

# EXPEDITION NEWS

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**EXPEDITION NEWS, now in its 17th 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.**

## **EXPEDITION STUDIES 2012 VENUS TRANSIT**

Venus, the planet named after the Roman goddess of love and beauty, is ready for its close-up. The Venus Transit Expedition next year is a modern day science expedition looking to emulate Captain James Cook's maiden voyage, for the Royal Society, to witness and record the path of Venus across the Sun in 1769. When Venus passes directly between earth and the sun, the distant planet is viewed as a small dot gliding slowly across the face of the sun.

A Venus transit only occurs every 120 years; after June 5-6, 2012, scientists will have to wait until December 2117. It should come as no surprise that the transit has its own website ([www.transitofvenus.org](http://www.transitofvenus.org)) and Transit of Venus phone app.

Modern day adventurer Huw (as in "Hugh") James, 27, from Caerphilly, South Wales, is assembling a team of four people to travel to the North Pacific in 4 x 4 vehicles starting in Britain, then across Europe, across the Ukraine, Russia, Mongolia and China to Japan where the team will witness the transit, one of the rarest events in astronomy.

James, the expedition leader, is a multi-talented individual with a passion for science and adventure. He runs a company in Wales that focuses on innovative ways to engage the public through informal scientific learning and adventure sports ([www.huwjames.com](http://www.huwjames.com)). He united his passion for science and sport into a website called Science Junkie ([www.sciencejunkies.co.uk](http://www.sciencejunkies.co.uk)). Log on and you'll be given helpful advice for determining your Ape Ratio: arm span divided by height. In sports such as rock climbing, a ratio greater than one is considered an advantage.

James explains the inspiration for the Venus Transit Expedition, "is to show that scientific exploration is very much still alive today and that science is not only interesting

but the scientific process can be a journey of a lifetime. The reason that Darwin, Cook, Scott went on their epic voyages were to discover more about the world and to bring home scientific facts about the world around them," James said.

The expedition is seeking sponsorship funding of £80,000 (\$131,180). (For more information: Lynne Edwards, Sponsorship Manager, UK +44 [0]7738166229, lynne@aventuremarketing.com).

## **EXPEDITION NOTES**

### **Wreck of Canadian Schooner Found with Masts Erect**

After 105 years, the three masts of the *Queen of the Lakes* still stand erect – all the more remarkable because the 19th-century Canadian schooner has sat in the dark depths of Lake Ontario since it wrecked in 1906.

"We think it hit bow first because the bowsprit is broken off, but the rest of the ship looks pretty nice," undersea explorer Jim Kennard told the *Associated Press* last month.

Kennard and fellow shipwreck enthusiasts Dan Scoville and Roland Stevens located the 129-foot-long vessel using side-scan sonar in 2009. They confirmed the find and captured images of it in early July using a remotely operated submersible.

The ship sits on the lakebed at a depth of 200 to 300 feet. Its masts extend as much as 100 feet upward in calm, frigid waters deprived of oxygen, conditions that account for how well it's preserved.

"When you have a temperature of, like, 39 degrees and you're at a depth where there's no wave action or current, the only thing that can damage the wood would be zebra or quagga mussels as they collect and grow in big clumps and fall off," Kennard said.

In 2008 in Lake Ontario, Kennard's team located the wreck of the *HMS Ontario*, the oldest shipwreck ever found in the Great Lakes. During the American Revolution in 1780, the 22-gun British warship was lost in a gale with barely a trace and as many as 130 people aboard.

Since 1970, Kennard has helped find more than 20 wrecks in the Great Lakes and about 180 others in Lake Champlain, New York's Finger Lakes and the Mississippi and Ohio rivers.

### **Search for Lost Amphibians Finds a Few in Borneo**

One of the world's most elusive amphibians has made a surprising reappearance recently in Malaysia's Sarawak State, providing science with its first-ever photographs of the endangered spindly-legged species and new hope for the region's biodiversity. Inspired by Conservation International's (CI) Global Search for Lost Amphibians, scientists with support from Universiti Malaysia Sarawak found three individuals of the missing toad, up

a tree during a nighttime search after months of scouring remote forests.

The Sambas Stream Toad, or Bornean Rainbow Toad as it's also called (*Ansonia latidisca*) was previously known from only three individuals, and was last seen in 1924. Prior to the rediscovery, only illustrations of the mysterious and long-legged toad existed, after collection by European explorers in the 1920s.

Because of this, scientists with CI and the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) SSC Amphibian Specialist Group believed that chances of finding the species alive were slimmer than the toad's unusually slender limbs, so they listed it as one of the "World's Top 10 Most Wanted Lost Frogs," in a global campaign to seek out amphibians that had not been seen in a decade or longer. They hoped that the campaign would inspire researchers around the world to employ local expertise to mobilize targeted searches.

"Thrilling discoveries like this beautiful toad, and the critical importance of amphibians to healthy ecosystems, are what fuel us to keep searching for lost species," said Dr. Indraneil Das of Universiti Malaysia Sarawak (UNIMAS). "They remind us that nature still holds precious secrets that we are still uncovering, which is why targeted protection and conservation is so important.

Amphibians are indicators of environmental health, with direct implications for human health. Their benefits to people should not be underestimated." (See a poster of the Top 10 Most Wanted amphibians at <http://ow.ly/5DDKC>. Read more about the campaign at: [www.conservation.org/lostfrogs](http://www.conservation.org/lostfrogs)).

### **Depths Studied as Arctic Sea Ice Declines**

A ship expedition is under way to conduct the first modern-day survey of seafloor depths along a vast region of the Arctic Ocean. Water depth in the Kotzebue Sound, off northwestern Alaska, hasn't been studied in more than a century — since the United States bought Alaska in 1867.

The 230-foot *Fairweather*, a National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) survey vessel, set off from Kodiak, Alaska, on July 7 and will spend two months at sea, measuring ocean depths across roughly 530 square miles in a region that is seeing a marked increase in ship traffic.

Satellite measurements that began in 1979 show that Arctic sea ice cover has been declining steadily. As sea ice has disappeared, ships have taken advantage of the open water.

"The reduction in Arctic ice coverage is leading over time to a growth of vessel traffic in the Arctic, and this growth is driving an increase in maritime concerns," said NOAA Corps Capt. David Neander, commanding officer of the *Fairweather*, in a statement.

The *Fairweather* and its survey launches are equipped with state-of-the-art acoustic technology to measure ocean depths, collect 3-D imagery of the seafloor and detect

underwater hazards that could pose a danger to surface vessels. The ship itself will survey the deeper waters, while the launches work in shallow areas.

Recent expeditions to the Arctic are attempting to better understand the processes that are fueling the loss of the region's ice.

### **The Explorers Club Discovers Its North Face**

Members of The Explorers Club discovered a bit of urban archaeology unseen for years – the North Face of their iconic Upper East Side New York headquarters named for famed broadcaster and Club member Lowell Thomas.

The 107-year-old Club celebrated completion of the restoration of its 46 East 70<sup>th</sup> Street north-facing façade, and removal of construction scaffolding, with a public open house on July 28. Immediately following the ribbon ceremony, a climber descended the east exterior wall of the six-story building, highlighting the next area of the building targeted for Phase II of the renovation project. The Phase II renovation will also focus on the Club's outside terrace and a colonnade of particular historical import that dates from the medieval period, another portion of which is believed to be housed at The Cloisters Museum and Gardens.

“As explorers our mission is to not only conduct field research and add to man's body of scientific knowledge, but to help ensure cultural and historical preservation as well. In this instance, cultural preservation starts at H.Q.,” stated Lorie Karnath, the 37th and only second female president in the Club's history.

### **QUOTE OF THE MONTH**

*“We must go beyond textbooks, go out into the bypaths and untrodden depths of the wilderness and travel and explore, and tell the world the glories of our journey.”*

– John Hope Franklin (1915-2009). Franklin was a U.S. historian and past president of Phi Beta Kappa, the Organization of American Historians, the American Historical Association, and the Southern Historical Association. In 1995, he was awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom, the nation's highest civilian honor.

### **EXPEDITION FOCUS**

#### **Anatomy of a Climbing Accident**

By Phil Powers, executive director, American Alpine Club

(Excerpted from [www.AmericanAlpineClub.org](http://www.AmericanAlpineClub.org))

*Editor's Note: On the afternoon of May 17, American Alpine Club (AAC) Executive Director Phil Powers was injured in a climbing accident. When the accident occurred, Powers was climbing with a group near AAC headquarters in Clear Creek Canyon's Highwire area outside of Golden, Colo. Clear Creek Canyon is a popular and accessible*

*sport climbing crag on public land. The following is a chilling excerpt from Powers' blog post of July 28, 2011.*

**“Update, June 28, 2011** – Today marks six weeks since my fall in Clear Creek Canyon. Erik Lambert and the AAC staff did a very good job keeping our website, blog and Facebook pages current with updates on my health during the first couple of weeks after the accident. Since then my progress has not been marked by major milestones so there has not been much to report. As a result, you may have begun to wonder how I am doing.

“I apologize for keeping you at all in the dark. So, from the beginning: The fall may have been from as high as 75 feet. It was low angle near the top and then very steep for the last 30-40 feet. I landed on my back and left side. My co-workers managed first aid (basically keeping me from moving and monitoring me) and immediately contacted EMS. A rather rigorous litter evacuation took about two hours and then I was transported by helicopter to St. Anthony's hospital in Denver.

“Over the next 48 hours various surgical teams corrected: a diaphragmatic tear (15cm) that allowed my stomach, spleen and intestines into my left lung cavity, collapsing the left lung; a broken left humerus and broke T12, L1 and L2 vertebrae which they fused. They did not correct a burst T6 and broken C6 vertebrae judging that these would heal best on their own.

“Ten broken ribs were also found. As a benefit of my AAC membership, Global Rescue put the doctors at Johns Hopkins in touch with my doctors at St. Anthony's to provide second opinions on every procedure. This did not change any protocols but I must say that it gave my wife and family some confidence during a very stressful time. After these surgeries, I remained sedated and on a ventilator for another few days.

“They took the breathing tube out on day 5, May 22. I took a few steps on the 24th and was released from ICU on the 28th. I can't say enough about the team at St. Anthony's. Since coming home from the hospital on June 1st progress has not been momentous but it has been steady. My energy has improved steadily and I no longer take afternoon naps. I can take long walks and have begun basic lifting exercises (curls, lat pull-downs....). I am now down to well under half the prescribed painkiller dosage. I wear a neck brace 24 hours a day and a back brace while awake. ...

“Next week I will return to Denver for follow up visits with doctors. Hopefully I can get rid of the braces and begin to increase my range of motion and building some muscle. I have lost a surprising amount of weight. It will take a little time for me to have the range of motion and energy for full time work and many more months for a full recovery. I don't yet know what a full recovery is but I have every intention of getting pretty darn close to where I was before. ...

“As I mentioned, I am not back working. My energy is, however, improving with each passing day.”

## **MEDIA MATTERS**

### **TV Host Sought by National Geographic Channel**

National Geographic Channel is in search of a scientist/explorer to host a new 30-minute weekly show that highlights everything that is current and happening right now in the world of National Geographic, science and exploration.

The search is for males and females between the ages of 28 and 45 years old located in the Boston, N.Y., Philadelphia or D.C./Baltimore areas. Hosts should have a legitimate background in the sciences, as well as be entertaining and credible while being able to communicate sometimes complex ideas and jargon to viewers without missing a beat. Nat Geo tells us the host should be smart, savvy, exciting, good-looking and an excellent communicator. All interested applicants should email a brief introduction letter along with a bio, resume and a recent photo to Sean De Simone at [sciencehostcasting@gmail.com](mailto:sciencehostcasting@gmail.com).

### **Why Measure Everest?**

Nepal is launching its first-ever expedition aimed at measuring Mt. Everest, a peak the Chinese says is 29,017 feet, but Nepal claims is 11 feet loftier. "Humanity's fascination with records can inflate the importance of a difference of a few feet," writes Carl Bialik in the *Wall Street Journal* (July 30-31). "Now surveyors' measuring tape is the Global Positioning System, which makes use of space-based satellites. While this greatly improves accuracy, it hasn't overcome disagreements involving sea level or plate tectonics that turn mountain heights and other topographical numbers into moving targets," Bialik writes.

The U.S.-based National Geographic Society assesses Everest at 29,035 feet, but the *Times Comprehensive Atlas of the World* is sticking with the Everest number advocated by Nepal since 1954 of 29,028 feet.

The Himalayas are rising by a few millimeters a year, observes Mark Ziebart, professor of space geodesy at University College London. "These days, we don't think of anything as being static," he says. "The idea of saying, 'The height of Everest is this,' is an anachronism."

### **Explorer. Leader of Men. Adulterer?**

We've long admired the tale of Sir Ernest Shackleton, reading everything we could obtain on the great adventurer. But two little known facts emerged from a *New York Times Magazine* story (July 24) about the mummified remnants of Sir Ernest's whisky stash in Antarctica. Charles McGrath writes, "By today's standards, he was an unlikely explorer, with little scientific training or interest. He wasn't even particularly enthralled by snow and ice. What motivated him," McGrath says, "was the lure of fame and wealth, and exploration was the best way he knew to get them."

“He was irresistibly charming, especially to women, and for his time – he was born in 1874 – was a highly advanced adulterer, who liked sharing his girlfriends with their husbands.”

Later in the story, McGrath reveals another little known fact about members of Shackleton’s Nimrod Expedition, “What really got them through was cocaine – in the form of pills called Forced March, which at one point they were fed every hour or so.”

Forced March pep pills were used by the British army in World War I. Each bottle promised, “Allays hunger and prolongs the power of endurance.” They were discontinued in 1920.

### **Everyman’s Everest**

Some call Kilimanjaro “Everyman’s Everest,” since it is the most achievable of the Seven Summits, writes Timothy Aeppl in the *Wall Street Journal* (July 23-24). “No technical climbing skills are required. No ropes. No ice axes. What is required is time. Uhuru Peak, the mountain’s highest point, is 19,340 feet above sea level. Ascend too fast and you risk the debilitating headaches and nausea of altitude sickness.”

Aeppl continues, “That’s why guidebooks often include descriptions of people sprawled by the trail, retching, during the final push to the top.”

Experts recommend spreading Kili climbs out to seven to 10 days.

### **Recalculating**

*NPR Morning Edition* (July 26) reports that in remote places like California’s Death Valley, over-reliance on GPS navigation systems can be a matter of life and death. Each summer in Death Valley, a quarter-million tourists pry themselves from air-conditioned cars and venture into 120-degree heat to snap pictures of glittering salt flats. They come from all over the world, but many have the same traveling companion suction-cupped to their dashboard: a GPS.

But when dozens of abandoned dirt roads lie between you and that destination, things can get tricky.

According to the NPR broadcast, Death Valley Ranger Charlie Callagan has been working with GPS companies to update the road maps in the area, to prevent travelers from winding up on closed and abandoned roads. Callagan wondered if part of the problem was that out there, GPS companies might be relying on old maps with roads that have long been closed.

Now Callagan is working to update maps for TomTom, Navteq and Google Earth. But, he points out, at the root of these mishaps in the desert is something much older than GPS technology.

In 1849, Death Valley got its name when a wagon train from the east tried to find a shorter route to California, and got lost.

"Somebody had a map, and somebody said, this is a faster way to get to the gold fields," Callagan says. "Deep down back in the brain, the common sense says, you know, this is not the wisest thing." (Hear the story at [www.npr.org](http://www.npr.org)).

## **CLIMBING FOR DOLLARS**

### **Website Gives Expeditions a Kickstart**

Increasingly, we're receiving expedition pitches from Kickstarter, the largest funding platform for creative projects in the world. Every week, tens of thousands of people pledge millions of dollars to projects from the worlds of music, film, art, technology, design, food, publishing and, yes, even exploration.

This is not about investment or lending. Project creators keep 100% ownership and control over their work. Instead, they offer products and experiences that are unique to each project. On Kickstarter, a project must reach its funding goal before time runs out or no money changes hands. Why? It protects everyone involved. Creators aren't expected to develop their project without necessary funds, and it allows anyone to test concepts without risk.

Photographer Marcy Mendelson of San Francisco is using Kickstarter to raise funds for her cheetah conservation project in Africa this fall. So far she's received \$3,125 from 48 backers for her three-month journey to South Africa, Botswana and Namibia to tell the story of the cheetah and conservation for *National Geographic News Watch* & Cheetah-Watch.com. Live video updates from the field and a published book will result. Backers receive everything from a simple listing in return for \$5, to Mendelson shooting the backer's wedding, assuming it's in northern California and they donate at least \$1,800. (For more information: <http://www.kickstarter.com/projects/cheetah/to-save-the-cheetah-a-documentary>).

## **EXPEDITION MARKETING**

### **Seek the Peak**

PrimaLoft Insulation Technology supported the 2011 Seek the Peak Hike-A-Thon fundraiser event at Mount Washington in North Conway, N.H. last month. Seek the Peak is New England's premier hiking event and raises funds to support the non-profit Mount Washington Observatory, the famous mountaintop weather station that monitors the conditions in one of the most extreme places on Earth. Seek the Peak was presented by Eastern Mountain Sports (EMS), one of PrimaLoft's long-standing brand partners. This year's event drew hundreds of hikers to Mount Washington, the Northeast's tallest peak at 6,288-feet.



Since its inception in 2001, Seek the Peak has raised nearly \$700,000 for the Mount Washington Observatory, which helps to maintain the weather station and continue its work collecting weather data and performing scientific research. (For more information: [www.primaloft.com](http://www.primaloft.com); [www.seekthepeak.org](http://www.seekthepeak.org))

## **BUZZ WORDS**

### **Dirtbag**

Brendan Leonard of [www.semi-rad.com](http://www.semi-rad.com) wonders if he's a classic dirtbag in a July 26 post on [www.adventure-journal.com](http://www.adventure-journal.com):

“My car has 196,000 miles on it. I have \$400 ski bindings mounted on \$100 skis (which I bought used from a friend) and bent ski poles (which were free; a friend was cleaning out his closet). I still don't own a suit. I bought my bicycle for \$100 from a Craigslist ad. I still look for opportunities for free gear whenever I can. I spend 30 nights a year in a sleeping bag that's almost six years old and a tent with a (patched) hole in the floor. The best times of my life are when I'm wearing a heavy pack, going up or down something on a rope, a pair of skis, or hiking boots, and sleeping on the ground afterward.”

He compares himself to “original dirtbags” – Yosemite climbers of the '60s and '70s such as Patagonia founder Yvon Chouinard, who survived on staples such as dented cans of cat food for months at a time while they pioneered new routes all over the valley.

## **EXPEDITION CLASSIFIEDS**

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