

# WELCOME to FIELDNEWS

In Issue 4 of Fieldnews we look at Fieldwork training at Oxford University, a plan to sail Lake Tanganika and more rigging and logistics work at the Danum Valley and in preparation for the Sabah Adventure Challenge. 2007 has been a hectic but hugely enjoyable one at Fieldskills, we are ready for a Xmas break, to recuperate over mince pies and brandy, a roaring fire in the UK and a Xmas beach party in Sabah! *Dom*

## UNIVERSITY FIELDWORK TRAINING

In the last month Fieldskills have developed their series of fieldwork training courses. Building on our work with Leeds University last year we ran a course at Edinburgh University for the University expedition society and a series of seminars at Oxford University for staff and postgraduate students involved in overseas and UK fieldwork.

Our aim throughout these training courses is to provide support to staff and students to run their fieldwork safely. In the coming months we will be extending this at a number of other universities. We believe that training is key to the success of any expedition or fieldwork activity. All the participants need to understand and engage with the safety planning system as it is their application of the systems in the field which will be largely responsible for the success and safety of the trip. The courses combine first aid, environment specific skills and generic planning skills, dependant on the team's specific needs. The feedback has been very positive and reflected that our main aim - to discuss safety in an engaging and constructive way - has been successful and allowed staff and students alike to look at what they are doing in new ways thus combining the huge expertise already held within University departments with the opportunity to reflect and reassess safety issues:

*The course reinforces the need to make contingency plans... the interactive group sessions were a very good idea - makes people really think - Oxford University*

*It is suprising how much more confident I feel now approaching a crisis situation... I feel much more aware of safety issues and more confident in problematic situations... The course is useful to get you thinking about things you may already know but don't always consider - looking at fieldwork in a different light - Leeds University*

Fancy the Sabah Adventure Challenge - find out more on page 4



Sailing Lake Tanganika on page 2



If you would like to discuss options for fieldwork training at your University or are interested in other options for bespoke courses then please contact [dominic@fieldskills.com](mailto:dominic@fieldskills.com)

## Lake Tanganika

*In 2008 Nigel Hodgson and Max Perry plan to sail Lake Tanganika - the longest and second deepest lake in the World and one of the least explored. Nigel explains more:*

In 1998, while working as a safari guide in Tanzania, I was lucky enough to run a camp in Katavi National Park, South Western Tanzania. It is a remote area, and receives few visitors a year and is only really accessible for a few months of the year during the dry season.

The area of woodland savannah, interspersed by flood plains is full of game - cape buffalo, hippos and crocodiles. Just to the West of the park is Lake Tanganika. I had previously travelled down the lake in the 60s with my parents when a decent passenger boat was still running and whilst running the safaris there I explored the lake shore whenever I could.



Before heading off on his expedition Nigel is working with Fieldskills to write and design the new Fieldskills Savannah Safety Course.

### NEW COURSES COMING SOON

Mountain Safety Course

Desert Safety Course

Savannah Safety Course

These courses follow the philosophy successfully developed with the Tropical Forest Safety Course of addressing everyday health and safety concerns in these environments. They are be available from Spring 08 and full details are now up on the website.

I found an area clean and self sufficient, with people growing crops irrigated from the Lake water and catching fish from it. People had hardly ever seen a 'Muzungu' and small children would run away screaming at the sight of me. The locals told me stories that on the Congo side it remained a really wild place.

Ten years on I am going back with long time friend Max Perry. Max is a sailor and together we want to buy a local dhow and sail the lake from its Southern point, Mpulunghu in Zambia to Bujumbura, Burundi, its most northerly point.

We plan to take time out to explore the shores. We hope to see the goliath tiger fish, water cobra and chimpanzees living in the rugged, forested hills along the lake shore.

Not much has changed since Burton and Speke first saw the Lake in 1858 in their attempts to find what fed the Nile. It remains a remote and forbidding place and there is still much careful planning and some adventures on the trip to undergo if we are to achieve our aim but in many ways, that's the point.

## World Land Trust/GUYRA Paraguay Research Expedition

*I was at the RGS at the end of November at the Explore event - as ever it was an inspirational event and I met many students setting up exciting and worthwhile projects. Here is just one example - if you would like to tell us about your project then please send us details and we'll include it in Fieldnews - you never know what help and advice might be out there from our readers... Dom*

Three WLT/UEA Post-Graduate Diploma students (Conservation and Project Administration) are heading to Paraguay in March 2008 for one month. They will be offering support, through scientific research, to WLT project partner GUYRA. In country logistical and administrative support will be provided through GUYRA.

Two students, Martyn Griffiths and Tracie Long, will be based in a Protected Area in the North East of Paraguay covering the transitional area between the Dry-Chaco and Pantanal. The site is in a remote area of Paraguay and much still remains to be discovered, so Tracie's research will involve biological investigation into the species of hawk and emperor moths that are present.

She will use simple light traps to survey and document moths, with a view to compiling a field guide of the species present. Martyn will be using social science sampling methods to assess the feasibility of incorporating the two local communities (Indigenous and Campesino) fairly into conservation efforts in order to ensure conservation success. Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) will be used due to time limitations, and he will be focusing on the local hunters and look at potential employment as park guards/forest wardens.

The final team member, Natalie Evans, will be based within the Atlantic Rainforest in the South West of Paraguay within the San Rafael National Park. She will be using GIS mapping and PRA in order to assess responsible soybean production within the region, with a focus on GUYRA's pilot soybean project.

This expedition is important as a confidence building exercise between the two partners and also provide scientific/technical assistance. The research projects will fulfil 20 credits towards their 'Project Administration' section of their PG Diploma. The WLT/UEA have funded the expedition, however a number of fundraising techniques have been engaged to help contribute to costs.

## Continued support for Danum Valley - and rope access in Sabah

Danum Valley is one of the few rainforest study centres that encourages and facilitates canopy research, indeed it has hosted many Phd's and filming projects amidst the verdant boughs of the giant rainforest trees in the conservation area there.

In the last few weeks we have been working again with the Royal Society's research programme at Danum to train staff and a researcher from Cambridge University in advanced techniques for moving around in the canopy. These techniques are the domain of professional arborists and allow climbers to manoeuvre themselves into pretty much any place in a tree safely.

After drumming in the basic safety regulations (don't let go!) we showed them some of the tricks we use to get cameras and presenters into some pretty hard to reach places and what to do if it all goes wrong. We aim to support Danum wherever we can and are privileged to work at a top research centre. As well as getting to spend plenty of time hanging out in trees, it is very rewarding to work with top researchers and support their vital studies. As an offshoot of this we have built our reputation as Fieldskills is quickly become established as the leading rigging firm in the Malaysian state.

As well as working at Danum, around Sabah we have been asked to carry out safety inspections, risk assessments and even build high ropes courses for recreation facilities, in one case for the Malaysian army. So if you have a place that is hard to reach or want ropes in high places in Sabah contact [simon@fieldskills.com](mailto:simon@fieldskills.com).



## Sabah Adventure Challenge [www.sabahadventure.com](http://www.sabahadventure.com)

### Do you fancy a real challenge this spring...

Into its ninth year now, this is SE Asia's longest running adventure race and has a reputation for being one of the toughest (ask The North Face team from last year!).

Fieldskills have been involved for a couple of years now as race directors and roping specialists, providing a lot of the medical kit and risk assessment support.

In 2008 we will be preparing the race route, this involves the horrible task of cycling for miles and miles to find the best routes in the jungles around Mount Kinabalu, a task that Simon is going to really hate as it gets him out of the office some more!

If anyone thinks that they would like to try an adventure race and

take a look at the amazing jungles of Borneo at the same time, there is an Adventure category in the race as well as the Extreme category which is a lot easier and is usually done by first timers or the less-fit who are looking for more of an adventure than a race!



## FOREST and other NEWS

Some other stories which caught our interest...

<http://www.sciencedaily.com/>

Scientists have discovered an extract from a rainforest tree that can block tissue destruction. This traditional medicine combines wound healing properties and illustrates the therapeutic opportunities that nature offers.

This breakthrough could help sufferers of various joint, skin and gastrointestinal diseases, including osteoarthritis and irritable bowel syndrome.

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/>

A minke whale that had got terribly lost amongst the Amazon's numerous tributaries has sadly been found dead. The 5.5 m whale

started off from the Atlantic, more than 1000 miles away.

The animal was spotted last week in the Tapaio River, deep in the Amazon rainforest, where attempts by locals and conservationists to keep the whale hydrated and to transport it back to the sea were thwarted.

<http://news.yahoo.com>

On a more positive note, a male South China tiger cub was born on a South African wildlife reserve. The tigers brought from China are part of a conservation project to increase numbers surviving in a natural environment - currently fewer than 30

exist in the wild.

<http://news.bbc.co.uk>

An ape fossil has been found in northern Kenya, dating from around 10 million years ago - primate fossils from this period are very rare and could provide groundbreaking clues as to human evolution.

The find, a lower jaw bone and 11 teeth, could contradict current genetic studies suggesting that apes migrated out of Africa to Europe and Asia, returning only much later.

An anatomist at University College, London, UK, Professor Fred Spoor, told the BBC "Perhaps we might

start to understand a little more about the common ancestor of African great apes and humans and whether it lived in Africa or Eurasia.