

Sabah Adventure

www.sabahadventure.com

Challenge

This year was the ninth year of the SAC, making it the longest running adventure race in South East Asia. It was the second one that Fieldskills have been involved in and a huge success.

A whole new location to throw the local teams off didn't stop them winning the main event but it did make for an extremely tough race and a huge pile of logistical challenges for the organising team.

Mountain biking, running, tyre tubing on the river, mangrove kayaking and night orienteering put all the entrants under both physical and mental duress and even some of the more favoured teams got lost or flaked out, notably the North Face team from Hong Kong who retired on day three.

This event is growing at a steady pace and the organising committee have made the decision to make next year's event much more professional. Fieldskills will be the main sponsor and will run all the logistics, safety and backup for the whole event, which will be the first ever race around Mount Kinabalu.

We have also been approached by the organisers of the Sabah Tea Adventure Race, the only other adventure race in Sabah at the moment. They want us to take over running the event for them which is a good opportunity for us, and I get to do a whole load more mountain biking!

Simon

NEXT YEAR...

Fancy joining in? We will be arranging packages for the race plus training and preparation - so if you fancy a challenge and seeing Borneo at the same time - email simon@fieldskills.com

WELCOME

to FIELDNEWS

The end of the winter and beginning of spring has been a very hectic time both in Borneo and in the UK and the summer promises to be no different. With teams getting ready for the busy summer expedition season we have been up to our ears, both preparing for teams coming out to Borneo as well as training people who are heading off both to Borneo and areas all around the world. So before everyone disappears off to all four corners of the globe we wanted to bring you up to date with what we, and some of our clients, have been up to. Best of luck with the upcoming season, keep in touch and let us know how it all goes. Cheers, *Dom*



TRAINING...

Busy spring of expedition training.

As well as open courses in Tropical Forest Safety and our new First Aid and Expedition Leadership courses we have also run a large number of bespoke courses at Universities and for Societies around the UK. It has meant a hectic few months for Dom, travelling the length and breadth of the country, particularly throughout March and April, delivering courses but has been thoroughly worth it. It has been nice to regularly see participants state they have learnt a lot and feel more informed and confident for their trips after the training, which after all is our whole aim.

TROPICAL FOREST SAFETY COURSES:

Our UK spring season of courses is nearly over - **LAST CHANCE BEFORE THE SUMMER:** First Aid for Tropical Expeditions: 15th June, Tropical Forest Safety Course: 16th / 17th June.

AUTUMN COURSES:

In September there will be a further Tropical Forest Safety Course.

In October you will have the next chance to join our new Expedition Leadership Courses - 'Get into Expedition Leading' and 'Leading & Planning expeditions'.

For full details on all these courses go to www.fieldskills.com.

FOREST NEWS:

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

SWIMMING THE AMAZON:

He said he was lucky to have escaped encounters with piranhas, the dreaded toothpick fish, which swims into body orifices to suck blood, and even bull sharks that swim in shallow waters and can live for a while in fresh water. But despite all these obstacles, Martin Strel has completed a 2,490 mile swim along the length of the Amazon.

He lost 26 pounds and suffered cramps, high blood pressure, diarrhoea, chronic insomnia, larvae infections, dehydration and abrasions from his wet suit. Strangely though, his biggest difficulty was sunburn, which developed into second degree burns.

I remember seeing this story on the TV news when he was setting out - I couldn't work out if I was relieved or disappointed to hear he was being backed up with boats etc but that can't take anything away from him - find out more about this incredible journey at: <http://www.amazonswim.com/main.php>

LOST IN THE JUNGLE:

Two French hikers survived getting lost in thick jungle in French Guiana. The men were exhausted and dehydrated

after their 49 days in the forest, although they had survived by consuming turtle meat, big hairy spiders and river water.

One of the men had lost about 20kg and had also lost feeling in his tongue "because of the poison from a spider he had eaten without having cooked it enough".

About 40 police and soldiers had searched for the pair for three weeks, on land and by helicopter. The search was suspended on 26 March.

We're always on the lookout for amazing rainforest survival stories and this one will be tricky to beat - you can find more all over the internet - they've even made Wikipedia...

CALL FOR PXRS...with everyone heading off on their summer expeditions soon we'd like to ask you to send us your Post Expedition Reports or expeditions summaries. For the next Fieldnews we'd like to share the lessons learnt and look at the issues arising - particularly in Tropical Forests... If you don't already, please also send them off to the RGS as well; they keep a wonderful collection in their archives which are a valuable resource for all expeditioners...

A sad story from the Adventure Race... with a happy ending

The planning of the Sabah Adventure Race, meant a lot of time was spent on recces, in 4 x 4's or on bikes and kayaks testing route options out.

On one of these recces Simon met a pregnant woman with small baby in her arms who asked him to help her husband, who was in the jungle behind their farm. They found a man who had been crushed by a falling tree and whose femur was waving around in the air completely disconnected from the rest of his leg. We rounded up some local workers and after a spot of basic first aid, we got him onto a homemade stretcher and off to hospital.

The result was that poor Maidol had done so much damage that he had his leg amputated a few days later, something that came as quite a shock to those of us who had become attached to this humble jungle man.

We have now raised almost enough money to buy him a fancy new prosthetic leg with a hydraulic knee joint and a rubber foot to enable him to get back to work as soon as possible. We think we've also helped him on his way to a new job working with other amputees for a prosthetic limb company - a happy ending we hope...



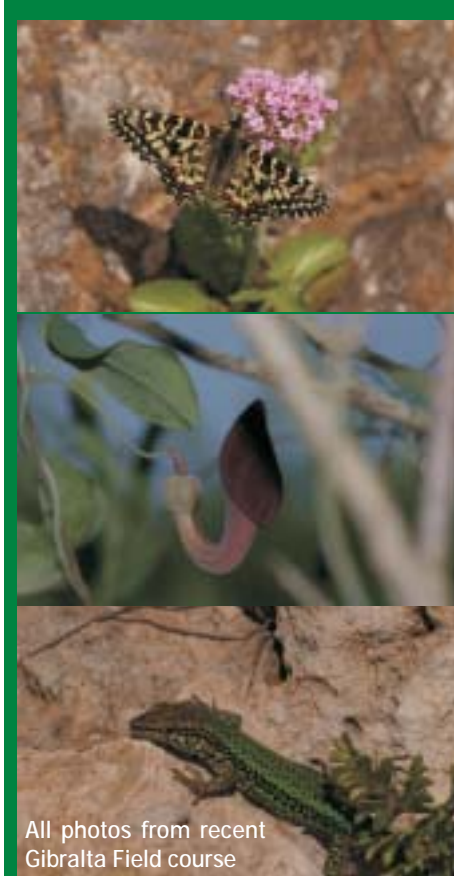
Fieldskills Collaboration with Leeds Uni...

Fieldskills are working in collaboration with Leeds University to offer practical training for masters students in field safety. The Leeds Biodiversity and Conservation programme is a one-year, full-time taught masters offering both MSc and MRes degree options, also offering part-time and sandwich internships. The programme is aimed at both home and overseas postgraduate students wishing to either enter a career in conservation, or prepare for a research studentship. It is also suitable for those with practical conservation experience who wish to improve their knowledge of underlying biological processes and to advance their qualifications. The Programme is distinct from similar courses currently offered in the U.K. in its concentration on the biological principles underlying biodiversity, its assessment and its management. Students have an opportunity to attend one of two field-course options to either the Mediterranean or Kenya, where they undertake field based projects on a variety of topics. In addition, students also have an ideal opportunity to work in tropical or temperate situations through participation in individual field based projects, (MRes this is two and MSc one). Alongside these fieldwork options the Fieldskills collaboration is providing all the students with first aid and fieldwork safety planning courses as a practical addition and transferable skill as part of the course.

For further information on the course please visit:

<http://www.fbs.leeds.ac.uk/gradschool/BCMSc/course.html>

If you are interested in incorporating practical fieldwork safety courses into your organisation please contact Dom at Fieldskills.



All photos from recent Gibraltar Field course

FOSSILISED FOREST...

A spectacular fossilised forest has been discovered by Dr Howard Falcon-Lang from the University of Bristol and US colleagues, in the underground workings of a coalmine, in Illinois, USA.

The fossilised forest was preserved following a major earthquake 300 million years ago. The quake caused the whole region to drop below sea level whereupon the forest became buried in mud, preserving it forever.

It is composed of a bizarre mixture of extinct plants: abundant club mosses, more than 40 metres high, towering over a sub-canopy of tree ferns, intermixed with shrubs and tree-sized horsetails.

The fossil forest is the largest ever found, covering over 10,000 hectares, an area 10 km by 10 km (which would cover the city of Bristol, UK). The fossils preserve a unique snapshot of what tropical rainforests were like 300 million year ago.

For further information see <http://www.bris.ac.uk/news/2007/5405.html> or read the full paper:

Ecological gradients within a Pennsylvanian mire forest, by William A. DiMichele, Howard J. Falcon-Lang, W. John Nelson, Scott D. Elrick and Philip R. Ames. *Geology*, May 2007; v. 35; no. 5; p. 415–418; doi: 10.1130/G23472A

OXFORD UNIVERSITY CONFERENCE

There were images of widespread drought in 2005 in the Amazon. Though scientists can not be sure if global warming caused the drought, Scientist at a recent conference at Oxford University have been considering the "corridors of probability" which may mean that these events become more common and, in the worst case, predictions that the Amazon is entering a cycle of destruction with events like this becoming more common and combining with disastrous effects.

The difficulty with these predictions is always that they can not be made with any certainty. Depending on the model used and the opinions of those involved the predictions can be very different.

However, the seriousness of any such event is so high that even if there is only an outside chance of it occurring it must be taken seriously...

FOR MORE <http://www.eci.ox.ac.uk/news/events/070320amazonconference.php>

All in a day's work...

Fieldskills Directors Dom Hall and Simon Amos.

In February I escaped the cold of the UK winter and spent a month out in the office in Sabah. As with all trips the month raced by and for the last four days, with jobs mounting up and time running out we headed off on a road trip round Sabah. First stop was the Borneo Eco Tours Lodge on the Kinabatangan River. Having battled the mudslides of the approach road we were transported across the River to the other side where we began work on a risk assessment consultancy job for the lodge who are keen to push the standards of tourism safety standards in Sabah. Whilst there we also helped them with another problem they had, a slow loris they had rescued from the market in Sandakan and weren't entirely sure what to do with as it seemed too timid and habituated to be released into the wild. Therefore as well as a risk assessment service we were also able to provide a contact at the new Sabah zoo to deal with the rescued animal.

From there we headed straight to Tabin. Rushing to arrive before the park gates shut we raced in with two minutes to spare and headed straight to the mud volcano. There we decided to stay overnight in the 30 metre observation tower. We raced in through the mud and the fading light, somewhat perturbed by the large fresh elephant prints we seemed to be trekking in. No elephants were seen, however, and the effort was worth it for the spectacular dawn chorus, particularly with the number of hornbills flying around the tower.

We were in Tabin to provide first aid training for the SOS rhino survey but Tabin is also home to the Sepilok Orangutan Appeal's rehabilitation site where Fieldskills continue to provide support. Therefore we were soon involved in shifting supplies around and preparing for a heli drop out to the site which was also happening that day. So with a BBC film crew flying in and supplies to be shifted, plus our original first aid training job to do the last thing we really needed was a call to say the helicopter had slid off the helipad six kilometres into the forest. Eventually the group out at the camp managed to right the heli by standing on the skids and it was able to fly out, but it was doing no more flying that day.

Mud Volcano, Tabin



So another tonne of stores moved back off the helipad, a first aid course successfully run, late night elephant encounter avoided, night at 30 metres overlooking a mud volcano, a risk assessment consultancy done and a loris and tipped up helicopter rescued, we headed back to KK for a much needed drink.

EVENTS, OPPORTUNITIES AND ADVERTS...

Expedition Medicine Course: Fieldskills are supporting Expedition Medicine in running their new Borneo based Jungle Medicine Conference, June 17th-23rd. There are a few places still available so if you are interested see www.expeditionmedicine.co.uk

Expedition Places: Biosphere Expeditions have a couple of last-minute places left on their Altai mountains snow leopard expedition. Dom has led on Biosphere Expeditions before and found them very rewarding and worthwhile.

Dates are 8 - 20 July | 22 July - 3 August | 5 - 17 August and they are offering a reduced rate for Fieldskills clients for each of these dates of £990 (excluding travel to the Novosibirsk assembly point). More information about this expedition is at www.biosphere-expeditions.org/altai.

Expedition Staff Wanted: Operation Wallacea are looking for expedition camp managers and leaders for their Honduras expedition this year from June to August 2007 though shorter contracts may be available. If you are interested contact Alex: www.opwall.com, alex.tozer@opwall.com

KIT: I'm not sure if any of you have discovered the wonders of freecycle - you advertise on the website items you don't want anymore and anyone who wants it can come and pick it up... simple. As we are trying to support people in getting expeditions up and running, and kit is always a major consideration - we would like to encourage you to do the same - so all your old expedition kit that you don't need anymore - let us know and we'll advertise it in Fieldnews - be it free or you want to sell it on is up to you - as long as it's good kit and a good deal we'll put it in...