

SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER 2007

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MALDIVES ONE & ONLY

Reethi Rah Resort

HOT SPRING BREAK

Atami, Shizuoka

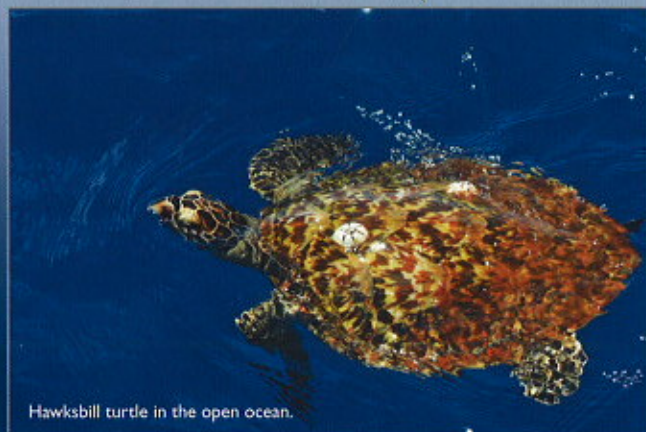


**13TH ANNIVERSARY
CELEBRATIONS**

A SPOT OF MAGIC

As the *SV Infinity* journeys towards a treasured dive site in Alotau, Papua New Guinea, they encounter drama on the high seas.

By **Abigail Alling, President PCRF,** and **Orla Doherty, Managing Director PCRF.**



Hawksbill turtle in the open ocean.

An idyllic month at sea brought us from Ambon to Alotau, Papua New Guinea (PNG). We made our way slowly towards the great mouth of the South Pacific Ocean, accompanied by countless gatherings of cetaceans: From sperm whales to Risso's dolphins (some in remarkable formations), to melon headed whales, pilot whales and larger unidentified baleen whales.

We made several offshore exploratory dives not far from Waigeo Island, witnessing vibrant scenes of Manta rays breaking through the sea's flat surface and somersaulting before us. Curious turtles also visited us even when land had disappeared from view. These waters of Rajah Empat, at the eastern edge of Indonesia, have been luring us for many years and making our way through them only whetted our appetite for a more thorough exploration next year.

Once in the embrace of the Pacific Ocean proper, our plans to revisit Hermit Islands were scuppered by a squall, which had us flying through the seas at breakneck speed and unfortunately closed the entrance channel to our passage. The next day we

were in the familiar clutches of the Vitiaz Straits, a channel infamous for its strong currents. This time we made good headway only to find a local boat with a dysfunctional engine helplessly adrift for ten days. All 50 on board, including a baby, were in good health but desperate to get back to Madang where their ominous journey had begun. We stayed with them for the day, replenished their water supplies, helped repair their starter motor and communicated with the rescue centre in Port Moresby, which promised to send a tug boat that night. They came at the stated hour and promised to stay with the ferry until they were safely ashore.

We arrived less dramatically into Alotau, one of our home ports in the Pacific. Our main task was to conduct a repeat Vitareef study at Magic Spot, one of the reef patches in the Raven Channel and a treasured dive site in PNG. Since our first encounter in 2002, we have been keeping a close eye on it and glad that it's still in a sound state of health.

Visibility was generally low, making it hard to gauge the state of the pelagic population. However we sighted several white tip reef sharks and enough Spanish mackerel, dogtooth tuna and Napoleon wrasse, to be assured that the fish stocks had not been degraded substantially. Come October, we will return to Alotau to join their annual Kula canoe festival and traditional dance competition... but for now, it is onward ho to Fiji!

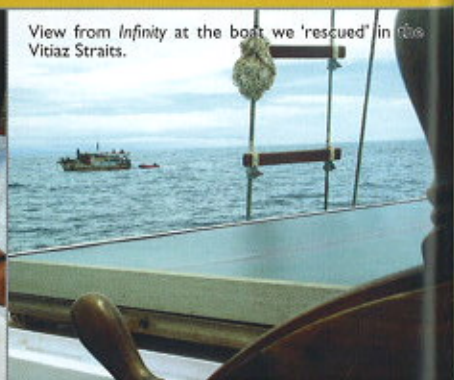
"Join the Voyage" of the SV Infinity, Raffles Marina's "club at sea" in Nautique and PCRF's homepage at www.pcrf.org. Together on our mission to conserve and protect the coral reefs and oceans, we can make a difference!



Risso's dolphins gathering.



Kirby (background) and Carol (foreground) mending one of the jibs after the rough weather en route to Papua New Guinea.



View from *Infinity* at the boat we 'rescued' in the Vitiaz Straits.