

EXPEDITION NEWS



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

EXPEDITION AUTISM AWARENESS TO TRAVERSE SOUTH AMERICA

Robert Mark, a 39-year-old computer consultant and professionally trained firefighter and paramedic from Maplewood, N.J., is planning an uninterrupted solo expedition across the continent of South America. The 4,200 mile trek, beginning in April 2010, is expected to last six months. Upon its completion, Mark, a member of The Explorers Club, believes he will become the first person to traverse the continent on a solo expedition. The project hopes to raise money and awareness for autism, hence the name, Expedition Autism Awareness. He will be traveling by foot, horse, and kayak during his journey.

Mark will begin on Peru's Pacific coast in the town of Camana. He will then climb to the source of the Amazon River, which is located at an altitude of 17,000 feet in the snow-capped Andes Mountains. From the Amazon River's source he will follow the waterway through the rainforest to its termination in the Atlantic.

In preparation, Mark has conducted two prior expeditions to South America where he mapped his planned route over the Andes, and hiked through a portion of the Amazon. Previous expeditions through Alaska and Africa helped him gain additional experience.

For those following his trek, Mark will provide real time satellite map images of his every location; he will also upload video clips, photos, a blog and MP3's of his daily activities, collaborating with classroom teachers before,

THE LOST 49ER' EXPEDITION - "ESCAPE FROM DEATH VALLEY"

Allan Smith, a 47-year-old film producer from Lancaster, Calif., is planning a solo expedition retracing the escape route of the "Lost 49er's" out of Death Valley to Barrel Springs, near Palmdale, Calif. This 30-day expedition, planned for late December, will involve a 275-mile trek on foot in the dead of winter, crossing the Mojave Desert and into some of most harsh and inhabitable terrain known to man.

Smith, president of the Los Angeles Adventurers' Club, and member of The Explorers Club, believes this expedition has never before been attempted. The \$32,000 project hopes to generate awareness for a band of pioneers that have been all but forgotten. "This trek will educate our schoolchildren and the public to learn of the trials and tribulations that these pioneers went through. To educate them that Juliet Brier, a female, led the men, women and children into Death Valley."

According to *Women of the West* by Dorothy Gray, in the Western classic, *Death Valley in '49*, William Lewis Manly, himself one of the greatest heroes in the history of the West, would say of Brier, "All agreed she was the best man of the party."

Smith will cross the Panamint Mountain Range, China Lake Naval Weapons base and then head across the Mojave Desert and into Barrel Springs where the last pioneer died after drinking copiously from the spring. Smith plans to be resupplied every seven days.

during, and after his expedition so that students can experience the journey in its entirety as each day unfolds.

Expedition Autism Awareness is one man's epic journey to fulfill his dream of bringing further awareness to autism. Funds raised will be donated to the Family Support Center of New Jersey, which will further aid families of individuals with autism. Mark is a dedicated stepfather to Jack, age 11, who has autism, and hopes to further facilitate understanding, acceptance and compassion for autism: its behaviors, needs, and fight for a cure.

"While autism awareness has come so far from where it was even one year ago, we still need to strive for greater acceptance and understanding for individuals with disabilities," he tells *EN*. "I want families affected by autism to feel support from my personal journey, as my family has experienced similar hardships as well as wondrous achievements." (For more information: Robert Mark, 973 885 7766, www.expeditionautismawareness.com [launching later this month], rob@expeditionautismawareness.com) ▲▲

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The expedition will be filmed for a future documentary using the new state of the art Trius 4K/3D camera system, one of the most advanced digital cameras in the world.

(For more information: Allan R. Smith, 661 492 3188, Allan@dreamquest.tv) ▲▲

Quote of the Month

"Destroying rainforest for economic gain is like burning a Renaissance painting to cook a meal."

– E.O. Wilson, American biologist, researcher, theorist, naturalist and author.

STUDYING THE GRAVEYARD OF THE ATLANTIC

Investigators from the Newport News, Va., Monitor National Marine Sanctuary are playing a leading role in a three-week research expedition designed to study the wrecks of ships sunk off North Carolina in 1942 during the Battle of the Atlantic.

Using advanced remote sensing technologies aboard the NOAA Research Vessel *Nancy Foster*, the expedition – which began last month – will first attempt to locate and take high-definition photographs of several previously undiscovered World War II shipwrecks in an area known as the "Graveyard of the Atlantic."

During the second phase of the mission, divers from NOAA and its research partners will survey and photograph visible sections of the British armed trawler *HMT Bedfordshire*, which sank with the loss of its entire crew after being torpedoed by the German submarine U-558 on May 12, 1942.

"The information collected during this expedition will help us better understand and document this often lost chapter of America's maritime history and its significance to the nation," said Monitor sanctuary superintendent David W. Alberg, who is leading the expedition, according to the Newport News *Daily Press*.

Alberg said that documenting the condition of these vessels some 67 years after they were lost represents a crucial first step in preserving these historic sites. He described the wrecks, which took place in the first year after the devastating Japanese air attack on Pearl Harbor in December 1941, as "time capsules from one of the darkest times in the nation's history."

In consultation with the British and German governments, which regard the wrecks of their vessels as war graves, NOAA is conducting the survey with technical expertise and logistical support from the Minerals Management Service, the National Park Service, the State of North Carolina and East Carolina University.

Additional support is being provided by the University of North Carolina Coastal Studies Institute, the University of North Carolina at Wilmington, the Georgia Aquarium and The Mariners' Museum.

The investigators will employ sophisticated sidescan and multibeam sonar systems as well as an advanced remotely operated vehicle during the operation, Alberg said. They'll also conduct a survey of the marine life found at the shipwreck of the *Bedfordshire*, documenting its transformation into a flourishing artificial reef. ▲▲

BUZZ WORDS

Flotsam Science – The study of floating debris. (Source: Robert Lee Hotz, *Wall Street Journal*, who writes, “In an era of billion-dollar space telescopes, gene machines and city-size particle accelerators, some scientists just have to make do with tub toys. From Greenland’s glaciers to the boundless Pacific main, researchers are tracking thousands of rubber ducks, frogs, beer bottles and wooden tops set adrift from around the world to solve critical questions of oceanography, glaciology and global warming.”)

Whatever happened to 33,000 Nike shoes that went overboard in 2003? Read *The Beachcombers’ Alert* (www.beachcombersalert.org).

Shigloo – Bathroom made of ice. (Source: Jeff Corwin of *Animal Planet*. Speaking to *New York Magazine*, he said of a trip to Greenland a few years ago, “We all used the shigloo. But I used it sparingly. Nancy Pelosi came to the field site we were at, and, um, I believe Nancy Pelosi may have visited the shigloo.”) ▲▲

EXPEDITION NOTES

Search Begins For Roald Amundsen’s Plane – Norway’s navy set sail last month for the Barents Sea to track down the missing plane used by legendary polar explorer Roald Amundsen who disappeared 81 years ago and hopefully resolve one of the Arctic’s enigmas. Two vessels will scour 36 square nautical miles of seabed close to the island of Bjoernoeya in a bid to locate the remains of Amundsen’s seaplane.

The first explorer to navigate the Northwest Passage that connects the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans in 1903-1906 and the first to reach the North Pole in 1911 after an epic duel with Englishman Robert Scott, Amundsen is, together with Fridtjof Nansen, Norway’s biggest name in polar exploration.

In 1926, he flew over the North Pole in an airship, the *Norge*, with Italian explorer Umberto Nobile and American adventurer Lincoln Ellsworth. Despite tensions that ensued with Nobile, Amundsen two years later offered to fly to rescue him and his crew, who had flown to the pole again on the airship *Italia* but crash-landed on the sea ice on the way back. For the unprecedented international rescue effort, the French government made available to Amundsen a twin-engine Latham 47 – at the time an ultra-modern aircraft. On June 18, 1928 around 4:00 p.m., Amundsen, Norwegian pilot Leif Dietrichson and four French nationals took off from the northern Norwegian town of Tromsø.

Between 6:45 and 6:55 pm, the crew sent a radio message, then nothing more: the seaplane and its crew disappeared, probably off of Bjoernoeya, the southernmost of the cluster of islands that make up the Svalbard archipelago. The circumstances of their disappearance have never been established and their bodies have never been found.

The Norwegian navy vessel *KNM Tyr*, equipped with two underwater robots, will search the seabed northwest of Bjoernoeya with a fine-toothed comb, supported by a ship from the Norwegian coast guard, the *KNM Harstad*, to find the seaplane’s engines.

The expedition hopes that its potential finds will shed some light on the circumstances of Amundsen’s disappearance: Did the seaplane crash into the water? Or did the crew manage to land in the sea in the middle of a storm only to succumb to the polar waters? Since the day of the disappearance, only a pontoon and a fuel tank from the Latham 47 have been recovered.

In 1933, a fisherman hooked an object that may have been a piece of the seaplane’s wreckage, according to experts, but his line broke, leaving the enigma intact.

Close Call – While most people with Type 1 diabetes might tend to live a rather sedentary life, that’s not an option when your last name is Schurke, you live in the north woods of Ely, Minn., and your father, Paul, 53, is one of the most experienced polar explorers alive. Peter Schurke, 17, just naturally fell into the family business, often joining sisters Bria, 23, and Berit, 14, trail testing their mother’s Wintergreen Designs northern wear.

In mid-August, however, a guided trip for Wintergreen Inquiry, Schurke’s non-profit outdoors group, almost turned to tragedy when Peter went into diabetic shock while his father was away from camp fishing with group participants.

“Here we were on a canoe trip in the Hudson Bay region, down in a spectacular gorge a full two days from medical help. Our guests back at camp became worried when they didn’t see Peter that morning. They checked his tent and were startled to see he was in full diabetic seizure,” Paul Schurke said.

“We had briefed the group about his condition, not thinking it was likely to happen. One of the participants had the presence of mind to check his pack and there inside was an orange emergency can identified, “In Case of Diabetic Emergency.” As I returned, Peter was being given a shot of Glucagon to jumpstart his liver. It may have saved his life since a diabetic coma left untreated is potentially fatal.


“After some rest, Peter was able to continue the trip,” he said.

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As a result of the crisis, Schurke and his son are consulting with diabetes experts at the University of Minnesota to prepare a Diabetes Medical Alert sheet designed to be included within any wilderness emergency first aid kit. He's passionate about providing it to every adventure group and outdoor Web site he can. For a copy, contact Schurke at info@dogsledding.com.

Human Whirlybirds – Sikorsky Aircraft increased the prize money for the Igor I. Sikorsky Human-Powered Helicopter Competition to \$250,000, up from \$20,000 previously. The contest is more than two decades old and no one has met the requirements of hovering about 10 feet in the air for 60 seconds. One previous attempt only flew eight seconds at a height of eight inches. Bill Patterson, who is retired from California Polytechnic State University in San Luis Obispo, said of the challenge of human-power flight, "It's doing something that no one has ever done before. It's what we do. If you don't do crap like that, you're not human."

The closest anyone has come to winning the challenge is a team led by professor Akira Naito of Nihon University, Japan. That aircraft flew for 19.46 seconds at a height of about half a foot.

The contest, begun in 1980, is administered by the American Helicopter Society International. (For more information: www.vtol.org). 

OUT THERE

Checking in with Professional Guide Vern Tejas

As *EN* enters its 16th year next month, we've created this new feature wherein we attempt in this age of instant communications, short attention spans, blogs, vlogs, Face Book fan pages, Twitters and tweets to check in with some of our favorite people *Out There*, asking the first 10 questions that pop into our fertile brain.

Vern Tejas, 56, a senior mountain guide for Alpine Ascents International, is best known for Denali's first solo winter ascent, the first solo of Mt. Vinson (Antarctica's highest), first winter ascent of Mt. Logan (Canada's highest) and as lead guide for Col. Norman Vaughan's first ascent of Mt. Vaughan in Antarctica.

We caught up with Tejas (pronounced *Tey-Has*) in Grand Central Station after he changed out of his sweaty workout clothes, having rollerbladed up from the West Village. ("Don't you get stares changing in the Mens room?" we asked. He laughs, "I use a stall since there are no phone booths any longer.")

Over a frightfully expensive Chop Chop Cobb salad and chicken wrap we began our probe.

What brings a hard-core Talkeetna, Alaska guide to the canyons of New York?

"Love, pure and simple. I fell (if you pardon the expression) for a New York M & A attorney named Carole Schiffman. She was a climber on one of my guided trips and we hit it off after we returned home. It was the first marriage for both of us."

Where did you finally tie the knot?

"After dating for 19 weeks in 2007 we were on a climb together in Antarctica on Mt. Vinson. When we discovered that fellow guide Todd Passey, a former missionary, was ordained to perform marriage ceremonies, we decided right on the summit ridge that there was no better place than the top of Vinson to exchange vows.

"Carole would later joke that she was suffering from hypoxia at the time."

Is a wedding ceremony in Antarctica legal?

"Well, not exactly. We satisfied the bureaucrats back home a few months later with a civil ceremony at City Hall in New York, decorated with plastic flowers that looked like they were there for decades.

"It's a good thing we made it official. About two months later, after returning from Everest, I became seriously ill and was hospitalized with blood poisoning. I qualified as her spouse for health insurance and we could take advantage of the fine health care that this city has to offer. So I guess you can say our marriage and Carole's quick action saved my life."

What's next for you?

"I am fortunate to hold the record for the number of times anyone has climbed the Seven Summits - eight. Now I want to re-claim my record for the fastest time. Ian McKeever completed all seven in 156 days, beating my record by 30 days. I think I can go back and knock off another round of the Seven Summits in 150 days next season."

You had a prostate cancer scare. Will that figure into the attempt?

"Yes, this time around I hope to raise awareness of the disease which I seem to have under control currently. Cancer of the prostate is the most common form of cancer among men in the developed world. It's estimated that there are 230,000 new cases in the United States alone each year. It's high time we develop a better understanding of how to deal with this killer."

How supportive is your wife in your career?

“Carole is wonderfully supportive of my guiding life and understands the call of the wild. We love to climb together and eventually hope to co-guide together.”

How do you train while stuck in the concrete jungle?

“New York is a surprisingly outdoor city. I bike the West Side Highway, Rollerblade to meetings, even unicycle. To train for Vinson, we dragged tires across the Brooklyn Bridge. The comments from passing New Yorkers were priceless:

“Hey mister? What happened to the rest of your car?”

“You know, if you put that tire up on edge, it’ll roll better.””

What’s the biggest difference between Talkeetna and New York?

“New York has better bagels.”

How has the guiding business evolved?

“Well, I’ll have to give Dick Bass a big kiss for ‘inventing’ the concept of the Seven Summits in 1984-85. Paradoxically, the publicity surrounding the Everest disaster of 1996 also generated interest in guided climbs. Since then I’ve helped a lot of people fulfill their dreams.”

Finally, in a shameless bout of self-promotion, we couldn’t resist asking: How’s it feel to be the cover boy of the new book, “You Want to Go Where?”

“I had to look closely when I first saw Gordon Wiltsie’s image of me. It was taken on a serac on Norman Vaughan’s namesake mountain in Antarctica in 1994. I recognize my parka and my boots, which I still own. I wound up buying three copies of the book. My mother is going to love it.”

To see an image of Tejas log onto www.expeditionnews.blogspot.com ▲



MEDIA MATTERS

Plastic Garbage Patch – It can be hard to find what you’re looking for in the middle of the Pacific Ocean. But scientists on an August research cruise had no problem tracking down their subject, according to Bettina Boxall of the *Los Angeles Times* (Aug. 31).

“We did observe a lot of plastic out there in the ocean about 1,000 miles from anything,” said Miriam Goldstein, chief scientist on the Scripps Environmental Accumulation of Plastic Expedition. “It’s pretty shocking.”

A group of doctoral students and research volunteers from Scripps Institution of Oceanography at UC San Diego and Project Kaisei spent nearly three weeks on the research vessel *New Horizon* taking samples and exploring the plastic garbage patch floating in the North Pacific.

During the next several months, they will analyze samples to learn more about the garbage patch’s toxicity and how it affects ocean life and food webs. Are invasive species getting a ride on the plastic? To what degree is the plastic interfering with ocean feeding?

Most of the plastic the ship encountered was small – about the size of a thumbnail – and floating beneath the surface, Goldstein said. There was no floating landfill. But larger items, such as buckets and bottles, drifted by the ship.

Glamping: Its Time Is Coming – Welcome to the early stages of the era of “glamping” – glamorous camping. It’s a visit to the outdoors, but updated and upscale. While it’s just starting to take off, it’s likely to grow significantly based on emerging travel and vacation trends, writes Mark Penn in the *Wall Street Journal* (Aug. 22).

“While glamping is sometimes caricatured as over-the-top luxury (think butlers with bug spray), its real potential is in making ‘roughing it’ a little less rough but still affordable. At the moment, the very high-end dude ranches are still conspicuous consumption. But camping with trimmings – tents with heaters, eco-outhouses, showers hidden around the corner – has tremendous appeal,” Penn writes.

“It’s outdoorsy, but with a good mix of the comforts of an active resort. The business people who provide these experiences get to skip building a big hotel, and put up ‘mobile rooms’ instead. Meanwhile, glampers get a feeling of being close to nature, with a full complement of activities like hiking, fly-fishing and kayaking.” ▲

EXPEDITION MARKETING

Sponsors Sought for End of 1,000-Day Sailing Odyssey

When uber-sailor Reid Stowe, 57, finally sails into New York Harbor next spring, after a record shattering 1,000 non-resupplied days at sea, a few selected sponsors will get to go along for the ride. Stowe has already achieved the longest self-sufficient sea voyage in history (previously 657 days set in 1986-88). From far out at sea, but connected to the world by sat phone and e-mail, he is seeking a maximum of three sponsors at \$25,000 each to help fund a series of celebrations and media interviews during Stowe’s planned June 2010 return to his Manhattan home base. At press time, Stowe, sailing on the 70-ft.

schooner, *Anne*, was just passing day 860 of his journey, one that he's been blogging about almost daily at www.1000days.net.

Plans are underway to host a welcome back celebration. Stowe expects to anchor a few days early just inside New York Harbor. "That will guarantee our exact arrival on a Manhattan dock, escorted by fire boats and a flotilla. It will also give us time to prepare banners, logos and my uniform and hat with sponsors' names for the waiting crowd of friends, family and media," he says.

A media blitz is also anticipated, including possible morning talk show appearances, *Dateline*, *Letterman*, *The Daily Show*, and whatever else can be arranged for Stowe, his partner Soanya Ahmad, and perhaps even his son, Darshen, who was conceived at sea and who Stowe will see for the first time when he arrives back home. (For more information: Jeff Blumenfeld, blumassoc@aol.com, 203 655 1600). ▲

ON THE HORIZON

Pictures From Space Land at American Mountaineering Museum – The American Mountaineering Center in Golden, Colo., will host a gathering on Sept. 30 to exhibit the last pictures ever taken from Bradford Washburn's camera, pictures taken from outer space. NASA Astronaut John Grunsfeld, a long-time member of the American Alpine Club, carried the camera into space on his recent mission to repair the Hubble. On Sept. 30 Grunsfeld will return the camera for all to see, talk about the mission, and unveil the photos which for a limited time will be displayed in the museum alongside some of Washburn's personal favorites. (For more information: www.mountaineeringmuseum.org).

Jump the Shark – While tagging whales sharks isn't exactly on our bucket list, a group called Iemanya Oceanica from Woodland Hills, Calif., is ready to take you on their next expedition. The non-profit organization dedicated to the conservation of sharks, rays and their habitats is inviting participants to accompany its research team to Bahia de Los Angeles on the Sea of Cortez (Baja California) to tag whale sharks for research, education and ocean preservation. The dates are October 15-19 and the cost is \$2,250 per person, all-inclusive. (For more information: <http://www.OurOceanOurFuture.org>). ▲

EXPEDITION CLASSIFIEDS

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