

EXPEDITION NEWS

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EXPEDITION NEWS, now in its 18th year, is the monthly review of significant expeditions, research projects and newsworthy adventures. It is distributed online to media representatives, corporate sponsors, educators, research librarians, explorers, environmentalists, and outdoor enthusiasts. This forum on exploration covers projects that stimulate, motivate and educate.

SOLO AND UNSUPPORTED TO THE NORTH POLE AND BACK

British ultrarunner Tim Williamson next year plans to become the first person to attempt to walk solo and unsupported to and from the North Pole. The 25-year-old Williamson, a virtual unknown on the global adventure scene, will be setting off on foot and without skis from Resolute Bay, on January 13, 2013, returning there 100 to 120 days later after covering approximately 2,200 miles during which time he'll be manhauling a 265 lbs./120 kilo pulk (sled). If successful it will reportedly become the longest, solo and unsupported expedition in the world.

Rob Swan OBE, the first person to walk to the North and South Poles said, "What Tim is undertaking is truly one of the last great Polar expeditions. I have watched his careful preparation . . . he can make it. Careful preparation helps luck, and on the Arctic Ocean you need some luck."

Williamson believes, "The majority fail because they aren't built for walking long distances. This is the thing I'm specially built for. The North Pole holds a great amount of wonder to me, and as an ultrarunner, it is the ultimate challenge."

This extreme test of physical and mental robustness will battle perpetual darkness, loneliness and constant fatigue. Williamson will also be racing against time, trying to make his journey and beat the melting ice. The expedition will be coordinated through www.discoveralifelessordinary.com, an adventure magazine site of the Chillisauce.co.uk group.

Williamson's organizers tell *EN* that depending on how many days it takes him to make it there and back and the distance he covers in that time will determine the extent of the records he will break.

Says polar explorer Will Steger of Ely, Minn., “I always respect bold plans and attempts. It will be an interesting trip to follow. The main thing is to be safe.”

Steger’s neighbor and fellow polar explorer Paul Schurke adds in an e-mail to *EN*, “Pulling off this feat would blow the doors off anything the rest of us have done. Going without skis makes sense to me given the surface conditions much of the way. But it will put him a great risk crossing sections of thin ice, especially since it’s tough to ‘read’ the ice in the limited light conditions of a mid-January start,” Schurke said.

(For more information: www.thenorthpoleexpedition.com, www.timwilliamson.org)

EXPEDITION NOTES

Skydive From Space

At presstime, Austrian athlete Felix Baumgartner, 43, was preparing to jump from the edge of space. The Red Bull Stratos space capsule has passed high-altitude simulation testing after it was damaged in July's final practice jump, and a launch date has been set for Oct. 8 in Roswell, N.M.

Jumping from an altitude of 120,000 feet/36,576 m he will attempt to become the first person to break the sound barrier in freefall and set four other world records in the process.

"I feel like a tiger in a cage waiting to get out," said Baumgartner, one of the world's most celebrated B.A.S.E. jumpers and extreme athletes, who in 2003 became the first person to make a freefall flight across the English Channel with the aid of a carbon wing. He will be flying as fast as a speeding bullet during his supersonic journey to Earth.

The climb to altitude will require about 2 hours 15 minutes with Baumgartner expected to go supersonic after about 30 seconds of free fall. His free fall should last about five minutes 30 seconds before he opens his main parachute about 5,000 feet above the desert.

The previous record-holder is Col. Joseph Kittinger from Altamonte Springs, Fla., who e-mailed *EN*, “I have worked for over four years on this project and have been honored to be a part of this historic occasion. Felix is ready, the team is ready, the capsule is ready – all we need is good weather (and some Divine cooperation) to successfully conclude Project Stratos.” Col. Kittinger set the skydive record at 102,800 feet in 1960.

A central goal of the Red Bull Stratos project is to collect valuable data for science that could ultimately help improve the safety of space travel and enable high-altitude escapes from spacecraft. (For more information: www.redbullstratos.com)

QUOTE OF THE MONTH

*Fly me to the moon
Let me play among the stars*

*Let me see what spring is like
On a-Jupiter and Mars
In other words, hold my hand
In other words, darling, kiss me*

– Lyrics to *Fly Me to the Moon*, sung by Diana Krall at the funeral of astronaut Neil Armstrong, Sept. 13, at the Washington National Cathedral. The next day, Armstrong's remains were carried by the *USS Philippine Sea* (CG 58) from Mayport, Fla., to burial at sea.

EXPEDITION FOCUS

Fishermen Join Scientists to Tag Sharks Off Cape Cod

It was an historic moment in shark research when marine scientists and a crew of seven fishermen became the first to attach real-time satellite tags to two great white sharks in the North Atlantic.

The tagging on Sept. 13 in federal waters 3.2 miles off the coast of Cape Cod, involved chumming, hooking, and gently hand-reeling a 15-ft., 2,300 lbs. great white. The shark is led onto a wooden platform with metal sides suspended off the 126-ft. *M.V. OCEARCH* (pronounced "oh-search"). When the research platform is lifted hydraulically, the shark is high, but not necessarily dry.

Scientists, lead by Dr. Greg Skomal of the Massachusetts Division of Marine Fisheries, and Dr. Nick Whitney of MOTE Marine Laboratory, then have 15 minutes to take blood and tissue samples, and scrape off parasites for later study, while the shark's mouth is irrigated with fresh seawater, and its head is covered with a wet towel to calm it down.

The safe tagging of "Genie," named for Eugenie "The Shark Lady" Clark, was the latest success in this five-year effort, considered the world's largest shark research project, according to its charismatic leader, Chris Fisher, from Park City, Utah.

Nicknamed "Fisch" by his friends, the 43-year-old adventurer says, "Significant information is lacking with regard to the medium and long-range movement of white sharks. Gaining this previously unattainable information about these apex predators enables more effective shark and ocean conservation – and protection of human life."

He continues, "Shark populations worldwide are under threat. Sharks are being slaughtered at an unsustainable rate, many for a bowl of soup."

Adds Skomal, "We've never had this kind of access to great whites before."

There's a reason no one else in the world is studying sharks in this manner.

The mere process of attracting a shark off Cape Cod consumes gallons of chum, and many days hunting, followed by 15-minutes of sheer terror as the team safely attaches a SPOT satellite transmitter, acoustic transmitter, and accelerometer to the dorsal fin.

A VideoRay ROV (remotely operated vehicle) about the size of a footstool connected to a 380-ft. cable, is placed in the water as the shark is about to be released, to ensure that it hasn't been harmed in the tagging process.

Once released, the general public, including schoolchildren nationwide, track the shark in real time using a Global Shark Tracker on the nonprofit research organization's website, www.OCEARCH.org, along with 35 other sharks the *OCEARCH* ship has tagged.

During *EN's* visit in mid-September, the team had just received national exposure on *CBS This Morning* and the *Associated Press*. The group was elated Sept. 17, the night before the expedition went on hiatus, when it safely captured and tagged a second great white off Cape Cod, another female, this one named Mary Lee, in honor of Fischer's mother.

Lying there on the platform, with Brett McBride, the ship's captain standing barefoot just a few feet away (see image at expeditionnews.blogspot.com), the shark looked almost like a cartoon caricature, as if drawn by a Disney cartoonist. Looks, of course, are deceiving as this ominous 16-ft., 3,500 lbs. creature was seemingly all razor-sharp teeth and powerful tail, a full 10 feet in circumference.

Within 15-minutes Mary Lee was fitted with a SPOT satellite transmitter, acoustic transmitter, and accelerometer. A few days later she was located pinging away, well beyond the coast of Cape Cod.

For this expedition, and the previous 14 shark research trips, the team depends upon sponsorship from companies such as CAT, COSTA, and Yamaha to fund the \$2 million it takes to tag sharks over a period of 80 days.

The Explorers Club Flag 95 flies proudly on the forward mast of the former crabbing vessel, although after six expeditions it was looking a bit worse for wear. Fischer, a member of the Club along with Skomal, jokes, "The flag represents tenacity, courage and endurance. If it comes back looking too pretty, people might think we probably weren't exploring hard enough."

(For more information: www.ocearch.org)

MEDIA MATTERS

Shack Comes to a Theater Near You

Robert Chartoff and Lynn Hendee of Chartoff Productions, Santa Monica, Calif., are heating up *Ice*, producing an action-adventure feature film based on the true story of Ernest Shackleton's Endurance expedition to the Antarctic.

Ice has been developed with Lori Nelson, who wrote the script and is also producing. According to *Variety* (Sept. 27), the Project is out to directors with the goal of a 2015 release to coincide with the 100th anniversary of Shackleton's Imperial Trans-Antarctic Expedition, an attempt to become the first land crossing of the continent.

"I could not have found a better home for a passion project that has consumed me for more than 25 years, when I first sailed a 40-foot ketch to the Antarctic and encountered Shackleton's remarkable story," Nelson tells *Variety*.

Producers are raising the film's financing through independent equity sources.

The *Ice* feature film is one component of The Ice Project, a multi-platform approach to the Shackleton anniversary, which will include an expedition to locate the *Endurance* wreck site. Nelson is teaming with David Gallo, director of special projects at the Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution, to assemble a team of deep sea exploration and logistics experts to determine the best technologies and techniques to locate and document *Endurance*'s final resting place on the Antarctic sea floor.

Space Tourism Appeals to Wealthy Travelers Bored With Earth

There are a variety of practical reasons for the sudden surge in space tourism activity, feature writer Jesse McKinley explains in the Sept. 7 *New York Times*. "They include cheaper, better technology and composite materials, along with a burst of previously pent-up entrepreneurship let loose by NASA's new need for private companies to replace shuttle flights.

"For its part, NASA says it is 'counting on the innovative commercial space industry' for rides to the space station and other low-orbit destinations. But the desire for such trips may also lie in the fact that people are simply running out of places to go," writes McKinley.

Adds Eugene Linden, a science and environmental writer and the author of *The Ragged Edge of the World*, about the planet's endangered wild lands, "Every square inch of Earth, pretty much, has been explored at this point by somebody.

"Next, we'll be hearing about roller-skating across the East Antarctic ice sheet or something like that in order to have some sense of accomplishment."

Space Travel is a Laughing Matter

Billionaire explorer Richard Branson is eventually planning to take a submarine to the deepest spot in the Atlantic called the Puerto Rico Trench, according to an interview with

Mike Vilensky of the *Wall Street Journal* (Sept 20). If he succeeds, the trip will be the fourth submarine to go below 20,000 feet in a friendly competition with James Cameron.

When asked if space exploration is more vacation than scientific discovery, Branson said, “Both. If you enable people to want to go into space, that will help fund deep-space exploration, scientific research, cheaper satellites, asteroid mining and colonies on Mars. So (it’s) a mixture of the two.”

When asked what would make someone a good companion for a trip to space, Branson replied, “If you’re going to be in a very small space, you want to go with somebody with a good sense of humor.”

Don’t Hold Your Breath

Roger Launius, a former NASA historian who is curator of the Smithsonian Air and Space Museum in Washington, D.C., is pessimistic about Mars travel. “We wanted to give people a glimpse of the future in the (Smithsonian) exhibit. I doubt that we are going to see (Mars) any other way for the foreseeable future,” he tells Dan Vergano of *USA Today* (Sept. 14).

Adds Arizona State University historian Stephen Pyne, “This is just not realistic, even spread out over many years, to think we will spend this kind of money.”

Pyne adds that in an age of robotic rovers such as Curiosity, “we don’t need people to plant the flag anymore to be explorers.”

Goop in a Jar

Chris Sharma, 31, gets the beauty treatment from the *New York Times T Magazine* on Sept. 5. The California native admits to not wearing sunscreen until a few years ago. He recommends Aveeno Baby Natural Protection Mineralblock which, at a mere \$8, is a bargain compared to the other goop in the story ranging up to \$175 for Brad Ultra Peel which “refines mature skin on a cellular level.” Coming to local theaters this fall: *The Dura Dura*, a short film that tracks Sharma and the Czech climber Adam Ondra as they attempt the most difficult climbs in the world. (For more information: www.reelrocktour.com).

Filming Begins on International Rivers Documentary

Canadian river advocate Mark Angelo from Burnaby, B.C., is filming a major international river documentary, traveling along a number of the world’s waterways profiling an assortment of river issues and conservation challenges. Working title is *The Last Paddle* with a release date sometime in 2014. The film will center on river conservation issues and challenges around the world and will include an array of examples of rivers that have been lost, saved or restored.

Scenes will include the Mana Pools section of the Zambezi, the Yamuna and Ganges Rivers in India, and the upper reaches of the Pearl River system in China, where the Li River is one of the most beautiful stretches of river on Earth.

Says Angelo, 61, “Our hope is that the film will be an agent for change and that the film will generate significant discussion about what's next in terms of river and water stewardship.”

Funding is being provided by Angelo, the Image Media Farm Production House, producer Roger Williams, Canadian environmental philanthropist Dr. Rudy North, the BCIT Rivers Institute, Mountain Equipment Co-op and Blue Planet Links.

(For more information: markangelo@shaw.ca,
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mark_Angelo)

CLIMBING FOR DOLLARS

Explorers Club Offers Student Grants

The Explorers Club is offering grants to students conducting individual scientific or exploration research projects through their respective schools. The Youth Activity Fund for high school students and college undergraduates fosters a new generation of explorers dedicated to the advancement of scientific knowledge of the world.

The Exploration Fund, for graduate, post-graduate, doctorate and early career post-doctoral students, provides grants in support of exploration and field research for those who are just beginning their research careers.

Awards typically range from \$500 to \$2,500 in each fund. A few awards may be granted up to a \$5,000 award level. The deadline for receiving 2013 applications is November 1, 2012, and awards will be issued in April 2013.

(For more information:
http://www.explorers.org/index.php/expeditions/funding/expedition_grants,
explorationfund2013@explorers.org, youthactivityfund2013@explorers.org)

EXPEDITION INK

Dark Waters – The Expedition

By Jason Lewis (BillyFish Books 2012)

Reviewed by Robert F. Wells

Editor's note: We've had a warm spot in our heart for Jason Lewis ever since the early days of *EN*. In our eighth issue, dated May 1995, we wrote about Lewis' "Pedal for the Planet" project with his teammate and fellow Brit Steve Smith – an attempt at the first circumnavigation using only human power. We're pleased to learn he has returned safely from his epic adventure and that his book captures some of the, er, pure insanity of the effort. Robert Wells' review follows below.

Tired of all those high profile sponsored expeditions? where complex scientific calculations meet extraordinary feats? Numbed by narratives of ventures precisely planned – with redundancy plots punctuating every possible occurrence? Well, here's a book for you.

In 1992, the author and another bloke burped their way through way too much beer only to encounter a revelation: No one had ever circumnavigated the globe using only human power. One thing lead to another and a few short years later, these two Brits launched a homemade pedalboat bound for the coast of France... biked across Europe to position themselves at a port in Portugal... and shoved off for America.

On the way to Portugal, training included late alcohol-infested evenings not to mention encounters with various ladies. The author picked up the clap along the way thanks to a waitress, which no doubt crimped any sponsorship potential. No, I'm wrong. *Fyfe's Bananas* came forward with a sponsorship proposal: Turn the boat into a flaming yellow banana and call the expeditioners *The Banana Boys* and cash would come! (No thanks.)

The pedalboat? A mutant tube able to crank out a rip-snorting three knots/hour. What these guys were thinking, as they schemed to pedal away from the coast of Portugal, could be summed up quickly: Not much. Their knowledge of navigation and seamanship was pleasantly horrifying. And there were questions: "Why wasn't the boat equipped with racks to store beer?" Sea anchors? Well, a couple of old tires would probably do... Now, off to Miami.

The Atlantic crossing turned out to be a 5,641-mile slog – taking 111 days. "Creeping Grey Funk" (the author's term for how one feels during endless sleep-deprived days) came amid near drownings... encounters with whales... consumption of over 8,000 calories of food daily... rogue waves and capsizing... maggoty salt sores... and pirates.

At last, Miami! And as lack of planning would have it, no media covered the landfall. So back into the boat for a 25-mile push to Ft. Lauderdale where the trek across America began. Steve hops on a bike with a girlfriend and heads for San Francisco – where the author and his mate had agreed to meet again in a few months. The author dons roller blades and a smile. Here's where the expedition gets a bit interesting. First, the Old South does not have many Englishmen with long hair and earrings traversing the low country on roller blades. Soon, Lewis encounters a dangerous combination of mosquitoes, Baptists and rednecks.

Now at this point, I have to say this book is only the first of a trilogy. In this volume, the author makes it into Colorado – which means getting to the West Coast and traversing the Pacific are yet to come. And I forgot to mention, in Colorado we leave Lewis in a ditch with two broken legs thanks to an errant automobile. Part Two? *The Seed Buried Deep*. We still need to learn about blood poisoning in the middle of the Pacific... crocodile attacks off Australia... altitude sickness in the Himalayas... arrests in Egypt... and, I am

sure, some other hanky-panky. Again, this is not your plain-brown-wrapper expedition account. So, if you're tired of more serious stuff, you'll get a giggle or two here.

Robert Wells, a member of The Explorers Club since 1991, is a resident of South Londonderry, Vt., and a retired executive of the Young & Rubicam ad agency. Wells is the director of a steel band (see www.blueflamessteelband.com) and in 1989, at the age of 45, traveled south by road bike from Canada to Long Island Sound in a single 350-mile, 19-hr., 28-min. push.

WEB WATCH

Are We There Yet?

Google's Street View image mapping service is going underwater, partnering with the Catlin Seaview Survey – a scientific expedition to study the world's reefs. Instead of cars driving around, scuba divers scan the water using a specially designed underwater camera. Google is starting by adding street view photos of six coral reefs around the world.

The scientists on site are using a tablet-operated underwater camera that takes 360-degree, geo-located panoramic video. The specially-designed SVII camera will record up to 50,000 images which, when stitched together, will allow viewers to choose a location along the Great Barrier Reef and experience a viewer-controlled virtual dive. (For more information: <http://www.youtube.com/catlinseaviewsurvey>).

EXPEDITION MAILBAG

Hope for Malaria Vaccine

“I read your story about a new malaria drug with interest as that remains a major health problem (see *EN*, September 2012). While we have had several drugs over the years that are extremely effective against malaria, the organism is incredibly adaptive and develops resistance over a variable period of time.

“The new drug artemisinin demonstrates excellent efficacy against malaria but is highly restricted in its use for fear of development of resistance which would leave no back-up drug for resistant cases.

“I strongly suspect this will be the case with this new drug from South Africa. Meanwhile, prevention is the other arm of the attack on malaria and there have been significant reductions in the disease where an emphasis is placed on mosquito nets and educating the public about the hazards of standing water which can breed mosquitoes.

“Additionally, there has been significant progress for a vaccine for malaria and there are promising candidates undergoing clinical testing now. Most infectious disease experts believe a vaccine is the best option, if it really works, combined with netting and breeding water source elimination.

“This will greatly decrease the pool of infected people from which the mosquitoes perpetuate the disease. Treatment however will still require development of new medications and strategies to avoid resistance development.”

Michael J. Manyak, MD, FACS
Professor of Urology, Engineering, Microbiology, Immunology, and Tropical Medicine
The George Washington University
Senior Medical Advisor, Global Rescue, LLC

ON THE HORIZON

Own a Piece of the Rock, Oct. 14, New York

On Oct. 14 in Manhattan, fragments of Mars, the moon and asteroids that have fallen to Earth go up for sale, in what auction house Heritage Auctions is billing as the largest public meteorite auction ever held. More than 125 items are for sale, a number of which have no minimum bid attached. The growing market for meteorites has driven the emergence of a meteorite prospecting industry in northwestern Africa and Oman, but even as people scour the deserts for meteorites, rocks from space remain among the most rare things on Earth.

Mars' rocks present a particular challenge to identify, because humans haven't been able to bring Martian rocks back to Earth, as has happened with moon rocks. However, scientists do know the composition of Mars' atmosphere, and they have matched it to the composition of pockets of gas contained in some meteorites, confirming their Martian origin.

The auction is scheduled to take place on Oct. 14 at the Fletcher-Sinclair Mansion at 2 East 79th Street, New York. The public can view the meteorites on Oct. 11-14.

(See photos of meteorites for sale here: <http://www.livescience.com/23397-space-rocks-photos-meteorites.html>)

American Alpine Club – New York Section Annual Dinner, Nov. 12, New York

Arlene Blum is the keynote speaker at the American Alpine Club – New York section 33rd annual dinner at the Union Club in New York on Nov. 12, 2012. Blum is known for the successful American Women's Expedition to Annapurna in 1978. Until then, only eight climbers had summited the most dangerous of Himalayan peaks, none American. She showed her resourcefulness in helping to finance the expedition, in the face of heavy male skepticism, through the sale of t-shirts reading, *A Woman's Place is on Top.* Also speaking is Mark Richey, a member of the three-person team that summited 24,655-ft. Saser Kangri II in the Indian Karakoram last year. (For more information: 212 763 0379, philiperard@nysalpineclub.org).

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Ripped From the Pages of *EN* – Read the book that was spawned by *Expedition News*. Autographed copies of *You Want to Go Where? – How to Get Someone to Pay for the Trip of Your Dreams* (Skyhorse Publishing) – are available to readers for the discounted price of \$14.99 plus \$2.89 s & h (international orders add \$9.95 s & h). If you have a project that is bigger than yourself – a trip with a purpose – learn how it's possible to generate cash or in-kind (gear) support. Written by *EN* editor Jeff Blumenfeld, it is based upon three decades helping sponsors select the right exploration projects to support. Payable by PayPal to blumassoc@aol.com, or by check to *Expedition News*, 1281 East Main Street – Box 10, Stamford, CT 06902

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