More than 30 people from 10 different countries will gather in San Francisco on July 1st. They are dendrologists, people who enjoy and study trees and other woody plants.

The International Dendrology Society, or IDS, will start a grand 17-day tour with a joint meeting with the Northern California Chapter of The Explorer’s Club.

“We’re here for the opportunity to look at the marvelous range of flora in California” said John Palmer, a retired forestry professor and organizer of the tour.

Prof. Dr. Marcel Robischon, a forestry professor from Germany and a member of the IDS and TEC will present the program before the Explorers & Dendrologists.

The balance of the trip will be spent traveling throughout Northern California observing the native forests and arboreta. The tour route has the group staying in San Francisco, Sonoma, Mendocino, Eureka, Crescent City, Mt. Shasta, Tahoe City, Bishop, and Yosemite.

“The highlights will be the coastal redwoods, the ancient bristlecone pines, and the giant sequoias, plus presenting 14 gift trees to our hosts along the way”, Palmer continued.

The forestry professors at Humboldt State University and William McNamara, the director of Quarryhill Botanical Garden in Sonoma, will be instrumental in hosting the dendrologists.

The idea of a Society to bring together dendrologists from all around the world originated in Belgium in 1952. The group is based in England, but there are 1,500 members in over 50 different countries.

Both the Chairman of the IDS, Sir Richard Storey (from England) and the Vice Chairman, The Vicomte Philippe de Spoelberch (from Belgium) will be on the Northern California tour.

The IDS organizes many tours each year all around the world. In 2009 they sponsored tours to: Malaysia, Morocco, Southwest Turkey, Gloucestershire, the Rhineland, the Swiss Canton Valais, Poland, New Zealand, and Bhutan. Along with the California tour in 2010 there will be tours to Southwest Ireland, Sikkim in the Himalayan Mountains, and the Kamchatka Peninsula, to name just a few.

The Northern California tour will be a highlight for many of the well traveled dendrologists. “I’ve been all around the world,” concluded Palmer, “but California has the finest trees there are, yeah, Tree-mendous California!”
Music and Exploration in the Cold
Stanford University

The Explorers Club meeting at Stanford, on May 21, was, indeed, a special one. The theme was “Music as a Vital Part of Exploration”, and the presenters were the Left Bank / Rive Gauche trio (earth scientist/musician Alan Cooper, Larry Schemel and Julianne Stafford—reachable at www.leftbanktrio.com.) The focus was on the exploration of Antarctica; the music was prepared by the trio for performance at the December 2009, 50th anniversary celebration of the Antarctic Treaty. An extra and welcome addition to the evening was the attendance of about 15 students, members of the organizing Stanford Student Branch of the chapter.

After an introduction by Dr. Cooper, the program consisted of an exploration-related musical accompaniment to a presentation of photos, maps and sketches tracing the exploration history of the Antarctic. It began with Captain Cook’s trips to the south seas, beginning in 1772, and comparisons of Tahitian music with that of Mozart; it extended through to the compositions of Soviet meteorologist Oscar Krichak, written in Antarctica before he died there in 1960.

The songs were both melodic and contained words that described the hardships and the pleasures of exploration, and several explorers in the audience could be heard quietly singing along. It was interesting to see how the national anthems of the various countries were played during the “claiming” of the land visited by the early explorers for their own country, which makes the Antarctic treaty all the more significant. Shackleton, in 1917, reports that both God Save the Queen and the Marseillaise were played during a joint expedition with France.

Of special note were the following: Antarctic Mariner Song and The Old Peacock, 1843, by J.D. Dana, and the Song Book of Dana and Palmer, that was never published; songs promoting teamwork and National Unity such as O, the Roast Beef of Old England (1731); and songs that provided entertainment to provide “escape from the agonies of one’s hard isolated Antarctic life.” “Music was the glue that bonded them, and kept their minds and spirits alive for yet another day.” Entertainment such as Little Brown Jug also provided “Mental Medicine” for explorers.

Music showed up in various ways in Antarctica. The rigors of life appeared in classical music such as Solveig’s Song from Grieg’s Pyrgynt (1875) which captured the loneliness and longing of the explorer far from home. The efforts to provide music to the indigenous population were represented by the photos of Scots playing the bagpipes for the penguins. And, of course, the activity of expressing one’s beliefs and shared values involved music at Sunday services via hymns such as Lead Kindly Light, 1857, also memorializing explorers who did not come home.

Certain songs were quite specific. Shackleton’s team wrote Our Home on Elephant Island during the course of their four-and-a-half months while waiting to be rescued. The Japanese team wrote about the amazing recovery of their two dogs, Song of Taro and Jiro, after they had been left behind alone in the Antarctic for a year; it became very popular in Japan. Finally, the Antarctic Waltz was written by Oscar Krichak during two Soviet expeditions in 1958-60; as noted he did not return.

So, we were led from the past into the future, with a recap of expeditions to the tune of Que Sera Sera, with a picture of Admiral Byrd and the plane of the same name being first to land at the South Pole. The program ended with the message “Antarctic is the heart of it all”, with music as its universal language, shared by all of the countries that have explored the area and participated in the Antarctic Treaty.

The explorers came away from the evening humming and singing with high praise for an extraordinary evening just off the Quad.

—Anders Jepsen FN03

Gracious Hospitality—Once again the home of Dede and Harry Hicks was opened to their fellow explorers on the weekend of May 8 & 9 which enhanced the field trip manifold. Not only is the home, filled with treasures from Harry’s long stays in Asia which are there for all to enjoy—each with a new story—but our hosts treated us to a scrumptious repast. The welcome home overlooks Garrapata ravine and the photogenic highway bridge of the same name, second only to Bixby, just down the road. This creek and beach was a favorite of Carmel’s famous photographer Edward Weston, whose family home is just across the highway. A warm gregarious spot to while away a stay between adventures. Thank you Harry & Dede!
NorCA Chapter
Contributors

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NorCA Explorers in Monterey

The Explorers took a trip to the Monterey Peninsula on May 8 & 9. We met at Point Lobos State Reserve on Saturday morning where we gathered around our guide, Ed Clifton, a semi-retired USGS geologist and a docent at Pt. Lobos. He showed us maps of the general rock types in the reserve and talked about what we would see. The now uplifted area was once thousands of feet underwater. As we walked toward Whaler’s Cove, through the pine woods, the view of the cove was spectacular—glassy calm water, harbor seals on the rocks, a great blue heron perched on a snag. Ed pointed out smooth sandstone and rough conglomerate that look like concrete had been poured. Indian paintbrush bloomed orange among the poison oak. Later, we walked over to West Beach, past a swarm of bees in the woods. The tilted slabs of sandstone showed ripples from the prehistoric sea floor.

Too soon, it was time to leave for and Harry and Dede Hicks’ place by Garapata Bridge toward Big Sur. Dede was making garlic bread, and it smelled heavenly to my hungry nose. She served a huge pot of cioppino, full to the brim, with salad. Outside in the cool breeze, an array of wine, old rum, margaritas and plenty of non-alcoholic drinks, plus chips and salsa and one lone little dish of sushi, reflecting the Asian treasures in their home.

Scott Macbeth brought a bottle of Islay scotch that he received for his 80th birthday. It had been 16 years old when it went along on his 1981 Everest expedition in 1981—so by now is it 45 years old? Jim Morrissy, who accompanied Scott on that east Kangshung Face attempt, gave him this last remaining bottle. We were told it must be poured by a friend—fortunately, that was no problem in this group.

Now it too is history.

After lunch, many of us, led by Peter Hemming giving photographic advice, headed down the long stairs to the canyon floor, along the creek to the ocean. The ocean showed off incredibly blue and aquamarine colors before it broke on the sand and crashed into the rocks. We all learned a few picture hints and were reminded of some basics that we sometimes forget. When we returned, we enjoyed Rick Saber’s famous homemade rum cake. Many participants had dinner together at Tarpy’s roadhouse, on the road to Salinas.

On Sunday, some were headed to the Monterey Aquarium, while Tom and I joined Deda Kutz, Barbara Berg and Peter Hemming at the entrance to Pt. Lobos where we joined Phil Sammett, an expert diver and dive-boat captain. He brought his boat out of the harbor and took us diving. The sea was still quite calm, and the sun was playing hide and seek with the clouds. We made two dives, and he brought us back to shore in between, for a lunch break. I found, when I reviewed my Dive Log, it was Tom and my first dive there since August 2006. The water was COLD—my dive computer recorded 48 degrees on our second dive; the first was 50 degrees. Visibility was very good for Monterey, perhaps 50 feet or so, though I heard someone claim 80 feet. We enjoyed the fish and the colorful and prolific anemones, snails, cowries, nudibranches. Phil was very helpful with our gear and showed the ladder he had recently welded to help divers get back into the boat. It was a very gentle re-introduction to northern California diving.

Another enjoyable field trip! —Sue J. Estey FN82

Barb Berg MN08 diving off Point Lobos

The Corner Chair—As many know our fearless Chair is on a Flag Expedition with his grandson Max—in Mongolia. Here is a portion of his mailed report just after arrival in Ulan Batar:

Our cancelled train tickets forced us to fly MAIT (Mongolia Air). Clean, smiling stewardesses, even an edible chicken and mayonnaise salad, and a good landing at Mongolia’s “International Airport” (reminds me of our Pocatello, Idaho airport in the 1930’s) with one gate, three rooms and no visa required.

Mongolia Hospitality—Talk about hospitality: A friendly, middle-aged Mongolian offers us a ride 20 miles to Ulaanbaatar. As we’re loading our bags in his Land Cruiser, he says it will cost 40,000 togrog (about $35). It’s thanks but no thanks. We pay 20,000 for a cab ride to the “newest luxury” hotel, the Evergreen Hotel, across from the train station, elevatorless (we’re on the 4th floor), viewless, soupless, internetless, serviceless, deteriorating fast but with a free breakfast—stale bread, jam, and a brown omelet.

Two weeks before we leave, chatting with a cab driver in San Francisco, we find out he is a Mongolian lawyer from Ulaanbaatar. That leads us to meeting his friend here on our first day, a ride in a Mercedes SUV, a dinner in his friend’s restaurant, on us ($100) with true Los Angeles decor and food—maroon fake-leather booths, dark wood, short-sleeved uniforms, a huge pizza oven (purchased in Santa Rosa, CA) followed by a visit to a ger resort, an invitation to go hunting (cost not revealed), a warning that we will be robbed camping out if we don’t go armed (a rifle offered for $1000) and advice that an old man (me) will be rattled to death on the Mongolian dirt roads in our Russian Purgon ($80 a day with driver)... but the last problem can be solved with a Toyota Land Cruiser offered for $1000 and advice that an old man (me)

Andrews Still—In two days, we meet our driver, Ogy, visit the National History Museum with a room full of Andrewski proceratops dinosaurs (discovered by Roy Chapman), and Meg, a friend of our driver (she’s in Lonely Planet) introduces us to a paleontologist of 25 years who was on Novacek’s first expedition (American Museum of Natural History). We meet and have lunch with Lama Chuluumkhan at Gangden Monastery (the headquarters of Tibetan Buddhism in Mongolia, Mongolia’s dominant religion and the home of a more than 50 foot high golden statue of a standing Buddha). Our lunch, at a Chinese fast food joint, reveals he came from a nomad family (statue of a standing Buddha). Our lunch, at a Chinese fast food joint, reveals he came from a nomad family (statue of a standing Buddha). Our lunch, at a Chinese fast food joint, reveals he came from a nomad family (statue of a standing Buddha). Our lunch, at a Chinese fast food joint, reveals he came from a nomad family (statue of a standing Buddha). Our lunch, at a Chinese fast food joint, reveals he came from a nomad family (statue of a standing Buddha).

Ulaanbataarans—The people here (seemingly mostly young), dress, eat and listen to the same music as San Franciscans. We even see Ozomatli, a ska band from LA, perform in the main square (free). They don’t live in gers, herd sheep or drive with the grass seasons. Half the population of Mongolia (one million people) live in this town—small, smoggy, traffic-jammed, dirty, poor, almost treeless, smelly, busting with new construction and pick-pockets, at least 50 Westernized restaurants and a few big “luxury” hotels.

Like Chinggis Khan (who never entered a building in his entire life), we seek the open spaces and blue skies of the countryside, as they refer to anything not Ulaanbataar. As Chinggis said: “I am a child of the sky so there is no reason why I should ever try to live like a mole inside”.

—Max & Alan Nichols FN84
Dendrology Society
1 July — University Club

Northern California
Calendar of Events
(Venues will be identified as soon as known.)

Our Next Event
July 1 . Joint Meeting with Dendrology Society
Marcel Robischon . . . . . . . University Club

Future Events
September 17 . . . . Lucy and Our African Origins
Don Johanson . . . . . . . . University Club
October 29 . . . . Expeditions and the Media
Josh Bernstein . . . . . . . University Club
November 19 . . . . . . . . planning
December 5 . . . . Alan & Becky Nichols
Chair’s Member Reception Nichols home, Tiburon
January . . . . . . . . . . Expedition Tales
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June 2010

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Webmaster: Mike Diggles
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nauticos@oceanearth.org

July 1: University Club, San Francisco

Date: Thursday, July 1, 2010
Place: University Club
Powell & California, San Francisco
Time: 6:30 - reception
7:15 - dinner
8:00 - talk
Cost: $49 in advance; $60 on the 1st
Students: $33. (Dues still $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

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!

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University Club
Atop Nob Hill
where the cable cars cross

The University Club has Valet Parking for $20; the Brocklebank Garage on Sacramento is only $10!
Other nearby garages are expensive. Some street parking. Muni (cable cars OR Sacramento #1) is very
near; BART & CalTrans connections are easy. Car pool! The University Club is wheel-chair accessible.

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