The Explorers Club
Northern California Chapter
April 2009

In color at our web site: http://www.explorersnorca.org

The mountains of Rwanda and the Congo border are shrouded in clouds and fog, the ‘mist’ alluded to in Dian Fossey’s biography, Gorillas in the Mist. Our speaker and his wife (who spoke with us earlier*) spent years living in this environment and, as animal doctors, tended to these fabled animals in their home environment. They trained indigenous staff to continue in this work.

It is hard to avoid the misty reference for it aptly describes the place in a single word that communicates the working environment. San Franciscans can relate.

While tourists pay a heady amount to struggle along a trail to observe the gorillas, Dr. Chris Whittier (and his wife, Dr. Felicia Nutter) were part of the Mountain Gorilla Veterinary Project. Jack Hanna, a Board Member, has observed: “Every day MGVP’s dedicated veterinarians risk their lives on the high mountain slopes of east central Africa to track and treat this highly endangered species. MGVP has been recognized as the best of its kind by the international scientific community, and has played a major role in increasing the mountain gorilla population by 17% over the last 20 years.”

There are approximately 740 Mountain Gorillas left on earth; they live only in two small parks, one in Uganda and one that includes a corner of Uganda, Rwanda, and the Democratic Republic of Congo. In order to ensure a healthy future for this special animal, vets monitor the gorillas on a regular basis, provide life-saving medical care if needed, conduct health studies, and do all they can to build local capacity in veterinary medicine and ecosystem health.

—San Francisco—April 24, 2009

Christopher Whittier
Veterinarians in the Mist
Tales of Living with the Mountain Gorillas
in Central Africa

NorCA Photo Expedition

On April 18, beginning at 9 AM, Mort Beebe (FN78), a world-renowned photographer, will lead us on Mt. Tamalpais to demonstrate good techniques of expedition photography. You’ll need a digital camera and good walking shoes for the moderate hike. May want to bring your laptop to download and edit results.

Sign up by sending email to sacred-mountain@att.net

Details of the exact locations, and directions, will be sent to all who register by April 15. ACT NOW!
Payne Johnson (FN94) took us on an explorers’ history trip at our March 27th meeting. Had the Club been chartered in the 1830s, John Lloyd Stevens and his artist compatriot Frederick Catherwood would have been honored Fellows. They joined together for a year-long exploration of then unknown-to-the-outside world Maya ruins of Central America and Mexico. Stevens organized and wrote about their travels; Catherwood’s art documented the grandure of what they saw. When they returned the publications were best sellers.

When they landed on the shore of what is now Belize, they only had vague reports of monumental buildings inland. No maps, no guidebooks; trails and rivers through deep jungles lay ahead. Stevens had travelled widely through the Mideast, Egypt, Russia, Greece and Turkey; he was a seasoned explorer. Catherwood, known for his extensive panorama art and also well travelled, became his trusted friend. Within fifty miles they came upon Copan! Over the months they pushed on to Antigua, over the Chiapas highlands and came upon Palenque. With so much in between: more Maya cities, more mosquitos, fighting malaria, fatigue and the tropical heat. They were the first to report extensively since the Spanish conquistadors, three centuries before. On a later trip they reported on Uxmal and Tulum, among other sites on the Yucatan Peninsula, in a separate publication.

Johnson, the former Chair of our San Diego Chapter, followed the “Path to the Lost Cities” over a five-year period. His goal was to capture the same vistas documented by Catherwood. Payne was successful in finding river valleys, rock outcrops, fallen idols, monumental pyramids and crumbling Spanish churches. Most covered by vegetation when Stephens and Catherwood were there; many now opened to the sky above. The color slides and art sketches are remarkable to view over this 150-year span when shown side by side. Our speaker found the same vantage; in many cases his splendid photos could almost be overlain on the earlier art.

Catherwood took very little artistic license; most views are shown to be almost photographic in their detail. How fortunate because, now exposed, the ravages of weather, volcanic acid rain and looting have all taken their toll.

Payne Johnson has followed other explorers and has investigated ancient drawings within the caves of Baja California. He also guides travelers to the major archaeological sites of the world.

HELP WANTED
Volunteer victims (virtual) for our Field Medicine Expedition on May 9.
Members who have written published books for our Story Night, next Fall.
A reminder: we would like to send as many notifications and newsletters as possible by email to be green. Please notify Steve Smith at nauticos@oceanearth.org if you will accept email-only communication. Note that our new web address for the chapter: www.explorersnorca.org
The Corner Chair

Our last speaker Payne Johnson was an inspirer—three members stood up and said so in their own ways. Thanks to Lee Langan for bringing Payne to us. Good to hear about some new expeditions—Liz Rosen to Peru (archeology); Dan Dana back to Africa; Todd Borgie to Viet Nam; Joan Boothe to South Georgia, again; Paul Stoicheff excavating in Macedonia.

Kyle’s parents are both NorCA Chapter members: Dr. Lynn Rothschild (FN04) and Dr. Rocco Mancinelli (FN87). Lynn and her father, Kyle’s grandfather Dick Rothschild, proudly attended ECAD! They brought the news that Kyle won the Bay Area Science Fair for all Biological Sciences, earning a spot to compete in the Intel International Science and Engineering Fair in May in Reno. His project is The Effects of UV Radiation on Supercoiled DNA: A Three Year Study. He began field work in Kenya in 2007 with a grant from the Explorers Club Youth Activity Fund.

ECAD’s official Scottish Bag Piper was Kyle Rothschild-Mancinelli (SM04). Kyle is a Junior at Carlmont High School in Belmont. His proficiency with the pipes is attested by competing in the highest-ranking Grade 1 solos for three years, placing in the top 5 under age 18 nationally. He came in 4th in the Grade 3A World Competition in Glasgow in 2005. Currently he is Pipe Major of the Prince Charles Pipe Band (Grade 3) in South San Francisco.

Joan Boothe and her Sirdars are rolling—4 more signed up at the meeting; good going Joan. Anders Jepsen pointed out that we old timers don’t have to introduce our spouses as guests anymore. They are now full-fledged Sirdars, a part of our official email member list and entitled to join all our events. A new development in Spouses Rights. And some may make the plunge and apply to be international members; we can help that happen. Mike Diggles, our Webmaster par excellence, reminded me Sirdars will also receive our email Explorations Newsletter with the reports on all the expeditions of Explorers Club members and others.

Thanks also to all who have joined the Honor Roll as voluntary dues payers ($25) and to Eva Splitz-Blum who paid her dues plus a donation to our Chapter.

I’m excited about our field trips. Photography with Mort Bebee, expedition telemedicine with Paul Freitas. Two more trips are in the works for later in the year. Our newest Sirdar Von Hurson has already volunteered to be a ‘victim’ on the Mt. Diablo expedition. As one of my expedition patrons, The Sufi Rumi, said: “Adventure is a state of mind not a seat on a camel.” —Alan Nichols (FN84)

For the second time this year* a NorCA nonagenarian has been honored with 14 pages in The Explorers Journal! Ed Ross (FE79) discusses collecting bugs throughout his life, and sixty-five spectacular color images are reproduced. He is the featured author and subject of the Editor’s comments, as well. Congratulations Ed!

The Journal is the principal outreach for The Explorers Club and is sent to subscribers and national members; we can help that happen. Mike Diggles, our Webmaster par excellence, reminded me Sirdars will also receive our email Explorations Newsletter with the reports on all the expeditions of Explorers Club members and others.

Thanks also to all who have joined the Honor Roll as voluntary dues payers ($25) and to Eva Splitz-Blum who paid her dues plus a donation to our Chapter.

I’m excited about our field trips. Photography with Mort Bebee, expedition telemedicine with Paul Freitas. Two more trips are in the works for later in the year. Our newest Sirdar Von Hurson has already volunteered to be a ‘victim’ on the Mt. Diablo expedition. As one of my expedition patrons, The Sufi Rumi, said: “Adventure is a state of mind not a seat on a camel.” —Alan Nichols (FN84)

* In the Fall issue Merle Green Robertson’s rubbings were featured in a similar broad spread
April 2009

Northern California Calendar of Events
(Venues will be identified at time of event.)

Our next Meetings
April 18 (Sat) . . . . . . . . . Mert Beebe
Photography Field Expedition, Mt. Tam
April 24 (Fri) . . . . . . . . . Christopher Whittier
Stories of Gorilla Country, GGYC

Future Event Schedule
May 9 (Sat) . . . . . . . . . Paul Freitas, MD
Medical Emergency Field Expedition, Mt. Diablo
May 15 (Fri) . . . . . . . . . Doug Findley
Sailing the NW Passage, GGYC
June 6 (Sat) . . . . . . . . . Angel Island Picnic
November (TBD) . . . . . . Story Night

Earlier Meetings
May 30 . . . . . . . . . . . Nancy Black
Whale Watching off Monterey, Hicks’ home,
Garrapata Beach, Big Sur
June 25 . . . . . . . . . . . Marta Walsh at 100
DOER Marine, Alameda
September 27 . . . . . . . Art Ford
Antarctic Tourism, Liebowitz home, Woodside
October 18 . . . . . . . . . Don Hartsell
Lighter than Air, GGYC
November 21 . . . . . . . Leela Hutchison
Giant Cave Crystals, Dana home, Tiburon
December 7 . . . . . . . . . Holiday Gathering, Langan home
January 30 . . . . . . . . . Malcolm Potts & Martha Campbell
Sex in 21st Century, Golden Gate Yacht Club-
February 27 . . . . . . . . . Orville Magoon
Tsunamis—Real and Personal, GGYC
March 27 . . . . . . . . . . . Payne Johnson
Stephens’ 1839 Search for the Mayas, GGYC

Send address changes and corrections by email to Steve at
nauticos@oceanearth.org

Beebe Photo Training
18 April — Mt Tam
Whittier Gorilla Stories
24 April — Golden Gate Yacht Club

April LOCATION
Date: Friday, April 24, 2009
Place: Golden Gate Yacht Club
1 Yacht Road, San Francisco
Time: 6:30 - reception, no-host drinks
7:15 - buffet dinner, wine
8:00 - speaker
Cost: $55 (in advance); $60 (24th)
Please mail information (to right),
to Dr. Sue Estey
216 Carmel Avenue
El Cerrito, CA 94530
or email sestey@earthlink.net
or call (510) 526-2216

If you desire a car pool from the
Peninsula call Helen Klaben Kahn at
(650) 888-4058!

We have established a PayPal account. For those of you who have these accounts, you can
sign up and remit dinner costs to the NorCA Chapter by transferring money to:
explorersnorca@gmail.com

Golden Gate Yacht Club,
San Francisco
Along the seawall

®

©

®