

The Explorers Club Northern California Chapter

October 2007

Note venues and dates with care.
Our next event is at 6:30 on
October 19th, a Friday, at the
Golden Gate Yacht Club,
San Francisco

In color at our web site: <http://www.diggles.com/ec/>

Join a modern day explorer as he leads a team and treks through the last remote rain-forests, deserts and plains of Madagascar in search of ants. The talk will highlight his project to use insects as

a useful tool to discover and preserve the biodiversity of all plants and animals on this unique island. Along the way we will see the newly discovered jumping ants and Dracula ants.

San Francisco—October 19, 2007 Brian L. Fisher Save an Ant, Save a Planet The race to discover Madagascar's biodiversity



Dr. Fisher has conducted research and published on ants since 1986. He is a leading authority on the application taxonomy to biodiversity and conservation. His current research centers in Madagascar, where he developed the Biodiversity Center in collaboration with Park Tsimbazaza. In November 2006, this center opened its new building in Madagascar; it includes the National Entomology Collection, student classrooms and research labs. He has conducted research in Madagascar since 1992; for the last six years he has been the lead scientist on the National Science Foundation-funded arthropod inventory of Madagascar. He has trained a cadre of Malagasy University students in entomology and conservation biology.

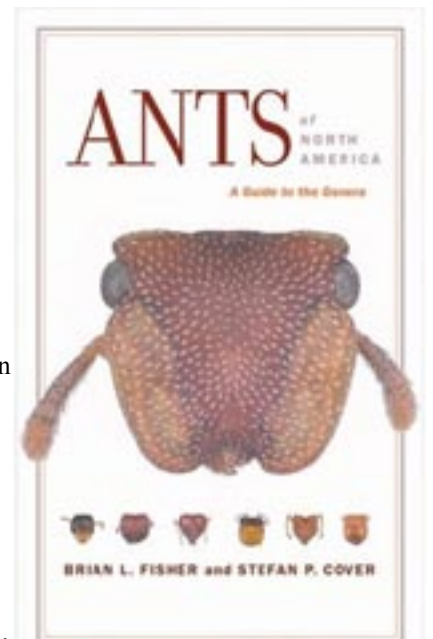
Fisher's specialty within entomology is the diversity and evolution of ants. He has published over 54 peer-reviewed articles in scholarly journals and books. He is currently Associate Curator of Entomology at the California Academy of Sciences and adjunct professor of biology at the University of California at Berkeley and San Francisco State University. He has appeared in a number of BBC, Discover Channel, and National Geographic films and has been profiled in *Newsweek* (2005) and in *Discover* (2006).



In-the-field picnic
in search of ants
(above)
Slow going on some
roads in Madagascar.

Ant-gatherer Fisher.

Brian's new book!



A Hidden Visit from Outer Space

Richard Blake
Sebastopol

Less than a week before Rick Blake (FN01) spoke to the Chapter on his discovery of a buried 20-million-year-old meteor crater, a solid piece of iron-nickel landed near homes in Peru! Despite the geologic aspects of his find, the subject is very topical. (There are some 150 identified ‘meteor craters’ in the world, and these were found largely as the by-product of the search for petroleum. Considering the ocean/land mass ratio, and those regions not thought to contain oil or gas, the world has been pelted by many more objects from outer space.)

Meteors come in all sizes. Peru’s September arrival was but a fist of metal. Blake’s Cowell Meteor find is estimated to have a diameter of half a football field. The Gulf of Mexico’s Cullucub giant, that ended the Cretaceous Period with a bang, was perhaps a kilometer across. It caused a global winter that lasted for years and decimated the world’s mammals.

The craters that have been found are not always as obvious as the well-defined hole in the ground in Northern Arizona, the Berringer Crater created some 50,000 years ago. Most have occurred over geologic times and been buried. Such was the case of the 2500-foot deep impact crater that Rick found while looking for natural gas in the Sacramento Delta. A million dollars of private exploration money was spent covering some 42 square miles with a dense pattern of seismic geophones, spaced 110 feet by 220 feet. When all of these data were brought out of the field, the structure of the subsurface was revealed. The anticipated petroleum region was deep, but a ‘feature’ jump out of the data at a shallow 2500 feet. Upon closer inspection, and subsequent study of adjacent actual wells, Rick deduced it to be a meteor impact.

The shape, the sonic reflection, the nature of materials brought to the surface—all support his conclusion. Congratulations! It might not be an oil or gas well (another of his finds holds the record for the largest gas well in California), but it is a feather in his cap as a discovery of merit.

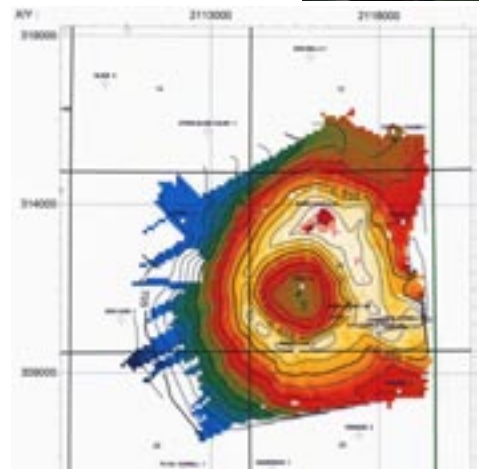
It is because the Cowell Crater is small and, by geologic standards, shallow that it has no economic value. Nevertheless, other ancient impacts do. They crunch the surface, at the time, and subsequently oil and gas becomes trapped in the remaining pockets of impervious rock. Large fields have been found under these conditions. Perhaps the largest remains as potential reserves; Yucutan’s Chicxulub Crater, is estimated to entrap more oil and gas than all that previously found in North America!

As he described the nature of the physics of an impact, large remnants of the actual material that hits the earth’s surface are rarely found. The heat involved vaporizes the material. Relatively small boulders are located, however. To provide a sense of the materials involved, he brought a basket-ball-size boulder retrieved from a South African site. Whew, it was h-e-a-v-y! He had a bag full of smaller pieces, also impressive in their heft.

NASA and other astronomers track near-earth asteroids that cross this planet’s orbit. Can’t see them all. Maybe those inbound pieces could be deflected? Probably it remains just one of those anxiety’s with which we live. However, better to try than just wait.



Looks deceive. This specimen meteorite remnant weighs 31.8 kg! The speaker made light of it; our youngest member Kyle Rothschild-Mancinelli (SM04) reflected the strain.



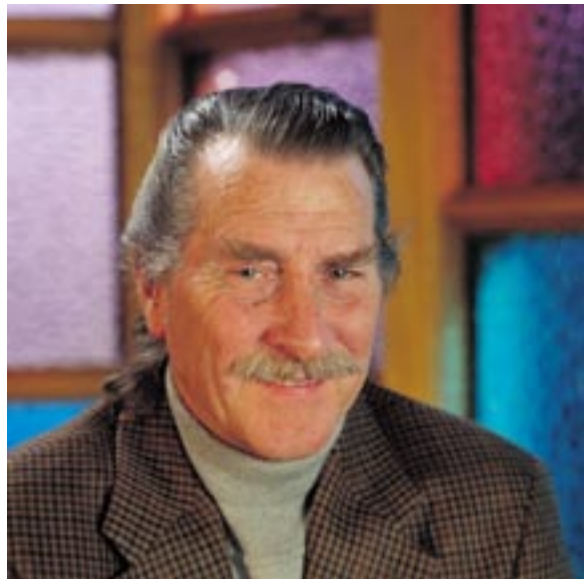
A topographic map representation of the buried meteorite crater southwest of Sacramento, CA

Art & Carole Ford were celebrating 52 years of marriage—joking a third not together (his Antarctic days!)



Our host, Gene Boudreau, shows one of his finds from northern Kenya to Don Dana (who also just returned from Africa.)





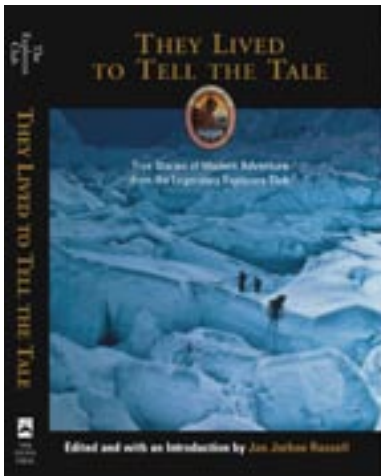
Gene Savoy—1927-2007

Chapter member and explorer of the old school of slogging through the jungles, Gene Savoy (FN69), died on September 11, at his home in Reno. Many will remember his stories of ancient Incas and expeditions that led him to the discovery of numerous ancient and mysterious archaeological remains where none were thought to exist. Among his greatest findings are the fabled *Lost City of Vilcabamba*—the Inca’s last refuge from the Spanish Conquistadors—and an intricate network of more than 24,000 stone structures, he named *Gran Vilaya*, covering approximately 100 square miles of dense jungle.

Gene also ventured seaward with three voyages from South America to MesoAmerica and the Hawaiian Isles. He named his boats *Feathered Serpents*. He spoke to the chapter last in 2001, early in the year at Reno and at Christmas time in the City.

The Most Right Reverend Savoy was head bishop of the International Community of Christ, Church of the Second Advent, which he established in Reno in 1971. His doctrine had its origins in a scientific-religious system of spiritual transcendence he initiated in 1959 in the Andes.

Gene’s son, Sean (MN04) is a Chapter member and is carrying on the activities of their Andean Explorers Foundation & Ocean Sailing Club.



The Explorers Club series of books is expanding just in time for book-giving holidays. You will hear a lot about this compendium of stories from 41 of our members. I agree with VP Whitby that it will be a popular summary of what the Club is about—especially for those who are not members! (Books can be ordered from Amazon at a deep discount.)

The Chapter Chair

Our September meeting was a great start for the year. The weather turned wine-country delightful to make the afternoon of visiting very festive. Everyone crowded into the Boudreau artifact-filled living room to hear Rick Blake tell us a lot about seismic geology and particles falling from space. Sibyl Boudreau moved about making sure everyone was offered ample wine and food; her assistant Angelina created tasty tacos, from scratch. As the sun set, folks drifted away. Thank you Boudreaus for the hospitality!

We return to the Golden Gate Yacht Club in October (and November). This has become a favorite venue: the food is good and ample, the view unmatched, the welcome warm (with a roaring fire, when needed.) Dan Liebowitz introduced me to Brian Fisher, the California Academy of Sciences ‘Ant-Man’. Brian is enthusiastic, knowledgeable and enthralling. You will love ants after his talk! He covers the world searching for specimens, but has chosen to focus upon the island of Madagascar as representative of the diversity of this species (and



I received a telephone call, then a follow-up email, from Capt. Vince Braken, of the *R/V White Holly*, docked in Sausalito. With the current news of melting ice, Canada’s fabled Northwest Passage has opened. Vince thinks big; as he writes, “The purpose for my introduction is to promote a San Francisco Chapter expedition, to and through the Northwest Passage. The Mission would be to chronicle the passage, through a science-based approach, collecting data along the route: geology, oceanography, limnology and atmospheric. I would provide the vessel *R/V WHITE HOLLY*. Undertaking this mission will require the enthusiasm and expertise of several disciplines.” Not the least: money. Take a look at what Vince and the *White Holly* have done: <http://www.whiteholly.org/>

their positive impact.) I asked him to bring some recent books, should you want to buy them from the author.

November’s meeting will be a reprise of a presentation Lawrence Bergreen will give in New York the week before. We took advantage of his travel to the City to listen to his story about Marco Polo. This will be at the Golden Gate Yacht Club, as well, on a Thursday, November 8. (As a sideline it will also allow us to ‘test’ having our meetings during the week when the traffic might be less.)

Our plate for events throughout the year is overflowing. When your Vice Chairman returns from his sacred-mountain travels in Tibet, we will make decisions and, hopefully, delight you with choices.

Unless someone leaps forward, the consensus seems to be: let the same folks run things for another year. Thus, the members on the masthead will stand for reelection at the October meeting.

I was delighted that Helen Klaben Kahn stepped forward to offer rides to the Boudreaus. Hopefully she will do so again for people to join here for the trip to the yacht club from the Peninsula. A great start to car



The *Proteus* makes it to the Big Apple. In early September, the unique WAMV (Wave Adaptive Modular Vessel) craft was shown to the press and potential users in New York harbor. It can skim over the waves at 35 miles per hour and has a range of 5000 miles on one load of diesel!

Ugo Conti, and his wife, Isabella, are the co-founders of Marine Advanced Research, Inc., the firm that built the *Proteus* for about \$1.5 million.

Next stop: the District of Columbia. *Proteus* is well suited for environmental studies, ocean rescue, freight hauling. You name it.

sharing. Now, someone from the East Bay? Contact Anders, with your reservation, if you want a ride!

I am looking for a ‘reporter’ to write a summary of our evening “Go and Tell” observations. These are always interesting, and someone needs to listen carefully and summarize them for the newsletter. My chairman duties interfere with adequate newsletter duties, in this regard. Please send me an email if you would like to help with this—you’ll get a byline!

A word about the price of our meetings. We strive to keep each meeting as close to our costs as we can without drawing excess from the Club’s account. After three years the price for dinner has risen to \$60 at the yacht club venue, a modest less-than-10%; we believe it is worth it. (Just price a dinner with wine elsewhere in the City or, for that matter, in the Bay Area.) I offer the rationalization that the generosity of the Boudreaus and a Christmas event will reduce the average outlay, significantly. Come, enjoy.

See you overlooking the Golden Gate on October 19!

—Lee Langan (FN99)

October 2007



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Secretary: Stephen E. Smith
Webmaster: Mike Diggles
Newsletter: Lee Langan

Brian Fisher — Ants
19 October — Golden Gate Yacht Club, San Francisco

**Northern California
2007-2008 Calendar of Events**
(Venues will be identified at time of event.)

Our next Meeting

October 19 (Friday)
Save an Ant; Save a Planet, Brian L. Fisher
Golden Gate Yacht Club, San Francisco

Future Meeting Schedule

November 8 (Thursday)
Marco Polo, Lawrence Bergreen
Golden Gate Yacht Club, San Francisco
December 9 (Sunday)
A gathering of Explorers
2660 California Street, San Francisco

2008 to be announced

Meetings earlier in 2007

January 19 Olaf Malver
Kayaking the Frontiers of the Seven Seas
Golden Gate Yacht Club, San Francisco
February 23 Helen Klaben Kahn
Hey! I'm Alive! Lost in the Yukon
Golden Gate Yacht Club, San Francisco
March 23 Craig Childs
Tracking Vanished Peoples Across Southwest
Golden Gate Yacht Club, San Francisco
April 20 Phil Rasori
Ceremonial Dress in New Guinea
Golden Gate Yacht Club, San Francisco
May 18 Don Dana
The First Americans: Siberians!
Parkside Grille, Portola Valley
September 23 Rick Blake
Meteorite Collision near Sacramento
Gene & Sibyl Boudreau Home, Sebastopol

October LOCATION

Date: Friday, 19 October 2007
Place: Golden Gate Yacht Club,
San Francisco, CA
Time: 6:30 pm
7:30 dinner, then talk
Cost: \$60 members and
reserved guests

Reserve ___ spaces for **October 19, 2007**, at
Golden Gate Yacht Club,
San Francisco, CA
Cost \$60 each.
Prospective members are welcome.
Drinks are no host for the evening!
Wine hosted by Redwood Creek, at table.

Please mail information (to right),
with payment, to Dr. Anders Jepsen
23 Dos Posos
Orinda, CA 94563
or email ajviking@aol.com
or call 925 254-3079

Name: _____

Address (if changed): _____

Guest(s): _____

Meat, fish & vegetarian servings available.

