

# WELCOME to FIELDNEWS

## Welcome to the latest Fieldnews...

This Autumn gives us the chance to reflect on a busy summer season both with expeditions out in Borneo and news coming back from training clients all across the world...

### COMING SOON...

We are currently working with a team of experienced expedition leaders to design new safety courses for different environments to complement our tropical forest safety course.

Mountain Safety Course  
Desert Safety Course  
Savannah Safety Course

These courses will be available from Spring 08 but register your interest now by emailing: [dominic@fieldskills.com](mailto:dominic@fieldskills.com)

## Sumatran Orangutan Society

In July, the Sumatran Orangutan Society ran their third fundraising trek. The trek began at the village of Tangkahan on the edge of the Gunung Leuser National Park in Sumatran.

We got started with the unforgettable experience of riding on the back of an elephant through the jungle, and helping the mahouts wash them in the Tangkahan river. The elephants are part of a Conservation Response Unit, conducting illegal logging patrols in the national park. That afternoon we visited a local village to meet some of those who will benefit from eco-tourism in the area.

The next day began with a motorbike ride to our first campsite. We drove through an oil palm plantation - now the greatest threat to orangutan habitat, as forest is cleared to produce palm oil. We drove past endless rows of palm trees reaching right to the border of the national park, and noticed the complete lack of wildlife; it is rare to even hear birdsong in the plantations. On arrival at camp it was all hands on deck to make the shelters, hang hammocks, build a fire and cook the evening meal. Throughout the trek we were amazed at the delicious food our guides were able to cook up in the middle of the forest!

The next three days were spent trekking through the forest. The terrain was very steep, but the views spectacular! We trekked for between 5-6 hours each day, with plenty of stops to allow us to acclimatise to the landscape. On the second day, Mega, the head guide, spotted a wild female orangutan with her infant. We all crouched down and tried to keep still and silent as we watched

Story continued on page 4

## TRAINING

As teams return from their summer exploits it has been great to get feedback from returning expeditioners that their training has proved useful in the field and that they've had safe and successful expeditions... *Dom*

### WANT TO LEAD EXPEDITIONS?

**Book now** - onto our October  
'Get into Expedition Leading' and  
'Leading & Planning Expeditions'.

For full details on all these courses go  
to [www.fieldskills.com](http://www.fieldskills.com).

### Aberdeen University: Brunei expedition:

A team of two went to Brunei to study frogs that live by streams. Visual Encounter Surveys were conducted every night for six weeks. Over 300 frogs from 11 species were caught and marked during the study. It was a really unique environment to work in and we loved every minute.

### Project Borneo 2007, Edinburgh Uni

went out to Danum Valley, Sabah, Malaysia to do research on birds, reptiles and amphibians in both primary and secondary rainforests. Whilst living in a hammock for two months our investigation involved catching and identifying reptiles and amphibians in pitfall traps along randomly sited 50m transects.

The results show a higher mean diversity of bird species per sample site and a higher number of observed individuals in secondary forest, contrary to the study's hypothesis. However a higher total number of species were recorded in primary forest and a higher diversity. The diversity of reptiles is consistently higher in primary rainforest than secondary rainforest. However the data for amphibians shows the opposite; more amphibians species were captured in secondary rainforest than primary rainforest. It remains to be seen whether lengthier studies would reach similar conclusions.

We would thoroughly recommend anyone going to do some research in Danum; from the people there to the teeming wildlife, overall we had an unforgettable experience.



Edinburgh Uni team taking a break from their research in Borneo

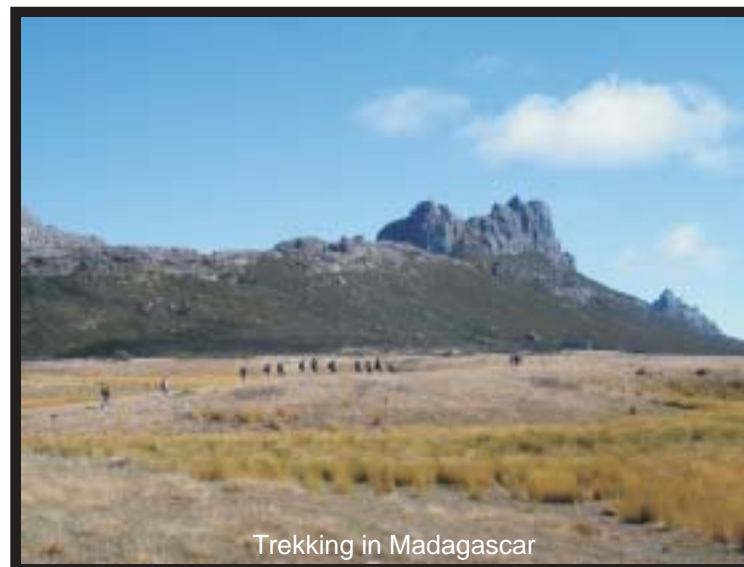
## Memories of Madagascar

My only previous experience of a BSES Expedition has been a slightly chilly but incredible journey through the glaciers and mountains of Svalbard. So from the Arctic to Madagascar, I wasn't quite sure what to expect! To prepare us for what was ahead a selection of leaders were enrolled on a Fieldskills tropical forest safety course. After getting over the initial comedy of the quickly dubbed 'jungle training' being held in Oxford, we soon got stuck into a fun filled, information packed, crash course in rainforest survival. I left confident of leading a group of young people in an alien environment.

With a short stop in the capital Antannanarivo, we soon headed for our first rainforest camp in Andasibe - the only place in the world you can see the unique Indri lemur! My 'jungle training' soon came into use - being confident I knew how to show my

machete-happy young explorers how not to chop their shins to pieces, we successfully set up camp. Positioning of the washing area and long drop not only had to be considered for minimising 'unsociable' smells but also for reducing our impact on the spectacular environment we were so lucky to be living in. I would not have considered this important before my Fieldskills course but attending the course and being part of a BSES expedition which focussed on rainforest conservation, really taught me how important it is to respect what is left of the enchanted (but very damp!) Malagasy rainforest.

After completing our tree planting project at our Mitsinjo camp, we travelled south to Andringitra National Park. Having seen a wide range of wildlife from the majestic diademed sifaka (or orange lemur!) to the googly eyed chameleons, the vast granite mountains and lunar landscape of the national park offered a spectacular side to Madagascar which the rainforest had hidden from us. Our five day trek saw us summit the highest accessible peak in Madagascar and provided the young explorer's with a tough challenge, both mental and physical. It was an excellent trip which has been an incredible experience. Seeing the young people grow and mature in character while learning an incredible amount about myself and what it means to be a leader, I would definitely recommend a summer like I had. My BSES expedition to Madagascar was definitely five weeks to remember. *Matthew Silley*



Trekking in Madagascar

## JOIN US ON FACEBOOK

If you want to share photos, ideas and chat with other expeditioners, then join our facebook group. Go to [www.facebook.com](http://www.facebook.com) and search for fieldskills.



Matt (top right) and team in Madagascar

Matthew Silley attended the Fieldskills Tropical Forest Safety Course in May, along with other BSES leaders, before leaving for his expedition.

The British Schools Exploring Society (BSES Expeditions) is a youth development charity which aims to provide young people with inspirational, challenging scientific expeditions to remote, wild environments and so develop their confidence, teamwork, leadership and spirit of adventure and exploration.

BSES Expeditions has provided opportunities for young people of all abilities between the ages of 16 and 23.

If you are interested to find out more go to <http://www.bses.org.uk/>

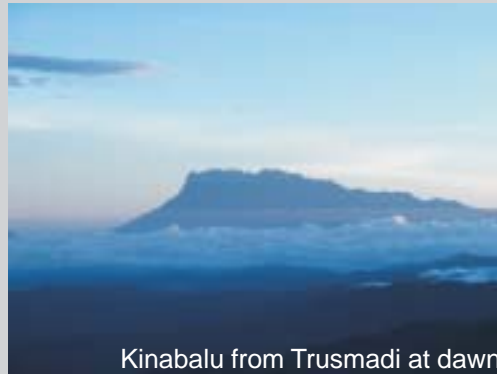
This summer Fieldskills worked with a number of school expedition teams through companies such as Adventureworks, Adventure

## Borneo Expedition Season

Lifesigns and Wilderness Expertise. Fieldskills provided in-country back up and project sourcing for these expeditions and I was very happy to be able to lead one of the Wilderness Expertise teams myself which provided a great opportunity to combine some time out in the field with my Fieldskills work.

My team decided to avoid the hordes on Mount Kinabalu and opted instead for an adventurous climb up Mount Trusmadi, Sabah's second highest peak. The trek was a stunning and challenging route, taking in some 'character building' uphill sections, a very sleepless night up high on the mountain, and a huge thunder storm. However this was all rewarded with a dramatic sunrise view of Kinabalu as well as the fascinating flora of the high montane cloud forest.

The team then spent a hugely rewarding and worthwhile week working with an orphanage at the foot of the mountain. As well as building a new playground from



Kinabalu from Trusmadi at dawn

scratch and brightening the place up with murals they also spent much of the time helping the kids with their studies. I had been to recce the orphanage back at the beginning of the year and it was great to see all the ideas I had talked about with the orphanage staff coming to fruition. Being able to concentrate so much of their time in this small area of Sabah also gave the team the real opportunity to get to know a place and its people. They rounded the trip off by visiting the world famous Sepilok Orangutan Centre and taking some wildlife boat rides on the Kinabatangan River where we

enjoyed proboscis monkeys and the pygmy elephant at close quarters. It was a great expedition and for me personally a rare opportunity to sit on both sides of the fence having done much of the incountry pre-planning and then also be able to get out leading the team in the field.

*Dom*



Extreme concentration at the orphanage sportsday.

## Borneo Jungle Expedition Medicine Conference

This summer Fieldskills worked with Expedition Medicine to set up and run a jungle medicine course in Borneo. Fieldskills provided ground operations and specialist lectures alongside Expedition Medicine's highly experienced expedition medicine staff. We also worked with many local specialists in snake handling and tropical diseases to provide depth to the course content.

The course saw the team sleeping in hammocks in the jungle, setting up camp and lighting fires. They experienced the jungle downpours first hand with torrential downpours lasting several hours resulting in rivers rising over 1.5m in 30 minutes.

The course itself combined medical care for groups (jungle diseases, bites, stings and infestations) with practical leadership skills such as making stretchers and river crossings.

We were grateful to be joined by Datuk Dr S Nagappan, a senior consultant in Sabah with huge experience of tropical diseases. He was able to provide a valuable insight into tropical diseases, particularly malaria. His experience was a valuable addition to the course and it was gratifying to hear from him afterwards that he too had found the experience enjoyable and valuable.

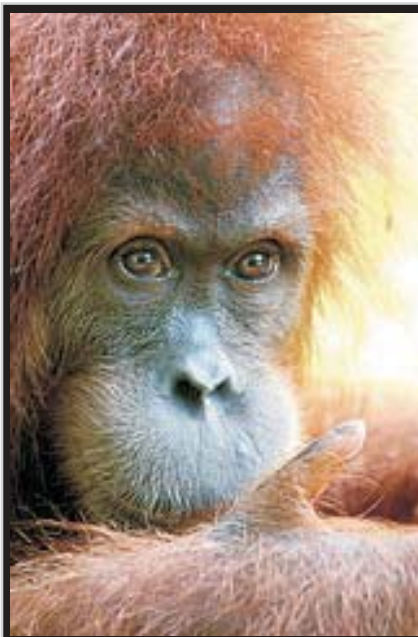
The jungle expedition medicine conference looks set to become a regular feature in the calendar with Expedition Medicine planning to return to Borneo every other year, alternating with another venue in Costa Rica.

If you are interested in attending the course go to <http://www.expeditionmedicine.co.uk/jungle.php>

her moving peacefully between trees, with her infant clinging to her back. We were able to watch her for almost half an hour before she moved out of sight. Orangutans have the slowest breeding rate of any mammal, having one baby every 6-8 years on average, so we felt very privileged to have seen this family unit in the wild.

The next day, we heard gibbons singing in the distance, and briefly spotted a young male orangutan, but he quickly disappeared into the thick canopy. We had to change our planned route due to a landslide blocking our path - evidence that illegal logging is still rife in the park.

The trek ended at the village of Bukit Lawang on the edge of the national park. This is the location of the Bohorok Orangutan Centre. It served as a rescue and rehabilitation centre for many years, where orangutans confiscated from the illegal pet trade would learn to lead an independent life in the forest. Although it is no longer a functioning rehabilitation center, many of the ex-captive orangutans remain in the area. They are provisioned with milk and bananas twice daily, giving visitors an almost-guaranteed chance to see orangutans at close range in their natural habitat, and some excellent photo opportunities!



*Helen Buckland* from SOS attended the Fieldskills Tropical Forest Training course in preparation to organise this trip. Giving you a taste of life in the orangutans' jungle home, the trek is as ecologically friendly as possible. The next SOS trek in Sumatra will be 8-18th April 2008 - contact [Helen@orangutans-sos.org](mailto:Helen@orangutans-sos.org) for more details, or see [www.orangutans-sos.org](http://www.orangutans-sos.org)

## Courses...

**Wilderness Medical Training** - Far From Help and Advanced Medicine for Remote Foreign Travel Medical Courses 6th - 9th December Oxford. We will be running a Tropical Forest Safety Course to tie in with this course. Also held in the Oxford area this will allow clients to attend both the Tropical Forest Safety Course and WMT's excellent Medical Training in one trip. [www.wildernessmedicaltraining.co.uk](http://www.wildernessmedicaltraining.co.uk)

**RGS courses:** for details: [www.rgs.org](http://www.rgs.org)  
**October 2007**

Off-Site Safety Management course

Google Earth for teachers and educators

**November 2007**

BS 8848 workshop for youth and gap year organisations - new date

Educational Visits Coordinator training

Update training for EVCs

Free Google Earth Training - Swansea

Land Rover Driver Training - one place left

Free Google Earth Training - Newcastle

Free Google Earth Training - Edinburgh

Explore: the expedition and fieldwork planning seminar

**Destinations 2008:** Scottish Unis expedition seminar: 9th - 10th February, day one talks on planning, logistics, funding and much, much more. Day two consists of two sessions of basic training; one session of first aid and one of forest safety. For more info: [AUEXPED@YAHOO.CO.UK](mailto:AUEXPED@YAHOO.CO.UK)

## FOREST NEWS

Most of our work is based in Tropical Forests. Here are some stories which caught our interest...

An expedition to the northern Amazonian region in Surinam has uncovered 24 previously unknown animals including a toad with fluorescent purple markings. Their other discoveries included frogs, fish, dung beetles and an ant species. They also recorded several creatures living in other places but never before found in Surinam.

Scientists from 13 universities and other organisations took part in the expedition and helped to draw up the report. In it they called for

improvements in the management of the region's ecology.

In particular, they called for illegal small-scale goldmining in the region and hunting to be curbed.

<http://www.timesonline.co.uk>

Relatives of 3 year old Nelson Oliveira Lima who were out hunting were amazed to find the toddler wandering in dense jungle - he had been missing for 11 days. Nelson was dehydrated but otherwise unharmed and didn't have anything to say about his adven-

ture in the jungle.

<http://www.earthtimes.org>

Once reknowned for violence against miners and loggers, the ancient Ashaninka tribe in Brazil's rainforest has opened a school designed by indigenous people, to preserve their traditions and spread environmental awareness through practical work.

<http://www.channel4.com/news/>