

Sunny Spray's travels, Episode 16

Charlotteville Bay, Tobago. November 11, 2016

Translated and edited November 13 - 16, 2016

Dear All,

Episode 15 dated from October 4, so it is high time to keep you up to date about our adventures since then. As you can see from the location bar above, we have by now left South America and arrived safely in Charlotteville, Tobago. As usual, we needed to overcome quite some obstacles and mishaps to get here.

It all started nice and easy. Our decision to not sail for Tobago at the end of September because of the expected arrival of a tropical storm had been a wise one. This tropical storm later developed into hurricane Matthew, which skipped the southern Caribbean, but wreaked havoc with a lot of victims and damage in the northern Caribbean. Because of our closeness to this tropical storm, we daily followed the special storm/hurricane forecasts from NOAS, which gave us a good insight into the different stages of the development from tropical storm into hurricane. Very educational.

Now, here in Charlotteville, we again follow the NOAS predictions daily. We are nearing the end of the hurricane season, and are eager to move on. We have agreed to start moving again by mid November, on the condition that NOAS does not predict any developing tropical storms.



The nearing end of the hurricane season is accompanied by an active rainy season until mid December. Heavy rain showers develop daily. But every cloud has a silver lining: all this rain ends up in our water tanks, so we rarely have to lug heavy jerry cans with water on board.

Moving onwards means Grenada, the Grenadines, and slowly further north. We have decided to forget going into the Western Caribbean, since Bob is afraid that going there will mean we will not be home

before the end of 2018. Both of us would like to sit between our own plants and animals again as of end 2017.

Because of the threat of Matthew, we ended up in Guyana, where we arrived on September 23. There are many large rivers in Guyana, but yachts are only welcome on the Essequibo, which is South America's third largest river, after the Amazon and the Orinoco. It is unclear to me whether the other rivers are non-navigable, or that the authorities do not want foreign eyes over there, or that we are not welcome because of safety reasons. Maybe all three arguments hold true!

Whatever the reason, it is very strange that such a large river, with quite a lot of local traffic in the form of river barges loaded with sand or gravel, good sized ferries and lots of water taxis, has absolutely NO navigational beacons: nothing, not a buoy, light or stake to be seen anywhere! Apparently the thinking must be that it is all local traffic (foreign ships would have a difficult time to enter the river mouth!!), and since locals know their way in and on the river, why bother?

We did bother and had the scantiest of information to guide us. Luckily for us, we had downloaded in Saint Laurent de Maroni part of a Cruising Guide covering Guyana. The download contained hand-drawn maps and lists and lists of waypoints with their geographical coordinates (latitude and longitude). We followed those waypoints, which dated from 2006 (are those still correct?), until the third decimal! Our Navionics map regularly showed us navigating on the shore, but the location of the waypoints was spot on, so the farther we got the more confidence we had.



The Essequibo waypoints given in the Cruising Guide are numbered as Guys 16, Guys 17, Guys 18, Guh 2, Guh 3 etc). Their location is given on a hand-drawn map, and they guide you around obstacles, islands and sand banks. Legends to the maps neatly show which yachts have been providing which depth information.

We sailed 255 miles from Surinam to the mouth of the River Essequibo; after that it was another 40 miles to Bartica, a major settlement up river. We did those 40 miles in two stages, with a stop at Fort Island, and a stop at lovely Shanklands Resort, sadly abandoned since 2006.

The River Essequibo, and in particular the downriver part, was beautiful. The river is very wide, and littered with small and large islands, nearly all uninhabited. At night we heard the howler monkeys living on the islands. In between the islands are numerous sandbanks, and the occasional rock. I don't mind rocks, as long as you can see them: it is the half submerged ones that bother us! Needless to say it was not a river for night navigation!

The shores have quite a lot of dwellings, but you hardly see them: unlike in Surinam, where all trees are cut prior to building a house, in Guyana one practices selective cutting, so that the plots look very agreeable, the houses and huts are nicely shaded and people have some privacy. Since there are very few roads, nearly all transport is by boat, and accordingly most houses have a small landing or pier.



Uniformed school kids waving from the shore.

Guyana people are proud of their country and foreign yachts are made welcome to visit it.

On September 26 we dropped anchor at Bartica, a noisy town on a peninsula where three rivers meet: the Essequibo, the River Mazaruni and the River Cuyuni. We only navigated on the Essequibo; the Mazaruni soon became a maze of rapids, rocks, and wild streams, only navigable by pirogues; we also skipped the Cuyuni because of not having any maps or waypoint information. If we had wanted to visit further inland, we would have traveled by pirogue, or by plane. After Surinam and French Guyana we felt we had already seen enough rain forest and rapids, so we did not engage in any further adventures.



Bartica's heart is Stelling, an old Dutch word for dock. It is the landing for ferries (since there are only a few roads in the country, most transport goes by river) and also the place to catch a superfast water taxi to Parika, a river town very close to Georgetown, the capital.

The picture shows the water taxis, which look like covered lifeboats. The tiller man stands at the back and can just look over the roof. They easily do 60 km/hour.

Bartica is the only place in the country where a yacht can clear in or out of the country. The only officer at immigration was extremely nice and helpful, and also doubled as a tourist information point, giving us maps, folders and advice. When we cleared in, we were the only yacht in the entire country. Later, three more yachts (all American) arrived. Customs was closed, although the sign on the door said they should have been open. We are getting used to this, so shrugged and came back the next day.

Coming back, though, was easier said than done. We were at anchor, and since we had to clear the freeway for the barges and ferries, we had anchored quite a long way from the shoreline. We were also quite far from town, since the noisy town also boasted an electricity plant right on the waterfront, and next to it an ice making factory, which ran 24/7.

Thus, in order to reach the shore with our dinghy with its electric, low capacity engine, we had to travel at least one km going and one coming back. Every trip Bob worried whether we would make it to and from, in particular since the current was most of the time too strong to allow us to row.

The first few times we landed at a shore with several rows of very long steps. That looked really good, but when we returned the tide was low and the shoreline covered with a thick layer of rotten timber, some of them with rusty nails sticking out, and many, many logs and trees and garbage in general. Our dinghy was sitting on top of this layer, and it took us a while getting it off. Bob ripped open the underside of his foot, luckily it did not become infected. On future trips we avoided that shoreline if we arrived at low tide. The alternative was going even further downstream, towards Stelling.



We later found a nice spot behind a row of wooden shops on the waterfront. In one of them (the orange house in the picture) was a young man who made some extra money tying up boats and dinghies, and watching over them. Despite his help we also touched bottom there, including the engine, and this resulted in a broken security pin. Bob shortened a 3 mm drill bit, which now serves happily as our new security pin.

Overall we found it quite challenging to land at Bartica. In the future they plan to lay moorings, which will shorten the distance to be travelled to the shore, but it will remain problematic to land and find a good spot to leave the dinghy.



Despite all this, we regularly visited Bartica, not in the least because it was the only place for miles and miles where one could buy something, and actually it was quite nice. Not nice in the sense of pretty or interesting, but nice in the sense of special, exotic and colourful.

Our first impression was “it looks a bit like Oyapoc” (in Brazil, see episode 13). That observation was spot on, because nearly half the inhabitants were Brazilians or of Brazilian descent. Furthermore, it was

bilingual, with English and Portuguese being spoken. And all these people were there to sell to, or support, the many Brazilians prospecting for gold in the interior of the country.



Now don't think that this is a marginal business, only yielding some gold dust. On the contrary. We met someone who used to prospect for gold, and is now retired and works as a tourist guide. Around his neck he was wearing a large golden chain, and on it a clump of gold as large as a pigeon's egg. The amount of gold found must be quite large as well, as seen by the number of shops that advertise that they buy gold. Other signs testifying to a vibrant trade are the many shops selling supplies in large quantities only, and the large-wheeled trucks laden full with supplies and drums with oil.



Gold prospectors come to Bartica to sell their gold, spend their money on girls and buy supplies.

They are tough characters. This truck of one of them says it all: it is called "Out and Bad".

Of course, all this gold attracts the wrong kind of people. Therefore, we were not surprised to find heavily armed guards in and around shops frequented by prospectors (such as hardware or liquor

stores). Quite a strange experience if you enter to buy some nuts and bolts or batteries! There are police, but they do not patrol the streets and instead prefer to sit safely in their air-conditioned offices.

To avoid the difficult trip to the landing site we decided to move a couple of miles downriver and drop our anchor at Baganara Resort. It looked fantastic, on its own island, with a park-like, well kept garden, a private airstrip, a bar-restaurant and some buildings with guest rooms. However, it was a very dead place.



Sunny Spray at anchor in front of Baganara resort.

The first night the resort had two guests. A couple of days later three American yachts arrived, and together (8 in total) we went for a chat and some drinks. The resort's personnel had taken the best chairs to sit in front of a giant wall-mounted flat screen; we, the guests, had to do with chairs around the pool billiard table, where we had the choice of glaring white lighting, or no lighting at all. It was our one and only visit to the bar-restaurant of Baganara. Nevertheless, the anchorage was very good, we regularly stretched our legs in the park-like garden, and we started using it as our "home-base", taking *Sunny Spray* down river if we had to visit Bartica for shopping or water.

Speaking of water: we were so far upriver that the water was 100% fresh. This, of course, is an ideal situation to save good drinking water. In the morning we skipped taking a shower and jumped into the river instead (Americans: how about piranhas? Me: I still have all my toes!).

Most drinking water was saved by connecting the washing machine directly to river water. Totally low tech, just a hosepipe with on one end a funnel, and the other end leading inside into the soap compartment of the washing machine. You then fill the machine with river water, until it rises to about one hand-width in the drum. After one washing this way you know exactly after how many minutes the machine wants new water to start another part of the washing cycle, such as rinsing. So, with all following washes, you stay near the machine around these times (with my machine it was at minutes 29 and 38 after the start), and fill the funnel with river water again. My washing had never been this clean!



Our dinghy moored at the partly collapsed pier of Shanklands Resort. On the site there were many rare birds and beautiful trees. The picture at the right was meant to photograph big black birds with bright yellow wings and tails. The hanging ovals are their nests.

On October 10 we left Bartica and slowly made our way downstream towards the river mouth. Our first stop was at the already mentioned Shanklands Resort, where we landed and took a walk. What a beautiful spot, and what a pity that this has turned into a failed project (it's been closed since 2006). On site we suddenly met a young man and woman. He said he was the guard and wanted entry money

from us. He had bad luck; we had just spent all our remaining Guyanese money in Bartica on shopping. Neither he nor his wife/girlfriend accompanied us on our walk, so we think they were just squatters trying their luck on us.



On October 12 we arrived at an anchorage near Fort Island, where we had already stopped on the way in. Next day we landed to pay it a visit, which turned out to be quite interesting. Thus we learned that the Eastern part of Guyana used to be part of a 17th century Dutch colony, just like adjacent Surinam. Therefore, the local fort was called Fort Zeelandia, just like the one in Paramaribo. It was one of the most complete forts we had visited until now. Remains of another Dutch Fort, named “Kyk-over-al” (meaning looking out over all/everything), can be found near Bartica, at the junction of the three rivers (Essequibo, Mazaruni and Cuyuni).

On Friday, October 14, we left at 06.00 am on our way to the river mouth and the long channel towards open sea, amidst numerous sand banks. It would become one of the most difficult trajectories we have ever sailed.

We left with an outgoing tide, so that we would not have both the wind and the tide against us, which would be a combination we could not beat, we would never get out. What we had now was wind from

the North-east, and the tide going North-east, meaning wind against tide. Wind against tide is always a recipe for a disturbed sea, in particular when the wind is quite strong; when we left the wind was 20-25 knots against. The sea gets even more turbulent when the water is very shallow; it then starts to resemble breakers on a beach. The navigation channel of the Essequibo is very shallow, with in some parts hardly 1.5-2 m under the keel. For hours we negotiated the wind and the breaking waves, at the same time keeping an eye on the depth sounder, and only navigating on the waypoints that we had successfully followed on the way in. Nowhere a buoy to be seen, nowhere any stakes (apart from fisherman's stakes). It was nerve wracking.

At approximately 2 pm the water became deeper and we could hoist the sails. At first we had to sail close hauled, but gradually the wind veered, until we finally ran completely with the wind. We went beautifully, with a 15-20 knot following wind. It was a wonderful sail, and we made very good progress getting away from the Venezuelan coast. At night the moon rose, and she was so big I could have read a book by the moonlight if I had so wanted.



Next day, a Saturday, was equally fine and we were very happy with *Sunny Spray's* sailing. All the rigging changes we had made in Surinam were finally paying off.

On the second night we were more than 100 miles from the Venezuelan coast, sailing more or less parallel to its coastline, and heading directly for Tobago. As usual, we shifted watch every three hours. When Bob woke me up for my morning shift, I saw to my surprise that it was already 6 am, instead of the expected 4 am. Strange, I said. Why did you let me sleep this long? Bob: I could not sleep anyway; I was too full of adrenalin. Me: adrenalin, why was that? Bob: all of a sudden a fast boat showed up behind us, and then became stationary at a couple of miles distance. I sailed away from it. At daylight, I could see nothing. I think we were being followed!!!!!!.....



The AIS user manual contained the suggestion to connect two, already provided, wires to a switch. Pressing the switch would turn the AIS into the SILENCE mode. This mode means that one continues to receive the AIS signals of other ships, while one's own position is no longer transmitted. It was a small job, done in an afternoon. The switch immediately proved its usefulness.

Our AIS was switched to SILENCE mode (see next to picture above, we receive but do not send), so no one could have spotted us electronically. In addition, we sailed without navigation lights; thus, our silhouette was only visible in the moonlight from quite close by. Someone with radar could have spotted us. We do not think it could have been a patrol boat from the Coast Guard, those would have sent out an AIS signal and we would have seen that on our own screens. It was also highly unlikely that it had been a fishing boat: they do not venture out that far into the ocean, nor beyond 10-20 m depth (we were at really deep water), and in general they are not so fast. Another sailing boat was also unlikely; the boat had come up from behind too fast. It could have been a pirogue or motorboat with bad guys. All in all it took a while before our racing hearts had calmed down a bit.

Fortunately the weather stayed nice, and Sunday saw us cruising happily in the direction of Charlotteville, Tobago. Around midday the wind dropped, so we started the engine and motor sailed.

Later I came down to use the toilet, and noticed a heavy smell of diesel oil. Closer inspection revealed that the entire floor of the engine room was wet with oil. We soon found the cause: on top of the oil filter are three inlets for the diesel oil; the middle one was spouting oil. The culprit was a worn down metal washer. Unfortunately, Bob did not have a spare, but he did find another soft-metal washer, albeit of the wrong size. Some drilling and filing made it fit, and that solved that problem. I started mopping up the oil.

One hour later I went down again to see whether the new washer on the oil filter connection was holding. Yes it was, but what did I see spouting from the corner of my eye? The new leak was soon found, a tiny one, on top of the water inlet, close to the aeration nipple. That could be solved easily. Once more I took the mop, this time to mop up the water.

We motor-sailed on and changed shift as usual. Halfway during my midnight watch, around 1 am, I heard a very loud tearing noise coming from the engine room. As if someone was tearing up ten telephone directories! I woke up Bob rather roughly (more or less like WAKE UP, NOW!! GET UP!!), opened the engine room, looked around – and saw nothing wrong! What was this...!!!! Bob, wide awake by now, switched off the engine, took a look and saw that the V-belt had split down the middle: that is, split lengthwise, with three of the seven ribbons still turning around as a V-belt, and 4 of the ribbons thrown off, partly melted down into rubber dust. It was a mess everywhere.

Fortunately by now there was again some wind, so we could sail again. Knowing this was a problem we would be unable to solve ourselves, we decided to head for Scarborough, the capital of Tobago. With daylight, and with the engine cooled off, we managed (with a lot of effort) to put on a spare V-belt. That way we would have at least something to help us bring into the harbour. Not knowing what was causing the breaking of V-belts, we could not trust the set up to last long. Sailing as long as possible, and motoring as little as possible, we arrived mid morning in the harbour of Scarborough.



The space under and around the engine was filled with rubber dust. It took a lot of kitchen paper to clean up the mess. I had by now had it with cleaning.

Our V-belt drives the pump for the internal cooling, the water pump for external cooling, and the alternator (to make electricity).

Without a V-belt the engine will turn but is not cooled, and the batteries would not be charged.

Scarborough is a terrible place. It has a rather large harbour, is home to two ferries, with a small corner meant for fishing boats and small crafts. There was a pontoon, which was full with fishing boats and small craft. There were moorings, very close together, and mostly occupied. There was one other sailboat at anchor. In between all this we had to find a spot, being careful to not come into the path of the ferries, leaving free an area so that the fishing boats could leave the pontoon, and not knocking against the boats on the moorings. It was near impossible. We found a spot, but during the night the wind shifted, and three times we had to get up to hoist the anchor and find another spot, since we were nearly touching our neighbors. Two days later some boats left and we had a bit more room.



The positive aspects of Scarborough: a local fisherman brought us 225 liters of diesel oil against normal pump price; his work fee (including delivery to Sunny Spray and pouring it into the tanks) was €42. Counting everything, one liter of diesel costed us €0.53 per liter.

To the right one of the few quiet places in Scarborough (the other was Fort King George): a nice but somewhat neglected botanical garden, more like a park actually. Below some pictures from the garden.



The morning after arriving we had the luck to quickly find a mechanic who was willing to travel out to the boat. He changed the V-belt for a new one, controlled whether all the pulley's were in line, checked whether the water pump, internal cooling pump and alternator were all turning smoothly without too much resistance (they did), looked here, looked there, and then declared the engine fit again. Relieved we left Scarborough as soon as possible after his visit; not only was the anchorage way too tiny, but it was also very noisy. We had found a spot not 50 meters away from a coast guard post, which was manned day and night. Nothing happened there, so the men having guard duty were bored out of their minds. Of course they invited their non-working friends to keep them company, and every night these

friends would come with their cars, open the doors, turn on the in-car sound system really loud and blast terrible rap-music into the bay. Every night.

Saturday October 22 we arrived in Store Bay, right next to the airport, on the southern tip of Tobago. It is walking distance from Crown Point, a well known tourist town, and Pigeon Point, a Nature and Heritage Park. This was more like it, the bay was wide and ample, the beaches sandy and white, the water clear and blue, some other yachts at anchor, hotels with terraces ashore, and a good spot for landing and leaving the dinghy. There was some kind of festivity going on, so we barricaded ourselves inside the boat. Oh well, one night of noise should be bearable – we thought.



The Pigeon Point pier with its thatched roof shelter graces the cover of every tourist publication about Tobago. Around it is a bay in which yachts sometimes can anchor, at other times cannot. No one knows the rules about this.

Now it looks forlorn: the pier has been blocked with red and white tape, entrance is forbidden because some planks are missing. It has been like that for months now. One could repair the pier in a single afternoon.

The next morning we decided to walk to Pigeon Point because we really needed to stretch our legs. Pigeon Point is a Nature park, and is home to many rare birds, turtles that come to its beach to lay their eggs, and tourists that can find shade in half open beach huts.

There was still some kind of festival going on, so from 10 am onwards an enormous sound installation on the beach started blaring rasta music into the bay (the rap music of the previous night had lasted until 6 am). The music was so incredibly loud that walking past in one hundred meter was impossible, the vibrations made you physically unwell. Disappointed we turned around and went back to the boat. The next day we caught up on sleep, and the 26th we left Store Bay and headed towards Charlotteville. We had been one week in Tobago and had run from every place we had dropped anchor.



A group of dolphins kept us company on our way to Charlotteville.



The trip to Charlotteville was beautiful, not much wind, so we had to motor. While approaching we saw an enormous bay, flanked by steep hills, very green, with some white sandy beaches. In addition a small village, a small pier, some fishing boats and approximately 20 yachts at anchor in Pirate's Bay. We started to get hope that here we might experience the Caribbean feeling.

Up until now we like Charlotteville very much. We are anchored in deep water, with sufficient space between the boats to give everyone plenty of room to swing. The distance to the pier in front of the town is quite large, but we have now learned that we can go twice to the pier (and back) before the battery needs recharging. Close by is a reef we can reach while snorkeling (provided there are not too many jellyfish).

There is a small village, with very little on sale. A couple of huts that serve as shops, in one they sell homemade bread. Eggs are only to be had when the hens are laying nicely (they feed themselves by scratching around the streets). Fish you acquire directly from the fishermen. No unfrozen meat is available locally – for that you have to go to Scarborough. Or you try pig tails (I once did, very salty).

Once a week some tables are set up and a car arrives with fresh fruits and vegetables. The choice is rather limited: potatoes, onions, garlic, fresh ginger, tomatoes, cucumbers, pumpkin, and pineapple. If you want more choice, you have to travel to Scarborough (40 km away), or all the way to the Southern tip of the island, to Crown Point.

If you want to go to Scarborough (also necessary if you want money from an ATM), you have to take a bus or a maxi taxi. While we were there the bus had broken down, and was standing beside the road halfway between Charlotteville and Scarborough. The maxi taxis are private cars, in which a driver takes you, or not (depending on your face and/or his mood). You stand beside the road, and raise up your hand at every car that passes. About one in five will be a maxi taxi. Normally they do not depart until they are full or nearly full. The fare is a fixed price and very cheap: the 40 kms to Scarborough costs 13 TTD (about €1.50). The maxi taxi is not as reliable as a bus. After 4 pm there are very few that still go to Charlotteville. So our morning programme would be a maxi taxi to Scarborough at around 9, shopping, finding a place for a beer or a lunch without getting ear-damage, and around 2-3 pm starting on the way back. Life is simple.



Charlotteville is one of the few anchorages that give immediate access to a couple of nice walks. Normally we try to do two long walks per week, which always start with a strenuous walk uphill (as said before, the bay is flanked by steep hills, so whichever direction you go, you always first have to negotiate the uphill road).

Our walking buddies are Egoi (Basque) and Rasa (Lithuanian), from the *Grain de Sable* (pictured below). They are fit thirty-somethings, and we are very proud that we could follow them at not too great a distance when going uphill. We did not know them before, although their boat was also at the pontoon in Waterland, Surinam. However, when we were there, they were away, working. When they returned

(we had left by then) and prepared for leaving, Noel approached them asking if they wanted to take an envelope addressed to us in Surinam. It was Bob's international driver's licence, which had travelled for four months between Spain and Surinam. We met each other in Charlotteville.



Sadly, our bad luck also surfaced in Charlotteville. The V-belt broke for the third time, while we were at anchor in the bay. We have had several mechanics on board. One thought the cause could be in the installation of the repaired water pump in Surinam; if installed a tiny bit lower than previously, it might give extra resistance. Yesterday another mechanic thought the last two times were because of a buildup of rubber dust particles in the grooves in which the belt has to run. Indeed, those grooves were caked with hardened rubber dust. We have now cleaned the grooves. Yet another thinks the V-belts we are using might have been too old, hanging too long in a shop Could be. Many maybes. For now, we will run the engine only for an hour or two at a stretch, then let it cool off again. Once in Grenada we will try to get someone who knows about Mercedes engines. We still have time.



What you see on an average walk in Tobago: at Hermitage Bay, we met a crab catching bird that behaved just like a heron but was not one; Helma in a giant water wheel, Bob at the machinery, found in Speyside. It was used to squeeze liquid from sugar cane. Below right the overgrown garden of an old villa, which stood at the most beautiful location for a house we have ever seen, overlooking a windswept bay. We had a nice picnic in the overgrown garden, adjacent to a private beach.



Animal of the month: the stowaway on *Sunny Spray*

There are wanted stowaways, and unwanted ones. Sadly, most of them are unwanted, and you're so glad when they are gone that you forget to photograph them. Or they scuttle away too quickly! Unwanted stowaways have the tendency to become a plague.

Until now, in descending order of wantedness, we have had (or still have) the following stowaways on board:

1. **Very welcome: birds.** In particular birds that land on *Sunny Spray* mid ocean for a rest. They land during the day, or at night. In particular night birds can give you a fright, when you stick

your head above the cockpit and are eye to eye (mostly eye to beak!). In Surinam we had swallows trying to build a nest inside the sail covers. Approaching the Canary Islands we had a hoopoe; on the Atlantic Ocean a swallow; on our way to Tobago two big black sea birds, a bit like black gulls.



2. **Tjik-tjaks [geckoes].** This is the Dutch name which we give to small lizards, which crawl up vertically against walls. In Spain you can find them in each and every house. They are wanted guests, since they eat insects. We had a house-tjik-tjak on the Essequibo. We were happy with his presence, he was welcome to stay. One day we went into the dinghy to go ashore in Bartica. All of a sudden I felt something on my shoulder: it was the tjik-tjak, and it remained sitting on my shoulder until we were ashore. He then jumped off. We miss him.
3. **Spiders.** No harm in them. They are allowed to stay as long as the number is not overwhelming.
4. **The sticky frog (plakkikker).** Sticky frog is the literal translation of the Surinamese name for a frog that jumps far and sticks to walls or ceilings. I met them for the first time in Waterland, Surinam. When I went out the door of the pilot house, a sticky frog jumped on me before jumping on to a wall. I gave a mighty yelp, it was very unexpected. We caught it and put it overboard. Later, we found three more sticky frogs inside the boat, which hid behind the kitchen cabinets. We catch them like you catch an insect such as a wasp, put a jar over them, slide something solid over the top and out with it. We do not know if they eat unwanted insects (see 7); in that case they are allowed to come back and stay.
5. **Ants. Not that wanted.** In Kourou, where we were moored on a pontoon, ants came on board. If there are not too many, I leave them be. If they go in the direction of the kitchen or food lockers, I get out the spray can or sprinkle anti-ant powder. At home, in Spain, I normally do not harm them, as long as they do not enter the kitchen area that is my limit.
6. **Wasps.** On the Sine Saloum in Senegal we met a particular wasp for the first time. It was of course yellow and black, and it seemed as if its lower body was hardly attached to the rest of its body; when it was flying the lower part just bungled beneath it. I called it a hanging wasp. We saw it daily, even when we had left the delta and were already on the Atlantic Ocean. It was clear it was looking for a spot to make a nest. About 1/3 of the way upon the Atlantic we stopped seeing it. Then, in Kourou, we suddenly saw it again (or it was its South American twin brother). After the Maroni River we no longer spotted it. Two weeks ago we found a wasp nest, on the underside of the port cabinet that houses one of the bicycles, with a dead hanging wasp clinging to it. Apparently this was the original African boat refugee.



7. **Cockroaches.** Our neighbor on the pontoon in Surinam was Gijs, who just came from Brazil. Gijs was having a cockroach plague. He combated it by bombing his boat with two gas bombs, bought for the purpose in Brazil. That same evening I saw a really big cockroach walking through the shower stall (really big is with a body of 3-4 cm). Before that I had sporadically seen 1.5 cm long cockroaches. In the meantime both species have multiplied, and the war has started in earnest.

We have taken several preventive and curative actions: (1) do the dishes immediately after dinner, do not leave any food rests anywhere; (2) put all food stuffs in a plastic or glass jar with a screw on lid; (3) disinfect everything you buy and bring onto the boat with a vinegar:water mix (1:4); (4) never ever bring carton boxes on board; (5) spray anti insect poison whenever they appear in a new spot; (6) put anti-cockroach bait on routes they frequently take, preferably of the kind that also kills the nest; (7) put drops of lavender oil along routes they frequently take (this seems to make the females sterile, thus reducing the number of eggs laid).

The most difficult thing is to decide whether to let them run when you spot one (rationale: if you let it live, it will bring the bait to the nest and kill the nest), or to kill them with your hand, a hammer or your shoe the moment you see them. Popular wisdom has it that your shoe is not a

good idea, if you kill a female full with eggs the eggs will spread through the house. If I meet them in the kitchen I have no scruples and kill them immediately.

Other stowaways observed by sailing friends are:

- A bat, hanging on the ceiling of the main cabin (*S/V Rusalka*)
- A rat (on board *S/V "Grain the Sable"*, until the ship's cats had enough of it).

If you have your own boat and had/have unusual stowaways, or know a tall story about unusual stowaways, **write to me, and we will make this into an amusing list.** Mind, it should not be unusual pets, (i.e. a snake, a monkey), it should really have been a stowaway!

Lots of love, and hasta la próxima!

Helma.

If not in SILENCE mode, you can again follow us via the AIS on: www.marinetraffic.com. Ship's name: Sunny Spray; MMSI: 244780434.