For over one-hundred years explorers have wondered if the large number of humans reportedly eaten (estimates ranged from 28 to 135 workers) during the construction of the British railroad across Kenya to Uganda in 1898, was plausible—as reported by Colonel J. H. Patterson in his 1907 book, The Man Eaters of Tsavo. In that cooperation is the cornerstone of lion social behavior, in this notorious case, two adult male lions cooperatively killed. In December, 1898, Patterson killed both large (nine feet nose to tail!) maneless males. Some thirty years later the stuffed hides and original skulls were sold to Chicago’s Field Museum, where they remain.

Move 100 years ahead. In 1999, The Explorers Club awarded a grant to Nathaniel Dominy to support his graduate studies. (He is now Associate Professor at UC Santa Cruz and has just been selected as one of the Brilliant 10 Scientists of 2009* by Popular Science. magazine.) Prof. Dominy studies the evolution of human and primate diets, and he is about to publish a paper on the diet, ecology, and life history of the Tsavo man-eating lions. Come hear how he has solved the question of how many people each lion ate! (Col Patterson wasn’t so wrong.)

While the full extent of the lions’ man-eating behavior is unknown, he will describe the use of stable isotope ratios to quantify increasing dietary specialization on novel prey (fortunately people are considered novel) during a time of food limitation.

* Dr. Dominy is profiled in the November issue, on newsstands October 15. It is the magazine’s ninth annual Brilliant 10 issue, which shines a spotlight on men and women under 40 whose work “will change the future.” An announcement states, “Dominy, 33, is a bold researcher who has already made significant contributions to the study of human evolution. His work focuses on the acquisition and consumption of food; his goal is to identify the nutritional jackpot that gave our forebears a major advantage over all other primates. To that end, he explores the diet and foraging behaviors of hominins, the early human ancestors who lived 2 million years ago. A creative and indefatigable scientist, Dominy works at the intersection of anthropology, ecology, and genetics to understand what fueled the development of bipedalism and big brains.”
Diana Pickworth, Ph.D. (FN01), has a passion for Yemen and a poetry in her presentation of the work she has accomplished there for nearly two decades. Native to England, she first traveled to this rugged land on the southern edge the Arabian Peninsula at 25—she taught two French children. She remembered this haunting place and returned to seek out archaeology therein—even though cautioned there was little to be found. Ah, she thought, there must be interesting sites, people have passed this way since the Pleistocene.

Dr. Pickworth gave a brief survey of earlier archaeology in Yemen. It has been modest in scale, partially due to the physical hazards of desert work and the hostility of local tribes. The desert breeds hearty humans very protective of their hard scrabble existence.

This is a land where a path crossed between Africa and India as the ancient human diaspora expanded. To leave Africa the first hurdle was the Red Sea, then the north-south mountain range which parallels it’s eastern edge. For centuries Bronze Age man populated the sea shores. At some point, a narrow pass (now in modern Yemen) was discovered that allowed access to a river valley crossing far to the east; slowly man made his way.

As a result of this long presence, burials and artifacts are common, and these have become the basis of her studies. Diana works closely with the Yemen Department of Antiquities and has found treasures in the beautiful, yet bleak, terrain. Archaeology in the desert is very hard and dangerous work to this day. She shared the humor of the locals and the close calls, not infrequent. She has lost expedition participants in tragic accidents, been chased by bandits, harassed by weather—yet she has returned with crates of carefully documented detritus left by humans.

She spoke of three sites: one, along the southern edge of the vast dunes of the Rub’ Al Khali (the Empty Quarter) where Paleolithic and even Neolithic burial sites were discovered. Another, an abandoned city once along the trade route for gold, frankincense and myrrh resins (when boats, introduced by the Greeks, allowed sea travel, the land route was abandoned.) A third, an old well in Aden where layers of chards revealed the development of trade between Asia and the Near East.

Yemen, like Thailand, has never been a colony (albeit the coastal city Aden was British for over a century.) It has a ancient and proud history It has been prone to shifts in religious fervor over the ages, and it now faces new intrusions of extremists partly because the population is rapidly increasing. Nevertheless, Dr. Pickworth returns in December to continue teaching at the University of Aden and conducting her solo expeditions into difficult places. “The silence of a sunrise in the desert is my perfect moment,” she says. No wonder.

It was a fascinating hour.
Von’s Trek Kit

Medical tape One roll
Gloves – Nitrile or non-latex 2 – 3 pairs
Alcohol swabs 6 – 8
Face shield One
Triangular bandages 3 – 4 (pre-packaged)
Scissors (EMT) One pair
Bandage compresses (sterile) 3 – 4
Roller bandages 2 – 3
Aspirin 3 – 4 packets or container
Irrigating eye wash 1 bottle
Sugar packets (glucose) 3 – 4
Band Aids 5 – 6 Small to extra large
Steri-strips One full sheet
Bio-hazard & zip-lock bags 2 – 3 various sizes
Whistle One
Rescue (“Space”) blanket One
Wire splint One

All above items can be carried in a gallon size zip-lock bag and weigh just one pound.

* You can lighten your load one ounce by omitting the blanket and splint.

The Trek Kit—It started with a scenario-based “Field Medicine Trip” on Mt. Diablo earlier this year to experience how medical advice from a doctor, via satellite cell-phone, would function to save a life—or at the very least, a limb. Impressive. Still, one important question remained: what about having the correct tools on hand to do the job? Having spent 11 years with the National Ski Patrol as a patroller with basic EMT training, I always responded to a call with a vest-full of basic, but important supplies. Hence the birth of what’s become known within the NorCA Chapter as the Trek Kit—a one-pound pouch filled with medical supplies that go well beyond those found in a standard first-aid kit and vary considerably from traditional survival kits. It focuses strictly on medical issues—from a small scrape, to diabetic emergencies and broken bones, to life-threatening events like breathing emergencies or severe bleeding.

The collection of supplies has been selected with the goal of keeping someone with traumatic, potentially life-threatening, injuries alive by stabilizing them, and keeping them as intact as possible until advanced medical help arrives or they can be transported to a medical facility. And that can make all the difference.

—Yvonne (Von) Hurson (NorCA Sirdar)

A new NorCA Field Trip on December 5 (Saturday)—We will travel to a nearby cave and be escorted by an officer of the local chapter of the National Speleological Society. You will need a good flashlight (and a spare), a construction-like helmet (bike head gear works; tape the light to this) and clothes that can get muddy (with a clean set for returning home.) Knee pads can be helpful; bring some water and a light snack—you’ll eat in the cave. (This may be a first for many! Aficionados say it can get into your blood.) If you are interested, please email Von Hurson soon,
trekking@sonic.net

The group is limited and eight signed before it became formal. Specifics will be forwarded. If you participated in the earlier field trips, you know it will be fun; if not, try it.

The Corner Chair—We had a record turnout to hear Diana Pickworth on her adventures and work in Yemen. Almost everybody made it, to my surprise, through the clogs and smogs of horrendous traffic jams from all directions. If they want to force the clogs and smogs of horrendous traffic everybody made it, to my surprise, through adventures and work in Yemen. Almost on our next field trip. This is a natural for me

President of the Mexico cavers, will lead us from the local cavers grotto; Fofo, former President of the Mexico cavers, will lead us on our next field trip. This is a natural for me since I’m often “completely in the dark.” Lawrence Glacy, visiting from San Diego, reported his upcoming visit to ‘prison’ Tibet looking for lichen, not freedom, in his studies of their relationship to the transport of air pollution.

True explorers are there when you need them. Kathy Jepsen took care of the money while Sue was away, and Becky stepped in for our lead hostess—both at the last minute. We had an explorers demonstration of the biblical loaves and fishes for carpools to Bart for the East Bay traffic jam victims. Those who made their way by auto gladly accepted passengers for the return. Thanks to all members who filled out the questionnaires at each table; the few responses must mean we’re doing OK? Or Not?

We now have a film new Sirdar, welcome Geoffrey De Vito.

Becky and I attended the New York dinner on Risk in expeditions: too many speeches, daredevils dancing on fabric 50 feet in the air (real risk takers), and some good advice: “Having an unexpected adventure on an expedition proves your incompetence.”

—Alan Nichols (FN84)

Early Warning, Symposium—Several of our members traveled north to attend the Compass Symposium arranged by the Pacific Northwest Chapter. We have been advised that it will again be held at the Lakedale Resort this Spring. The dates: April 22-25, 2010. If you want details of what is scheduled, the costs and signup, contact: Lynn Danaher (MN05):

Lynn <islandlynx@aol.com>

Election for 2010—As nominated by the prior chairs of the NorCA Chapter, Alan Nichols was unanimously elected at our October meeting to serve as Chapter Chair in 2010. We look forward to another great year and thank him for the year just closing.
Northern California
Calendar of Events
(Venues will be identified as soon as known.)

Our next Meeting
November 20 (Friday) . . . . Nathaniel J Dominy
Tsavo Lions of yore, Dana home, Tiburon
ATTENDANCE LIMITED TO 1st 40

Future Event
December 5 (Saturday) . . . . Fofe Gonzales
Cave Field Expedition register with Von Hurson
December 12 (Saturday) . . . . Alan & Becky
Chair’s Member Reception, at Nichols, Tiburon
January 29, 2010 (Friday). . . . Several
Story Night . . . . . . Golden Gate Yacht Club
February 26 . . . . . . Reginald Barrett
California Wildlife . . . . . . GGYC
March 26 . . . . . . . . . . Adam Wolf
Siberian Tundra . . . . . . GGYC
April 30 . . . . . . Seth Shostak
Are We Alone in Space? . . . . GGYC
May 21 . . . . . . planning
June TBD . . . . . . Angel Island Picnic
July 1 . . . . . . Joint Meet with Dendrology Society
Marcel Robinson . . . . . . GGYC

Dana Home: take Tiburon exit, north of Golden Gate, from 101; left at Cove Shopping Center, over a hill into valley; house near roundabout, #34 Paseo Mirasol.

Dana’s

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Nate Dominy about the Tsavo lions
20 November — the Dana home, Tiburon

November LOCATION
Date: Friday, November 20, 2009
Place: The Don & Jeanne Dana home
34 Paseo Mirasol, Tiburon, CA
Time: 6:30 - reception
7:15 - supper
8:00 - talk
Cost: guests of the Dana’s;
Chapter donation $20

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

Reserve __ spaces for
November 20, 2009
Dominy talk at
the Dana’s Tiburon, CA home
Cost: we are the guests of the Dana’s
(a Chapter donation of $20 is requested!)

Name: ____________________________
Address (if changed): ____________________________
Companion: ____________________________

DUE TO SPACE LIMITS
ATTENDANCE AVAILABLE FOR 1st 40 Sign Ups

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

November 2009

Chair: Alan Nichols
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nicholsalan9@gmail.com
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ajviking@aol.com
Treasurer: Sue Estey
510 526-2216
sestey@earthlink.net
Secretary: Stephen E. Smith
Webmaster: Mike Diggles
Newsletter: Lee Langan

November 20, 2009
Nate Dominy about the Tsavo lions
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