

EXPEDITION NEWS

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EXPEDITION NEWS, now in its 18th 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 UPDATE

50-Plus Explorers Report Antarctica Was Smooth Sailing

On Nov. 16, a team of five adventurers flew to Antarctica (See *EN*, December 2011). The team was led by Richard Weber (Canada), and included Chris de Lapuente (Britain); Kathy Braegger and Ruth Storm (USA); and Michael Archer (New Zealand). The team started skiing from the Ronne Ice Shelf at a location called the “Messner Start,” 900 km from the South Pole. After Braegger and de Lapuente dropped out due to sickness and infection, after 38 days, Weber, Archer and Storm reached the Pole. Storm returned from the Pole by aircraft.

After a frustrating period waiting four days for wind, Weber and Archer started their kite-skiing journey 1130 km back to the edge of the continent. Both spent ten days kiting and another three days waiting for wind. Most kiting days they covered about one degree of latitude (110 km). Their best day was 240 km. They reached Hercules Inlet on the 57th day, January 17, 2012.

Weber reports, “Traveling across Antarctica is in many ways boring – endless white, no wildlife, the Messner Route has almost no mountain scenery. Yet, Antarctica is so vast, huge, pristine (except for the U.S. base at the South Pole), and snow surfaces are always changing. From the start to the South Pole the climb is almost 10,000 feet but it is mind boggling to think that all that climbing is on top of ice.

“The kite-skiing was often frustrating because of a lack of wind and the fact we did not have all the correct equipment. At the same time, when the wind was good, flying across the surface of Antarctica was an amazing, exhilarating experience. We are a couple of men aged 50 plus, with limited kite-skiing experience, yet we covered over 1130 km in ten days of kiting. This year other kiting expeditions completed amazing treks, thousand

of kilometers in short periods to time. No question: kite-skiing will become more and more popular in Antarctic and other parts of the world where conditions are right.

Weber concludes, “I feel that I am incredibly lucky to have had the opportunity to traverse this unique landscape at the bottom of the world.” (For more information: www.WeberArctic.com).

Brit Becomes First Woman to Cross Antarctica Solo

British adventurer Felicity Aston finished her Antarctic crossing last month becoming the first woman to ski across the icy continent alone. She did it in 59 days — ahead of schedule — pulling two sledges for 1,084 miles (1,744 kilometers) from her starting point on the Leverett Glacier on Nov. 25. (See *EN*, March 2010)

She announced her achievement by Twitter: ""!!!Congratulations to the 1st female to traverse Antarctica SOLO.V proud," after reaching Hercules Inlet on Antarctica's Ronne Ice Shelf.

Aston reportedly also set another record: the first human to ski solo, across Antarctica, using only her own muscle power. A male-female team already combined to ski across Antarctica without kites or machines to pull them across, but Aston is the first to do this alone.

Aston, 34, grew up in Kent, England, and studied physics and meteorology. A veteran of expeditions in sub-zero environments, she worked for the British weather service at a base in Antarctica and has led teams on ski trips in the Antarctic, the Arctic and Greenland.

Aston had modern technology in her favor: She kept family and supporters updated and received their responses via Twitter and Facebook, and broadcast daily phone reports online. She carried two satellite phones to communicate with a support team, and a GPS device that reported her location throughout. She also had two supply drops — one at the pole and one partway to her finish line — so that she could travel with a lighter load. Otherwise, her feat was unassisted.

While others have traveled farther using kites, sails, machinery or dogs (which are now banned for fear of infecting wildlife with canine diseases), she did it on her own strength. (For more information: www.kasperskyonetransantarcticexpedition.com)

Swede Also Expects to Kite-Ski Antarctica

Swedish explorer Johan Ernst Nilson is more than halfway through his yearlong expedition to travel from the North Pole to the South Pole by ski, boat and bike, a project rather immodestly dubbed “The Last Great Adventure” – Pole2Pole (see *EN*, April 2011).

Nilson's journey of some 12,000 miles started April 6 at the North Pole where he skied across the Arctic, and even survived falling through the ice. He'll bike across North

America and South America before sailing to Antarctica where he will kite ski to the finish sometime next spring. He tells *Competitor* magazine's Jeff Banowetz (December 2011) that his kite skiing rig will allow him to cover 100 km per day (62 miles) assuming favorable winds. Knee problems are a current concern. (For more information: <http://pole2pole.net/>)

Maxfield Concludes Life-Altering Trip With a Purpose

On January 1, 2011, journalist Christine Maxfield quit her job at a national travel magazine to help indigenous people living in developing countries. This led her to volunteer once a month at 12 different at-need hosts, including Sierra Leone where she helped handicapped victims of war; Kenya where she taught English to children with HIV/AIDS; Cambodia where she taught music to orphans recovering from child labor and sex trafficking; and Romania where she worked on the construction of a new home for a Roma (gypsy) family. When asked what her next adventure will be, Maxfield laughs, "Reentering American society now since I'm used to pit toilets and bucket showers. And perhaps writing a book." To read more about Maxfield's adventures, visit her blog at www.compassmag.com.

EXPEDITION NOTES

Recycled Ship is Center of Ocean Studies

The crew of *Tara Oceans*, a 118-foot schooner that was docked in New York's East River this month, was the focus of a public lecture at The Explorers Club in New York on Feb. 6.

Inspired by Darwin's legendary 1820 expedition of the *HMS Beagle*, *Tara's* team of international scientists and explorers have spent the last few years collecting and categorizing plankton (responsible for half the oxygen on the planet) in order to discover the oceans' relationship to climate change.

The schooner is owned by French fashion designer and activist agnès b. and Etienne Bourgois, her son and *Tara's* leader. The yacht, designed to work as an ice breaker in Polar regions, has also sailed in temperate waters and equatorial zones throughout the planet for almost three years and, in a commendable bit of recycling, is the former ice resistant *UAP* owned in the 1990s by Will Steger's co-explorer Jean-Louis Etienne.

Sadly, it is the ship where renowned explorer Sir Peter Blake, New Zealand sailing legend, undertook expeditions and was tragically killed in Manaus, the capital of Amazonas, Brazil, in 2001.

The *Tara* is crisscrossing the planet in a three-year expedition with scientists, artists and journalists to investigate the impact of climate change on marine ecosystems. It plans to sail the Northwest and Northeast Arctic passages in 2013.

The fun part of the evening began when Mara G. Haseltine, an artist and environmentalist, unveiled *La Boheme: A Portrait of Today's Ocean's in Peril*, her latest sculpture based on her discoveries on board *Tara Oceans*. Her inspiration comes from abstract forms that are in fact megascopic renditions of microscopic or sub microscopic images often gleaned from sequences of amino acids.

She decried the extent that microscopic plastic is poisoning the oceans. "It's like falling in love with all these beautiful things and there's f'ing plastic everywhere among the plankton," she said. A film showing the ship in rolling, gag-inducing seas included this memorable line, "Only heroes can do science this way."

Haseltine's presentation included a live performance of an aria from *La Boheme*, making for a most unusual night. (For more information: oceans.taraexpeditions.org, www.calamara.com).

Volunteers Needed for Fieldwork in Peru

Hugo Ikehara of the University of Pittsburgh is offering an opportunity for individuals to participate in his dissertation fieldwork in the Nepeña Valley of Peru from July to October 2012.

Students pay a fee for training, local transportation, lodging, food, and fieldwork experience. The project does not provide academic credits. The minimum age is 18 years old, and no previous fieldwork is required, but archaeology majors will be given priority.

(For more information: Nepeña River Valley Settlement Survey project, HCI1@pitt.edu, <http://www.pitt.edu/~hci1/NepenaSurvey.htm>)

Study the Mennonites by Motorcycle

Canadian author/adventurer Cameron Dueck is looking for a documentary/filmmaker partner to join on a 6-month motorcycle journey through the Americas to research modern Mennonite culture. Dueck already has a contract for the book. Departure from Canada is planned in June 2012. Must be able to ride your own bike and Spanish language skills are a plus.

Dueck is author of *The New Northwest Passage* (Great Plains Publications) which comes out this spring in Canada. It tells the story of a voyage through Canada's Northwest Passage, describing the climate change, political and economic challenges faced by Inuit communities, while putting the entire story in the historical context of Arctic exploration. (For more information: 852 9582 2231, Cameron.dueck@gmail.com).

QUOTE OF THE MONTH

"Never stop because you are afraid – you are never so likely to be wrong. Never keep a line of retreat: it is a wretched invention." – Norwegian explorer Fridtjof Nansen (1861-1930)

MEDIA MATTERS

1,500-Mile Trip by Sea Kayak Circumnavigates Ellesmere

In the Jan. 17 issue of the *New York Times*, Tim Mutrie writes a fascinating profile of the first circumnavigation of Ellesmere Island last summer. He reports that to stave off a breaching 3,000-pound walrus from the cockpit of a small sea kayak, adventurer Erik Boomer recommends using the paddle.

“Sort of like a Heisman stiff-arm, hit him in the face and try to feed him the paddle,” he said. “Then start paddling.”

Opposite Greenland along the ice-choked Nares Strait, Ellesmere (population 146) is the northernmost isle of the Canadian Arctic Archipelago and the most mountainous island in the Arctic Circle. “It’s stacked with fatty mountains,” Boomer said. Ellesmere, the world’s 10th largest island, is also something of a jewel of Arctic exploration, its rugged and icebound 1,500-mile perimeter rarely traveled before. (See *EN*, May 2011)

Unlikely partners, Boomer, a 26-year-old photographer and rising figure in whitewater kayaking, and Turk, 65, an author, scientist and veteran of far-flung adventures, were attempting to complete what is believed to be the first circumnavigation of Ellesmere Island, Mutrie writes.

They hardly knew each other before setting out on their clockwise circumnavigation attempt. Starting May 7 from Grise Fiord (population 141), on the south coast, they found the first section involved trudging for 10 hours daily over snow and ice on what remained of their skis, towing their 200-plus-pound kayaks, making and breaking camp, all under the midnight sun. Introduced by a mutual friend, who withdrew from the trip after he was injured in a 94-foot waterfall plunge six weeks before, Turk and Boomer also spent a lot of time talking and laughing.

On Aug. 19, they paddled back into Grise Fiord, Ellesmere’s first circumnavigation complete in 104 days. Boomer said they learned other lessons: When a friendly Arctic wolf traipses into camp and wants to hang out, let him sleep where he pleases. When a polar bear pokes his nose into the tent, scream to chase him out. When visiting a place where the sun never sets, carry more sunscreen. And when your traveling partner goes into kidney failure, call for a medevac.

They finished about 9 a.m. Aug. 19. Some 42 hours later, during his second night of sleep in a bed, Turk knocked on Boomer’s room door. He was in a lot of pain and could not urinate.

“His muscles were twitching,” Boomer tells the *Times*’ Tim Mutrie.

Tests by a local nurse indicated Turk's kidneys were not working. Three days later, after low clouds finally cleared, a medevac plane whisked him off the island. Turk spent six days in a hospital. Recently, he rated his recovery at 95 percent and improving.

He and Boomer are in regular contact. "I'd be a liar if I said we never had any conflicts out there," Turk said. "But I think the enduring thing — 104 days, no books, no iPhones, no iPods, no music, no radios, just the two of us — was that we really enjoyed each other's company," he tells the *New York Times*.

Turk and Boomer, whose trip was financed by grants from Eddie Bauer/First Ascent and Polartec, have since been nominated as Adventurers of the Year by National Geographic. (Read their personal account at www.jonturk.net).

Wiese is First Westerner to Visit Moroccan Berber Village

It is seemingly impossible in this day and age. And especially in a country as well traveled as Morocco. But Explorer Richard Wiese and his television production team were welcomed as the first westerners to visit the isolated Tafraout Issirce Village in the High Atlas Mountains. Wiese filmed a recent episode of *Born to Explore with Richard Wiese* in Tafraout, which will air this February on ABC.

The *Born to Explore* team was invited to Tafraout by the Issafarn Association, whose mission is to improve the standard of living in the High Atlas Mountains of Morocco. Founded in 2006, the Association "Issafarn" means "medication" in the Berber language. Its goals include health care, education, and development.

Until recently, Tafraout was accessible only by narrow donkey paths or on foot and is located five miles from the main road. The new dirt road still proves problematic, as there are little funds to maintain it after heavy rains and snow.

The 200 men, women and children of the village live in "takhates," small homes made of mud. Subsistence agriculture in the terraced mountainside produces vegetables and grains and the group also herds goats as semi-nomads. The women have never left this village and few of the children will finish high school.

According to Mohktar Abou Aissaba, a local guide, "Taфраout is a special village because it is one of the few villages in Morocco where westerners have never set their foot." The episode on Taфраout titled, "Morocco: The Lost Village," will be broadcast on most ABC stations on Feb. 25, 2012.

It's been a good year for Wiese so far: Reach the World, a global education and mentoring organization founded in 1998, will award him its inaugural Cronkite Award for Excellence in Exploration and Journalism. The award is named in honor of their long time Advisory Board Member, the late news legend Walter Cronkite. The award will be given at RTW's 12th Annual Benefit at the Yale Club in New York on March 6, 2012. (For more information: <http://www.rtw.charityhappenings.org>).

Bronx Base Camp

Jinpa Sherpa, 38, a member of the famed Nepalese Sherpa community, was profiled in the Jan. 22 *New York Times*. He works at a base camp of sorts that furnishes fast food and daily necessities to truck drivers, warehouse workers and mechanics in a gritty Bronx industrial area. He has trekked up Mount Everest a dozen times and has reached the summit five times, according to the story by Corey Kilgannon. But between guide jobs in the spring and fall, he often travels to the U.S. to find temporary work. He says in Nepal he can make \$4,000 to take climbers on a two-month Everest expedition. Reaching the summit can bring a \$1,000 tip.

He tells the *Times*, “When I’m climbing, my mind is very clear and happy – it’s like meditation.”

EXPEDITION MARKETING

Baffin Footwear President Plans Expedition to Namesake Island

Sometimes it’s not enough to sponsor expeditions so other explorers can have fun (or misery, as the case may be). The president of Baffin, Canada’s largest winter boot brand, has been subjecting himself and his footwear to the extremes for years.

This March, Paul Hubner, CEO, and his three sons, ages 16 to 24, will be putting his brand to the ultimate test by trekking from Qikiqtarjuaq to Pangnirtun on Canada’s Baffin Island. Matty Mcnair, National Geographic’s Adventurer of the Year, will be guiding.

Hubner’s previous expeditions include trekking to the geographic North (2006, 2008) and South (2008) Poles and Baffin Island (2009), as well as Everest Base Camp (2011) in Nepal. Many of his ads show him out in the field with company product; this time the company’s new extreme clothing line will come along for the journey. That’s him modeling the company’s Polar Parkas and Polar Pants in the 2012 catalog.

“Baffin is based around the core philosophies of ‘living the brand’ and being ‘Polar Proven’. It wouldn’t make much sense to not test our new clothing system under the most extreme conditions”, says Hubner. (For more information: www.baffin.com)

It was Only a Matter of Time

Slacklining, which is sort of like tightrope walking except on a 1-in. nylon webbing that stretches and bounces like a long and narrow trampoline, has been a favorite training tool for climbers. It began in Yosemite National Park in the 1970s when climbers would string up lines in parking lots to practice balance and build core strength before tackling rock.

For those of us who crave all sorts of outdoor gear – especially that which can be secured for free – now comes word of the first slackline-specific shoe, the Andy Lewis Signature Line King from Five Ten. It features a firm heel to prevent injuries and a reinforced heel counter for increased stability. We're already jonesing for a pair (hint, hint).

ON THE HORIZON

American Polar Society 75th Anniversary Meeting and Symposium, May 2-4, 2012 Union Club and The Explorers Club, New York

For seventy-five years, the American Polar Society has both documented and communicated polar activities to the world. The 2012 75th Anniversary Meeting and Symposium will bring together the current leaders in science, government, commerce, and diplomacy for a state-of-the-art forecast of the next 75 years in a world influenced more than ever before by the destiny of the Arctic and Antarctic. \$250. (For more information: www.americanpolar.org)

WEB WATCH

Terra Nova Exhibit Featured in Video

In January 1912, the British explorer and naval officer Robert Falcon Scott reached the South Pole, only to discover he had been beaten there by his Norwegian rival Roald Amundsen. Scott – and four comrades who traveled with him – died on their return to base camp.

Exactly a century later, the Natural History Museum in London is marking the explorer's final ill-fated expedition by celebrating the scientific achievements he and his men made during their three years in Antarctica – and by looking at how the team lived together in such an inhospitable place. The exhibit lasts until Sept. 2, 2012.

Louise Emerson from the museum narrates a fascinating 4-min. documentary that takes a look back at Scott's Terra Nova Expedition with some rarely seen images. You can see it here on the BBC News website: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/magazine-16628909>

Real-Life Lost Voyages That Would Make Amazing Science Fiction Novels

It's been the busiest summer ever for Antarctica, with about 20 expeditions supported from the South American side of the continent, many honoring the centennial of the conquest of the South Pole. On the 100th anniversary of Robert F. Scott's ill-fated South Pole Expedition, i09.com speculates that the story of his missing teammate Lawrence Oates has what it takes for a great science fiction novel. Oates had weakened severely, and he recognized that his weakened state was holding up the other men in their attempt to reach a supply station. They refused to leave him, so he decided to leave them.

Seeing the blizzard outside, he got up from his sleeping bag, didn't bother with his boots, since his feet were too frost-bitten to be able to put them on without pain, and walked out of the tent with the words, "I am just going outside, and may be some time."

His body was never found.

Other expedition mysteries that would make great reading include the fate of Roald Amundsen who beat Scott to the South Pole and later, disappeared in an airplane in 1928;

Sir John Franklin who lead a crew of 128 men through the Arctic – the first bodies were found in 1854; and Colonel Percy Fawcett, who had explored extensively in South America, went off into the Brazilian jungle in 1925 to find The Lost City of Z – he and his son never came back. (Read the entire post here: <http://io9.com/5878358/10-real+life-lost-voyages-that-would-make-amazing-science-fiction-novels/>)

BUZZ WORDS

Geotherapy

The practice that embraces the future by addressing the link between cultural and biological evolution. Source: artist Mara G. Haseltine (see related story).

“By using the principles of Geotherapy, my work encompasses the cross section between art, technology, and social change. Many of the sculptures utilize microscopic and scientific data. They are then abstracted into large-scale figurative forms,” she explains. “It’s a practice that anyone can practice, such as picking up litter on the street.”

Ambergris

A waxy excretion formed in the intestines of sperm whales (thanks to their inability to digest squid beaks). It sells for roughly \$20/gram compared to gold at \$30. Often difficult to identify, the easiest clue is smell. Fresh ambergris, straight out of the whales, has an odor that’s often likened to “scented cow dung.” Nonetheless, it acts as a fixative and fragrance amplifier sold to perfumers. (Source: *Bloomberg Businessweek*, Jan. 16-22, 2012).

DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS

Kili is Even More Popular Than Reported

The *Wall Street Journal* was a bit off with their numbers when it reported 25,000 people per year attempt to climb Kilimanjaro, with about two-thirds summiting (See *EN*, January 2012). Frederick P. Selby, author of *Postcards from Kathmandu* (Vajra Publications, 2008), reports that the Tanzanian authority managing Kili pegs the number attempting to reach Uhuru Peak (the actual Kili summit) at closer to 35,000 annually.

Another 15,000 attempt Gilman's Point, a lower goal. The overall success rate for Uhuru is approximately 49 percent. The success rate is highest for the Western Breach Route (89%) and lowest (35%) via the widely popular and shorter Marango Route, nicknamed the Coca-Cola Route due to its popularity. The Marango ascent and descent time is 4-1/2 days while the Western Breach turnaround period is about seven days. Key for success,

according to Selby, is the slow pace of ascent and an acclimatization rest day at about 12,000 feet.

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