

# EXPEDITION NEWS



**June 2009 - Volume Sixteen, Number Six**

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**EXPEDITION NEWS**, now in its 15th year, is the monthly review of significant expeditions, research projects and newsworthy adventures. It is distributed online and to media representatives, corporate sponsors, educators, research librarians, explorers, environmentalists, and outdoor enthusiasts. This forum on exploration covers projects that stimulate, motivate and educate.

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## **SWEDE HOPES TO BECOME MAN WHO SKIS DOWN EVEREST, K2 AND KANGCHENJUNGA**

Swedish extreme skier Fredrik Ericsson, 34, will embark on his dream of becoming the first person to ski the world's three highest mountains: Mount Everest, K2 and Kangchenjunga. Arguably, the toughest challenge of the three is expected to be his expedition to K2 (8612m), which begins in June 2009. Ericsson has already nailed ski descents on Peak Somoni, Shisha Pangma, Gasherbrum 2, Laila Peak and Dhaulagiri. He will attempt Kangchenjunga (8586m) in fall 2009, and Mount Everest (8850m) in fall 2010.

K2 was first climbed in 1954 by the Italians Achille Compagnoni and Lino Lacedelli. Since then, The Savage Mountain – as it has come to be called due to the extraordinarily high number of deaths on the mountain – has been climbed on 10 different routes and only around 200 people have summited. So far no one has made a complete ski descent from the summit of K2. Coincidentally, Compagnoni died last month in Aosta, Italy, at the age of 94. Upon learning of his death, famed climber Reinhold Messner told the news agency ANSA, “(His) was one of the last acts of heroic mountaineering.”

The ski descent, which is the highlight of a two-month expedition, is expected to take five hours. The descent from the summit all the way to base camp has a vertical drop of almost 3600 meters and has very steep sections of up to 50 degrees inclination.

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## **EXPEDITION NOTES**

### **Everest Round-Up**

Try as we might, we still can't resist keeping up with the latest attempts to summit Everest, especially during the May climbing season. The mountain continues to fascinate the world. Who are we to argue? Here's a look at a few newsworthy Everest achievements this season:

- **Fiennely** – Veteran British adventurer Sir Ranulph Fiennes reached the summit of Everest last month, succeeding after two previous attempts ended in failure. Sir Ranulph, 65, who had kept this latest attempt at climbing the mountain low key, said from the top he was pleased but “felt dreadful.”

He added, “This is the closest you can get to the moon by walking.” Sir Ranulph becomes the oldest Briton and the first British pensioner to scale the mountain. He turned back from the summit on his first attempt in 2005 after having a heart attack in 2003. Exhaustion forced him to turn back when he tried to climb it again last year. His efforts this time focused on raising money for the Marie Curie Cancer Care charity – his wife, mother and sister all died from the disease within 18 months. The BBC's Andrew North joined Sir Ranulph during the first two days of the climb and said it was obvious that a “bull-headed determination” drove him on.

During his career Sir Ranulph has led more than 30 expeditions. The explorer is perhaps best known for a three-year Transglobe Expedition – the first successful circumnavigation of the world on its polar axis which was completed in 1982. He also traveled to the North Pole unaided, along with Dr. Mike Stroud, as well as achieving a 97-day trek across Antarctica.

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## **SWEDE HOPES** *from page 1*

The project to be the first in the world to ski the three highest mountains is a step towards Fredrik's ultimate goal to ski all 14 of the world's 8000-meter peaks. Sponsors are: Adidas Eyewear, Dynastar, Grivel, Hestra, Osprey, and Tierra. (For more information: [www.fredrikericsson.com](http://www.fredrikericsson.com)). ▲▲

## **EXPEDITION NOTES** *from page 1*

- **Apa Sherpa Nails 19th Summit** – A poor yak herder's son who became a porter at the age of 12 to feed his family re-established his image as the greatest living Everest summiteer, conquering the peak for a record 19th time.

Apa Sherpa, who in the 1980s attempted to climb Mt. Everest to eke out a living, this year led the Eco Everest Expedition 2009 to draw attention to the perils of climate change in the Himalayas. At 8 a.m. local time on May 21, the 49-year-old wiry and ever-smiling Apa clambered atop the peak where he unfurled a banner reading, "Stop climate change, let the Himalayas live."

In 2003, when the world celebrated the golden jubilee of the first Everest climb by Edmund Hillary and Tenzing Norgay Sherpa, Apa said he would hang up his boots. However, the need to secure a good education for his children has been driving him back to the mountains. Though Nepal's best-known climber, Apa emigrated to the U.S. in search of a better future and now lives in Salt Lake City. He tells Christian DeBenedetti, writing for *Outside Magazine* (November 2007), "My main goal is education for my three kids. That way, they can help in Nepal in the future. We're very happy in Salt Lake. The kids are doing good. Everybody achieves. You don't see that in Kathmandu."

### *Quote of the Month*

*"The trail is the thing, not the end of the trail. Travel too fast and you miss all you are traveling for."*

– Louis L'Amour, *Ride the Dark Trail*

- **Dave Hahn Achieves Non-Sherpa Record at 11** – Rainier Mountaineering, Inc. (RMI) announced that at 6:00 a.m., Nepal time, May 23, RMI's second team of climbers summited Everest. The summit team was led by Dave Hahn who has now climbed Everest 11 times, and holds the record for the most ascents by any non-Sherpa climber. Joining Dave were two accomplished RMI Guides, Melissa Arnot and Seth Waterfall, and cameraman Kent Harvey.

Another RMI Everest team, led by Peter Whittaker, summited on May 19 and consisted of Ed Viesturs, Gerry Moffatt, Jake Norton, and John Griber. Ed Viesturs, the only American to summit all fourteen 8000-meter peaks (doing so without bottled oxygen), reached the summit of Mt. Everest for his seventh time. (For more information: [www.rmiguides.com](http://www.rmiguides.com)).

- **To Boldly Go** – American Scott Parazynski achieved a milestone on May 20, becoming the first astronaut to scale Everest. Parazynski, a veteran of five space shuttle missions, reached the summit at 4 a.m. local time and stayed on the peak for about 30 minutes. He tried to summit Everest last year, but a slipped disc in his back foiled his plans. Parazynski's trip wasn't driven purely by the thirst for adventure. He also was on a science mission, setting up instruments "... looking for evidence of life in the extreme," Parazynski told Space.com. "Things that can live in the harshest environments on Earth may be the kinds of things that once existed on Mars or other planets."

The astronaut, who left NASA in March, is working with scientists from the space agency to hunt for forms of life such as bacteria and lichens that might live in the thin oxygen on Everest. He also planted sensors to determine if liquid water exists at any time during the day on the peak. ▲▲

## **EXPEDITION FOCUS**

### **Fossett Searchers Form Group to Find Lost Aircraft**

Members of the Steve Fossett search team who helped find a plane missing in Arizona for over two years, are now calling for a wide-ranging national review of search and rescue procedures. Lew Toulmin and Robert Hyman served as members of the private Missing Aircraft Search Team (MAST) which helped find Cessna 182 number N2700Q, missing near Sedona, Ariz., since September 2006.

According to Toulmin, "MAST efforts included devoting over 1,000 hours of volunteer time to the search analysis;

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undertaking and documenting over 40 interviews with friends of the victims, flight instructors, possible witnesses, family members and others; and reviewing data and interviews from the 2006 search effort. Our team also obtained and analyzed over one million radar hits for the day in question; verified the radar track which proved to be a vital clue in the case; and undertook an aerial search and recon of the subject area.”

The Missing Aircraft Search Team was founded when the search for adventurer/aviator Steve Fossett ended in 2008. MAST is comprised of experts in search theory, search and rescue, aviation, aviation archaeology, radar analysis, emergency management, law enforcement, communications, mountaineering, expedition management and wilderness survival. Almost all MAST members had worked together on that search, and they felt that their assembled capabilities should be applied to similar cases.

The Cessna, carrying pilot Bill Westover and passenger Marcy Randolph, took off from Deer Valley Airport in North Phoenix on September 24, 2006, and headed north. It disappeared off radar nine nautical miles southwest of Sedona; a three-week search by the Civil Air Patrol and others never found a trace. However, according to Toulmin, efforts by the private team and the family paid off in the end, “We developed 16 scenarios for the possible plane crash, refined them, and came up with three top candidate areas for the location of the plane. The plane was actually found in our highest probability area.”

Stated Hyman, “The key lead in the case was uncovered by a MAST team member from California, Chris Killian, who came across an old overlooked fire report for the date of the crash. He was able to track down the hikers who made the report and had even taken pictures of the small fire across a steep canyon. Intrigued by the new knowledge that their 2006 fire report might have been a plane crash, the hikers returned to the area of the sighting and stumbled across the crumpled aircraft, hidden by fallen trees. MAST learned from the hikers that they had found what appeared to be a plane, and MAST immediately called the local Sheriff’s Office. Authorities have now confirmed that the find was in fact the missing plane N2700Q and confirmed the identities of the victims.”

According to Toulmin, an expert in emergency management, “As far as we know, there is no other group active in this area, trying to analyze cold cases of light aircraft disappearing, applying new technologies and the latest methods, and then capable of launching ground and air searches in high probability areas. We were motivated to do this in the Steve Fossett case ... that search is where we honed our skills.”

Said Hyman, “Most people don’t realize that this is a national problem. There are over 100 light aircraft missing since

1962, all with family and friends suffering and wondering what happened to their loved ones. We just want to help bring closure to these families.”

Added Toulmin, “It is clear from our study of the N2700Q and the Fossett case that there is a real problem with search and rescue in the U.S. ... There are myriad problems with coordination, funding, insurance, standards, routine destruction of vital search data, and search command and control. This is a problem that has received almost no national attention, and we are calling on the Congress, the U.S. Air Force, and Federal Aviation Administration to look at this issue very closely indeed.” (For more information: [www.n2700q.com/](http://www.n2700q.com/)). ▲



## **MEDIA MATTERS**

**R**ediscovering Amelia Earhart – There’s something about Amelia Earhart. More than seven decades after she disappeared without a trace in the South Pacific on her flight around the world, Earhart remains the most famous female aviator in history, a timeless heroine and inspiration to generations of women, filmmakers and fashionistas, writes Susan King in the *Los Angeles Times* (May 25).

“She definitely has a legacy,” said Dorothy Cochrane, the curator overseeing Earhart’s fire engine red Lockheed Vega, in which she flew solo across the Atlantic in 1932 and which is housed at the Smithsonian Institution’s National Air and Space Museum in Washington, D.C.

Cochrane expects Earhart’s legacy to soar even higher with the release of the family comedy “Night at the Museum: Battle of the Smithsonian,” featuring Amy Adams as Earhart, filtered through a Katharine Hepburn-Howard Hawks screwball comedy sensibility.

**Reel Rock Film Competition** – The 2009 Reel Rock Film Tour, presented by Sender Films and Big UP Productions, is accepting submissions for the 2009 Reel Rock Filmmaking Competition. Building on the popularity of the 2008 competition in which tens of thousands of people voted for their favorite Humor/Spoof and Action/Adventure films, the 2009 program has expanded with new rules and new prizes. Winning filmmakers will receive \$500 in cash and grand prize packages from title sponsors Windstopper and The North Face, gear sponsors Petzl Equipment and Sterling Ropes, and media sponsors *Climbing Magazine* and *Urban Climber*. The winning films, one from each genre category – as chosen by voters online and Reel Rock judges – will be featured on the 2009 Reel Rock Film Tour in over 100 locations worldwide. Submission deadline is July 20, 2009. (For more information: [reelrocktour.com](http://reelrocktour.com)).

**Expeditions Go Green** – “In the past explorers won fame partly by besting nature in feats of endurance. Now they seek to preserve nature,” writes Peter Huck in the *New Zealand Herald* (May 9).

Explains Lorie Karnath, newly elected president of The Explorers Club, “We’ve gone beyond the quest to be first, at least on land. Now one of our greatest needs is to protect the planet. I would say that almost every expedition we have, where we plant a club flag, has a very significant element of preservation attached to it.” Karnath led an expedition to help save the endangered white stork last year, sponsoring a dual-use sanctuary – storks and farm cattle – on the River Elbe with a German wildlife group.

Huck continues, “And while each expedition is full of the der-ring-do expected from adventurers willing to put their lives on the line, they tend to emphasize the upside. It’s not all doom and gloom at the end of the world. Environmental challenge can also mean economic opportunity and sponsorship from corporations who are beginning to realize that further damaging a fragile planet is ultimately not good for the bottom line.”

Karnath adds, “Corporations face many of the same things as explorers. They have to be conscious of their carbon footprint.” The confluence of eco-adventurism and corporate sponsorship is driven by a growing awareness of shared interest. ▲▲

## EXPEDITION MARKETING

### Time for Bumbling Climbers to “Get Smart”

**M**ammut Sports Group USA, providers of Swiss alpine gear and apparel, is sponsoring a “Get Smart” contest to highlight its Smart belay device. With the increasing popularity of sport and indoor climbing, Mammut designed the Smart as an assisted belay device that aids in catching a fall, especially with newer lightweight and skinny ropes. The device also shines in situations with partners of varying body weights, making catching a fall intuitive and safer.

The Mammut Get Smart contest is loosely based on the 1970’s sitcom, *Get Smart*, in which Agent 86, awkward and bumbling, surprisingly has enough physical prowess and dumb-luck to always save the day. Climbers are encouraged to look to their climbing peers at local crags and nominate their own Agent 86 – that absent-minded, klutzy climber who steps on the rope and puts his harness on backwards, yet is somehow always able to pull off the challenge regardless of climbing ability. The nominators and Agent 86 nominees are all eligible to win the grand prize, which includes Mammut climbing gear, and a Smart belay device. Winners will be announced on July 17 on the Mammut Sports Group Facebook Fan Page.

### First Nikwax Bellwether Grants Announced

Ann Piersall, of Whitefish, Mont., and Tracie A. Seimon, of Nyack, N.Y., have been selected to receive the first Nikwax Bellwether Grants, established in partnership with the American Alpine Club (AAC). The new grant program provides a total of \$3,000 annually to adventurers documenting the effects of climate change on high alpine environments.

Piersall will use the grant money to supplement her study of the socio-economic impacts of glacial retreat in the Tien Shan region of China. Her project will provide empirical assessments linking the physical effects of climate change to local communities.

Seimon, a biologist, plans to study global warming’s impact on the migratory patterns of amphibians in the tropical, high-altitude region of southern Peru. The Nikwax Bellwether Grant money will help fund this crucial biological component of an existing climate- and glacier-monitoring expedition to southern Peru.

### There’s a Bear in the Air

McMurdo, manufacturer of emergency distress beacons, is supporting Bear Grylls in his latest expedition through the Northwest Passage, by supplying his team with a number of potentially lifesaving Fast Find 210 Personal Locator Beacons (PLBs). The pocket-sized Fast Find will transmit a distress signal via satellite to search and rescue authorities if Grylls or his team get into a life threatening situation.

In August 2010, Grylls is leading one of the coldest RIB (rigid inflatable boat) expeditions to date, in an attempt to take an ice-breaking, custom designed RIB for 2,000 miles through the main part of the Northwest passage, in the Northern Arctic.

Although the passage is still almost continually blocked by sea ice and constantly moving ice floes and bergs, the creep of global warming over the past two years has started to reveal a navigable passage during August, so it is expected that 2010 will provide a similar window in which Grylls will make his attempt.

Each Fast Find is pre-registered to its owner, so if Grylls’ signal is picked up by rescue authorities back in the U.K. it will quickly be decoded, providing vital information to help speed up the rescue.

Fast Find operates on the global COSPAS SARSAT 406MHz search and rescue satellite communication system, which is supported by international government search and rescue authorities around the world, so a call for help will be acted upon quickly. The Fast Find is subscription free and does not rely on commercial call centers. (For more information: [www.fastfindplb.com](http://www.fastfindplb.com)). ▲▲

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## EXPEDITION INK

### *You Want to Go Where? Without a Net?*

*This month we offer another exclusive sneak preview of one of our favorite and never-before-told adventure projects, an anecdote that will appear in You Want to Go Where: How to Get Someone to Pay for the Trip of Your Dreams by EN editor Jeff Blumenfeld (Skyhorse Publishing, publication date: June 17).*

It's one thing to capture an image in the field, and quite another to transmit it back home almost instantaneously to a waiting audience of armchair explorers. Today anyone can link their digital camera to a satellite telephone from the most backwater regions of the planet, then onto the Internet. But it wasn't always that easy. I pushed technology to the edge in October 1995 when I hired a Brooklyn-based news photographer named Mark D. Phillips to photograph a tightrope walk – to this day history's longest and highest – across China's Qutang Gorge, the most spectacular of the fabled Three Gorges.

But the word "tightrope" doesn't do it justice. Listen to former circus performer Jay Cochrane, a thin, intense, milk-drinking athlete in his sixties with impossibly orange-blond hair, and he'll tell you it was a high-wire "skywalk." Listen to my father, a retired but still savvy menswear retail consultant, and he'll say, "schmuck! You have a tightrope walker for a client? Better get your money up front!"

Jay, nicknamed the "Prince of the Air," became a client when he was looking to promote his plans to walk 2,098 feet, some 1,340-feet above the Yangtze River. The Chinese hired the wirewalker to bring international attention to the Three Gorges dam, the largest of its kind ever constructed, and deflect some of the criticism for the many cities and towns that would be inundated. We brought in Mark Phillips because we needed an image of the feat, and we needed it fast, sent by telephone modem to the closest wire service. Easier said than done.

Base camp was Fengjie, a historic city in southwest China's Chongqing municipality about to be submerged by the dam. First we needed a signature photo. One image that would communicate death-defying heights, an exotic location, and just one man, one wire, and a forty-five-foot balance pole. Mark stationed himself on the far end, waiting for Jay to complete his fifty-three-minute crossing in front of an estimated 200,000 Chinese spectators, and another 200 million watching on television across the country.

Photography is all about access, being in the right place at the right time, so Mark spent two weeks scouting the best position for himself and his camera equipment. Scrambling

down to a narrow ledge, just below Jay, below the supports for the unforgiving 1-1/4-inch braided steel wire rope spanning the gorge, it was now or never. He fired off dozens of frames of film with his Nikon f3. When Jay simultaneously lifted one hand and one foot, we had our money shot.

Mark raced back to his room in a seedy hotel, developed the film in water that housekeepers boiled for him, and dried the color negatives with a hair dryer. He placed the color negatives into a scanner, then tried to secure a clear open telephone line to Agence France-Presse in Hong Kong. The transmission over the hotel's single long distance circuit continued to crash. Finally, after sitting on his hotel-room floor attempting to connect for four hours, he managed to complete one 17-min. transmission. AFP distributed the image worldwide, and Jay made it into the record books.

Mark believes his digital transmission was one of, if not the first from an independent photojournalist sent from this rural region of the country.

"It was at the cusp of digital photography," he remembers. Mark would later become embroiled in controversy when a photo he took of the 9/11 disaster, an image shot from the rooftop of his Brooklyn home, seemed to show the face of Satan in the smoke enveloping the World Trade Center. The photo was sent worldwide over the newswires, and a media frenzy ensued when it began appearing on front pages nationwide. Mark was accused of doctoring the image for private gain, but was eventually vindicated when Olympus technicians verified the authenticity of the digital image. It was a case of pareidolia, the same phenomenon that makes people believe they can see the face of Mother Teresa in a cinnamon bun. (To see an image of the Skywalker's signature photo, log onto [www.expeditionnews.blogspot.com](http://www.expeditionnews.blogspot.com)). ▲

## WEB WATCH

**Which Famous Adventurer Are You?** – A new on-line Web game from travel research Web site Tripbase.com asks kids to decide what famous adventurer they most resemble. We're no gaming experts but this has to be one of the first uses of the word "fecal" in an on-line kids game. Some of the multiple choice selections are downright cringe worthy:

"I make my presence known. I stab the nearest person in the face. Also, my incredible physique garners enough attention in itself."

"The map I have constructed from my own skin, blood and fecal matter will serve its purpose. It is a perfect copy of the map held by my nemesis."

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“I stab everyone in the face. Break some stuff. Stabby stabby, breaky breaky.”

Assuming you promise not to play the game on a full stomach, you can see it here: [www.tripbase.com/quiz/whichadventurer](http://www.tripbase.com/quiz/whichadventurer). ▲▲

## BUZZ WORDS

**Umbraophiles** – Eclipse chasers who travel to the corners of the earth specifically to see solar eclipses, making specialty tour operators very happy. Beyond providing the thrill of standing on the moon’s shadow, or umbra, an eclipse is often the centerpiece of a travel adventure in exotic climes. On July 22, the 21st century’s longest total eclipse (about 6-1/2 minutes) will darken the sky along a narrow corridor of the Asian landmass and the Pacific Ocean. Says astronomer Glenn Schneider at the Steward Observatory of the University of Arizona, “Totality is stronger than opioids or pheromones.” (Source: *New York Times*, May 17) ▲▲

## ON THE HORIZON

**Kathmandu Film Festival** – Kathmandu City, the cosmopolitan heart of the Himalayan region, is hosting the seventh edition of the Kathmandu International Mountain Film Festival from Dec. 10-14, 2009. The festival will screen some of the most recent and exciting films about mountains, mountain environment, mountain cultures and communities from various corners of the world. KIMFF is dedicated to exploring the diverse and complex ways in which human beings relate to mountains. The festival seeks to foster a better understanding of human experiences as well as of the social and cultural realities in the highlands of the world. (For more information: [www.kimff.org](http://www.kimff.org)). ▲▲

## EXPEDITION CLASSIFIEDS

**Death Valley and Mt. Shasta Cycling Trips** – Join AdventureCORPS for five days of road cycling, yoga, and hiking at magical, mystical Mt. Shasta on July 29 – August 2 and one-of-a-kind Death Valley in February, 2010. <http://www.adventurecorps.com>.

**Compression Socks Give Your Feet a Boost** – Competitors from runners to triathletes to skiers are increasingly turning to compression socks for an edge that helps them recover faster in the process. CW-X Compression Support Socks, from Wacoal Sports Science Corporation, makers of CW-X® Conditioning Wear, use seamless, variable compression Torex four-way stretch fabric to provide targeted support to increase circulation in the feet and lower legs. A built-in Support Web™ supports the calf muscles and arch of the foot, and stabilizes the ankle joint. This results in reduced fatigue and quicker recovery from strenuous athletic activity. ([www.cw-x.com](http://www.cw-x.com))

**You Want to Go Where? – How to Get Someone to Pay for the Trip of Your Dreams** – The only book that not only takes you behind-the-scenes of some of the most historic and modern-day adventures and expeditions, but also provides advice on how individuals can fund and arrange their own trips. Written by Jeff Blumenfeld, editor of *Expedition News*, it retells the story of explorers familiar to *EN* readers, including Anker, Schurke, Shackleton, Steger, Vaughan, and many others. It includes tips on communications technology, photography, writing contracts, and developing a proposal that will impress potential sponsors. Available through Amazon.com, BarnesandNoble.com and Borders.com (Skyhorse Publishing, 2009). ▲▲

