

# The Explorers Club

## Northern California Chapter

March 2013

**NEW Date and Speaker**

**LOCATION**

Note venues and dates with care.  
In San Francisco, CA,  
our next meeting is 6:30 pm  
March 28, a THURSDAY,  
at City Forest Lodge

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

# Into the Himalaya Valleys

Snakes, Sages and Yoginis: The *Devatas* of Himachal Pradesh and their Himalayan Abodes

Suzanne Klotz

San Francisco—March 28, 2013, a THURSDAY



Himachal Pradesh is a small state in the northwestern Indian Himalayas. Its geography is dominated by towering mountain ranges—the Dhauladars, the Sivaliks, and the Pir Pingal. These ranges shelter narrow valleys where distinct religious traditions have been incubated, nurtured, and preserved. In these valleys, nearly every village has its own local god or *devata*. There are so many devatas in Himachal that it has come to be known as Dev Bhoomi or *land of the gods*.

Intricately carved wooden temples are another feature of the region that can be seen nowhere else in India. Constructed from Himalayan cedar, so durable that it is considered sacred, these temples stand, as they have for hundreds of years, on mountain spurs or beside snow-fed lakes in the vast

wilderness. Some are remnants of a fractious past and were originally towers that warring medieval clans used as fortifications. These fortresses now serve as religious shrines for Himachal's devatas, but this does not mean that violence is a thing of the past. Many devatas eschew the more orthodox Hindu concept of nonviolence. They have always been propitiated through offerings of blood, and this practice continues even today.

Since 1991, **Suzanne Klotz MN'12**, an attorney by day, has visited the northwestern Indian Himalayas at least 18 times to learn about and document its local traditions. She has lectured at the Asian Art Museum of San Francisco and is scheduled to give her third lecture at the museum on May 2. During her presentation at the Explorers Club, she will talk about the devatas, their mythology, their rituals, and their temples and shrines.

This talk should intrigue anyone interested in Himalayan culture. It will also interest those who want to leave behind the well-trodden Indian cities, and their more mainstream form of Hinduism, for the villages where most Indians still live and where local gods and goddesses dominate religious life.

Suzanne Klotz in the field (above)

Snake Temple, Kinnaur District,  
Himachal Pradesh, India (upper right)  
Local god dancing on palanquin,  
Bhimakali Temple, Sarahan,  
Himachal Pradesh, India (right)



SUZANNE KLOTZ'S PHOTOS



# The Grey Underbelly of a Red Planet @ Mountain View — February 22

Curiosity: the essence of exploration, the actuality of planetary research. On February 22, Dr. David Des Marais, a geochemist at NASA Ames Research Laboratory held a large audience of Northern California Chapter members and friends in awe. Speaking in the public exhibition space created to show some of Ames/NASA projects, he weaved the story of Mars exploration over the century since it was first crudely mapped by Lowell in 1908. His last images showed the drill hole and resulting grey core sample taken by the *Curiosity Rover* within days of his talk! Frankly, astounding.



The fantasy of reported Martian canals and alien creatures, proliferated without scientific challenge well into the 20th century, has given away to the reality of a harsh, spectacular, eroded environment completely hostile to any life form as we understand life's molecular biology and organic chemistry today. One time, long ago—billions of years—water abounded, as the surface is revealing stream traces, lake shores and eroded outcrops. The planet is now dead, but the remains

holds great insight into a transition from a moist atmosphere to one devoid of life support.

In 1965, the first earth-launched fly-by brought back images. In 1976, images were returned by the US *Viking Probe*—the pictures were fuzzy revealing pock marks like on our moon. Channels hinted at erosion, but the extent awaited later observational probes—and a technically superb set of increasingly large and more-complex on-the-ground 'rovers'. What a challenge; what a feat. One has to admire the precision and scientific ingenuity involved no matter how well the approach is understood. Here is an example of superb multiple-disciplinary achievement.

Des Marais described the progress made in discovery with each new step since *Viking*, giving equal credit to the orbiting observatories and the landed rovers. He couched the small findings into the grand picture of the history of the planet and how this impacts upon our understanding of our planet, the earth, and life within our atmosphere.

The robotic geologists that the rovers are have become increasingly sophisticated: in 1996, the breadbasket-sized *Pathfinder* could look around; the *Opportunity* and *Spirit* rovers could pick and choose and return images (*Opportunity* continues to rove, over 33 kilometers so far, and still operates after more than a decade of use; *Spirit* did well too, but has gone dark.) The Jeep-sized *Curiosity* combines a more useful pick-and-choose capability with an internal laboratory of on-site analyzers. Ingenious.

We know a lot about another planet (Mars) now, from direct observation and a great deal of deduction based upon the geological sciences. We know there are not canals or red-planet folks. The poles are frigid; there is a great deal of relief, relatively more than on earth's deep sea to high peaks. There is a great scar, the *Vales Marinous*, much deeper than our Grand Canyon and with a length equivalent to the distance coast to coast in the United States. There are enticing places to explore—and plans afoot to do so. The window to reach Mars opens every couple of years, and it takes money. With these constraints we have made astounding progress, and Dr. Des Marais spoke eloquently about this progress.



Allan, Jim  
Barrett, Reginald  
Blumberg, Marion  
Bogardus, Peter  
Boothe, Barry  
Boothe, Joan  
Breed, George  
Cantini, Mary  
Chase, H. Keith  
Cheatham, Nonna  
Cook, Sandra  
Cooper, Alan  
Crowder, Wendy  
Day, Peggy  
Dutcher, Susan  
Esley, Sue  
Ewing, Lesley  
Faggioli, Richard E.  
Ford, Art  
Glantz, Gina  
Glantz, Ron  
Guzy, Michael  
Guzy, Michael  
Hamer, Michael  
Heydorn, William  
Heyneman, Donald  
Hicks, Harry  
Higgins, Bob  
Hirzel, David  
Hodges, Eliot  
Hurson, Jim  
Hurson, Von  
Hutchison, Alan  
Hutchison, Ann  
Jake, Krist  
Jepsen, Anders  
Jepsen, Kathy  
Klotz, Suzanne  
Klotz, Suzanne  
Komarmy, Margot  
Komarmy, Margot  
Kutz, Dida  
Kvenvolden, Keith  
Langan, Karine  
Langan, Lee  
Lapham, Ellen  
Libowitz, Dan  
Long, Elgen  
Maroney, Robert  
McGann, Mary  
McPhail, Brian  
Meniketti, Marco  
Merdinger, Charles  
Moyer, David  
Nichols, Peter  
O'Kane, Teresa  
Perkins, Shelby  
Prigoff, James  
Ross, Sandy  
Roush, John  
Rygh, Char  
Saber, Rick  
Schmieder, Bob  
Schmieder, Kay  
Smith, Mark  
Smith, Steve  
Taylor, Susan  
Von der Porten, Ed  
Walsh, Don  
Weil, James  
Whiteside, Dede

**From the Chair—** The meeting at NASA was something those who attended will remember for a long time. The venue at the NASA Space Museum worked out extremely well, with the tables spread out among the exhibits. The food was exceptional and the talk truly memorable. What was most remarkable for me was that data that were presented to us had been gathered just five days before on Mars. Queen Isabella had to wait months to hear anything about the new world from Columbus! This great event would not have happened without the driving force of **Keith Kvenvolden FE'80**; thank you Keith.

The Explorers Club Annual Meeting will take place on March 16, with several peripheral events including a meeting of all the Chapter Chairs. Thirty NorCA Chapter members will be in New York—a fine showing!

The past year has been a very effective one at the National level, under the great leadership of our own Alan Nichols. In order to keep this momentum going, we need to keep that leadership team together, which means that those directors who contributed to the progress and are currently running for reelection need our support—**Alan Nichols FN'84** and **Lee Langan FN'99** from our Chapter. If you have any questions about other candidates, please email.

The depth of experience of our members is truly amazing. By the time you read this, Peggy Day will have given a talk on her experience leading a trek/pilgrimage to Tibet. And the talk by Suzanne Klotz on Himalayan culture is our next scheduled meeting on Thursday, 28 March.

A thought about Chapter Membership. Our joy and our strength is found in the people who get together once a month. If you have someone that you think would find our talks interesting, then we would in all likelihood enjoy getting to know them. Bring a guest to one of our meetings; encourage them to consider joining the Chapter and The Explorers Club.

—Anders Jepsen PhD FN'03

**TX5K has landed; is operational—**

The **Bob Schmieder FN'86** TEC Flag Expedition, the 2013 Cordell DX-pedition, arrived at Clipperton Island on February 28; the camp is set up and they are now operational. You can follow the frequently updated blog at <http://www.dxa2.org/>.

Lots of info, photos and boobies.

Landing equipment and supplies through the crashing surf proved to be a challenge. Bob reports they have 10 HF stations at two sites, plus a 6m EME station; there are 30 antennas in various configurations.

The All Terrain Vehicle, with wagon, has proven absolutely essential to transport the equipment in the deep, loose sand.

Bob welcomes your participation in the blog; check it out!



**Elsa J. Roscoe (16 Nov 1920-18 Feb 2013)—**Elsa bought her Kelty Pack from Dick Kelty in the late 1950's. She trekked through Nepal, Burma, and Greenland, talked about what a nice town Tehran used to be. She went on archaeological digs through *Earthwatch* in Papeete, Huahine, and Chaco Canyon; did geologic mapping in the Sierra Nevada as a volunteer at USGS with **Mike Diggles FN-92**. She was commonly seen with her Kodak Retina loaded with Kodachrome. Elsa was married to **Col. John Roscoe FN'54** from 1968 until his death in 2007. We miss them both a lot.

**From the Board** Your Board has not met since their much appreciated visit to San Francisco in late January although committees have been busy voting members and choosing grant recipients. ECAD, the annual fund-raising gala at the Waldorf=Astoria will be upon us concurrent with receipt of this newsletter. NorCA has put together three full tables—maybe the most in our forty-year history (although we had at least two for the centenary ECAD in 2004.) The election results will be reported on March 17, St. Patrick's Day—New York's Irish either celebrating or bemoaning the results with a day-long parade passing just over a block from TEC. (If you receive this before the voting deadline and have yet to make your choice, I would appreciate the support!) —Lee Langan FN'99

**Member Moment—** **Dr. Keith Kvenvolden FE'80 ...**“Carbon, Organic Molecules & Friendships” An unlikely combination one might think, yet the glue bringing together our own member Keith, his high school friend and early mentor **David Smith (FE'53)**, and our speaker David Des Marais; events in their lifetimes symbiotically affected each of their careers in geoscience. While at NASA-Ames more than 40 years ago, Keith, in seeking evidence for the origin of life, described amino acids in meteorites and searched for carbon compounds in lunar samples; Dr. Des Marais followed Keith at Ames. During the last 40 years has been involved in the search for evidence of life on Mars using remote vehicles such as *Spirit*, *Opportunity* and now *Curiosity*. Keith and the speaker are both organic geochemists and professional colleagues. Sharing the platform at the NASA Exploration Center with Dr. Des Marais was a very special and nostalgic Member Moment for Keith.



ROCK SAHER

Keith went on to mention his many geological experiences including studying the integral part played by molecular fossils in terrestrial and extraterrestrial materials which often hold keys to evolutionary discoveries. This all happened because his teenage friend in Cheyene, Dr. Smith, urged Keith to join him in the Stanford graduate program! What Keith did not say is that he is also an avid model railroad hobbyist with an expansive layout. Ask him.

**Biking Tumble—**On February 10, our Chair Emeritus and current Explorers Club **President Alan Nichols FN'84** was taking a weekend bicycle ride around San Francisco Bay with his son. Nearing the three-quarter mark on a bright Sunday midday

a pedestrian came onto the path, and Alan swerved into a serious crash. The good fortune: his son was there, and he wore a now-cracked helmet. The misfortune: a broken femur, bruised shoulder and knee.

After week of repairs at Kaiser Oakland, our robust leader went home to Marin to recover with a fixed femur and bandages. It was an experience not to be repeated. He is already in New York for ECAD, and the affairs of The Explorers Club have not missed a beat.

Imagine 10,000 miles from Istanbul to Xian—plus numerous other extended bicycle excursions—and he cracks up at home. Now isn't that 'good' luck.



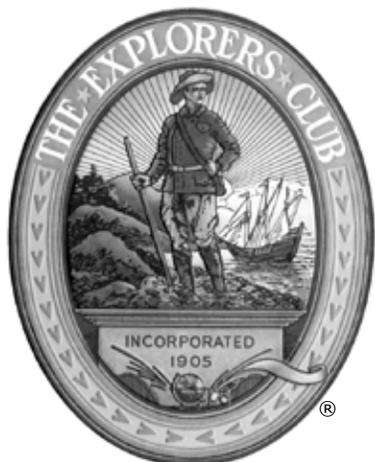
BECT ROYAL NICHOLS

The list is building.  
Add your name!

Dues go to the cost  
of our newsletter!  
Send \$25 to  
Joan Boothe



March 2013



Chair: Anders Jepsen
925 254-3079
ajviking@aol.com
Vice Chair: Rick Saber
415 457-0345
eagle@rsaber.com
Treasurer: Joan Boothe
415 346-5934
hoodooskr@aol.com
Secretary: Stephen E. Smith
Webmaster: Mike Diggles
Newsletter: Lee Langan

March 28, 2013 – Into the Himalayas

Northern California Calendar of Events

(Venues are identified as soon as known.)

Our Next Event

March 28, 2013 . . . . . Suzanne Klotz
Himalaya Valleys . . . . . City Forest Lodge

Upcoming Events (2013)

April 26, 2013 . . . . . Chris Welsh
Ocean Robotics . . . . . City Forest Lodge
May 2, 2013 . . . . . Klotz lecture
Asian Art Museum . . . . . San Francisco
May 11, 2013 . . . . . NorCA Field Trip
Black Diamond Coal Mine, Contra Costa
June 9, 2013 . . . . . NorCA Picnic
Angel Island "Expedition"

Earlier Chapter Events (2012/13)

January 27, 2012 (Friday). Expedition Medicine
Matthew Lewin, MD . . . . . City Forest Lodge
February 24 . . . . . Joshua Glovin
HOT Ocean Exploration . . . . . City Forest Lodge
March 30 . . . . . Ed Von Der Porten
New Findings of San Felipe. . . . . City Forest Lodge
April 27 . . . . . Stephen Smith
16 years at Kosrae . . . . . City Forest Lodge
May 25 . . . . . John Wilus
Fremont's Canon . . . . . City Forest Lodge
September 29 . . . . . Return to Garrapata
The Hicks' Big Sur home.
October 26. . . . . City Forest Lodge
Cordilleran Blanca. . . . . Dr. Bill Straka
November 30. . . . . Prof. Michael J. Harner
Tribes of the Amazon and Shamanism
December 16. . . . . Annual Holiday Party
..best expedition photo contest' . . . . . Saber home
January 25, 2013. . . . . TEC Board visit
Board's Story Night . . . . . Ferryboat, Pier 3, SF
February 22, 2013 . . . . . Dr David Des Marais
Mars Exploration by NASA, . . . . . Moffett Field

USE PAYPAL!

March 28, San Francisco @ City Forest Lodge

Date THURSDAY, March 28, 2013 Reserve \_\_ spaces for Mar 28, 2013
Place: City Forest Lodge Cost: \$49 (for members and sirdars)
254 Laguna Honda Blvd \$35 for card-carrying students
San Francisco, CA 94116-1409 Name: \_\_\_\_\_
(415) 753-8326 Address (if changed): \_\_\_\_\_
Time: 6:30 - reception Companion: \_\_\_\_\_
7:15 - dinner — 8:00 - talk Entrée Choice (select from below\*): \_\_\_\_\_
Cost: \$49 in advance; \$60 after 25 Mar
Students: \$35. (2013 dues \$25!)
Please mail information to Joan Boothe,
2435 Divisadero St., San Francisco, CA 94115
or email hoodooskr@aol.com or call (415) 346-5934

Please reserve by Mar 25!

We have an established PayPal account.

For those of you who have an account, you can sign up and remit dinner costs to the NorCA Chapter by transferring money to: explorersnorca@gmail.com
There is a PAYPAL BUTTON on our website (www.explorersnorca.org); easy to use!

\*March Meal Options (select your choice)
Chicken Picatta, Spiral Baked Ham or vege pasta primavera

In 2012, the City Forest Lodge was sought out as a meeting place in the heart of San Francisco. The lodge is hidden in a driveway just south along Seventh Avenue as it turns into Laguna Honda Boulevard. The Lodge has the catering and space needs we require, and our meetings this year have proved it is working!

Location details should be researched in advance

There is parking, and the location, while unfamiliar to some, is easy to find tucked away just across from the City's Laguna Honda Hospital. Once the lot is full, park within the neighborhood, just uphill to the west. Muni access is VERY easy from downtown via the light-rail Taraval 'L' Line and Ocean View 'M' Line. Exit at the Forest Hill station and walk a block north. These lines can be reached by BART and the Peninsula's CalTrain. (Forest Hill Station is located deeper underground than any other Muni Metro station; so much so that, unlike other stations, most people use an elevator to reach the platform at Forest Hill.)

Send address changes and corrections by email to Steve at nauticos1@oceaneearth.org