

EXPEDITION NEWS

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EXPEDITION NEWS, now in its 16th year, is the monthly review of significant expeditions, research projects and newsworthy adventures. It is distributed online to media representatives, corporate sponsors, educators, research librarians, explorers, environmentalists, and outdoor enthusiasts. This forum on exploration covers projects that stimulate, motivate and educate.

COLD SHORES EXPEDITION ATTEMPTS 300-MILE TREK ACROSS NORWEGIAN ARCTIC

David Leaning, 30, a former British Commando who served in Helmand Province, Afghanistan, late last month announced that the Cold Shores Expedition team has departed for the Norwegian Arctic to attempt to trek 300 miles across Svalbard Island (which means ‘cold edge’ in old Norse). Svalbard is where polar explorer Roald Amundsen mysteriously disappeared in 1928. The objective of the Cold Shores Expedition is to raise funds for The HALO Trust landmines charity (www.halotrust.org). Leaning is accompanied by Anton Havas, 21, a marathon runner from Sweden, and Apostolos Alafogiannis, 31, a former Special Forces operative from Greece.

Leaning completed a tour of duty in Afghanistan in 2007 and witnessed the terrible effects of landmines. Wishing to do something, he has completed two fundraising expeditions to support landmine charities. In 2008 he skied 1,615 miles down the entire length of Norway and in 2009 walked 1,429 miles from coast to coast across central Australia.

The team has been training in northern Norway with the Royal Marine Commando’s Mountain Leaders Section. Expected hazards include polar bears (it is illegal not to carry a weapon to defend against polar bear attack), glaciers, ice storms and crevasses coupled with the perils of a restricted diet and sleep deprivation. Food and supplies will be hauled on sledges (known as pulks) weighing over 154 lbs./70kg.

Sponsors for the expedition include Aclima, Arktis, Asnes skis, Berghaus, Drytech, Kobold, Leatherman, Lifesystems, McMurdo, Neverlost Knives, NSSL Satcom Solutions, Olympus, Swix, and Timberland. (For more information: www.coldshores.co.uk)

ATLANTIC RISING TRACES DOOMSDAY COASTLINE

Atlantic Rising is a three-person driving expedition tracing 19,884 miles/32,000 km of what could be the new coastline of the Atlantic Ocean. The U.K. team of Lynn Morris, Tim Bromfield and Will Lorimer, all 29, are traveling around the ocean along a line that's an average of one meter higher than current high tide, which is predicted to be the new coastline of the ocean in 100 years time if sea levels continue to rise.

The journey is an exploration of the history, cultures and places that could be lost to climate change and an opportunity to explore how people around the Atlantic are adapting to the challenge and finding innovative ways to mitigate the problem. The team believes that if the coastline rises by one meter, thousands of communities will be displaced, unique landscapes will be lost and the geography of the Atlantic will be changed forever.

Team member Lynn Morris adds, "We are not such ecological vandals as to stick to this contour line exactly, driving through people's gardens, etc. But what we have done is identify low lying, vulnerable areas in every country we visit and we walk, hike, bike, swim and drive between them."

The team left the U.K. in September 2009 bound for France. They traveled through Europe and crossed into Morocco. They then followed the coastline of West Africa to Ghana. This took them through the Sahara, along the beach in the Banc d'Arguin National Park in Mauritania, and to mangrove forests in Senegal. In late February, the team put themselves and their sponsored Land Rover Defender 110 on a containership and crossed the Atlantic to Brazil.

At press time, they were heading north up the Atlantic coast of the Americas to Canada where they are expected to arrive in November.

Along the way they are creating a network of schools in low-lying communities around the edge of the ocean. The idea is to get children to share their experiences of climate change and to work together on solutions.

The expedition is supported by the Royal Geographical Society in London. Official partners also include AST Systems, Land Rover, Phase One, and Safmarine. (For more information: www.atlanticrising.org).

EXPEDITION UPDATE

Long-distance Trekker Andrew Skurka Heads to Alaska

Last month endurance adventurer Andrew Skurka, 29, began his latest long-distance project in a string of extreme expeditions known for their mind-numbing lengths (see *EN*, February 2007). This time, he's off on the Alaska-Yukon Expedition (AYE), a 4,700-mile, seven-month-long ski/trek/packraft adventure that begins and ends 30 miles north

of the Arctic Circle in northwestern Alaska. Reportedly, the route has never before been completed or attempted. He calls it “an unadulterated wilderness adventure,” and has set a budget of \$10,000, with support from sponsors including Alpacka Rafts, DeFeet, and GoLite.

Skurka will travel through the heart of six U.S. National Parks (including the Park Service's three largest — Wrangell-St. Elias, Denali, and Gates of the Arctic), and two Canadian parks. It crosses only eight major roads and travels 615 miles through completely undeveloped wilderness (no villages, no roads, no pipelines). AYE features lengthy traverses of the Alaska Range (home of Mount McKinley) as well as the Brooks Range, arguably the greatest wilderness in the world.

AYE includes long floats on some of North America's wildest rivers, including the Copper, Yukon, Peel, and Kobuk. And it follows two historic routes, the Iditarod Trail and Chilkoot Trail. For the first two-thirds of the route, at least once a week, he will receive a self-addressed supply box. The boxes will be shipped via the U.S. Postal Service and will be picked up in towns and villages as he travels.

Only 10 percent of the AYE route follows manmade thoroughways such as hiking trails, ATV tracks, and vehicle-accessible roads; and about 15 percent of the route follows winter dogsled and snowmobile routes. The bulk of the AYE route is organic: there are 1,850 miles of off-trail trekking, 350 miles of off-track skiing, and 1,350 miles on rivers and saltwater bays.

Andrew Skurka is an accomplished endurance adventurer, speaker, and guide. Since 2002 he has trekked over 25,000 miles; his two most well known trips were monumental long-distance hiking firsts – the 6,875-mile Great Western Loop and the 7,778-mile Sea-to-Sea Route.

His goal? “I want an exceptionally unique, rewarding, and challenging experience. ... I am not associating the AYE with a particular important cause, e.g. wilderness conservation or clean energy, although during it I do expect to gain unique insights into these types of issues. Marketing the AYE as being cause-inspired or cause-motivated would be disingenuous, probably unproductive, and perhaps undermining of a successful completion,” he says. (For more information: askurka@comcast.net, www.andrewskurka.com/AK10).

Sunny Outlook for Solar Airplane

Following the first take-off last December – affectionately called a “flea hop” – of the first aircraft designed to fly day and night without fuel, the prototype Solar Impulse HB-SIA aircraft began a new test phase last month at Payerne airfield in Switzerland (see *EN*, September 2006). These tests (including first short circuit flight and first altitude flight) will enable Markus Scherdel, the test pilot of Solar Impulse, to verify the aircraft's controllability and behavior. Project leaders Bertrand Piccard and André Borschberg will then take turns at the controls to familiarize themselves with the revolutionary airplane.

This summer, the team plans the first night flights by a plane powered solely by solar energy.

Six years of intense hard work, calculations, simulations and tests by a 70-person team and 80 partner companies and organizations have gone into completing this new carbon fiber aircraft, which has the wingspan of an Airbus A340 (208-ft. /63.4 m), yet weighs only as much as an average family car (3,527 lbs. /1600 kg). Almost 12,000 solar cells, integrated into the wing, feed renewable energy to the four electric motors with a maximum power of 10 HP each, and by day also charge the lithium-polymer batteries which will enable the aircraft to fly at night.

Eventually, the team hopes to fly it around the world, day and night without fuel, propelled only by solar energy.

The team announced late last month that Bayer MaterialScience was coming on board as the newest official partner. The company will support the project with technical expertise, high-tech polymer materials and energy-saving lightweight products including Baytubes carbon nanotubes that are expected to increase battery performance and improve the strength of structural components. (Follow the test at: www.solarimpulse.com).

EXPEDITION NOTES

Sir Edmund Returns to Everest – Mt. Everest, whose name came to be inextricably associated with Sir Edmund Hillary, will be the last resting place of the New Zealander in a grateful tribute by Nepal, the tiny country he made famous worldwide.

A historic Everest expedition, led by another mountaineering legend Apa Sherpa, 50, the man who has summited the peak 19 times and is now eyeing his 20th ascent, will depart from Kathmandu this month to place Hillary's ashes on the 29,035-ft./8,850-meter summit.

“After I die, let my ashes be scattered in the two places I love the most - the harbor in Auckland and Khumbu (the Everest region)’ – that was Sir Edmund Hillary's last big wish,” said Sharad Singh Bhandari, Nepal's tourism minister.

“The Eco Everest 2010 expedition will place his ashes on Mt. Everest and Nepal will pray that his soul rests in peace.”

Two years after his death in Auckland at the age of 89, his memory remains fresh in the minds of the Sherpas of Himalayan Nepal for his love for them that he showed by building roads, schools and hospitals in the remote, once nearly inaccessible mountainous region.

Slice of Life – Next time you plan to hack through the jungle, leave your Gerber at home. The U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission, in cooperation with Gerber Legendary Blades, Portland, Ore., announced last month a voluntary recall of about 149,000 Gator

Machetes and 6,000 Gator Machetes Jr. Seems the saw side of the machete can stick in wood during use, and if the user's hand slips off the handle and slides forward across the machete blade, there will be blood. Gerber has received five reports of individuals cutting themselves while using the Gator Machete, all of whom required stitches, but no reports of injuries associated with use of the Gator Machete Jr. (For more information: www.gerbergear.com).

Miles to Go Before I Sleep - Those of us who cover expeditions lose sleep trying to get the facts right. Thus imagine our dismay when we saw in a new book from the U.K. that mileage for Will Steger's 1989-90 Trans-Antarctic Expedition was being pegged at 3,471 and not 3,741 miles. When we approached the author he said the smaller number came from Steger's own Web site. Sure enough, there it was. We contacted Steger and it has since been corrected, obviously a transposition error. Nonetheless, in the Internet age, errors are tough to correct once posted and tend to multiply out of control. Google is only moderately helpful. Search on-line for "Steger 3471" and there are 25,300 references; search "Steger 3741" and you'll find 43,900 references, which is the correct distance. Go figure. (See related story below).

"Danger, Will Robinson!" – Many of us of a certain age grew up fascinated about space exploration, in part thanks to a hunk of metal and flashing lights that we wanted in the house as much as a new puppy. Television's most famous robot – best known for the phrase, "Danger, Will Robinson!" – was developed by TV producer Irwin Allen in the mid 1960s for *Lost in Space*.

Now two faithful reproductions have been completed and are ready to be shipped by robot builder B9 Creations of Deadwood, S.D. They join an additional 54 robot replicas that have already been purchased by collectors worldwide. Each one is numbered and authenticated as an officially licensed replica.

The B9 (think "benign") appeared in 83 episodes between 1965 to 1968, and is currently being reproduced by Michael Joyce, who is also the founder of team Next Giant Leap (www.nextgiantleap.com), an effort to win the \$30 million Google X PRIZE for the first commercial moon lander.

The original robot used in the television series was altered for other shows and is lost to TV history. These reproductions are actually better built with an acrylic bubble based on the existing original, laser cut steel brain with polished stainless steel top cover and crown, a torso based on the original stone molds, and hundreds of individual parts fabricated from fiberglass, acrylic, aluminum, steel, etc.

The B9 even speaks in its original voice, that of Dick Tufeld, the 83-year-old voice actor for many Irwin Allen productions. Of course, it might be cheaper to go for the puppy. The B9's are currently sold by Joyce to collectors for \$24,500 (For more information: www.lostinspace-robot.com).

I Love Lucy – “Scientists believed Europe was the finishing school for humanity. Nothing could be further from the truth,” said paleoanthropologist Donald C. Johanson, Ph.D., founding director of the Institute of Human Origins (<http://iho.asu.edu>) during a Mar. 21 presentation at The Explorers Club in New York. “There’s no question that Africa was the cradle of humankind.”

Johanson received the prestigious Explorers Club Medal the evening before during the organization’s annual dinner at the Waldorf=Astoria.

Johanson, who knew from the age of 13 that he wanted to grow up to become a fossil hunter, is famed for his discovery of Lucy, a 3.18 million-year-old hominid skeleton – 40 percent complete – which he unearthed in Ethiopia’s remote Afar region in 1974. The find was named after the Beatles song, *Lucy in the Sky With Diamonds*, which was playing over and over that night on a tape recorder. Since then, Ethiopians talk about Lucy as if she was a real person, “They’re very proud that humanity arose out of Ethiopia,” he said. “There are Lucy schools, Lucy cafes, even Starbucks Tazo African Red Bush Tea refers to the fossil on its packaging.”

During his talk he provided insight about the often harsh working conditions out in the field. “When it’s 95 percent humidity and 95 degrees F., you never have to move to sweat.” His mission is to find answers to, “Who are we? Where do we come from? How do we fit into the natural world?”

“We are all Africans,” Johanson concluded. “The dawn of culture. The dawn of art. The dawn of sophisticated technology are all African innovations. Our roots lead to the African continent – the crucible of all humanity.”

Say Hello to Yesterday’s Lunch ... For Less – Zero Gravity Corporation (Zero-G) announced last month the establishment of the Zero-G Weightless Lab. The specially designed two-day program provides the only commercial access to Martian, Lunar, zero and hyper gravity environments for scientific research.

The Zero-G Weightless Lab provides open access for commercial and government entities to conduct research in an affordable reduced gravity environment. The microgravity laboratory is completely operational; no test flights, development effort, or outside investment is required, according to Eric Anderson, president and CEO of Space Adventures/Zero-G.

The program promises more time in weightlessness at a lower cost than before since clients share projects on the same flight. Past experiments have included studies in biomedical and pharmaceutical research, fluid and fundamental physics, materials science, aerospace engineering, space exploration hardware and human space habitation. However if you watch the Zero-G video, the public flights certainly looks like more fun than work: participants wear socks and jumpsuits as they perform summersaults, try weightless push-ups, and attempt to catch water in their mouths.

Two research flights have already been scheduled. On July 22-23, the plane will fly out of Ft. Lauderdale, and on September 17-18, out of Memphis.

Since launching Zero-G in September 2004, the Vienna, Va.-based company has conducted more than 200 weightless flights and flown over 6,000 members of the public, including celebrities and media personalities, corporate charters, science and math teachers, and individuals ages eight to 93. A basic ride starts at about \$5,000 for 12-15 parabolas – an approximate weightless time of eight minutes. (For more information: www.gozerog.com).

QUOTE OF THE MONTH

“Twenty years from now you will be more disappointed by the things you didn't do than by the ones you did. So throw off the bowlines. Sail away from the safe harbor. Catch the trade winds in your sails. Explore. Dream. Discover.” – Thought to originate from Mark Twain, but the attribution cannot be verified. While the quote should not be regarded as authentic, we like it nonetheless. (Source: www.twainquotes.com).

MEDIA MATTERS

Pimp My Ride – David de Rothschild’s Plastiki Expedition isn’t as austere as one might think. According to the *New York Times* Travel magazine (Mar. 28), the 31-year-old heir to the de Rothschild banking fortune is setting out on a 11,000-mi. voyage in a boat made of plastic bottles. Coming along for the ride are custom gear satchels created by San Francisco-based designers Nice Collective. The crew will enjoy special all-in-one grooming products from Kiehl’s (an official expedition supplier), and he’ll wear a pricey watch from IWC. Swashbuckling pirate motifs adorn the interior. De Rothschild later rants, “Our idea of ‘out there’ comes with a can of Off! God forbid another species would land on me! We like nature when we can control it.” (Learn more about the Plastiki project at www.adventureecology.com)

EXPEDITION MARKETING

Mountain Hardwear Sponsors Six New Athletes – Mountain Hardwear sponsors over 20 athletes to provide real-world challenges to its product designers and to conduct product testing in extreme conditions. The theory here is that extreme use creates a “halo” effect on the apparel so that even if the average consumer travels nowhere more hazardous than the Costco parking lot, they at least know they can be out in the extremes if they so desired.

New sponsored athletes are: (U.S.) **Matt Wilder**, Boulder, Colo., climber and Ph. D. student, with a passion for the big walls of Yosemite and the Rockies; **Pat Goodman**, climber and alpinist from Banner Elk, N.C, part of the Mountain Hardwear Southeast climbing team since its inception; **Kip Garre**, ski mountaineer, North Lake Tahoe, Calif., just back from a number of expeditions such as Antarctica with Andrew

McLean and Gulmarg, Kashmir; and **Noah Howell**, skier and filmmaker, co-producer of Powderwhore Productions, Sandy, Utah.

New sponsored athletes in Canada are **Andre Charland**, whose notable ski mountaineering achievements include the North West Summit of Mt. Waddington, several lines on Mt. Rainier, the northeast face of Mt. Atwell and the North Couloir on Mt. Joffre; and **Jamie Bond**, skier and founder of the freeskiing Web magazine www.doglotion.com. (For more information: www.mountainhardwear.com).

Gore’s “Experience More” Picks \$10K Winner – The winner of the Gore-Tex brand Experience More Challenge is Peter Green of Eugene, Ore. The winning experience is a snapshot of Green’s many climbs as a member of Team Sight Unseen, a climbing team comprised of blind/visually impaired and sighted mountaineers.

Green will be using the \$10,000 grand prize to help fund Team Sight Unseen’s climb of Gannett Peak, the highest mountain peak in the state of Wyoming. The team will spend 10 days making the 50-mile round trip across the glacier trail. Green and three other sighted climbers will guide one blind and one visually impaired climber up the 9,000-foot vertical climb.

According to Green, people often ask why someone who is visually impaired would want to take such enormous risk when they are unable to appreciate the view from the summit. He points to the team’s motto, “It’s not the destination but the journey that makes the trip worthwhile.” The Gore-Tex brand will also donate \$5,000 in Green’s name to the Access Fund, a charity he selected.

The Experience More Challenge launched last December in conjunction with the brand’s new online community, www.MyExperienceMore.com. Community members submitted photos of themselves “experiencing more” outdoors, and their peers were invited to rate those experiences.

EXPEDITION INK

Crossing Antarctica Marks 20th Anniversary – It was 20 years ago last month – March 1990 – that Will Steger and five international polar explorers completed what will forever be considered the most audacious crossing of Antarctica. Their Trans-Antarctica Expedition will last in Antarctica history for a variety of reasons: Its length and duration (3,741 miles in 221 days, requiring that it start in winter and end in winter). Because it was the last expedition by dogsled (dogs were outlawed the following year by an amendment to the Antarctic Treaty). And its expense (upwards of \$12 million). A lot has changed in the two decades since – international politics and economies have shifted, new technologies invented and boomed, the human population added one billion, says writer and filmmaker Jon Bowermaster.

Bowermaster is co-author with Will Steger of the original book *Crossing Antarctica*, and now its 20th anniversary edition published by Menasha Ridge Press

(www.menasharidge.com). He writes on his Web site, “... when I think of that grueling, seven-month-long expedition perhaps the biggest change has been to the continent itself. At the time, the impacts of global climate change were just beginning to be talked about and mostly in scientific circles. Today the ice shelf where Trans-Antarctica started, on a very cold July day in 1989, no longer exists.”

Bowermaster continues, “Part of the Larsen B Ice Shelf, it was sundered in 2002 by the massive breakup of Antarctica's largest shelf due to warming sea and air temperatures.

Steger’s recent work has focused on educating students and policy leaders alike on the causes, effects and solutions to global climate change. His organization is planning the 5th annual Summer Institute for Climate Change Education, Aug. 12, at the University of Minnesota Continuing Education & Conference Center in St. Paul. (www.willstegerfoundation.org).

Bowermaster has been back to Antarctica two dozen times since that initial introduction 20 years ago. His recently completed high-def film, *Terra Antarctica*, documents a six-week long exploration of the Antarctic Peninsula by sea kayak. (www.jonbowermaster.com).

WEB WATCH

Start Spreading the News – NASA is retiring their Space Shuttle fleet and has announced that they will make three space shuttles – *Discovery*, *Endeavor* and *Atlantis* – available to different institutions throughout the U.S.

The Intrepid Sea, Air & Space Museum believes New York City would make an ideal home for one of these retiring shuttles and has applied to NASA for consideration to bring the shuttle to their west side location. The shuttle would be prominently displayed alongside of The *USS Intrepid* and the *Growler* submarine at Manhattan’s Pier 86. The *Intrepid* served as a primary spacecraft recovery vessel during the 1960s. At press time the museum had received almost 26,000 signatures. (Join the petition here: <http://www.intrepidmuseum.org/shuttle/>)

ON THE HORIZON

Mountainfilm Festival Announces Guest Speakers – The line-up for the Mountainfilm Festival in Telluride, Colo., May 28-31, this year includes: **Greg Mortenson**, who has dedicated his life to promoting education, especially for girls, in remote regions of Pakistan and Afghanistan; **Ed Viesturs**, the first (and only) American to summit all of the Earth’s fourteen highest mountains (above 8,000 meters); **Maya Lin**, renowned sculptor and landscape artist, best known as creator of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington, D.C., a public work she designed at age 21; and **Chris Jordan**, a former corporate lawyer now dedicated to raising consciousness, through his photographic art, of the far-reaching and destructive consequences of our everyday habits.

Also speaking: **Rick Ridgeway**, a member of the first American team to summit K2, and one of the world's foremost mountaineers and adventurers in addition to being an Emmy-winning filmmaker, photographer and author; **Ambassador Richard Holbrooke**, currently serving as President Obama's special representative to Afghanistan and Pakistan; and **Mike Fay**, best known for a 455-day, 2,000-mile trek across Africa known as the MegaTransect. (For more information: www.mountainfilm.org).

Wings WorldQuest Award Dinner, April 15 – For the 8th year, WINGS WorldQuest will honor the accomplishments of visionary women who are pushing the boundaries of knowledge to aid in understanding today's complex issues. The "Women of Discovery Awards" recognizes excellence in exploration and discovery in all areas of field research and environmental conservation. Among the five awardees are pioneers in the elucidation of plant communication and the documentation of ancient traditions, which are rapidly vanishing in the face of the modern world.

Awardees are: (Sea) **Alexandra Morton**, orcas specialist, Canada; (Lifetime) **Carol Beckwith** and **Angela Fisher**, photohistorians, U.K.; (Earth) **Susan Dudley**, botanist, Canada; and (Field Research) **Kate Harris**, glaciologist, Canada. The awards dinner is at Tribeca Rooftop, 2 Desbrosses Street, New York. Tickets start at \$500. (For more information: www.wingsworldquest.org).

EXPEDITION CLASSIFIEDS

Science Museum of Long Island Expeditions – (1) Peruvian Highlands, June 17-30, 2010 with anthropologists and archaeologist. Study Chachapoya culture pre-dating Inca civilization. For the first time, survey Lamas site. Explore Karajia, with rows of sarcophagi with mummies still inside. Participate in native crafts including medicinal plants. \$4,500 all-inclusive from JFK. (2) Paleontology Expedition, August 21-28, 2010.

A full week of hands-on experience at the Wyoming Dinosaur Center, Thermopolis, Wyo. Field, quarry work and laboratory study. Inter-disciplinary topics include: geochronology, paleobotany, taphonomy, dinosaur anatomy, paleoclimates. Fee: \$2,300 includes airfare, Dinosaur Academy Program, lodging, meals, tools for fieldwork. Contact: Dr. John Loret, smli@optonline.net.

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