

WELCOME to FIELDNEWS

It seems hard to believe that 2009 is already upon us and we are already into another exciting year of expeditioning and fieldwork. We are all raring to go for 2009 and look forward to hearing from all of you about your plans for this year... *Dom*

Can volunteering projects cater for all customers and still effectively reach its ultimate goals?

Since Judith Brodie, CEO of Voluntary Service Overseas (VSO), claimed that modern day volunteering had become a form of neo-colonialism, few issues in the responsible tourism world have become as heated in debate.

Companies offering volunteering holidays, often those associated with gap years, have been pitched against charities and not-for-profits in fierce battle. The former argue, often with support from local partners, that without their schemes vital work in conservation and development would not take place due to lacking resources. However check any travel forum and you would likely find a disgruntled volunteer who feels fleeced by the price of a project and asking if they should have simply donated the money directly to a local cause. But is that possible?

YourSafePlanet is in a fairly privileged position working with local stake holders worldwide. We connect travellers with trusted local experts in the places they want to visit. A common theme throughout our network is a passion for sustainable tourism and engagement of visitors with the community. This ranges from our 'YSPerson' in Trinidad being a long-standing advocate of responsible travel to the Caribbean to our YSPerson in Spain who runs her own ecotourism and community volunteering company. This gives YSP an insight into the situation at the very grass roots and, in general, this is what we find:

1. There is ground-breaking work taking place at the global grass roots without input from international bodies
2. International bodies can support local work by providing profile and sponsorship
3. Local stake holders are the best informed about how to work against a certain local problem but benefit from sharing best practice with similar projects
4. Volunteers are a useful resource when they can offer relevant skills.
5. Visitors are of benefit to local projects if they promote that work and donate money to the cause while they are there.

Finally, we find there is a need to provide a connection between the local project and the overseas visitor or volunteer. Any organisations with this aim as its core ethos will provide an important service to both customers: the volunteer and the project. Done transparently, projects have access to extra manpower and possibly specialist skills as well as financial support, while the volunteer feels they are getting the necessary support in finding a suitable placement and getting a fair deal.

Can such organisations be profit-making? Yes, we believe so, as long as they are not taking money away from the community or project in question.

FIELD SKILLS WATER SAFETY COURSE...



March 28th - 29th 2009

This innovative new course gives you the opportunity to look at safety in a variety of water environments. With practical sessions ranging from the pool, to rivers and the sea the course will give you the skills to assess water and an awareness of how to avoid or handle the dangers. So if you are going to be working on, in, or near water this course is a must... sign up on the website now...

SEE PAGE 4 for all upcoming course details

If a service is being provided to a traveller or volunteer then fair payment should be taken. However the key again is transparency. This is the wonderful opportunity offered by the internet – freedom to information to make informed decisions. We can now check internet forums to see if we should be using a certain company or visiting a particular place and find out from our peers what their views are. I hope this will be used wisely and to democratise travel.

As an industry of travel providers we need to make our local service providers a core customer, not supplier. They should be treated with the same respect and consideration as any traveller. Not only will this mean tourism becomes a more responsible business but that everyone involved will benefit. There is a win-win opportunity here for the taking, but rather perversely it requires a middleman. Which is something I never thought I'd hear myself say.

Sally Broom runs Your Safe Planet (www.yoursafeplanet.co.uk) and shares Fieldskills passion for finding ways to make volunteering opportunities rewarding both for the volunteer and the in-country partner. She wrote this article with input from Raj Gyawali founder director of socialtours.com in Kathmandu.

Leanne's Trek for Heroes

In April 2010 Leanne Franklin-Smith will (wo)man-haul a +100lb sled for over 320 nautical miles from Resolute Bay in the Northwest Territories to the 1996 position of the Magnetic North Pole.

Have a read and see if you can help her out in any way - maybe you could even join her...

By enduring weeks on the ice in temperatures usually down to -50 degrees or less with wind-chill, Leanne is hoping to raise £30,000 for the charity Help for Heroes (www.HelpForHeroes.org.uk). The charity was set up in October 2007 with the primary target of providing a swimming pool and rehabilitation complex for the DMRC Headley Court facility that provides rehabilitation services for all wounded military personnel. That target met, the charity has gone onto raise over £12 million and to provide essential infrastructure, equipment and support for the high numbers of wounded returning, for example, from Iraq and Afghanistan. Since leaving the employ of the Air Force in 2003, Leanne has wanted to raise money for wounded service personnel and raise awareness of the lack of facilities/help that is provided, and so Help for Heroes is the perfect charity.

The event itself is organised by Polar Challenge, and Leanne needs to recruit 2 other team mates to join her in the race. Although the logistics are covered, there are many



hints and tips for optimal Arctic travel/survival that are being discovered along the way, more are always welcome! There is a website to raise the profile of the project, and provide information on fundraising, training, events and the race/the charity. BearBabe branded t-shirts, mugs, pencils etc are available from the website if you'd like to a) contribute to the fund and b) help advertise the cause! If you would in anyway like to get involved, please get in touch (training/nutritional advice, arctic experience, fundraising experience, advertising...), all help and advice is gratefully received!

Keep up to date with progress (both fundraising and training) on www.BearBabe.co.uk - and please tell everyone else!!

WANT TO ASK FOR HELP OR TELL US ABOUT YOUR EXPEDITION? SEND US INFO FOR THE NEXT ISSUE OF FIELDNEWS NOW...

Youth Expedition Follows in Shackleton's Footsteps

A team of 13 young people aged between 18 and 23 have successfully completed the notorious Shackleton Crossing in South Georgia, an island located deep in the South Atlantic. They have braved crevasse riddled glaciers, high mountain passes and sub zero temperatures to become some of the youngest people to have ever completed this demanding traverse.

The team was headed-up by volunteer leaders on an expedition to South Georgia and the Falkland Islands with the youth development charity British Schools Exploring Society (BSES Expeditions). The crossing was originally made by Sir Ernest Shackleton in 1916 after a failed attempt to cross the Antarctic continent. It's a notoriously difficult journey even for seasoned

explorers taking in 11 mountains over 2,000 metres and sub zero temperatures.

Alongside this once in a lifetime achievement the group has also been conducting a range of scientific research projects on the Falkland Islands and South Georgia including surveying elephant and fur seals and investigating the populations of king penguins. The expedition has been made all the more unique as the group has travelled to and from these remote islands on the Royal Navy Ice breaker the HMS Endurance Patrol Vessel - a rare experience in itself.

BSES Expeditions will be running expeditions in 2009 to Greenland, the

Peruvian Amazon, Indian Himalaya and Arctic Norway. Fieldskills have worked closely with them in providing leader training and helping to source young explorers and leaders. Their next adventure - the 'Extreme Arctic' expedition departs for the frozen archipelago of Svalbard, arguably Europe's last remaining true wilderness. For any young people inspired by this opportunity the deadline for joining this exciting expedition is Feb 9th 2009 and there are still a few places available. BSES also have opportunities for leaders looking to lead youth expeditions see www.bses.org.uk for more details.

CREES - Community Minded Research and Adventure in Peru

CREES are developing scientific and volunteering programs in the Peruvian Amazon. Fieldskills are working with them to offer training opportunities and to help promote the work they are doing in Peru. Matthew Fielding explains more about their plans for 2009:

CREES represents the Manu Learning Centre (MLC), a research and education facility in the South Eastern Peruvian Amazon. The centre hosts researchers from around the World, as well as working with adventurous expedition groups and local development initiatives. It strives for sustainability in every form and ensures work carried out at the centre has local as well as international relevance.

In 2009 CREES is focusing its resources in three specific areas; Conservation Research, Education and Capacity Building, and Community Livelihoods.

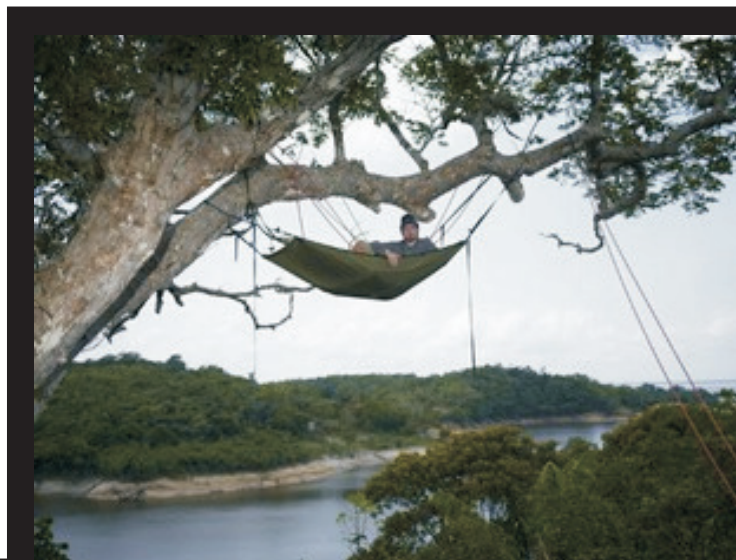
Conservation Research we are continuing our highly successful monitoring of the endangered blue headed macaw. We have gathered unique data on the species from our collpa over the last three years and this year we are extending the monitoring to incorporate tower monitoring from within the MLC private reserve. We will develop our dataset for the species by including information about the range and the habitat of the BHM, contributing to its conservation and to the continuing role it plays in environmental education.

Community livelihoods we have developed a household garden concept at the MLC which enables local people to produce fresh fruit and vegetables for consumption at the MLC and by tourism companies operating in the area. Our plan is to transfer the accumulated knowledge and skills that CREES has acquired to the local population. The two-pronged form of this project is to facilitate these business and entrepreneurial skills associates with commercial food production and to improve the nutrition and diet of the local populations by using plants that grow in the area but are not locally available.

Education and Capacity Building We will train and support young people and adults in the local community in learning languages, about IT and business development skills. The aim is to expand local skill sets with emphasis on sustainability and environmental awareness. This is all in addition to our highly successful and long running environmental education programme and ecology club with the local high school.

If you wish to find out more about any of the projects listed above or would like to join one of our expeditions, please contact matthew@crees-expeditions.com.

It is worth noting that CREES Expeditions operate a volunteering programme at the MLC incorporating all of the aspects of the projects described above. Within January they are offering a discount of \$475 on programmes longer than four weeks (www.crees-expeditions.com/jansale).



Slow Travel for Forest Sustainability

Tree Climbing Northwest (TCNW), a tree climbing school for individuals and guides based out of Portland Oregon, is currently working with a multiple of groups, scientists, eco-villages and mavericks around the globe to bring ecotourism to a new height. They are using SRT climbing,

similar to what some canopy researchers are employing today to give clients a unique experience of the forest which they also hope will minimise the environmental impact as well. This type of slow travel casts aside ziplines, tree platforms and canopy walkways instead focusing on a heartfelt appreciation of the trees micro ecosystem, along with experiencing the relationship their tree has to the rest of the forest. This type of slow travel also allows flexibility in climbing destinations, preventing the over use of any one area.

They use preset Treeboats (hammocks for tree top camping) for everyone to enjoy their lofty experience in comfort. "Having a Treeboat for the climber to relax into once they reach the canopy, helps to reduce the environmental impact and eases any mental apprehension. By keeping the climber on rope and off the branches we are producing a safer experience for both the climber and the tree.", says Tim Kovar, chief instructor of TCNW and Master Instructor of Tree Climbers International. For those travelers wanting a more adventurous way of seeing the forest, Slow Tree Travel is becoming a unique way to reconnect with nature.

For more information on how Slow Tree Travel can help bring awareness to your forest, contact TCNW at www.treeclimbingnorthwest.com



SIGN UP NOW...

FEB COURSES:

OUTDOOR FIRST AID 16th/17th Feb

EXPEDITION LEADERSHIP:

Get into Expedition Leading 21st Feb,

Planning & Leading Expeditions 22nd Feb.

FULL DETAILS www.fieldskills.com

Also coming in the spring:

Water Safety: Mar 28-29th

Tropical Forest Safety: Apr 11-12th

Savannah Safety: Apr 11-12th

Mountain Safety: Apr 25-26th

More details, further dates and to book go to www.fieldskills.com

Back to earth with a bump the UK training year launching with our annual fieldwork safety training at Leeds University. We had a lot of fun and the students again seemed to take a great deal from the course.

The course was also a baptism of fire for Clare Dyson our new UK course manager who got hands on straight away. Clare has worked in outdoor education for the last 6 years as well as travelling overseas leading expeditions both commercially and on her own overland mission to Mongolia. She joins Fieldskills to help develop our UK training courses throughout 2009.

EXPED NEWS

Here are some snippets which caught our eye from the expedition and field science world...

Tropical Animals could be most endangered by climate change. An article in New Scientist by William Laurance of the Smithsonian Tropical Research Institute in Panama suggests that whilst the polar bear has become inextricably linked with climate change imagery perhaps we should be more concerned about tropical animals who can survive far smaller temperature range changes and therefore could be badly affect by climate change.

Full article in *New Scientist* issue 2690 or online www.newscientist.com

Rowing round the world... Having become the youngest person to row the Atlantic in 2005, 26 year old Oliver Hicks is now setting off from Tasmania to row around the world. He expects the trip to take two years with only one stop in South Georgia. You can find out more about his trip and follow his progress at www.virginglobalrow.com

Biofuels debate continues we have all been made aware of many of the weaknesses in the use of biofuels but new analysis argues the picture may not be so clear cut. Previous models had suggested that land use changes would be a negative contributor to biofuel's environmental profile. However a new study by Bruce Dale and Seungdo Kim suggests that the pay back time may be much shorter than previously thought. Full article in *Environmental Science and Technology* magazine, summary available www.sciencedaily.com



Fieldwork safety training...

Very informative, I learnt so much. Good fun too!
(student Leeds Uni)

Fieldskills News...

Despite Christmas and New Year the last 6 weeks have been busy and exciting times at Fieldskills. Simon and Christine came back to the UK to combine family Christmas visits with the opportunity to travel round the country catching up with UK clients and promoting Borneo. Simon and I put in a few thousands miles ploughing round the country but it was great to speak to so many clients old and new with lots of enthusiasm for doing good constructive expeditions out to Borneo.

The Borneo team is also soon to be joined by two professional climbers who will be heading out to Borneo early in 2009. Through Ropeskills Rigging we have increasing opportunities to develop rock climbing out in Borneo - starting with an amazing project setting new routes on a tropical island - pictures to follow soon!

I did also manage to get a bit of a break as well with 5 days climbing in Scotland - this has little to do with work but this gives me the opportunity to gloat a bit about the incredible weather and ice conditions I got.