

EXPEDITION NEWS



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EXPEDITION NEWS, now in its 14th 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.

GIANT MOUNTAIN CHALLENGE CLIMBS HIMALAYAN DEATH ZONES

The Giant Mountain Challenge is a quest to climb six of the highest peaks in the world by Will Cross, 41, a mountaineer and motivational speaker from Pittsburgh. All are located in the Himalaya in the so-called death zones above 26,247 feet (8000 m). The purpose of the challenge, which he hopes to complete within three years, is to demonstrate that one can lead an extraordinary life with diabetes, an incurable condition and a global pandemic.

The five-year project incorporates diabetes research and base camp participation for interested patients. Brett Goodpaster, Ph.D. of the University of Pittsburgh will develop and conduct the studies to examine the effects of altitude on the diabetes physiology.

Cross topped out on Lhotse last spring; now the remaining five lay ahead: Shisha Pagma, Cho Oyu, Broad Peak, and Gasherbrum 1 and 2. He leaves in November for a tune-up climb on Ama Dablam, then departs in April for Shisha Pagma. Why not K2? "I chose the six that offered the highest chance of success and the least chance of disaster. K2 is way off my cost benefit scale," he tells *EN*.

His quest is endorsed by Sir Chris Bonnington, Sir Ranulph Fiennes and the Honorable Alexander Shackleton. Corporate sponsors include Animas Corporation, Kobold Watches and Novo Nordisk. Supporting sponsor is Wild Things. (For more information: Will Cross, 412 606 7758, wcross@willcrossmotivates.com, www.willcrossmotivates.com). ▲

SOUTH POLE QUEST ATTEMPTS ENERGY NEUTRAL EXPEDITION

It was bound to happen. Word comes of an energy neutral expedition. A team of two runners and two skiers is planning to run and ski unsupported for 35 days across the traditional 700-mile route from Hercules Inlet to the South Pole. Starting in November, the Impossible2Possible expedition team will use technology and creativity to attempt a near energy neutral expedition with minimal greenhouse gas emissions. The expedition team will consist of famed polar explorer Richard Weber (on skis, expedition leader); ultra-runner of *Running the Sahara*, Ray Zahab (on foot); adventure journalist Kevin Vallely (on skis, videographer); and ultra-runner Will Laughlin (on foot).

Through the work of Dr. Ewan Affleck, an arctic physician and researcher from Yellowknife, NWT, the expedition team will apply cutting-edge renewable energy technologies in combination with simple human ingenuity, according to Zahab. Success will be evaluated by measuring total energy in (at outset of trip) and total energy out (at end of trip), and factoring in the forms of energy used to power the humans and equipment (such as satellite phone, cooking stove, computer, and cameras).

As a closed energy system, Zahab, 39, hopes the expedition will serve as a graphic model of another closed energy system—the earth itself. In the process of attempting an energy neutral, greenhouse gas free expedition, the team will showcase the application of cutting-edge renewable energy technologies such as lightweight solar cells, wind power generators, and friction generators. They admit to one constraint: the need to burn fuel in energy-efficient stoves. Otherwise,

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the team will employ simple creativity by using such available energy sources as body heat, friction, and waste products to produce energy.

As part of a secondary research project, they will subject themselves to pre, during, and post expedition measurements of physiological data. This is part of research by Dr. Brian J. Krabak of the University of Washington on the physical effects of extreme endurance events. He will measure body fat changes, heart rate parameters, caloric output, and blood chemistry changes and analyze his findings for publication. While the data will present its own story, the latter variable (blood chemistry) could, conceivably, yield data relevant to the unique atmospheric properties of Antarctica. In addition, the heart rate measurements will allow them to more accurately measure energy used in the closed energy system of Dr. Affleck's experiment. (For more information: Ray Zahab, 613 868 2888, rzahab@impossible2possible.com, www.impossible2possible.com). ▲

IMAGING ANCIENT GREENHOUSE SEDIMENTS IN ANTARCTICA

An expedition based out of New York's Queens College hopes to seismically image the Greenhouse to Icehouse World transition sediments that lie off East Antarctica. The sediments date back to 45-25 million years ago. Through imaging they expect to determine the geological history of the region and find the optimal site to drill these sediments as part of the ANDRILL Program (www.andrill.org).

Quote of the Month

"... mountaineering has become more dangerous in recent decades as the traditional expeditionary culture of the early- and mid-20th century, which had emphasized mutual responsibility and common endeavor, gave way to an ethos stressing individualism and self-preservation."

— Maurice Isserman, a professor of history at Hamilton College, writing in the Aug. 10 *New York Times*.

ANDRILL is an international program to recover stratigraphic intervals for interpreting Antarctica's climate and glacial history over the past 50 million years. The expedition is an International Polar Year Project titled the Offshore New Harbor Seismic and Gravity Survey. The team will depart from Christchurch, New Zealand, arriving at McMurdo Station on Oct. 10. After the team completes survival training, they will traverse over 43 miles of sea ice to their remote field camp approximately nine miles off the Dry Valleys of East Antarctica. There they will live in unheated tents for about 40 days.

The time interval of study was when the Earth was significantly warmer than today, with a dynamic Antarctic ice sheet advancing and retreating, and vegetation lining its coastline. This makes it a great analogue for what may happen in the near future, especially considering that CO2 levels in the 21st century are expected to be as high as they were millions of years ago. "Indeed, studying these sediments is like looking back to our future," says Professor Stephen Pekar of the School of Earth and Environmental Sciences at Queens College.

The project has a significant educational outreach component, which includes collaboration with nearly a dozen educational organizations. They plan to recruit a schoolteacher from a Harlem public school to accompany the expedition. Team members will conduct live video conferencing to schools around the world, send weather data to thousands of schools, and publish written and video blogs when they are in Antarctica. (For more information contact Prof. Stephen Pekar: 718 997 3305, stephen.pekar@qc.cuny.edu, http://qcpages.qc.cuny.edu/offshore_new_harbor/index.htm). ▲

EXPEDITION UPDATE

Expedition to Holocaust Cave Postponed

The Ukraine trip to the cave that harbored Holocaust survivors during World War II was postponed 24 hours prior to departure, according to Ken Kamler, of New Hyde Park, N.Y., who is a member of the medical team (see *EN*, August 2008). Kamler points to a combination of reasons: "There have been torrential rains in western Ukraine posing a danger of flooding in the cave, there is political uncertainty due to the Russia/Georgia conflict, and there was an unexpected shortfall in funding at the last minute."

Meanwhile, as part of his annual expeditions to the Ukraine, expedition organizer Chris Nicola plans to revisit the cave, called Priest Grotto, in July 2009 in connection with a book that he is writing with fellow Explorers Club

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member Bernie Chowdhury. Apart from continuing their interviews of locals, Nicola and Chowdhury will also conduct a further search of the cave for artifacts (e.g. buttons, china plates, cooking utensils, tools, etc.), establishing an exhibit at the local museum in honor of those who lived in the cave, and documenting the experiences of several relatives of the Priest Grotto survivors who have expressed an interest in participating.

SOLIO Team Confirms Source of Nile

Julian Monroe Fisher FRGS, the expedition leader for The SOLIO 2008 Mount Stanley Expedition (see *EN*, June 2008), announced that the expeditionary team safely and successfully completed their expedition along the remote Ugandan Congolese border following a water source down from the glaciers in the Rwenzori Mountains, the fabled “Mountains of the Moon,” to Central Africa’s Lake Albert, which feeds the River Nile.

Following their trek to the altitude of Mount Stanley, at 16,762 feet/5109 m the third highest peak on the African continent, the SOLIO team followed water flows down from the Rwenzori glaciers, establishing per the Ugandan Wildlife Authority, a new trail route from the Rwenzori mountain range through the Bukurungu Pass to the Lamia River. The team then followed portions of the Lamia and Semliki rivers until they reached Lake Albert. From there they traveled to Murchison Falls where the expedition ended.

The waterfalls were named by explorer Samuel Baker in honor of Sir Roderick Murchison, who was one of the founders of The Royal Geographical Society in 1830. Expedition leader Julian Fisher has concluded that the Rwenzoris are indeed an actual source of the Nile.

Additional geographic research within the Rwenzori National Park in the years to come as well as other scientific expeditions is expected to allow Ugandan Wildlife Authority officials to open new areas of the Rwenzori National Park for visitors to experience and enjoy for generations to come.

Title sponsor was Better Energy Systems, the producer of SOLIO, a solar (hybrid) charger for hand-held electronic devices (www.solio.com). (For more information: www.mountstanleyexpedition.com).

Junk Bonding

Tanned, dirty and hungry, two men on a raft of junk ended a three-month journey from Long Beach, Calif., to Honolulu on Aug. 27. They aimed to raise awareness about debris polluting the Pacific Ocean (see *EN*, August 2008).

Friends greeted Marcus Eriksen, of the Algalita Marine Research Foundation in Long Beach, and fellow eco-mariner Joel Paschal with lei, fresh food and beer to celebrate the end of their 2,600-mile voyage on what they called the *Junk* raft. “We got used to eating fish and peanut butter,” said Eriksen, who celebrated his 41st birthday at sea.

The pair left Long Beach, on June 1. Their 30-foot vessel had a deck of salvaged sailboat masts, six pontoons filled with 15,000 plastic bottles and a cabin made from the fuselage of a Cessna airplane. While at sea they realized they were only traveling half a mile per hour and it would take them much longer to reach Hawaii than the previously anticipated six weeks. “We had to go to half rations for awhile,” said Paschal, 32.

The third person of the group, who didn’t make the 2,600 mile trip, was Anna Cummins, Eriksen’s fiancée. Cummins took care of land support, blogs and fundraising. The three want single-use plastics to be banned, saying they’re wasteful and usually end up in the ocean. ▲

EXPEDITION NOTES

Fastest Circumnavigation of Vancouver Island Planned – This month, California-based British sea kayaker Sean Morley will attempt to break the record for the fastest circumnavigation of Canada’s Vancouver Island. The records currently stand at 23 days 10 hours for a single kayak set by Joe O’Blenis, and 19 and a half days for a double kayak set by Kieron Tastagh and Jeff Norville, both in 2007. Paddling a Rapier 20 single kayak manufactured by Valley Sea Kayaks, and representing Kokatat Watersports Wear, Sean aims to complete the 700-mile journey in less than 18 days.

“Vancouver Island can present some of the most challenging conditions a kayaker can face including fierce winds and huge waves off the notorious headlands of Cape Scott and the Brooks Peninsula. There is also high surf and treacherous reefs guarding the remote beaches of the west coast and raging tidal rapids reaching speeds of 15 knots in the myriad of channels separating Vancouver Island from the mainland,” says Morley.

In 2004 Morley completed the first solo circumnavigation of the UK and Ireland and all the inhabited islands – a six-month, 4,500-mile expedition and reportedly the longest journey ever undertaken by kayak in British waters. (For more information: www.expeditionkayak.com and his blog <http://riverandocean.blogspot.com/>). ▲

EXPEDITION FOCUS

Climbers Bemoan the “Everestification” of K2

At least 11 people are presumed dead after an Aug. 1-2 avalanche on K2, the world’s second-highest mountain. The Pakistan Ministry of Tourism said the victims in this, one of mountaineering’s worst disasters, included three South Koreans, two Nepalis, two Pakistanis and mountaineers from France, Ireland, Serbia and Norway.

Want to impress a fellow climber? Don’t tell them you summited Everest. K2, which straddles Pakistan and China in the Karakoram range, is regarded by mountaineers as far more challenging. K2’s knife-edged ridges and icy slopes are steeper and prone to both avalanches and sudden and severe storms. K2climb.net calls it “the mountaineers’ mountain.”

While at press time the exact nature of the deaths remain unclear, several contributing factors were likely: (1) summititis - several expeditions – about 24 climbers – had waited anxiously through July for good weather to scale the 28,250-foot peak; (2) climbers had to reposition fixed ropes that an advance party had mislaid across a treacherous gully 1,150 feet below the summit, said Dutch mountaineer Wilco van Rooijen, 40, in an interview with the *Associated Press*; and (3) teams reached the summit only shortly before dark. In the rush to get down, groups, including van Rooijen’s, drifted apart. Pushing ahead as darkness approached was derided as “just pure stupidity” by Reinhold Messner, perhaps the world’s most accomplished mountaineer. Maybe so, but according to ExplorersWeb.com, most of the climbing teams on K2 early last month were highly experienced.

As many as 10 of the fastest climbers were in the steep gully, known as the Bottleneck, when a huge chunk of ice crashed down from above, sending a Norwegian and two Nepali sherpas to their deaths. The ice swept away some of the ropes, stranding those caught above, van Rooijen said.

The famed Bottleneck and a tricky section of ice known as the Traverse have previously been the scene of many accidents and deaths. What’s worse, by the morning, clouds had descended, making it almost impossible for the climbers to locate each other or see their way. Van Rooijen said other expeditions had failed to keep a promise to mark the way with flags.

Chris Warner, an American who climbed K2 last year, said the Bottleneck gully was the deadliest place on the mountain, with an unstable ice wall above and a fall of up to 9,000 feet below.

“You can see how, for people who were exhausted, it would have been nearly impossible for them to descend without the ropes,” said Warner. “Once their hands and feet are frozen, they really are unable to move on their own power, and it takes other people to carry them down.”

Said Phil Powers, executive director of the American Alpine Club, “It’s premature to be judgmental, but there are good reasons you get slowed down, but never a good reason to continue climbing into the darkness.

“I’m concerned about the application of Everest-like infrastructure to a mountain as steep and difficult as K2. Fixed lines up high, high altitude porters and bottled oxygen are attempts to make K2 doable for the less experienced. There’s too much support being provided,” said Powers, who climbed K2 in 1993 during a U.S. – Canadian Expedition that placed the first Canadians on top. British Columbia climber Dan Culver died during that expedition, also in the Bottleneck.

Career mountain guide Dave Hahn of Taos, N.M, tells *EN*, “In a difficult environment like that, there will always be fatal accidents, even more so on K2. Since the mountain has a public reputation of extreme conditions it’s inevitable that as more people try to make a name for themselves by climbing it, many won’t be up to the challenge.”

Hahn, who been on Everest 14 times, summiting ten, continues, “All the attention on Everest after the 1996 tragedy created a boom in climbing that mountain. Perversely, the worse the news, the more attractive a mountain becomes.”

Mountaineer and author David Roberts tells the *New York Times* (Aug. 10), “The best mountaineers are still motivated by the glory of something right out there on the edge. But now climbers are being sponsored. They are making big bucks on speaking tours. There is a whole new breed of wannabes who see it as a shortcut to fame or at least notoriety.”

Messner adds with evident disgust, “People today are booking these K2 package deals almost as if they were buying some all inclusive trip to Bangkok.”

American climber Chris Warner believes re-conquering peaks like K2 helps all of us. “It’s a selfish act if it ends with you,” he tells *New York Times* writer Graham Bowley. “But guys go back and are deeply humbled by the experience that they have and they are much more capable of being husbands, brothers, people. There is a part of the whole experience that is ultimately metaphysical. Whenever you push the limits of ability, there is a lesson in there for all of us.”

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The reported toll from the avalanche was the highest from a single incident on K2 since at least 1995, when six climbers perished after being caught in a fierce storm. About 280 people have summited K2 since 1954, when it was first conquered by Italians Achille Compagnoni and Lino Lacedelli. Dozens of deaths have been recorded since 1939, most of them occurring during the descent. ▲

MEDIA MATTERS

Adventure is Addictive – Majka Burhardt, author of *Vertical Ethiopia: Climbing Toward Possibility in the Horn of Africa* (Shama Publishing), tells the Outdoor Retailer *Show Daily* early last month, “I’m a writer. I communicate with story. I am also a climber, paddler, skier, hiker, biker and wannabe surfer who is still that kid who wanted nothing more than to explore. Now, I’m trying to put all of this together. I call it making adventure addictive,” says Burhardt, 31, of Boulder, Colo.

Vertical Ethiopia documents a climbing expedition to unexplored sandstone spires in northern Ethiopia. In March 2007, four women traveled to Ethiopia to discover if climbing might be the next frontier for this continuously evolving country.

The book includes a profile of an eco-resort on a 15.5 mile lake south of Addis Ababa because, “we want to show people there is water in Ethiopia.” She’s now seven months into a speaking tour talking with people about the connections between outdoors, adventure, culture and politics. Her next presentation is Sept. 24 at the Bradford Washburn American Mountaineering Museum in Golden, Colo.

“As our world gets more contentious, as resources are depleted and tensions augmented, understanding is our most important international commodity,” she writes in the *Show Daily*’s Aug. 9 issue. “I believe that those of us who find adventure in the natural spaces of this world have a chance to understand sooner – and share it faster.” (For more information: www.verticalethiopia.com).

Still Not Over the Moon – As NASA is planning to return to the moon by 2020, former astronaut Jim Lovell, now 80, tells the September-October issue of *AARP Magazine*, “It never occurred to me that 40 years later, no one would go back to the moon. With what we’d accomplished, I thought the momentum would continue. But I guess evolution goes two steps forward and one step back,” he tells writer Bill Newcott.

Tom Hanks memorably played the former mission commander in the movie *Apollo 13* (“Houston, we have a problem”). The

AARP story revealed the little-known fact that Lovell himself had a role in David Bowie’s cult classic, *The Man Who Fell to Earth*.

Just Joshing – On the eve of the premiere of his new *Discovery Channel* series, “Into the Unknown with Josh Bernstein,” the 37-year-old TV adventurer tells Jane L. Levere of the *New York Times* (Aug. 17), he travels 46 weeks of the year to research his series and to oversee the Boulder Outdoor Survival School, which he owns in Colorado. But next month he’s looking forward to a rather tame journey – his vacation. “I’m evaluating places right now,” he said, adding he plans to go somewhere “secluded, where I can sit on the beach and relax.”

In a *New York Magazine* story by Emma Rosenblum (Aug. 17), he says of the rain forests he’s visited, “The biodiversity per square mile is off the charts. You can blaze your way through the jungle, then two days later, it doesn’t even look like you’ve been there.” Rosenblum writes of her day recently with Bernstein in New York’s American Museum of Natural History, “... he’s a veritable Wikipedia of information about the natural world, a compulsive sharer of random factoids. It’s a quality that could be annoying if Bernstein weren’t so damned charming.”

Of his previous appearances on the *History Channel*, she writes, “He looked a little like a charismatic high-school teacher, the kind all the girls hoped would chaperone the prom. He started appearing on morning TV shows, and turned up in a Men’s *Vogue* profile. He became, surprisingly, a thinking woman’s pinup boy.”

Rosenblum continues, “With his suntan, scruff, and very white teeth, he achieves that perfect cable-TV balance between Everyman and Brad Pitt.”

An appearance last year at the Explorers Club was packed with eligible New York women hoping for a private audience with the hunky TV host. And there are sickly YouTube tributes to Bernstein—slideshows of glamour shots set to romantic songs.

Give Us Some Slack – One of the trends emerging from the giant outdoor industry trade show in Salt Lake last month was the growth of slacklining. What was once practiced by dirt-bag rock climbers is now going mainstream, according to the Outdoor Retailer Summer Market *Show Daily* (Aug. 11). A slackline is a length of nylon webbing stretched between two trees or other anchors to create a low-level tightrope. Experts can do spins, flips and other tricks on the bouncing line. Slacklining kits for about \$80 to \$120 are being sold by Asana, Gibbon, Mammut, and Trango. A session on one-inch webbing can be a real workout that’s definitely not for slackers. ▲

EXPEDITION MARKETING

Guides Recognize The North Face

The North Face, the outdoor apparel, equipment and footwear company, is the 2008 recipient of the American Mountain Guides Association's (AMGA) Industry Award.

The Industry Award is presented annually to an outdoor company that has shown outstanding support through scholarships, products, and sponsorships of professional mountain guides. The North Face has partnered with the AMGA to provide educational support for the past 12 years. The North Face is the official sponsor of all AMGA Alpine Guide Certification exams, helping to reduce tuition costs. The announcement was made by Betsy Novak, executive director of the AMGA. (For more information: www.amga.com).

Inspiring Soles

Crocs Inc. and *Outside Magazine* have launched Inspiring Soles, a program celebrating athletes who have dedicated their lives to shattering boundaries and raising awareness for meaningful causes. It includes Timmy O'Neill, Andrew Skurka, Sean Swarner, Ray Zahab, and others who have ascended the world's highest peaks after conquering terminal illnesses or have raced across the Sahara educating people about the global water crisis. Recognition includes a total donation of up to \$50,000 in cash, plus Crocs product, to the athletes' charities. (For more information on how to nominate an athlete: www.inspiringsoles.com). ▲

WEB WATCH

Are Striped Icebergs Real? – A recent cancer document purported to be from Johns Hopkins University, but which was later determined to be an Internet hoax, got us thinking about those images of striped icebergs we've been e-mailed from time to time. In fact, the July issue of *The Polar Times* also questioned their authenticity, calling them "doctored bergs." But they seem to be authentic, according to the urban legend debunking Web site Snopes.com. One set of striped iceberg images were taken by a Norwegian sailor named Oyvind Tangen while he was aboard a research ship about 1,700 miles south of Cape Town, South Africa. Keith Makinson of the British Antarctic Survey said striped icebergs were common in southern waters. Photographs of similarly-patterned icebergs can be viewed on the Web site of the Australian Antarctic Division at <http://www.aad.gov.au/default.asp?casid=24046>.

Anker Away – Mountaineer Conrad Anker is blogging his travels for the first time on a new Timex Web site: www.returntotheoutdoors.com. While flying back from Paris last month, he offered some intriguing thoughts about Greenland:

"In climbing we have a term know as 'sand bagging.' This practice entails under grading a route to what its actual difficulty might be. The first ascensionist has the privilege of determining how to set the rating, the assessment of the difficulty of the route, for subsequent climbers. A sand bagged route is one that is always much more difficult than what the rating gives it. In a similar manner, Greenland is perhaps the ultimate sand bag. Greenland is a land of glaciers and rocky fjords with long nights in the winter. What is green about this? Perhaps when it was settled by the Norse it was green. Perhaps it might be green again." ▲

EXPEDITION CLASSIFIEDS

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 Africa, 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, www.summitclimb.com.

New LEKI Antishock System – LEKI, the leading international manufacturer of trekking poles, has introduced a Soft Antishock-Lite (SAS-L) System that provides much more comfort along the trail. The impact energy is absorbed directly into the lower shaft. The perfect combination of steel spring and elastomer provides precise synchronization between spring strength and compression – making trekking with a pole more comfortable than ever, reducing stress on the joints, muscles and ligaments. (www.leki.com)

Tights, Tops and Sport Support Bras for Athletes – CW-X Conditioning Web is specifically tuned to provide total support to the key muscle groups and joints of the lower limbs and upper body. Tights and Tops, and the company's new Sports Support Bras, are made for a wide variety of high-energy activities, including running, fitness walking, hiking, cycling, skiing, snowboarding, track and field, and other fitness activities. It has been worn to the summit of Everest on at least two occasions. (www.cw-x.com) ▲

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