

# EXPEDITION NEWS

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**July 2011 – Volume Eighteen, Number Seven**

**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.**

## **CHERNOBYL RESEARCHERS HEAD FOR FUKUSHIMA**

This month, an international scientific expedition led by the University of South Carolina and supported by the biotechnology company QIAGEN is seeking to measure the genetic impact of radioactivity on animals and plants in areas surrounding the Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Station in Japan.

The start of field work in Japan marks the beginning of a long-term research project designed to better understand the actual impact of radiation on molecular building blocks of life such as DNA and the consequences for ecosystems. The work will build on research results gained following the 1986 Chernobyl nuclear disaster with an aim to provide more comprehensive data for hazard assessment of nuclear accidents.

The expedition team consists of biologists from the University of South Carolina in the U.S., the University of Paris-Sud in France, and the University of Tokyo, Fukushima University, and Nagasaki University in Japan. The University of South Carolina and University of Paris-Sud also have been leading an international research initiative started in 2000 to assess the long-term ecological and health consequences of radioactive contaminants from Chernobyl.

"The Fukushima disaster has stimulated intense public debate about the risks associated with nuclear energy. But very little is known about the actual long-term effects of such incidents on our environment and health," said Professor Tim Mousseau of the University of South Carolina, who is heading the research expedition.

At an Explorers Club presentation last May in New York, Prof. Mousseau candidly said of the Chernobyl region, "This part of the world has human health issues up the wazoo."

A study of swallows revealed tumors under beaks, patches of missing skin, tumors near the eyes, and smaller brains – mutations not known to occur in swallows anywhere else in the world.

The researchers in Japan plan to collect and analyze a variety of samples of insects, plants, and birds, focusing on geographically widespread species to allow for comparability of the research results with data generated during similar research expeditions to Chernobyl. A variety of tissues, including blood, semen, and feathers will be non-destructively collected from each bird (in general, the birds are not harmed in any way by this procedure).

Unlike in the Ukraine, where contaminated areas remained inaccessible for extended periods, researchers in Japan expect for the very first time to examine both the parent generation directly affected by the nuclear catastrophe, as well as their first offspring after the incident. This will allow for a comprehensive study of cumulative effects of nuclear pollution and its consequences for individual animals, species and the ecosystem from the first generation onwards.

Researchers are planning to return to Fukushima on a regular basis, continuously expanding their scope of work to other species, and also to carry out studies in other regions where radiation levels are naturally higher, such as in India. (For more information: <http://www.qiagen.com/>).

## **SEARCHING FOR LIFE ON MARS .... IN CHILE**

Out There Expeditions, joined by Discovery Channel Canada and NASA, departs later this month to Chile's famed Atacama Desert. Based in San Pedro de Atacama, the "driest place on earth," the expedition will perform a thermographic survey from a hot air balloon to search for hidden desert caves, which become analog Mars research sites for NASA's Spaceward Bound program. Scientists will then work with invited teachers to collect and test soil and bacteria samples, and test exploration equipment destined for Mars. This intensive research project is now in its fifth year of providing data to NASA and other agencies, and supports the cutting edge research conducted by agencies such as The Mars Society.

Previous data studies are published in journals and white papers by NASA and The Mars Society. Led by Dr. Azua-Bustos, of the Pontificia Catholic University of Chile, the Mars Analog Research project is considered an integral part of the search for life throughout the universe. (For more information: 321 243 8448, [www.outthereexpeditions.com](http://www.outthereexpeditions.com) [idee@outthereexpeditions.com](mailto:idee@outthereexpeditions.com)).

## **EXPEDITION UPDATE**

### **Landmine Benefit Expedition Interrupted By ... Landmines**

African explorer Julian Monroe Fisher has completed his Equatoria – A Walk Across

Africa “coast to coast” Mozambique to Angola overland crossing of the African continent (See *EN*, March 2011).

Based upon recommendations from the expedition’s security advisors, landmine specialists with MAG Angola and the Angolan consulate in Zambia, Fisher’s project ended with the MAG Angola field team in the village of Lucusse, Moxico Province, Angola. It was simply deemed to dangerous to walk across the Angolan province of Moxico, one of the most heavily land mined regions on the planet.

The ending was appropriate in that Fisher’s stated goal was not just to walk coast to coast from Mozambique to Angola but also bring global awareness to the work of MAG International (<http://www.maginternational.org/>) and their efforts to clean up the remnants of war in places like Angola. “The simple truth, remnants of conflict continue to pose huge threat to civilians and their communities,” Fisher says. (For more information: [www.walkacrossafrica.org](http://www.walkacrossafrica.org), [www.julianmonroefisher.com](http://www.julianmonroefisher.com)).

### **Leave No Man Behind**

A proposed Congressional amendment might finally lead to the return of three men entombed in the ice of Antarctica. In 1946, Navy flying boat George 1 crashed during an Operation Highjump mapping mission over Thurston Island. Six survivors were rescued, but the bodies of three crash victims lie buried below at least 100 feet of packed glacier ice (see *EN*, December 2007).

To complicate matters, the glacier is moving towards and will eventually calve into the Bellingshausen Sea, according to Lou Sapienza, CEO/Expedition Lead of North South Polar, Inc., East Hampton, N.Y., a deep-glacier recovery specialist and advocate for the victims’ families. Sources within the Department of Defense state that a small group within Navy senior command is concerned that the land-based glacier recovery will somehow open the door to thousands of WWII deepwater losses. According to Sapienza, “Nothing could be farther from the truth. According to U.S. Title and Code this country has a legal obligation to recover its 38,000 viable MIAs.”

Sapienza, 58, submitted a recovery plan to the Commander and Senior Staff of the Joint POW/MIA Accounting Command (JPAC), a Department of Defense task force established in 2003 to consolidate recovery efforts of the U.S. military’s 88,000 MIAs. The group focuses on finding remains from World War II onward, although it has also made recoveries dating from the Civil War. JPAC concluded the project to recover the well-preserved frozen bodies is “medium risk.” JPAC twice offered to undertake the mission for Navy.

In the absence of government action, Sapienza plans to lead a survey expedition in December to find the crash site and intends to excavate the men next year, although he hopes that the Navy will do the recovery. The amendment offered by New York Democrat Timothy H. Bishop declares that the Defense Department should “pursue all feasible efforts to recover, identify and return” the sailors’ bodies.

Sapienza promised the 40 surviving family members of the men buried in Antarctica, including two sisters of one of the men, "As long as I'm alive, I'm bringing them home."

He tells *EN*, "I've pushed Congress to push the Department of Defense and on May 26, the House passed their version of the Defense Authorization Act with the three-page amendment. I'm now working with the 24 Senators representing the 40 surviving family members."

In the interim Sapienza continues his deep glacier MIA recovery work in "Greenland's Bermuda Triangle," the site of 10 military aircraft crashes. Under contract to the U.S. Coast Guard, Sapienza and his team will recover three of its WWII aviators and five U.S. Army Air Force C-53 crew in close proximity to the eight aircraft of the Lost Squadron. In 1992, Sapienza was part of the team that recovered a WWII P-38 Lightning from 268 feet below the surface of Greenland ice sheet. (For more information: [www.nspolar.us](http://www.nspolar.us); <http://lousapienza.photoshelter.com/>).

### **Restoring the Old Man of the Mountain – Sort Of**

New Hampshire was rocked with grief when its beloved Old Man of the Mountain rock formation in Franconia Notch State Park came crashing down in 2003, the victim of gravity and intense weathering. (See *EN*, October 2003). But now if you visit the old viewing area and line yourself up behind seven devices that resemble giant upside-down hockey sticks with bumps, and squint, you can glimpse the Old Man's stern profile on the side of the cliff where it used to be.

The devices, called profilers, attempt to replicate the images still reproduced on state quarters, license plates, road signs and untold other items. The profilers will just have to do; the mountainside site is considered too fragile to replicate the facial features – forehead, brow, nose, upper lip and chin – which sat there for thousands of years. (To see what the Old Man looked like prior to 2003, log onto [www.oldmanofthemountainlegacyfund.org](http://www.oldmanofthemountainlegacyfund.org)).

## **EXPEDITION NOTES**

### ***Titanic* in 3-D**

Scientists showed some never-before-seen images of the *Titanic* in a Virginia courtroom earlier this month, unveiling dramatic three-dimensional views of the rusting hulk and the ghostly images of the sea floor where the ship sank almost a century ago.

The *Titanic* struck ice while making its maiden voyage on April 12, 1912, about 400 miles off Newfoundland. More than 1,500 of the 2,228 passengers and crew perished as the liner plunged into the deep.

The images taken from a remote-controlled submersible vehicle were shown to a judge amid an ongoing salvage claim involving the world's most famous shipwreck.

Scientists who took part in a 2010 expedition to the North Atlantic wreck site said the images are the most extensive and highest quality ever taken of the *Titanic*. The expedition also fully mapped the 3-by-5-mile wreck site, which is located 2 1/2 miles below the ocean's surface. The experts said the entire debris field has now been documented for the first time.

The new images will ultimately be assembled for public viewing, scientists said, and to help oceanographers and archaeologists explain the ship's violent descent to the ocean bottom. It is also intended to provide answers on the state of the wreck, which scientists say is showing increasing signs of deterioration.

Scientists said the images collected by the expedition will someday be available to the public to explore the wreck, navigating the ocean depths as a teenager operates a video game with joy sticks.

### **RGS Grants Royal Medals to Livingstone and Earle**

The Royal Geographical Society (with The Institute of British Geographers) has announced the recipients of its annual medals and awards for outstanding contributions to geography. The Society's two Royal Medals, approved each year by Her Majesty the Queen, are amongst the highest honors in the world for the development and promotion of geography.

Professor David Livingstone, Professor of Geography and Intellectual History at Queen's University Belfast, received the Founder's Medal in London on June 6 in recognition of his outstanding encouragement, development and promotion of historical geography. His work has largely focused on bringing geography's history into the wider conversation of the history of science, culture and philosophy, and also in turn, examining the geography of science itself – where it is practiced and how this affects findings.

The Patron's Medal was awarded to ocean scientist Dr. Sylvia Earle. Former Chief Scientist of National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, Earle is Explorer-in-Residence at the National Geographic, Founder of Mission Blue, the Sylvia Earle Alliance, Deep Ocean Exploration and Research, and chairs the Advisory Council of the Harte Research Institute for Gulf of Mexico Studies.

During the award ceremony in June, Earle said, "Since my first breath of air under the sea in 1953, I have had the joy of spending thousands of hours diving, living underwater, using submersibles, witnessing and sometimes participating in the greatest era of exploration in the history of humankind – so far."

The Royal Geographical Society (with IBG) is the learned society and professional body for geography. Formed in 1830, its Royal Charter of 1859 is for "the advancement of

geographical science.” Today, the RGS develops, supports and promotes geography through research, expeditions and fieldwork, education, and public engagement, while also providing geographical input to policy. (For more information: [www.rgs.org](http://www.rgs.org)).

### **Junk Food Attracts Space Junkies**

A group called SpaceUp obviously has a sense of humor: consider if you will their MoonPie Eating Contests. A MoonPie is a pastry which consists of two round graham cracker cookies, with marshmallow filling in the center, dipped in chocolate or other flavors. Undoubtedly, it goes best with a few Lipitors on the side.

Little known fact: during the Apollo 11 mission, the astronauts each carried a moon pie when they exited the lunar module upon landing on the moon. After returning to earth, they each ate their moon pies, marking the first time a human had consumed a food item which had returned from the moon.

Rules are to consume (as quickly as possible) one double-decker MoonPie (no substitutions) and one RC Cola (or a carbonated cola product of the contestants’ choosing). The flavor of the double-decker MoonPie chosen by the contestant is only limited by the offerings available at the time. The first contestant to finish both consuming the entire double-decker MoonPie (a 226 calorie belly bomb) and drinking the entire cola is declared the winner. The winner is then given the opportunity to make a public statement. The loser(s) will be expected to clean up the mess.

SpaceUp is a space unconference where participants decide the topics, schedule, and structure of the event. Unconferences have been held about technology, science, transit, and even cupcakes, but this is the first one focused on space exploration. The next SpaceUp is Aug. 6-7 in Los Angeles.

One thing is certain: with a contest like this focused on Vitamin J (that’s “J,” as in “junk,”) none of these space junkies go home hungry. (See the competition at: <http://spaceup.org/agenda/moonpies/>)

### **QUOTE OF THE MONTH**

*“Nobody wants to lose to a blind guy, how humiliating.”* – Blind adventurer Erik Weihenmayer, 42, during the premiere last month of Mark Burnett’s latest reality show, *Expedition Impossible*, an adventure race across the ancient kingdom of Morocco. Weihenmayer writes, “No blind person had ever done anything like this, and it was a huge risk for the TV executives to even accept me.” He continues, “Gallop a spitting, biting camel across the Sahara Desert as it puked green vomit and tried to throw me on my head may have been scarier than climbing Mt. Everest blind.” (Read more at: <http://www.touchthetop.com/blog/>).

### **EXPEDITION FOCUS**

**Explorers Club Flag Program is on Track;  
Monitoring Flags Like Never Before**

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During the early part of the 20th century, Admiral Richard E. Byrd, an Honorary Member of The Explorers Club, carried three flags on his second Antarctic expedition in 1933-35. Yet by the mid-1950s, when their whereabouts were still a mystery, the celebrated explorer was reportedly miffed that Club officials would ask for them back. You can imagine the sense of unease when the Club president solicited board volunteers: “Who here wants to ask Admiral Byrd to return our flags?”

There are 202 numbered flags in existence, but several are still unaccounted for. Occasionally they turn up from time to time. In fact, just last spring, while rummaging through some old archives, polar explorer Paul Schurke of Ely, Minn., found number 124 that he had taken on his 1989 Bering Bridge Expedition. “It was mismarked in a box marked ‘Flags Flown at Pole,’” he reported somewhat sheepishly. It has since been returned.

Now flags are being tracked like never before thanks to a new website feature at Explorers.org. Log on, click Expeditions-Flag Expeditions-Interactive Map and view a real-time map of the flags almost anywhere in the world (the polar regions have yet to be added). Click an individual flag to read the Flag Report from that expedition, a report flag-carrying members are required to submit upon completion of their project.

The Explorers Club flag represents a history of courage and accomplishment and has been carried on hundreds of expeditions since 1918: to both poles, to the highest peaks of the greatest mountain ranges, to the depths of the ocean, and to outer space, perhaps someday even to Mars and beyond. Flag expeditions fulfill a fundamental part of the Club's mission: To engage in scientific exploration and share the results. Flags are constantly being re-circulated, even more so now. New durable nylon fabric construction withstands the rigors of expedition travel better than the cotton flags of old which often returned stained and in shreds.

Consider the tale of Flag no. 170. Starting in 1956 it went to the South Pole with Albert L. Raithel, Jr., then Nepal with John Alley (1968), the North Pole with Rev. Laurie Dexter (1981), Madagascar with Terry J. Cooper (1985), and the North Pole again with Will Steger's first confirmed dog sled expedition (1986), with numerous stops in between.

“Flags are the ‘Good Housekeeping Seal of Approval’ for an expedition. We receive fantastic applications that are really impressive,” said former Club director and Flag and Honors Committee member David Concannon. Each year, the committee considers about 100 applications, rejecting at least half because they do not meet exacting standards of what constitutes a flag-worthy expedition. Just being first to do something is not enough; what matters is the science, the research, and how the project improves understanding of the world, according to Concannon.

Flags require a \$250 deposit and, like Hollywood's Oscars, can never be sold. Members don't own the flag, they can only be borrowed. One year when a flag came up for auction at Christie's, the Club had it removed despite strong interest from collectors to own one the easy way – with just a few strokes of a well-heeled checkbook.

Flags are only retired if they were taken on a trip where a member died, or if they participated in an historic expedition, such as the flags taken on three moon voyages and now displayed under glass in the Clark Room in the Club's Lowell Thomas Building in New York. Nearby is flag number 2, featuring an older design, taken to the Gobi Desert in 1925 by famed paleontologist Roy Chapman Andrews. Also on display is Thor Heyerdahl's retired flag no. 123 carried on the historic voyage of the *Kon Tiki*, an expedition that inspired many of today's explorers. You can see it in one of the images in his famous book about the expedition.

Sadly, the last flag to be retired was no. 68 in 2009, carried by highly regarded British diver Carl Spencer, 37, who perished in 400 feet of water while diving the *Britannic*, sister ship to the *Titanic*. The flag began its career in 1937 and had twice voyaged aboard the Space Shuttle.

"Members have studied some of the world's greatest mysteries," said Club President Lorie Karnath. "The *Titanic*, the tombs of pharaohs, Amelia Earhart's disappearance. I'm sure we're up to the task of locating more of the missing flags, especially with the help of the new mapping feature on Explorers.org." She tells Club members, or anyone else for that matter, "If you have a flag, or know the whereabouts of one, let us in on the mystery and we'll track it down."

## **MEDIA MATTERS**

### **Save Now for Trips of a Lifetime**

*Worth Magazine* (June-July 2011) prices out 20 "trips of a lifetime" – the magazine explains, "Here are 20 unforgettable adventures that won't end even after your return home." They must be referring to all the collection calls from creditors you're going to receive afterwards. To wit:

- **Boldly Go** – Travel into space with Vienna, Va.-based Space Adventures. Charter a seat on the Russian Soyuz spacecraft to blast off to the International Space Station. After arrival, spend the next two weeks orbiting the Earth at over 17,000 miles per hour and witnessing up to 16 sunrises and sunsets a day. \$50 million. A space walk is optional add-on for \$15 million. (For more information: [spaceadventures.com](http://spaceadventures.com)).

- **Penguins and Poles** – Kensington Tours offers two eight-day excursions a year from Cape Town, South Africa, to their Antarctica camp. Options include witnessing over 6,000 mating emperor penguins at their largest-known colony; making camp at the southernmost tip of the world; posing for photos at the South Pole; and kite-skiing across the open terrain. \$80,000 per person. (For more information:



[www.kensingtontours.com](http://www.kensingtontours.com)).

- **Climb Everest** – Now here’s a bucket list item that rarely gets crossed off, and for good reason. International Mountains Guides is offering an Everest climb, but only for those who first complete a progression of climbs, including one of the smaller mountains in the Himalaya. “While the journey can be less than pleasant,” writes *Worth*, “the outcome is eternal. You’ll join the ranks of 3,000 other climbers who have summited Everest (over 250 of whom were led by IMG). \$100,000 for your own personal guide; \$70,000 if you share him with one other climber. (For more information: [www.mountainguides.com](http://www.mountainguides.com)).

## **CLIMBING FOR DOLLARS**

### **Alex Hibbert Seeks Sponsors Large and Small**

British polar explorer Alex Hibbert, 25, has announced plans to fund his latest expedition in the extreme High Arctic while supporting charity at the same time. Fifty companies of any size, or even individuals, can sponsor a sector of the near 500-mile expedition by donating just £2,500 (about \$3,975), of which £500 (about \$795) goes directly to Help for Heroes ([www.helpforheroes.org.uk](http://www.helpforheroes.org.uk)).

The sponsors, known collectively as Team North 2012, will enable Hibbert and his teammate to launch their world-first expedition in the North Pole region. Shrouded in secrecy due to competition with other polar expedition leaders from around the world, the sponsors will have advance exclusive access to their brand-new route and expedition concept which will be publicly announced later in 2011.

Hibbert explains, “North 2012’s unusual plan to achieve funding for our equipment and logistics was born as a reaction to the understandably cautious nature with which post-credit crunch companies treat sponsorship. The aim is to deliver value to smaller companies by providing speaking opportunities, press coverage and other internal and external benefits at a fraction of the cost of even a small print advertising campaign.”

In 2008 Hibbert, aged 22, with his teammate George Bullard, skied 1,374 miles in 113 days via a new route across the Greenland icecap. (For more information: Carmen Lester-Williams, [Carmen@alexhibbert.com](mailto:Carmen@alexhibbert.com), +44 (0)7715 103597, [www.alexhibbert.com](http://www.alexhibbert.com)).

## **WEB WATCH**

### **Oh, The Places You’ll Go!**

Meet J.W. Ocker, a travel oddities author currently under contract with publisher W.W. Norton to write a book dealing with his experiences visiting fascinating and macabre sites, attractions, and artifacts throughout the world. We particularly liked his account of visiting Galileo’s fingers on display in a museum in Florence, Italy (who knew?); the Cushing Brain Collection at the Yale School of Medicine in New Haven, Conn.; and the

Robot Hall of Fame at the School of Computer Science at Carnegie Mellon University in Pittsburgh, where our personal favorite is the B-9 (“Benign”) robot from the television series *Lost in Space* (1965-1968). Log on with a sense of wonder to [www.OddThingsIveSeen.com](http://www.OddThingsIveSeen.com).

### **Cragmama Rocks**

Kudos to Cragmama, aka Erica Lineberry, a woman who as mother to 1-year-old Canaan has continued to feed her passion for climbing both before and after Canaan’s birth. Lineberry, 30, from Charlotte, N.C., has been documenting the ways she’s been successful (and not so successful) including Canaan the “Cragbaby” in her climbing pursuits on her website [Cragmama.com](http://Cragmama.com). She tells [ChickswithPicks.net](http://ChickswithPicks.net), “During my pregnancy and Cragbaby’s early weeks my husband and I realized that we were at a stage where a lot of people give up on play, and get locked into a rut of everyday living. I started writing more and more, hoping to provide some inspiration and motivation to others out there who wanted to remain active throughout pregnancy and beyond.

“My goal at Cragmama is to become an online resource for fellow nature enthusiasts that believe starting a family doesn’t mean the end to outdoor adventures.” (Reach Lineberry at [erica@thelineberrys.com](mailto:erica@thelineberrys.com)).

### **EXPEDITION CLASSIFIEDS**

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