

# EXPEDITION NEWS



**October 2007 - Volume Fourteen, Number Ten**

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**EXPEDITION NEWS**, now in its 13th 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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## TRANSPATAGONIA EXPEDITION DEPARTS

Chilean explorer Cristian Donoso is on a kayak expedition in Western Patagonia this month, one of the most inhospitable places on earth. Spending five months navigating open seas and fjords and pulling their kayaks across glaciers, Donoso and his team will face daunting physical and mental challenges as they gather information that will inform Chile, and the world, about this little-known area. The project is the recipient of a Rolex Laureate Award.

With its labyrinth of rocky islands, serpentine channels, and icy fjords, Western Patagonia in southern Chile is one of the least-explored areas on earth. Nestled among glaciers that hug the slopes of steep Andean peaks and drenched by storms that blow out of the southern Pacific, the harsh region deters all but the hardest explorers.

During this five-month Transpatagonia Expedition, the team will traverse 1,267 miles (2,039 km) of the central part of Western Patagonia on open sea, lakes, and rivers. They will travel overland for 93 miles (150 km) – including 14 miles (22 km) atop glaciers, using their kayaks as sleds to drag provisions behind them.

Over the past 14 years, Santiago lawyer Cristian Donoso, 32, has ventured almost 40 times into Western Patagonia's most inaccessible corners. Just like the indigenous people who paddled their fragile canoes in the region for thousands of years before the arrival of Europeans, he often travels by sea kayak which allows him to maneuver around the narrowest fjords to discover their hidden beauty. "In order to strengthen the protection of this territory, we have to know what's there," says Donoso, who reports that today most Chileans

## EXPEDITION UPDATE

**Don't "Wave" Goodbye Just Yet**

Wave Vidmar, best known for a solo and unsupported North Pole expedition in 2004 (see *EN*, March 2006), has postponed his solo row across the North Atlantic until next spring, according to a recent e-mail sent to *EN* from his base in Hopland, Calif.

"I was expecting to be out on the Atlantic Ocean right now, rowing solo from Cape Cod to England. Logistics, politics, and severe weather put the kibosh on launching safely this season and I (painfully) had to postpone this expedition until next season (launch set for June 2008). My boat, *Aquanova* will be finished in Hopland and I'll be touring with it before the row," he writes.

"As you can imagine, it is disheartening to postpone another expedition. More so, because of the support (and pressure) from friends and sponsors. Looking back through history, explorers have typically struggled to obtain enough support to proceed with major expeditions. Minor setbacks have only strengthened my resolve to not give up until I have reached my objectives."

Sponsors for the North Atlantic Ocean Row 2008 USA to Europe Expedition include Gill North America, Maptech and Simtano.

Vidmar, 43, continues, "Because of the years-advance scheduling and time lost between these major expeditions, I have begun to focus on planning and scheduling my smaller expeditions and objectives. The first of these smaller (but still significant) expeditions, is a solo sea kayaking expedition along the California coastline, being done in phases over the next coming months." Partners for that effort include California Coastal Commission, California State Parks, and the Sierra Club. (For more information: Wave Vidmar, [wave@northpolesolo.com](mailto:wave@northpolesolo.com), [www.pacifickayaker.com](http://www.pacifickayaker.com)). ▲

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have little knowledge of the Western Patagonia region. He warns that such ignorance makes it easier for those seeking commercial gain to exploit the region's natural resources – seafood, water, virgin forests – with little respect for its biodiversity.

To enhance understanding of the region's geological past, soil and rock samples will be collected, and then analyzed by university scientists. The explorers will also collect geological evidence, including stalagmites in caves on Madre de Dios Island, showing how the climate has changed over time.

Kokatat, Prijon and NRS are among the companies sponsoring the project. (For more information: [www.patagoniaincognita.blogspot.com](http://www.patagoniaincognita.blogspot.com) ). ▲▲

## EXPEDITION NOTES

**R**ecycle Those Ropes – Sterling Rope is launching a rope recycling program in partnership with Rock/Creek Outfitters, ClimbingGear.com, and the Triple Crown Bouldering Series. Starting in October and running through the end of the year, Sterling will be collecting and recycling used ropes of any brand and rewarding those who participate with a discount on a brand new rope. Sterling feels that in cooperation with climbers, they can make a strong impact in the amount of old ropes that get needlessly tossed into landfills each year. After collecting the retired ropes, Sterling will consolidate them into containers and send them to their recycling partner who re-pelletizes the nylon. From there the nylon is made into products such as carpet fuzz, coat hangers, and all types of everyday household items. (For more information: Brooke Scott, 423 266 8200 ext. 1111, [brooke@rockcreek.com](mailto:brooke@rockcreek.com)).

### Quote of the Month

*“Risk takers aren't crazy at all. They don't want to die. They want to live for another exciting day, another interesting day.”*

– Frank Farley, a psychologist at Temple University who has studied risk takers. The former president of the American Psychological Association was quoted in a *New York Times* story (Sept. 16) titled, “When the Limits Push Back.”

**Make Way** – Arctic ice has shrunk to the lowest level on record, new satellite images show, raising the possibility that the Northwest Passage that eluded famous explorers will become an open shipping lane.

The European Space Agency said nearly 200 satellite photos this month taken together showed an ice-free passage along northern Canada, Alaska and Greenland, and ice retreating to its lowest level since such images were first taken in 1978.

The waters are exposing unexplored resources, and vessels could trim thousands of miles from Europe to Asia by bypassing the Panama Canal. The seasonal ebb and flow of ice levels has already opened up a slim summer window for ships.

**Not Found Him Yeti** – A photograph purportedly of a Yeti footprint taken by Eric Shipton during a 1951 expedition in the Himalayas was recently auctioned by Christie's for £3,500 (approximately \$7,144). The photos were sent by Tom Bourdillon to a friend, Michael Davies. In an accompanying letter Bourdillon indicated that the prints had been found on a pass at around 19,000 feet. “... I am quite clear that it is no animal known to live in the Himalaya, & that it is big...” he wrote.

Debate of the existence of the Yeti has raged since a member of The Royal Geographical Society, N.A. Tombazi, claimed to have seen the creature on a 1925 expedition. Subsequent expeditions have yielded no conclusive proof of the Yeti's existence. ▲▲

## EXPEDITION FOCUS

### Is Hard Training Dangerous for Young Climbers?

**A** review of the scientific literature on young climbers was recently published by Audry Morrison and Volker Schöffl in the *British Journal of Sports Science*, according to a story posted to the American Alpine Journal Web site by Dougald MacDonald ([www.americanalpineclub.org](http://www.americanalpineclub.org)).

Morrison and Schöffl define young climbers as those between ages 7 and 17. They looked at 50 climbing studies and large-scale physiological studies of the development of youngsters, and although the authors point out that there is a “paucity” of research on young climbers, their review allowed them to draw some conclusions:

- Climbers under 16 should not do intensive finger strength training.

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- A young person's final growth spurt (usually around age 14 or 15) is associated with increased risk of injury. Growth charts (height and shoe size) may help in identifying spurts.
- A force producing a torn ligament in an adult is likely to produce more damage in a growing youngster.
- Up to around age 12, children have a limited capacity to benefit from intensive strength training, but possess an accelerated capability for motor development. This suggests training at this age should focus on volume and diversity of climbing routes to improve technique and movement skills, rather than pure strength.
- Wearing excessively tight climbing shoes is not recommended in growing feet to help prevent foot injuries and deformities.
- Climbers should be educated in the importance of appropriate diet and timing of meals for health and performance.
- Knowledgeable and qualified personnel should monitor young climbers' training. When training intensity is increased, it should employ safe and effective exercises for a given gender and biological age, independent of any competition calendar.

The International Federation of Sport Climbing implicitly incorporates some of these guidelines in its rules, which prohibit international competition at the adult level for climbers under 16. But as the popularity of competition climbing grows – and as more 14- and 15-year-olds perform at an adult level – the pressure on talented young climbers to train harder is likely to increase, according to the AAC which is selling the abstract titled “Review of the Physiological Responses to Rock Climbing in Young Climbers” for \$12. (This article is based in part on reports at [www.ukclimbing.com](http://www.ukclimbing.com) and [www.thebmc.co.uk](http://www.thebmc.co.uk)). ▲

## CLIMBING FOR DOLLARS

### Climbing Greats Advise Climb to Conquer Cancer Expedition

Fred Hutchinson Cancer Research Center in Seattle announced the launch of the inaugural Climb to Conquer Cancer expedition to an unclimbed Alaskan mountain in the name of cancer research. The specific location of the mountain, chosen by the expedition's Mountaineering Advisory Committee – a collection of

climbing royalty if there ever was one – will be announced this winter. The climb is scheduled for June 2008.

The Hutchinson Center has carefully selected a team of four professional mountaineers who will use all their knowledge and skills to achieve this goal. The expedition team – consisting of Matt Farmer, Dawn Glanc, Kevin Mahoney and Bayard Russell Jr. – is a group of talented and goal-oriented mountaineers said to reflect the bold, innovative nature of the researchers at the Hutchinson Center.

Said Lee Hartwell, Ph.D., president and director of the Hutchinson Center, “The scaling of an unclimbed mountain is a good metaphor for cancer research – the challenges are unknown until you are in the middle of it and no one wants to turn back. Through the efforts of these four mountaineers, we hope to build awareness for the critical need to support cancer research.”

A group of renowned mountaineers, expedition leaders and adventurers will advise the expedition. They are: Phil and Susan Ershler, the first couple to climb the world's “Seven Summits,” the highest peaks on each of the seven continents; John Harlin, a noted climber and editor of *American Alpine Journal*; Eric Simonson, leader of the historic Mount Everest expedition that found the body of George Leigh Mallory; John Roskelley, a public servant, conservationist, author and revered American Himalayan climber; and Jim Wickwire, a climbing legend and Alaska mountaineering expert who was the first American to climb K2, the second-highest mountain on Earth. (For more information: [www.fhcr.org/theclimbtoconquercancer](http://www.fhcr.org/theclimbtoconquercancer)). ▲



## MEDIA MATTERS

**Fossett Search Leads to New Discoveries** – If it's possible that some good could come out of the presumed death of missing adventurer Steve Fossett, 63, it's this:

While the small air force combing the wilderness has yet to find signs of Fossett, searchers have spotted a half-dozen uncharted crash sites that, once they're investigated, might bring some solace to families of fliers who disappeared decades ago. According to the *Reno Gazette-Journal*, about 15 to 20 private planes have vanished in the area since 1950.

Associated Press reporter Brendan Riley writes that friends of Fossett also have launched a Web site where Web surfers worldwide can get involved by downloading Google Earth satellite photos of the search area and report anything they see. Tips – most of them false alarms – have poured in from far and wide. Amazon is also involved – they are rewarding

computer users who search aerial photographs posted to Amazon Mechanical Turk (www.mturk.com).

The AP's Riley reports that parallels are being drawn between Fossett's disappearance and the mystery of Amelia Earhart's disappearance over the Pacific Ocean 70 years ago.

Ric Gillespie, who led efforts this summer to find Earhart, who vanished in July 1937 during an around-the-world flight attempt, said that as the search for Fossett continues the parallels to the hunt for Earhart and her navigator, Fred Noonan, will increase.

"We like to think that anything is findable with enough resources. But it could turn into another Amelia Earhart situation," Gillespie said in a telephone interview with the AP. "If they don't find something, the mystery element will grow and grow."

"Steve Fossett already is famous enough. But if it turns into a mysterious flight into oblivion, he will be more famous than he already is," added Gillespie, head of The International Group for Historic Aircraft Recovery. "A legend always is more memorable than a personality."

Fossett's small plane apparently crashed in northern Nevada as he was scouting out locations for his next adventure – an attempt at the land-speed record.

As the search continues over a 20,000-square-mile area, the odds of finding Fossett alive diminish – despite his known survival skills. He had previously survived a nearly 30,000-foot plunge in a crippled balloon, a dangerous swim through the frigid English Channel, and hours stranded in shark-infested seas, writes the AP's Riley.

The search for Fossett continues at press time with new clues pointing to the possibility he went down near Death Valley National Park, 100 miles southeast of where he took off on Sept. 3.

**Sight for Sore Eyes** – The eye condition that blinded climber Beck Weathers on Mt. Everest during the fateful 1996 climbing season was an early form of vision correction surgery called RK, or radial keratotomy. His high altitude blindness was described in the 1998 book, *Into Thin Air*. Thanks to medical advancements, NASA is loosening its vision standards, allowing more men and women to fly into space, according to a story by Rhonda L. Rundle in the *Wall Street Journal* (Sept. 21). For the first time starting with the 2009 candidate class, NASA will consider applicants who have undergone two new forms

of correction surgery: laser-assisted in situ keratomileusis, known as Lasik; and photorefractive keratectomy, or PRK.

"The NASA endorsement of Lasik and PRK is a big thing," says Smith L. Johnston, a NASA physician who oversees astronauts' medical standards. Dr. Johnston tells the *Journal* that the reversal will open the door to many "sharp people" who in the past would have been ruled out.

**Nice Try** – Unearthly blue lights played across the ocean floor 2.5 miles (4 km) below the North Pole as the heroic Russian explorers descended in mini-submarines to plant a meter-high flag.

That's what the Russian state television company, Rossiya, wanted us to believe. The truth was rather different. In an apparent attempt to "sex up" a news program, the TV station has been caught passing off footage from the 1997 Hollywood blockbuster *Titanic* as a real-life report on the Kremlin's recent attempt to stake its claim to the riches of the Arctic Ocean. Rossiya's images were distributed around the world, appearing on television news, Web sites and as "screen grabs" in newspapers. It took an alert teenager in Finland with a *Titanic* DVD to spot the sham. WALTERI Seretin, 13, recognized the images in the national daily, *Ilta-Sanomat*.

"I was looking at the photo of the Russian sub expedition and I noticed immediately that there was something familiar about the picture," he told the paper. "I checked it with my DVD and there it was, right there in the beginning of the movie; exactly the same image of the submersibles approaching the ship."

James Cameron's film about the 1912 disaster opens with a scene of mini-subbs diving to inspect the wreck of the *Titanic*. In the Russian report, expedition images from the movie were inserted into real footage and bore an on-screen caption reading "northern Arctic Ocean."

Rossiia is one of two state-controlled channels that have been turned into propaganda tools under President Vladimir Putin. The TV fiasco adds fresh controversy to the expedition, which caused resentment among northern hemisphere nations seeking their share of the Arctic's energy riches.

**Actor Stages Space Disasters** – As improbable as it sounds, the story of the Columbia shuttle disaster of 2003 and the stranding of a Russian cosmonaut on International Space Station Expedition 6, has been turned into a theater performance in San Francisco which runs through early October.

With *Expedition 6*, Hollywood actor Bill Pullman attempts to bring the incidents to the foreground again. Created and

directed by Pullman and presented in association with the Chabot Space and Science Center, the show made its world premiere late last month at the Magic Theatre. Billed as a “docu-drama,” Pullman shaped his script from public record and various media sources, and an ensemble cast of eight performs it on a nearly empty stage with minimal props. In addition to astronauts Kenneth Bowersox and Donald Pettit, and cosmonaut Nikolai Budarin, the characters portrayed include science experts, NASA psychologists, reporters, TV anchors, the astronauts’ nervous wives and a clownish California millionaire who bought a trip into space.

There’s plenty of motion in the production – hanging overhead is a web of trapezes, which the actors use with balletic skill in solo, duo and group configurations. Watching them swing, turn, glide and simply float above the stage, it’s easy to imagine the weightlessness of space travel, say reviewers.

The show makes a few strong points about NASA scientists who hadn’t done their homework, and the media that turned away from the event after it became clear it wasn’t disastrous enough to make headlines.

**Wozer’s Everest Woes** – Self-professed outdoor comic Jeff Wozer, 46, of Evergreen, Colo., has produced an amusing short film of his efforts to prepare for an Everest climb. The Everest clip is a direct extension of his stand-up comedy act which has a heavy outdoor bent and includes bits on skiing, backpacking, camping, and general outdoor mayhem.

The idea for the clip itself emanated from a spoof climbing journal he began writing, detailing the perceived adventures of a rube (Wozer) who decides to climb Everest by establishing Base Camp in his apartment in Denver.

Initially it was only intended as Web site filler. But one night, on a lark, while performing at the Comedy Works in downtown Denver, he read an excerpt from the journal on stage and it generated strong audience response. Buoyed by the laughter (a prerequisite for any sustaining joke), he expanded the bit into a PowerPoint presentation for use at corporate parties. And the rest is comedic history.

The clip, just under three minutes, details three days of the climb. It can be seen at [www.jeffwozer.com](http://www.jeffwozer.com).

**Have Camera Will Travel** – What is it about expeditions that make people beg to come along? Is it eating worms because your food supply is running low? Perhaps it’s the thrill of using a pee bottle for three days during a fierce storm raging outside your tent? Hard to say. But it does take a special type of person.

*EN* recently received an e-mail from one such potential expedition team member, Haden Baker, 50, from Moore, S.C. He writes, “I know this sounds like fiction but every word is true. I’ve shot presidents and kings, chased criminals and prayed with Cardinals. I’ve been shot at, frozen, bit and baked; spit on, hit, trampled and had to run from wild politicians. I feel that this qualifies me for anything that nature can throw at me. So I’ve decided to change direction. I want to shoot nature, float rivers, climb mountains, record history for the future...or something like that...possibly with you on your next expedition around the world.”

Baker continues, “For 35 years I have produced video for television, private industry and for national news agencies. My name is Haden Baker and I’m a freelance writer/producer/director/shooter for hire and I will consider any opportunity.” (For more information: [hbakerassociates@charter.net](mailto:hbakerassociates@charter.net), 864 266 1872). ▲

## EXPEDITION MARKETING

### Training for Everest

Panasonic has literally taken over one of the underground walkways at Grand Central Terminal in New York with huge images of Mount Everest. It’s all part of a campaign for their Toughbook laptop – “The Rugged Individual.” The headline reads enigmatically: “Legally, we cannot say it can climb Mount Everest.” The tagline is somewhat more understandable: “Our fully-rugged laptops. With magnesium alloy cases for every extreme imaginable.” ([www.panasonic.com/toughbook](http://www.panasonic.com/toughbook)).

### Bak-a-Yak

*The Hippie Guide to Climbing the Corporate Ladder & Other Mountains*, the new book by JanSport founder Skip Yowell (Naked Ink, 2007), includes a reference to one of our all-time favorite expedition fundraising schemes. The book outlines how Yowell took dealers on climbs of Mount Rainier, joined an Everest expedition, and got involved in goofy promotions like the “Bak-a-Yak” fundraiser for a Himalayan excursion. For the right price, he would hang your corporate banner on a fury beast and send you a photo of it.

But it was not all smooth climbing for the Skipster. There was one colossal business blunder: after nearly freezing to death while testing a prototype tent, he and his partners came up with a new concept and design – the dome tent – that became the standard across the industry. In their enthusiasm, they neglected to apply for a patent. Yowell estimates that the oversight has cost him \$200 million. ▲

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## ON THE HORIZON

**American Alpine Club/New York Annual Dinner** – The 28th Annual Dinner of the New York Section of the American Alpine Club is being held on Oct. 27 in New York City. Over the years, this black tie affair has hosted most of the world's great mountaineers, from Sir Edmund Hillary and Sir Christian Bonington, to Americans Brad and Barbara Washburn and Dr. Charles Houston, among others. This year's special guest speaker, Dr. Geoff Tabin, has distinguished himself, not only by his climbing exploits which included being on the 1983 American team that conquered Everest by its most difficult and dangerous East Face, but his humanitarian contributions to the people of the Himalaya. Tabin, an ophthalmologist, is the co-founder of the Himalayan Cataract Project which provides state of the art eye care to the people of Nepal, a region beset by a high rate of cataract-caused blindness.

The HCP model, which is self-sustaining operationally, is being exported to other parts of the Third World including Ethiopia and Ghana. The Dinner is being run as a benefit for the Himalayan Cataract Project. (For more information: philiperard@nysalpineclub.org).

**Explore 2007 Returns to the RGS** – The Royal Geographical Society with IBG in London will be holding its annual Explore conference from November 23-25 to showcase the very best in expertise and support for those planning an expedition, whether it be their first or their fiftieth; wherever it may be and regardless of the goal of their travels.

Participants will have unrestricted access to over 100 explorers and travelers representing the full spectrum of the expedition community. Specialists in planning overseas expeditions using everything from mountain bikes to Land Rovers, from maps to Google Earth will also be on hand to offer advice. Jason Lewis and Steve Smith of Expedition 360, who have just returned from 13 years circumnavigating the world by human power alone, will open Explore on Nov. 23 with a lecture about their experiences and outlining the environmental impact of expeditions. (For more information: [www.rgs.org/explore](http://www.rgs.org/explore)). ▲▲

## EXPEDITION CLASSIFIEDS

**Costa Del Mar Sunglasses** – The leader in high performance polarized sunglasses is interested in sponsoring expeditions. Help us “See what’s out there™.” See Costa Del Mar’s online video network dedicated to water sports and angling adventures ([www.costachannelc.com](http://www.costachannelc.com)). Submit film footage of “you-had-to-see-it-to-believe-it” extreme water sports and fishing expeditions. Contact Laurie Driggs at [ldriggs@costadelmar.com](mailto:ldriggs@costadelmar.com) for information. Learn more about our commitment to exploration and adventure travel at: <http://www.costadelmar.com/adventures/>

**Himalaya Climbs and Treks** – Five percent discount for Explorers Club members. Climbs and Treks with Dan Mazur and SummitClimb.com - Africa, Himalaya, Aconcagua, Everest Basecamp Treks, Kilimanjaro and Mt. Kenya Treks and Climbs. Ascents and walks around Tibet, China, Nepal and around the world with our experienced friendly team. Established for 18 years. Novices, and experts are welcome. 360 570 0715, [info@SummitClimb.com](mailto:info@SummitClimb.com), [www.summitclimb.com](http://www.summitclimb.com).

**Four Legs Good, Two Legs Bad** – LEKI, the world's largest ski, trekking and Nordic Walking pole company, Buffalo, N.Y., introduces three new P2 Grip/Strap Trekking Poles for 2007. Lengthen and shorten the pole strap with the one touch locking tab on top. Grips are vented to reduce weight. See more at [LEKI.com](http://LEKI.com).

**CW-X Insulated Tights for Athletes** – New CW-X Insulator Stabilyx Tights provide optimum Targeted Support to both the lower back/core area and the knee joint and surrounding muscles for greater overall stability and power. The new tights feature an integrated stretch wind panel, which will cover the lower abs, crotch and quad areas, perfect for winter running, downhill and cross country skiing, and snowboarding. Insulator Stabilyx Autosensor nanotechnology fabric helps maintain core body temperatures in cold conditions, wicking excess moisture and providing insulated warmth. Available in mens and womens sizes; \$115. [www.cw-x.com](http://www.cw-x.com). ▲▲

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