

EXPEDITION NEWS

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

“FINGERPRINTING” HELPS I.D. BLUE AND RIGHT WHALES

Blue whales are endangered globally and right whales are the most endangered large cetaceans in the North Atlantic. There is, however, a striking lack of knowledge for both species, concerning their distribution, dispersal, and populations in the productive waters of the Flemish Cap, Grand Banks and eastern Scotian shelf areas off Nova Scotia and Newfoundland. Richard Sears and Scott Kraus have launched the New England Aquarium Right Whale Project to study the whales this summer, using a photo identification system similar to fingerprinting humans.

To track the movements of whales, researchers will study the unique mottled pigmentation on blue whales, and for right whales, the patterns over the eyes that are as individualized as fingerprints are to humans. Then images are compared to “mug” shots taken previously, helping to identify individual whales in the wild, estimate the size of populations, determine dispersal, distribution, and migratory patterns, and estimate age.

Sears, 58, founder of the Mingan Island Cetacean Study (MICS), believes it’s vital to survey and collect data from little-studied offshore regions because blue and right whales act as prime sentinels of marine ecosystem changes, and reflect such changes over wide areas of oceans and over long time periods.

MICS is a U.S. and Canadian non-profit research organization dedicated to ecological studies of marine mammals. Founded in 1979, it was the first organization to carry out extensive research of cetaceans in the Gulf of St. Lawrence and is best known for pioneering long-term studies of the endangered blue whale. By contributing to raise the current state of knowledge about cetaceans, MICS data is used to determine species population status, and how to implement protective regulation and design recovery plans.

Sears, who resides in Montreal, says this will be the first dedicated offshore shelf edge survey for marine mammals – let alone blue and right whales – ever conducted in the Flemish Cap, site of the fabled “Perfect Storm.” He explains, “It will greatly add to our knowledge of two of the most endangered species on the planet.”

MICS’ multi-disciplinary field studies, based on a 165-ft. yacht carrying 22 crew and two rubber inflatables, will combine research techniques, such as photo-identification, biopsy darting (for genetic and toxic studies), acoustics tracking, and satellite tagging in conjunction with detailed behavioral field observations. The expedition has raised \$110,000 out of a projected budget of \$175,000, in part due to support from the Canadian Wildlife Federation, the SEDNA Foundation, New England Aquarium and the French shipping company CMA CGM. The group is seeking additional sponsors to climb on board. (For more information: 450 465 9176, rsblues@polysoft.com, www.rorqual.com).

EXPEDITION RECREATES *BOUNTY* SURVIVAL-AT-SEA SAGA

Four adventurers set sail late last month in an open boat from Tonga in a bid to re-enact the epic 4,400-mile (7,081 km) survival voyage of Captain William Bligh of *HMS Bounty* fame when he was cast adrift by mutineers in 1789. Bligh, widely acknowledged as an expert seaman, sailed a 45-ft. open longboat with 18 crew from near Tonga to West Timor in 48 days, surviving partly by catching fish and seabirds, and drinking rainwater.

The feat — achieved without charts or compass — has been portrayed in novels, poems and in several *Mutiny on the Bounty* films starring Hollywood luminaries such as Clark Gable, Marlon Brando, Charles Laughton, and Anthony Hopkins.

According to the Associated Press, the new expedition is sailing in a 25-ft. open deck boat, the *Talisker Bounty*, which sports two small sails. The team expects to take seven weeks to cover the distance.

Led by Australian Don McIntyre, the expedition includes experienced Antarctic sailor David Bryce from Australia, Hong Kong businessman David Wilkinson, and 18-year-old Briton Christopher Wilde. McIntyre said the group is trying to get close to what Bligh encountered by taking with them only what he had on board in 1789. While Captain Bligh took rum with him, bottles of Talisker Single Malt Scotch Whisky is going along for the ride, to be auctioned off for charity at the conclusion of the project. Lucky for them, Talisker is an expedition sponsor. (For more information: www.bountyboat.com).

EXPEDITION UPDATE

Change of Plans: Hillary’s Ashes Won’t be Spread – The ashes of Sir Edmund Hillary will be kept at a memorial near the mountain and will not be scattered on the peak as he had desired, a Sherpa official said last month (see *EN*, April 2010).

Hillary, who climbed Everest in 1953 along with Nepal's Tenzing Norgay Sherpa (see related story), died in 2008 at the age of 88 in New Zealand. He had wished that his ashes be scattered on the world's highest mountain and over Auckland's harbor.

A Nepali Sherpa climber, Apa Sherpa, who holds the record for the most successful Everest ascents, was to scatter Hillary's ashes, which have lain in a monastery in the area, this month.

But Ang Tenzing Sherpa, chief of Sherpa citizens' group Khumbu Civil Society, said scattering the ashes on the mountain, considered God by the Sherpa community, would be against their culture and tradition. He said the ashes will be kept at a memorial during the golden jubilee of the first school Hillary opened in Khumjung next year.

EXPEDITION NOTES

W. L. Gore & Associates Awards \$20,000 – Explorers and adventurers will receive grants totaling \$20,000 through the Gore-Tex Brand Shipton-Tilman Grant program announced this month. The annual program was established by Gore in 1990 as a tribute to the spirit of adventure embodied by legendary explorers Eric Shipton (b. 1907) and Bill Tilman (b. 1897). Now in its 20th year, the program provides funds to be divided among expeditions that are most in harmony with Shipton and Tilman's philosophies.

The following six teams receiving grants in 2010:

- **The Australian Chamlang Grand Traverse, awarded \$2,000**

Inspired by a small "what if" mention in another climber's writings, the Aussie team of Theo Kossart and Stuart Morris have set their course for the Nepal Himalaya and the 24,000-foot peak of Chamlang. If successful, they will be the first team to complete the Grand Traverse of this peak which rises just 11 miles from its well known sister, Everest.

- **British Tahu Ratum Expedition, awarded \$4,000**

Luke Hunt, Hamish Dunn, and Tom Ripley, all under the age of 22, will attempt the first ascent of the NW ridge of Tahu Ratum in the Hispar Muztagh region of Karakoram. The remote location and technical difficulty of the climb means it has not been attempted until now. The young team has climbed extensively in the U.K. and European Alps, but this will be their first attempt at a major expedition in Asia.

- **Full Length Ski Traverse of the Wrangell Mountains, awarded \$2,000**

The Wrangell Mountains in Alaska include several of North America's highest peaks. The three-man team of Dylan Taylor, Andrew Wexler and Joe Stock plans to be the first to ski the full length of the Wrangell range covering more than 150 miles. Along the way they will ski over Mount Wrangell (14,163 feet) and attempt to ski Regal Peak (13,845 feet).

- **Karjiang Untouched, awarded \$2,000**

At 23,691 feet high, Karjiang is the fourth highest unclimbed mountain in the world. The summit remains untouched by humans. Joe Puryear and David Gottlieb plan to ascend to the peak, climbing in such a way that the mountain will appear untouched even after their climb. This commitment to leaving no visible trace means that no fixed rappel anchors or other lingering evidence will remain to spoil the experience for future climbers. There are only two other recorded attempts at the peak, both resulting in teams turning back.

- **Gangotri Expedition: First Ascent of Jankuth, awarded \$5,000**

Climbers Pat Deavoll and Malcolm Bass plan to return to Northern India and attempt to make the first ascent of Jankuth, the 22,326-ft. summit that turned them away in 2004. This is the highest unclimbed mountain in this part of India. Both Deavoll and Bass are highly experienced Himalayan climbers. However, the challenge is increased as Deavoll recovers from a broken back suffered in a recent fall.

- **First Ascents in the Tien Shan: Central Kokshaal-Too Range, Kyrgyzstan, awarded \$5,000**

The climbing world is just starting to discover the potential in Kyrgyzstan. Once closed to foreign teams, the region is more open and features multiple virgin peaks. The four-person team of Matthew Traver, Steve Beckwith, Chris Parenteau and Mike Royer has identified three unnamed peaks as potential objectives. In addition to the climbing, the team plans to act as international goodwill ambassadors, carrying out volunteer work in Kyrgyzstan before departing for the Central Kokshaal-Too Range.

(For more information: www.gore-tex.com).

Mortenson Shares Obama Winnings – Ten charities will split the \$1.4 million awarded to President Obama as part of the Nobel Peace Prize, the White House announced in March. One hundred thousand dollars is earmarked for the Central Asia Institute which promotes and supports community-based education and literacy, especially for girls, in remote regions of Pakistan and Afghanistan. The institute's co-founder, Greg Mortenson, was also a Nobel Peace Prize nominee this year. His book, *Three Cups of Tea: One Man's Mission to Promote Peace, One School at a Time*, recounts his attempt to successfully establish dozens of schools and promote girls' education in rural Afghanistan and Pakistan.

An Evening with Pete Athans – The North Face hosted an enjoyable evening with legendary Himalayan climber Pete Athans in New York on Apr. 27. Within the company's new 10,000 sq. ft. showroom, surrounded by 700 drool-worthy TNF packs, parkas, and boots, the tall, lanky seven-time Everest summiteer spoke about leading an exploration to study sacred caves in Mustang, part of Nepal and home of the original Tibetan culture.

Athans, 53, has distinguished himself with speed ascents of Annapurna South, Pumori, Ama Dablam and Cho Oyu, and has led expeditions to Manaslu, Makalu and K2.

In Mustang's cliffside caves, accompanied by a team of experts, he unearthed a rare library of ancient Tibetan texts, including over 200 illuminated hand-inked folios in dust-laden piles, each folio worth upwards of \$100,000 on the open market. In fact, some pages had already been cut apart by looters. The texts are from the pre-Buddhist religion known as Bon. Inside these climber-accessible-only caves, the team also found ancient Tibetan Buddhist shrines decorated with exquisitely painted murals and 600-year-old skeletons.

The rock quality below the caves is quite poor. "There's no risk this area will ever be as popular as Yosemite Valley. The rock threatens to come off as souvenirs with you."

Athans showed scenes of his team jamming manuscripts into stuff sacks, beating them against rocks to remove dust, and cleaning them with coarse brushes. "I know this makes archivists cringe, but the texts are on some pretty hardy material," he said.

Blindness is a serious problem in Nepal, with only about 120 ophthalmologists serving a country of 29 million. Athans, a board member of the Himalayan Cataract Project (www.cureblindness.org), explained how the Nepalese are needlessly suffering from cataracts, which, once removed and replaced with an intraocular lens, can offer the blind perfect sight within 24 hours.

Athans, a resident of the Seattle area, is also the co-founder of the Magic Yeti Libraries which inspire literacy in pre-school-aged children in several underdeveloped Himalayan regions. "Our hope is to sponsor literacy at a very young age and show how learning can be fun with books," he said. Athans plans to return to the caves this summer to continue the recovery and conservation effort. The Mustang expedition can be seen on the National Geographic film *Secrets of Shangri-La* which premiered in 2009.

Teen Abandons Circumnavigation – A 16-year-old Southern California girl hoping to become the youngest person to sail around the world alone ended her quest last month and headed to South Africa for boat repairs. Abby Sunderland wrote on her Apr. 24 blog that it would be "foolish and irresponsible" to keep going after losing use of her boat's main autopilot. Even with her nonstop attempt over, Sunderland writes she will complete her trek back to Marina del Rey, Calif. Sunderland, of Thousand Oaks, Calif., embarked Jan. 23 after older brother Zac completed a westerly solo circumnavigation at the age of 17. The record for the youngest person to circumnavigate is held by 17-year-old Mike Perham of Britain. (For more information: <http://abbysunderland.com/>).

QUOTE OF THE MONTH

"There's an unaccountable solace that fierce landscapes offer the human soul." – Climber Pete Athans during a presentation at the New York showroom of The North Face, Apr. 27 (see related story).

MEDIA MATTERS

New TV Network Provides Inside Look at the Outside – *Outside Magazine* and RSN Resort TV announced the creation of Outside Television, a new active-lifestyle network which will debut May 31 in 110 resort destinations across the U.S. The new program lineup will include Outside Today, The Outside Film Festival, The Outside Buzz, Untracked, Ride Guide, and Primal Quest – anchoring the network’s lineup with global adventures that will feature some of the world’s best hosts, producers, and cinematographers. (For more information: www.outsidetv.com).

TV Host Sought – NHNZ, a major producer of entertaining non-fiction programming for U.S. cable broadcasters, is looking for an explorer to host a new TV series centered on marine survival. Ideally the host has plenty of experience in demonstrating primitive survival skills such as hunting, fishing, sourcing water and building shelter. He or she also should be able to travel over both land and sea using traditional navigational methods and little equipment. Producers contacted *EN* to emphasize that the show’s presenter must “carry” an hour of programming, so his or her commentary will need to be engaging and insightful enough to bring viewers along on the journey. (For more information: sjenne@nhnz.tv).

Antarctica Tidies Up – “Some of the most important scientific research in the world has taken place in Antarctica over the past 50 years, including the discovery that chlorofluorocarbons led to the formation of the ozone hole. An ice core drilling project now underway will provide the most detailed greenhouse gas record for the past 100,000 years,” writes Ann Posegate in the Apr. 13 *Washington Post*.

“Yet the pursuit of that scientific knowledge has damaged some of last pristine wilderness on Earth. Raw sewage was dumped into coastal waters from 1957 until 2003. Landfills of solid waste accumulated for years on icy hills nearby. Nonnative spiders, mosses and fruit flies now inhabit McMurdo Station, the hub of the United States’ three permanent research stations.”

The story explains the international community’s management of the Antarctic environment has come a long way, and many of the Antarctic Treaty nations, including the U.S., continue to make strides to reduce their impact.

Dumb Money – *Forbes* magazine (Mar. 29) isn’t too impressed with David de Rothschild’s *Plastiki* expedition, calling the effort to sail on soda bottles, “Dumb Money.” So far, the *Plastiki* remains buoyant thanks to 12,500 pressurized 2-liter bottles ringing its hull, held together by cashew nut glue. Writer Dirk Smillie warns, “If the *Plastiki* breaks up at sea, those thousands of bottles could cause an eco-disaster.” But so far so good. According to www.theplastiki.com, the strange-looking craft has yet to pop. As of late last month, it was near Tuvalu having traveled for over 40 days and 3,600 nautical miles.

Polar Visits are “Astonishing” – Sir David Attenborough has realized a life-long ambition and reached the North Pole, the BBC has said. The broadcaster, 84, is filming in the Arctic Circle for *Frozen Planet*, a BBC One series due to air in late 2011. Sir David, who has also visited the South Pole for the series, said it was a “huge privilege” to reach both Poles. The BBC said the seven-part series is the “ultimate polar expedition to the last great wilderness on the planet – before the regions change forever.” Speaking from the Svalbard archipelago, 700 miles from the North Pole, Sir David said: “The Poles – North and South – look superficially very similar.

“But when you visit them within a few weeks of one another, as I have just done, you realize how profoundly different they are and how what is happening to them is going to affect the entire planet.”

Sir David continues, “Most of the programs I have made over the past 50-odd years have been about the tropical parts of the world.

“Having seen what I’ve just seen – from penguins to polar bears, from the frozen ocean to snow-covered volcanoes – I can’t imagine why I’ve left visiting these marvelous, astonishing and beautiful places until so late in my life,” he said.

OUT THERE

Checking in with Norbu Tenzing

As the spring Everest climbing season continues in full swing, *EN* spent a few moments with Norbu Tenzing, son of famed Everest climber, Tenzing Norgay. Norbu, 48, a resident of San Francisco, is vice president of the American Himalayan Foundation, serving a region so remote that people often live without basic health care and education. Economic pressures have forced environmental degradation. And traditional ways of life are in danger of disappearing.

The American Himalayan Foundation was founded 30 years ago to respond to some of these pressing problems. The AHF builds schools, plants trees, trains doctors, funds hospitals, takes care of children and the elderly, and restores sacred sites throughout the Himalayas. The group also assists and encourages Tibetans to rebuild and maintain their culture both in exile, and within Tibet. Last month, we asked Norbu to explain more:

We sense that that your work with the AHF goes a long way towards honoring your father’s legacy.

The AHF was started in 1978 by Richard C. Blum, husband of Senator Dianne Feinstein (D-CA), who traveled to Nepal in the late 1960’s and was struck by the beauty of the mountains, the culture and people in their daily struggle to survive. AHF has provided an education for 10,000 girls who would otherwise fall prey to human trafficking. It takes only \$100 to send a girl to school for a year and keep her safe. Each year we take care of 25,000 – poor children, young girls at risk, Tibetan elders, refugees. I have been with the

AHF since 1993 and most of what I do is find people who are interested in our work to make a difference in the lives of people in the Himalayas. Today AHF oversees 150 projects.

Growing up the son of Tenzing Norgay – those are some very large boots to follow.

He was a father to us, just like any other father, very loving to his children. We were more fortunate because we got to go to good schools, see things, meet people that we wouldn't have otherwise. He was a man who came from nowhere. All that fame was not something he asked for. He never let it get to his head. My father and Sir Edmund Hillary – no two finer people could have been chosen to summit Everest first. It was a lifelong dream for both of them.

In 1968 on my sixth birthday, my dad took me to base camp where we played soccer. Sitting on his shoulders and seeing him pointing to the mountain was my most impressionable moment.

Who do you believe was first to summit in 1953?

My father was not the guide, he was a full member of the expedition. He was an integral part of the team. In fact, he had been on the mountain six times before. He always maintained he climbed Everest together with Sir Edmund. In my mind, they climbed Everest together. No one climbed it first.

Many people think the iconic photo of that first summit shows Sir Edmund on top. Actually it was your father.

Sir Edmund had the camera and knew how to use it. He had the camera so he took the photo of my father. They didn't think to take a picture of Sir Edmund. He was behind the lens, not in front.

Remember, what Sir Edmund and my father achieved was reaching the highest point any human had been to before going into outer space. It was as famous as a moon landing. You were going into the unknown. They had no idea what was in store for them. Climbing Everest first was to reach a point of the earth that had been there for millions of years, but where no human had yet stood. But of course, Olympic records can always be broken.

How will you feel if the camera lost by Mallory and Irvine on Mt. Everest in 1924 is found and its images reveal that one of them, if not both, reached the summit of Everest decades before your father?

I really don't know if they could have done it. It really doesn't matter. If they climbed first, they climbed first. My father and Ed Hillary climbed because they had a love of climbing. It just so happened they're credited with being first. If the camera is ever found,

and people can prove the Mallory team reached the summit first, I think that's great. But it doesn't take away from my father's accomplishment.

Dozens, sometimes hundreds of climbers reach the summit of Everest each year. Does it seem as hard now as in your father's day?

People might say it's a walk in the park, but it continues to be a deadly mountain. The weather can get bad in an instant and people can still die. People are pursuing a lifelong dream, a sense of adventure, a sense of passion. If they're climbing Everest for those reasons and they are physically prepared and mentally prepared, I think it's great. When you hear 40 to 50 people have stood on the summit in a single day, it still doesn't mean anyone can just go climb it.

Do you aspire to follow in your father's footsteps by summiting Everest yourself?

I think about Everest every year on May 29, the anniversary of my father's successful summit. But I have no desire to climb it like my brother, Jamling, who was featured in the Everest IMAX film. I'm happy for him. But I feel no pressure to summit myself, and neither does my family. My daughter, Olivia, 16, is a real California teenager. She'd rather surf and ride horses.

Finally, we can't let you go until you clear up the greatest mystery of the Himalayas – how to simply pronounce the place. Is it Himal-yahs or Him-a-lay-uhs?

If you travel to the actual Himalayas, we'll expect you to say, *Himal-yahs*. The way you westerners say it isn't how we say it.

(For more information: www.himalayan-foundation.org. The organization is also accepting donations to aid victims of the earthquake in Tibet)

ON THE HORIZON

Exit Strategies – The days of outdoor enthusiasts making a mess of hiking trails and mountainsides with human waste are fast coming to a close. Top land managers, scientists, entrepreneurs, and wilderness participants from around the globe will convene at the American Alpine Club in Golden, Colo., July 30-31, to discuss and formulate strategies for managing human waste in remote areas. The conference, *Exit Strategies: Managing Human Waste in the Wild*, will include general/plenary sessions, poster presentations, and field-proven techniques and opportunities for focused problem solving. (For more information: <http://www.americanalpineclub.org/exitstrategies>)

WEB WATCH

Ditch the DEET – Tired of coming back from an expedition smothered in plastic-melting insect repellent and smelling like a Superfund site? Tender Corp., the maker of over-the-counter skincare and first aid products, has launched the Natrapel 8 hour "Ditch

the DEET” Photo Contest at www.ditchthedeet.com. The top prize is a five-night trip for four to New Hampshire White Mountains, a tourist region that knows a thing or two about no-see-ums. To enter, post a photo that captures your favorite bug-free moment in the outdoors to www.ditchthedeet.com.

Containing 20% of the CDC-recommended active ingredient Picaridin, Natrapel offers eight-hour protection from mosquitoes, black flies, ticks and other biting and stinging insects. Contest ends July 31.

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Steger Parka Available in Mint Condition – Celebrate the 20th Anniversary of the 1990 International Trans-Antarctica Expedition with purchase of this authentic expedition anorak, designed by expedition co-leader Will Steger and manufactured to his specifications by The North Face. This jacket containing Gore-Tex is identical to that worn by the team on their 4,000-mile, historic crossing of the Antarctic continent by dog team, a *National Geographic* cover story in 1990. The jacket features reflective patches, and the flags of the six countries represented on the expedition. Stitched-on logos for expedition sponsors Gore-Tex and UAP of France appear on both shoulders. This bright orange jacket was part of a set provided to expedition support staff, but never worn. Selling for \$1,500 with free shipping. (Contact: jgasperini@iphouse.com)

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