

The Explorers Club

Northern California Chapter

February 2010

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

Note venues and dates with care.
San Francisco, CA
Our next event is at 6:30 on
February 26, a **Friday** evening,
at the **UNIVERSITY CLUB**.



PHOTOS BY R. H. BARRETT

San Francisco

February 26, 2010

Tracking the Elusive Fisher

in the Sierra Nevada

whistling for a weasel



Reg Barrett is a wildlife biologist specializing in the animals of California and a member of our chapter. He will introduce us to the fisher, the second largest weasel in North America. Its range in California has been reduced by 60%, and the few left in the southern Sierra have been proposed as endangered by both federal and state governments. Reg began his quest to discover what was holding this population back in 1975. He will review the ups and downs in his efforts to understand the ecology of this elusive predator. Currently he is leading an 11-person ground crew, plus using an airplane, to track the whereabouts of this species.

As a professor at the University of California, Berkeley, he researches three general areas: the response of terrestrial vertebrates to forest and range management practices, the ecology and management of introduced species, especially feral

animals, and the individual ecology of economically or politically important wildlife, including fishers, coyotes, pumas, wolverines, deer, elk, wild pigs and wild turkeys.

The results of Dr. Barrett's work are now being used by the forest industry and state resource agencies in producing environmental review documents for land-use planning, landscape ecology, conservation biology and vertebrate population ecology as they relate to the problem of predicting the responses of wildlife to human activities, especially on forest and rangelands.

The *fisher* (*Martes pennanti*), also referred to as a *fisher cat*, is a medium-sized furry mammal hunted to near extinction in the 19th century. The fisher's agile slender body allows it to pursue prey in trees or burrow in the ground. You may never have seen one but you may have heard their screech.

Come hear how they are doing now

A LONG, COLD NIGHT

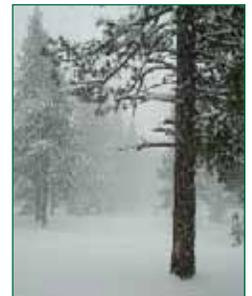
It was an exquisitely crisp, beautiful, clear Sierra afternoon, with small puffy clouds, as my friend and I buckled on our back country skis and headed off across the sparkling snow.

Our destination was a lodge about an hour away that we skied or showshoed to often and knew well.

Then—forty minutes into our trek—ominous dark clouds unexpectedly thundered in, bringing snow and near-blizzard-force winds. The blowing snow made visibility almost nil, and the terrain we knew so well became foreign. And so, completely disoriented and with fast-fading light and plummeting temperatures, we resigned ourselves to hunkering down to survive a long, cold night.

"Couldn't happen!" you say? Ah, but it can! A bright sunny day can change drastically within an hour, and whiteout conditions can appear without warning. Hence an exciting new NorCA Field Trip is planned into the wilds of the Sierras. We'll head into the snow to learn how to survive the unexpected: from injuries, to hypothermia and frostbite, how to create a shelter and to stay warm—and how to find your way out or summon help.

Come frolic in the snow with other Club members on Saturday, March 6. Limited lodging may be available with a couple of our members, or we've found a wonderful lodging bargain! All will be revealed to those who contact Von at trekking@sonic.net. Plan on skiing or snowshoeing on Sunday!





Chapter Chair Alan Nichols came up with a new idea for our first 2010 meeting: let some of our published authors tell stories about their book. Kay Schmieler organized a half-dozen tales told at a filled dining room at San Francisco's University Club. It was great fun.

Dan Liebowitz led by showing a brief clip of the travel he and his late wife Rusty took to follow portions of Stanley Livingston's last great 19th-century expedition. Yes, there are some roads now in the center of the dark continent. Clearly much manpower is still needed to manipulate a Land Rover across rickety bridges or along the trail when rains persist (commonly). Pygmies and warrior ants remain too. Dan's research resulted in a well-accepted documentary of the search for the Emin Pasha—who, in reality, saved Stanley rather than the reverse. They continued together across Africa to the Indian Ocean. David Kennard commented briefly; after a NorCA meeting, he was instrumental in pairing Dan with his coauthor Charles Pearson. The book is now published in the US, the UK and translated in Belgium (think Congo.) *The Last Expedition*

Liz McLoughlin spoke about her reaction to learning she had *DCIS (Ductal Carcinoma In Situ)*. "The phone rings. It's my nurse practitioner. 'They found DCIS in your breast.' Silence at both ends of the line. She could have been speaking Swahili." This begins her very informative book. 'Ductal', the cancer starts inside the milk ducts, 'carcinoma' in the tissues that line internal organs, 'in situ', means in place. DCIS is noninvasive because it hasn't spread into any surrounding breast tissue. The nurse said, "But if you have to have breast cancer, it's the best kind to have." You can imagine the reaction, and Liz decided to write as her treatment progressed: the technical talk is on the left

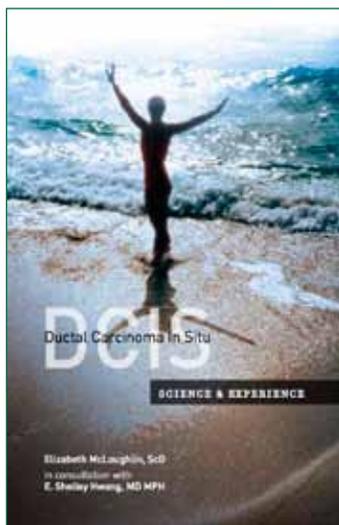
page; her feelings on the right. The result is a helpful document of hope. The growth is gone, for now. Liz tells us, "Each life adventure teaches you something." Learn from her book, on the web: http://www.bikenfly.org/dcis-final_for%20web.pdf

Mort Beebe's successful photo-essay coffee-table book, *San Francisco*, five printings since 1984 and in its 3rd edition, had its genesis after Mort was asked to document the third Antarctic Deep Freeze. (As a young Navy officer on early polar expeditions he had many pictures, and he collected other's and stories too.) The result became a collectors item. After travelling the world gathering a portfolio of world-class images, he returned to San Francisco with the idea to bring together pictures and stories about his home town. The publisher said, "we want only your pictures!" Among others he per-

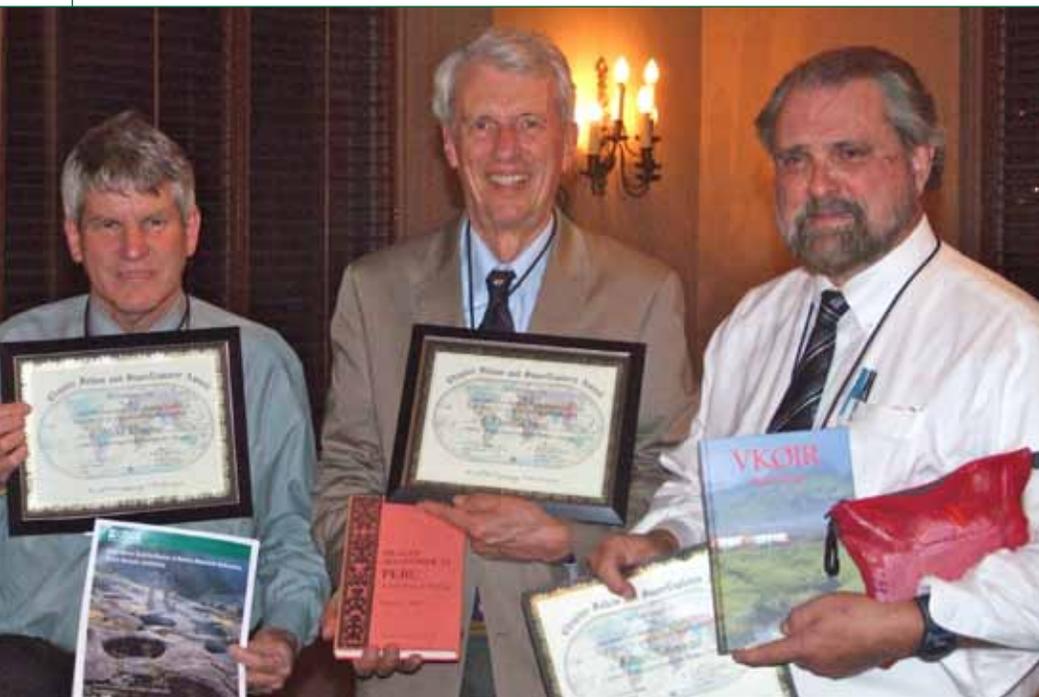
suaded Tom Cole to write on early history, Kevin Starr to cover the 20th century and Barnaby Conrad to cover the food and bars. He had a funny tale of getting Chronicle-star Herb Caen to write a welcome, using an old newspaper column! The pictures are timeless; over 70,000 copies have sold.

Mike Diggles has been the NorCA web-master for 15 years—more notable he has 105 publications under his belt. His most recent, penned and researched with Jim Moore, a fellow USGS geologist, tells of some 250 basins carved in Sierra granite to harvest salt. Created not by nature, but by diligent planning and hard labor (inventively they fire-weakening the granite then chipped it away a thin at a time.) A local salty spring was diverted into each basin; within a few months, the evaporated water left a salt residue. It is estimated some 5000 pounds of salt was bartered to other tribes each year. Mike showed the meticulous tests used to confirm these findings—at a location that remains

Stories about Stories — Six NorCA Authors



Elleo



Authors Get Ten Minutes Each in San Francisco

Liebowitz, Mike Diggles Tom Hall, Bob Schmieder (l-r)

withheld for its own protection. *Hand Hewn Granite Basins at Native American Salt-works, Sierra Nevada, California*

Tom Hall reached back in time to speak about the beginning of his continuing career as an epidemiologist and international health researcher. He spoke of his dissertation days doing research on the medical capabilities in Peru in the 1960s. The Mercator Projection of the earth creates a false impression of it's size; the country is as large as Alaska and is composed of a coastal region, the high Andean mountains and the Amazon jungle. He took a battered VW for over 2500 miles (up & down and more battered in the end) visiting clinics throughout the country; he measured his altitude by the reaction of chasing dogs, much subdued at the near 16,000' passes. One finding, Peru had an oversupply of physicians! The problem was most were in the big cities. His findings became important

in the World Health Organization's manpower planning. *Health Manpower in Peru*
Bob Schmieder organized a ham-radio expedition to Heard Island on the edge of the Antarctic in the southern Indian Ocean in 1997; one might say on the edge of the world. In three weeks records were broken reaching other radio operators around the world. Upon his return he wrote *VKQIR Heard Island*. He read an excerpt wherein he describe an imagined conversation with a huge elephant seal he came across on a solo walk, taking advantage of some reasonable weather. In his mind he spoke with *Elleo* the largest and apparent elder of a pod of seven; out of direct sight Lee Langan became Elleo's voice. Elleo spoke to defend this place as the center of the world, a place where he had always been as had all his kind before. He promised to remember this strange Visitor. Bob clearly remembers him.

The Corner Chair— Our Big-Six Storytellers graduated us to the University Club Friday thanks to **Kay Schneider's** efforts and some last-minute rescues from **Mort Beebe** on Projector and **Max Nichols** on our new borrowed sound system. Congrats to our Super Explorer Editor **Lee Langan** who won the Explorers Oscar for his ten years of unmatched newsletters; he's given so much to us—its time we elect him to the Explorers Governing Board. Vote early and often!

Welcome **Jim Hurson**, our newest Member, who explores battlefields, ignoring the mines of course. That beautiful young lady in the back is **Elizabeth Rosen**, the germinator of a Stanford Explorer Group and our host in May.

Thanks to the heavy rains the real exploration on January 26, was getting to the meeting; especially for the Peninsulars, It took **Susan Anderson** and her two guests over two hours and **Eric Stackpole** from San Jose had to turn back after three hours.

Lots of members have suggested a Story Night telling about expeditions for next year. I have asked Kay to do her magic again to start 2011.

Special thanks to the University Club, Barbara and Dominick: even the Executive Director **Michael George** figured out how we could raise the screen so everyone could view the projections.

The perfect guest: **Dan Liebowitz** not only told us his story but donated the proceeds from his book sales to the Club

Bring your wildest imagination to the next meeting to hear Explorers Member and wildanimal expert **Reg Barrett** tell us how to track the wild ones (animals, that is).

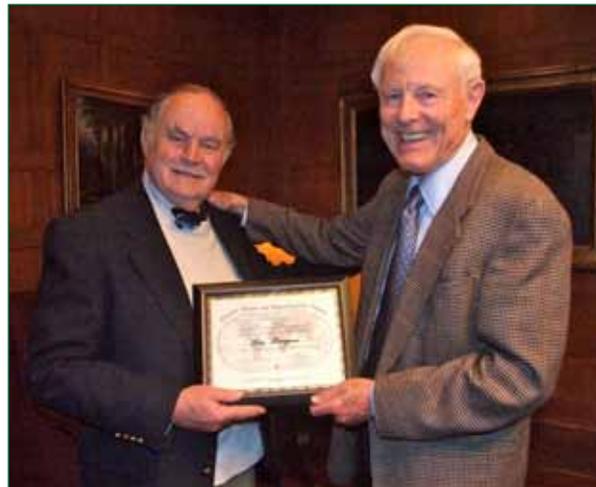
Attention all Divers: **Dida Kutz** has a plan for an underwater adventure in May; if you're interested, contact field tripper **Von Hurson** who is taking us to the snow in March (see lead story).

Shhhhhhh—For cheap parking (\$10) at meetings, go to the Brocklebank, 1040 Sacto between Mason and Powell (1 1/2 blocks from the Univesity Club

—Alan Nichols (FN84)

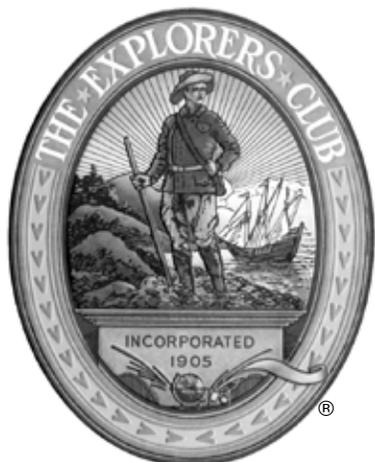
NorCA Newsletter Award—As part of the evening of stories, the Chapter recognized your editor, Lee Langan, for the excellence of reporting our meetings as we enter the end of a decade of our chapter newsletter under his tutelage. Lee was deemed a "Super Explorer of the NorCA Chapter," an award for his service and dedication to communicating—in words and photos—the gatherings of our group. His first effort was published for February 2001, reporting upon Gary Richter's talk on "Disarmament in the Former USSR" and announcing Jean-Pierre Hallet's memorable talk on life in the Congo with the Pygmies. Lee's comment, "Writing each of these reviews of our speakers has been a wonderful education."

All of this effort, and that provided by our two immediate previous editors, Sue Estey and Charles Geraci, is available on the chapter web site www.explorersnorca.org, thanks to Mike Diggles (who also served as newsletter editor.)



DAVID KENNARD

February 2010



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

The Elusive Fisher
26 February – University Club, San Francisco

Northern California
Calendar of Events

(Venues will be identified as soon as known.)

Our next Meetings

February 26Reginald Barrett
The Elusive Fisher.University Club
March 6-7Von Hurson
Snow Camping Field Trip, Lake Tahoe

Future Events

March 26Adam Wolf
Siberian TundraUniversity Club
April 30Seth Shostak
Are We Alone in Space?University Club
May 21planning
June TBDAngel Island Picnic
July 1Joint Meet with Dendrology Society
Marcel Robinson.University Club

Earlier Meetings (2009)

April 24Christopher Whittier
Stories of Gorilla Country, GGYC
May 9Paul Freitas, MD
Medical Emergency Field Expedition, Mt. Diablo
May 15Doug Findley
Sailing the NW Passage, GGYC
June 6Angel Island Picnic
June 13Mt. Shasta Climb
September 25Jim Sano
Retracing Shackleton, GGYC
October 30.Diana Pickworth
Yemen Archaeology, GGYC
November 20.Nathaniel J Dominy
Tsavo Lions of yore, Dana home, Tiburon
December 5Fofo Gonzales
Cave Field Expedition
December 12.Alan & Becky Nichols
Chair's Member Reception/Nichols home, Tiburon
January 29, 2010 (Friday).several
Story NightUniversity Club

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

USE PAYPAL!

February: UNIVERSITY CLUB

Date: Friday, February 26, 2010
Place: University Club
800 Powell St., San Francisco, CA
Time: 6:30 - reception
7:15 - dinner
8:00 - talk
Cost: \$49 in advance; \$60 on the 26th
Chapter 2010 dues: \$25
Please mail information to Dr. Sue Estey,
216 Carmel Avenue, El Cerrito, CA 94530
or email sestey@earthlink.net
or call (510) 526-2216

Reserve ___ spaces for
February 26, 2010
The Elusive Fisher
on Nob Hill in San Francisco
Cost: is \$49 (Chapter annual dues are
now due, \$25 for members and sirdars)

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

Please NOTE this location.

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

There is also a PAYPAL BUTTON on our website (www.explorersnorca.org); easy to use!



University Club,
Atop Nob Hill
where the cable
cars cross

The University Club has Valet Parking for \$20; numerous garages (not inexpensive) are nearby. There is
often some street parking. Muni, via the cable cars OR Sacramento #1 stops very near the Club; BART con-
nections are easy; even CalTrans is a good option. Car pool! The University Club is wheel-chair accessible.