started with a good wind—about 10 knots at our start time—and held through the finish, building to 14-18 knots for most of the race.

We set up for outside jibes, which worked well shorthanded as the wind gained strength. We did our best to stay in the wind and avoid current until the course required us to cross to the halfway mark. That turned out to be a good call, as we saw 4 knots of adverse current crossing the center of Admiralty inlet.

Our day wasn't without its mistakes. We found ourselves too deep in Skunk Bay and the current relief did not outweigh the light wind we got stuck in while we were there. I know better and didn't listen to prior lessons. Then south of Kingston, as we focused on staying ahead of the boats closest to us in our class, the J/99 *One Life* and Wauquiez Centurion 40s *Different Drummer*, we overstood the finish mark not anticipating the last shift. Ending the day with a tight spinnaker reach in 16-18 knots was a fun fast sail to the finish, but we put in more distance than we needed. We did not know one boat evaded us Sunday until seeing the posted results. The J/100 *Selah* started before us, and we never caught up enough to realize they were ahead of us. Congrats *Selah*, well sailed! In the end, we were happy to secure the first in class for the weekend, and even happier to have had such splendid sailing conditions for the entirety of both days.

The two of us on *Eclipse* enjoyed the weekend thoroughly. It was a blast to sail doublehanded with a friend I've known my whole life, having grown up together in local sailing families. Sailing to Port Townsend is always a great adventure, enhanced by hanging out and partying with fellow sailors. Getting to do it all again the next day makes it a memorably fun weekend, no matter your finishing position. Adding a bit of competition to the camaraderie creates a goal and inspires focus, and our good fortune to secure a first in our class for the weekend was icing on the cake. Hope you get out sailing often, for Race to the Straits 2027 or any of the other great opportunities on Puget Sound and beyond!

Full results at www.styc.org

With a great fleet and conditions like this, it was an outstanding weekend no matter your finishing position.



THE BANANA STAND'S DEVASTATING RACE TO THE STRAITS

by Adam Yuret, Skipper, SC 27 *The Banana Stand*

After a sail change near Apple Tree Cove in breeze building into the high teens and above, we approached Point No Point flying our Santa Cruz 27's beautiful blade jib and reefed main. My 15 year old son, Ben, estimated we were reeling in some competition. I was on the high side, and Ben was keeping an eye on traffic below us. I went over emergency radio procedures with him, as I wasn't sure he knew how to call for help effectively if things somehow went awry.

On our last tack before crossing Admiralty Inlet after Point No Point, Ben looked under the sails and calmly said "There's a boat crossing us who isn't going to make it, but they should be clear to tack ahead." I assumed the boat would tack away and lee-bow us, and we might have to tack to avoid their dirty air.

A few seconds later, Ben yelled "STARBOARD!" and I joined him. I decided to take a peek and see what was happening. What I saw was a 40-foot racing boat that was only a few feet from our rail, bearing away from the wind with both sails strapped, trying to duck us. Just as I saw them, they made hard contact with our hull on the port side, and our race and season was over. The skipper of the other boat immediately apologized and took full responsibility.

I told Ben to get the sails down and he went forward. When I saw the port-side chainplates were obscured by the rippling deck damage and feared they might be lifting out and our rig might drop, I tacked across to the other board. Ben admonished me since now the big hole was on the leeward side, but it was more important we get the rig secured and move the wind load to the undamaged chainplates until he could attach the jib halyard to the first bit of intact toerail aft of the damage.

I called a pan-pan into the USCG to let them know about our collision and that we were motoring two hours back to Shilshole unescorted.

Digging the bilge out from under the #1 we stuffed down during our sail change, it was full of water. Weirdly, my automatic bilge pump wasn't working. Luckily, I was able to use our manual backup to clear the bilge and confirm that no more water was coming in. I am in awe that an "ultralight" 27-footer from 1978 not only didn't sink when T-boned at full speed by a 15,000-pound boat, but she got us home safely.

It would be nice if there was a silver lining to this story, but the *Banana* is definitely dead. It's devastating to lose a boat, a member of the family, that we had enjoyed for 15 years—Ben's entire life. The boat that hit us made a terrible mistake, and I do not bear any ill will toward them.

With luck and some financial help, I hope we'll recover and be able to get back out there as a family. In the meantime, thanks to everyone who made *The Banana Stand* a great racing program, and a wonderful learning platform for both my boys and me.



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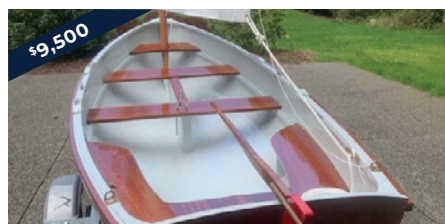
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LISTINGS WANTED! • WE GET RESULTS!
See Your Boat in 48" North + 6 Online MLS!

45' Beneteau 45 '15Sale Pending
 44' Jeanneau 44DS '13SOLD
 43' Nauticat 43 PH '83Sale Pending
 40' Jeanneau 409 '14SOLD
 39' Jeanneau 39i '08SOLD
 36' Sceptre 36 '80New Listing, \$27,000
 36' J/111 '11SOLD
 35' Jeanneau SO 35 '03Sale Pending
 35' Catalina 355 '24SOLD
 35' Island Packet 35 '94SOLD
 35' Catalina 350 '04SOLD
 35' Jeanneau 349 '22Sale Pending
 35' Jeanneau 349 '16 & '172 SOLD
 34' True North 34 OE '24, Clearance..\$628,568
 28' XO DFNDR 9 24 Clearance..\$389,784

Reduced



2022 Bali 4.6 Catamaran • **\$999,000**

Reduced



2021 Jeanneau 440 • **\$379,000**



1990 Jeanneau Sun Magic 44 • **\$97,500**

Reduced



2004 Cabo Rico 42PH • **\$299,000**



1990 Catalina 42 • **\$69,000**



2021 Jeanneau 410p • **\$375,000**



1985 Dehler 372 • **\$59,900**



2014 Jeanneau 349 • **\$149,500**



2001 Hunter 34 • **\$44,900**



Dan Krier



Dean Iwata



Bryan Rhodes



Todd Heckel



Don Smith



Jon Knowles