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## Mauritius Oil Spill & Covid Conservation Efforts

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August 21, 2020



**Mauritius Wept as it was Surrounded by Oil.** The Indian Ocean island paradise has seen the possible destruction of its tourist industry by the oil that has leaked from a tanker wrecked on its southern shores. On July 25, the *MV Wakashio*, a Panama-flagged, Japanese-owned freighter, ran aground within swimming distance of two international marine heritage sites. For two weeks, the government did not act to remove it, instead negotiating with the vessel's insurers to determine who would pay for the effort. The public only learned that it carried 4,000 tons of oil after outraged individuals shared photos on social media. So far, more than 1000 tons of oil have leaked into the ocean, and it's unclear whether the government can control the spread. Japan has sent a relief team, and France is supporting the clean-up efforts. The wreck has now split in two, making it more difficult to remove the remaining oil. Meanwhile, the oil is spreading up the coast, destroying the formerly pristine white sandy beaches and killing marine life. The Mauritian Tourist Office now says that only a small percentage of its beaches have been damaged. (*Mail & Guardian, S.A.*)

**Have You Been Doing Ocean Conservation Work?** Before the pandemic, many dive centers and small groups worldwide engaged in a variety of important conservation projects – spearing lionfish, protecting turtle nests, planting coral, collecting trash, tracking down ghost nets, you name it. Some have been able to continue during the last six months, keeping their staff and volunteers busy, while others have had to shut down. Either way, we'd like to hear about your project, what it takes you to continue, or what the consequences might be when you couldn't continue. We're looking to hear about any project, big or small, and if you're a diver who visited such a project, ask them to get in touch (tell us your impressions as well). We'd like to know just what it takes to keep going. Write to [BenDDavison@undercurrent.org](mailto:BenDDavison@undercurrent.org) and tell us all about it.

**Myocarditis Resulting from Covid-19 Can Affect Your Diving.** Even if you have only a mild or asymptomatic case of the Covid-19 virus, you stand a chance of having myocarditis, which has little in the way of symptoms and can be fatal while diving. The American Medical Association recommends waiting 6-8 weeks before returning to any physical activity after infection with Covid-19. This includes any sport that causes an elevated heart rate. Cardiovascular complications of Covid-19 have received less medical attention than severe acute respiratory syndrome; nevertheless, the first cases of myocarditis in Covid-19 patients have been reported. Myocarditis is an inflammatory disease of the heart characterized by inflammatory infiltrates and myocardial injury without an ischemic cause. The most commonly identifiable cause of myocarditis in the United States and other developed countries is viral. [Click here](#) to view the article.

**Werner Lau Centers in Bali, a Casualty of Covid.** Precipitated by the fact that Bali will not be open to visitors until at least September and perhaps longer since all foreign arrivals to Indonesia have been banned until further notice, Werner Lau has closed his long-established dive centers. Both the Alam Anda and the Siddhartha will be taken over by a group of investors. The Pondok Sari will continue with the old owners.

**Teenage Snorkeler Killed by Speedboat.** Brits Harry & Barbara Genga had sailed west from Jersey via Panama 18 months ago, with their 14-year-old son Eddie and his sister Amelie, 12. They had spent the past nine months in French Polynesia, their stay extended because of Covid-19 restrictions, and were anchored off Moorea when Eddie was struck and killed by a speedboat while snorkeling. ([www.divernet.com](http://www.divernet.com))

**French Polynesia Open to Visitors.** Dom McCann at Dive Advice tells us that French Polynesia is now open for visitors with flights from Los Angeles, San Francisco, and Vancouver, B.C., to Papeete in Tahiti, and onward to the Tua Motus. With so few possibilities open to American traveling divers, this is one bright spot. One of Dom's clients reported 16 wonderful days, including diving at Fakarava, a famous hotspot for aggregating grey reef sharks. To be safe, he tested negative for Covid-19 before traveling, and self-test negative about four days after arrival. ([www.diveadvice.com](http://www.diveadvice.com))

**The Philippines puts Safety First as it Reopens for Tourism.** Filipino Government guidelines for resorts include providing facemasks and face shields, disposable gloves, and hand-sanitizers with strict physical distancing rules in places. Pre-ordered in-room dining replaces buffets, and only single or double-occupancy rooms are allowed. Tourism-based businesses must obtain a Dept. of Tourism Certificate of Authority to Operate, and rooms must be thoroughly sanitized after guests check out.

**Local Diving for Americans.** Two companies are cleared to offer guided diving on a World War II-era plane submerged in Lake Mead. The National Park Service has issued permits to [Las Vegas Scuba](#), and [Scuba Training & Technology](#) for technical dives on the B-29 Superfortress. The plane crashed into Lake Mead in 1948. The five crew members survived. For information about tours, contact [www.lasvegasscuba.com](http://www.lasvegasscuba.com).

**Canadian Airlines Return to Cuba.** A group of Canadian airlines, including Air Canada, plan to resume regular commercial flights to Cuba in September and October, if sanitary conditions allow. Flights from Toronto and Montreal will include the tourist destinations of Varadero and Cayo Coco. The required documents and entry requirements for Cuba do not vary. Visitors will not have to undergo a prior test before departure, nor will they have to undergo a quarantine upon arrival on the island. Of course, Americans are not allowed to enter Canada because America failed to control it, so for now, the trips are only for Canadians. (*Prensa Latina*)

**China Agrees to Galápagos Moratorium.** It's reported that as of September 1, China will place its fishing fleet under a three-month moratorium in the high seas west of the Galápagos Marine Reserve. China has also agreed that Ecuador supervises its fishing vessels while they operate in international waters. This is in response to global concern about the activities of its Distant Water Fishing Fleet operating close to the Galápagos Marine Reserve. ([www.sharkguardian.org](http://www.sharkguardian.org))

**Stay Safe,**

**Ben Davison, editor/publisher**  
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