

# The Explorers Club Northern California Chapter

Summer 2015

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

## LOCATIONS

Note venues and dates with care.

On Angel Island, SF Bay  
our Annual Picnic, 10:00 am  
13 June, a Saturday  
Angel Island State Park  
Ferry's run from Tiburon  
and Fisherman's Wharf in SF

**COME JOIN THE FUN!!**

**Saturday, June 13**

## **Explorers Club Annual Picnic at Angel Island State Park**

*10 AM until ??*

*We will gather on the  
lawn near the ferry  
landing.*

*The Club will supply  
plates, napkins, etc., as  
well as beverages and  
some food, but please do  
bring food and drink  
contributions to share.*



*To reach Angel Island, take the Angel Island ferry from San Francisco or Tiburon. See [www.angelislandferry.com](http://www.angelislandferry.com) (re Tiburon departures) or [www.blueandgoldfleet.com/angel-island-ferry/](http://www.blueandgoldfleet.com/angel-island-ferry/) (re San Francisco departures) for information.*

*For planning purposes, please let us know if you will be coming by email to Joan Boothe ([hoodooskr@aol.com](mailto:hoodooskr@aol.com)) or phone (415-346-5934).*

**THE CALIFORNIA ACADEMY OF SCIENCES**  
**AN EVENING OF EXPLORATION**  
**A FAREWELL TO OUTGOING CHAIR RICK SABER**  
**AND A WELCOME TO INCOMING CHAPTER CHAIR JOAN BOOTHE**

The regular Northern California Chapter meeting Thursday, 21 May, at the California Academy of Sciences was an evening crowded with attendees, good conversation, interesting visits to the working heart of the Academy and an ecological presentation at the planetarium called *Planet Earth*. It also entailed the transition of Chapter leadership from outgoing Chair Rick Saber MN'01 to incoming Chair Joan Boothe MN'07.

The technical part of the evening began with Meg Lowman FN'97, Chair of Sciences and Sustainability of The Academy, welcoming the members and guests and introducing members of her staff who would be leading the tours of the generally unseen portions of the Academy. These tour leaders included Jack Dumbacher, Curator of Ornithology and Mammalogy, Luiz Rocha, Curator of Ichthyology, Elliott Jessup, Diving Safety Officer, Michelle Trautwein, curator of Diptera, and Laurel Allen, technical writer. A little later in the evening, after the Chapter Chair transition ceremony, these scientists led the tours that showed interested members how the Academy worked.

To open the transition, outgoing Chair Rick Saber announced the winner of the



“Best Dressed Explorer” competition which was won by Doc Chandler. The transition itself was led by the Mistress of Ceremonies, past chair Lesley Ewing, FN'93 who introduced the following Chairmen emeriti: Bob Schmiieder FN'86, Anders Jepsen FN'03, Stephen Smith FN'96, Lee Langan FN'99, plus member Dede Whiteside Hicks MN'13 and sirdar Peterson Conway. Presentations included laudatory remarks by several past Chairs, a poem written by Alan Nichols while biking across the southeast USA, honorary membership in the *Sisterhood of 12 women* of the Chapter, a commemorative medal, and a giant piece of Nan from the

Himalayas of India. Lesley also presented Rick with a plaque declaring 21 May 2015 Rick Saber Day.

To end this part of the evening, incoming Chair Joanne Boothe welcomed everyone, made a few announcements about up-coming programs including the annual picnic to Angel Island and then closed the ceremony to permit everyone to attend the tour of their choice or the Planetarium show *Planet Earth*, which was a dramatic call to awareness about the current state of the earth and its ecosystems. More photos on page 5

**PHOTO OF THE MONTH**  
**STORY OF THE MONTH**

Got a favorite picture from your explorations? How about an interesting little story. Please submit them to the Newsletter editor ([ajviking@aol.com](mailto:ajviking@aol.com)) so the rest of the club can enjoy them. This procession up the Himalayan mountain is part of the story on Page 4 written by Suzanne Klotz MN'12 and is taken from her photos and writings on the continuing study project that she has been working on since 1995.



Contact the Editor or Chapter Secretary to submit your email address if not already receiving notices OR for a color print. Pass the word..

## FROM THE CHAIR

This is my first “From the Chair” to you since taking over as chair from Rick Saber at our wonderful “Gala” at the California Academy of Sciences in May. It is a huge honor to be your new chair, as well as a serious challenge to follow in the footsteps of Rick Saber, who led us all so magnificently for the past two years. In the months to come, I will be relying heavily on his guidance, as well as that of all our other past chairs, who so splendidly honored Rick at our May gathering. As I move into the Chair role, we have a new vice chair — Steve Smith, who has been our treasurer for the past two years. Kendra Bolt, FN14, will be replacing him as treasurer.

I look forward to my new role and hope to engage as many of you as possible in our Chapter activities. In the months to come I will be contacting those of you who have been our frequent meeting attendees in the past two years to ask if you wish to become even more active. If you do not hear from me about this in the next two weeks and you do wish to become more involved, please do let me know by email (hoodooskr@aol.com) or phone (415-346-5934). You will also be hearing from us again, within the next two weeks, as we move forward on our roster update project.

As usual, we are taking the summer off so that our members can go out and explore. But we will continue our tradition of a Chapter picnic at Angel Island — this year on Saturday, June 13. An announcement has already gone out, repeated as page 1 of this newsletter. I hope to see many of you there.

In July and August, your chapter board will be meeting to discuss and plan chapter matters.

In September, we will kick off what should be an exciting Chapter year. We



will resume our regular monthly meetings with new member Arjun Gupta, a world-renowned authority on climate change and many other accomplishments, as our speaker. Several other speakers for later months are already scheduled, but if you have suggestions, please let me know. We are also planning for more field trips. Again, suggestions from members are most welcome.

The Northern California Chapter is one of the most active chapters in the Explorers Club, and we are committed to keeping it that way. We need your support, however. The Chapter dues from Explorers Club members (\$25) and our Sirdars (\$50) are an important source of funding that make possible events like our picnic, annual Holiday party, and subsidies to our more expensive events. If you have not yet paid your dues for 2015, please do so now!

Joan Boothe MN'07

## MEET THE NEW CHAIR

Joan N. Boothe is considered an expert on Antarctic history and has been interviewed on NPR, taught a course in the Stanford University Continuing Studies program, guest lectured on Antarctic tours and spoken on the Antarctic for a variety of venues. She remembers reading her first story of icy adventure in the Antarctic when she was 8. Today she has built one of the most comprehensive private collections of books on Antarctica in the United States, containing more than 1,800 individual titles, along with thousands of journal articles.

Joan has now traveled to the Antarctic 12 times, including making a 67-day circumnavigation of the Antarctic continent aboard an icebreaker. She is the author of the critically acclaimed book *The Storied Ice: Exploration, Discovery, and Adventure in Antarctica's Peninsula Region*.

A graduate of Wellesley College, Joan was elected to Phi Beta Kappa with an honors degree in economics. She further received an MBA in finance from the University of California, Berkeley, and has also pursued doctoral studies in organizational behavior at UC Berkeley.

Editor's note: The above was abstracted from the descriptive notes found at the Incoming Chair's website. Joan has been a valuable member of the Chapter's operational team for years.



## EXPLORERS ON THE MOVE

Past Explorers Club National resident, past Northern California Chapter Chair current vagabond Alan Nichols is biking across the country in honor of the Solar Impulse which is at this writing in the air on the 6-day China-Hawaii leg of its Around the World solar powered flight. Alan and his support team of Becky Nichols and Char Rygh are shown on the road and on the beach in Florida. Photos by the team.

More news on the Round-The-World flight of Solar Impulse 2 may be found on page 6.

**From the Board:** Your Board is scheduled to meet on the day of the NorCA picnic, the reason Past President Nichols and I will miss this event. The new Bylaws allow for electronic communication and even votes and a subset of the Board, the Executive Board, meets between full meetings. In this manner all committee chairs have been selected, new flags and members agreed upon, and a return to the Waldorf+Astoria has been approved for the March 12, 2016, ECAD (mark your calendar). —Lee Langan FN'99

It was late June in Bagi village and I was grateful for the clear, windless sky. The summer monsoons that pound the western Indian Himalayas, and bring life to a standstill, had not yet arrived. Because of the good weather, the pilgrimage I travelled so far to see would go forward. Shringi Rishi, the most venerated god in the region, could now return to his sacred seat on Sakiran Peak where he first miraculously appeared as a stone. My host Karan and I waited outside Shringi Rishi's temple with villagers spilling down from their mountainside homes. They were buoyant when their god emerged at last—his serene golden face floating, bodiless, in a mantle of mountain roses. An elderly priest carried the god through the parting crowd as long-necked horns and beating drums heralded that the procession had finally begun. Rain or shine, we would trek over 5000 feet up the mountainside in a single day to Sakiran Peak.

Sakiran Peak is located in the Seraj, an obscure region in the northwestern state of Himachal Pradesh. It's a stone's throw from the Great Himalayan National Park Conservation Area, 468 square miles of pristine wilderness rich in flora and fauna. The Seraj's sublime natural beauty, especially the unspoiled waters of the Tirthan River where the wild brown trout still swim and spawn, is a testament to the villagers' "David and Goliath" struggle to keep the river free of hydro-electric projects.

Glacial melt from the park drains into the Tirthan and Sainj catchment areas that cut east to west across the Seraj. These river valleys are home to a complex hierarchy of local gods called devatas. The devatas have a bewildering array of identities, and make this Himalayan strain of Hinduism polytheistic to the max. Some devatas, like Shringi Rishi, are known by the names of mythical Hindu sages. Others are addressed as nag, a title that signifies that they're snake gods, and reveals the devatas' deep animist roots. The devatas, unlike more mainstream Hindu gods, are not merely objects of religious devotion. They're revered as kings who rule separate territories, a vestige of pre-Independence India when the devatas were seen as landholders and the villagers their tenants who tilled the land. Even today, the devatas express their will on important private and public issues through human oracles, the gurs.

Nearly every village has its own devata, but



the real power players, including Shringi Rishi, exercise authority over the territories of lesser gods. These paramount gods battle for supremacy and their hostilities spill into public view. On October 15, 2013, The Times of India reported that Shringi Rishi and his rival, Balu

Nag, grew so acrimonious at a religious festival that local authorities placed them "under house arrest in their tents." This conflict is the residue of a decades-old rivalry between dueling politicians, which suggests that the line between secular politics and the devata system is not clearly drawn.

But this internecine strife was a distant thought on the trek to Sakiran Peak. Children scampered uphill, while adults adopted a steady rhythm of breath-to-step that kept pace with the god. Shringi Rishi was represented by a small metal image of a face, a mohra, wearing cloak of fragrant roses and red silk gown that made him nearly life-size. He glided uphill in his priest's embrace like a Japanese



Bunraku puppet moves in the arms of its silent puppeteers.

Outside the hamlet of Chaini, the trail narrowed as we passed through fields of young green wheat. The long ribbon of people walked single file to avoid trampling the precious cultivated ground. The Great Tower of Chaini loomed in the foreground, recalling a time past when warring tribes inhabited these valleys. Originally a defensive castle, the tower was built nearly four hundred years ago and stands an astonishing 147 feet high



(roughly 13 stories). It's the tallest free-standing structure in the entire Western Himalayas that's built in the traditional architectural style. Just before nightfall, the procession reached the Sakiran Dhar Ridge and made a final push for the crest. Shringi Rishi's mountain temple finally came into view. This modest wooden structure seems to humble itself before the

grand Himalayan ranges. Without warning, a bare-chested gur went into a violent trance, dashed around the peak to ward off evil spirits and flagellated himself with iron chains. The vil-



lagers looked on calmly as if to say "all in a day's work" for a gur, and then retired to temporary encampments where they spent the chilly night.

The peak was humming with activity when we woke up the next morning to clear skies. One after another, villagers were offering small vessels of milk and clarified butter at Shringi Rishi's temple. These symbols of regeneration are offered to the god because he follows the more orthodox Hindu precept of non-violence toward animals. But ritual animal sacrifice (bali), a common form of worship in the Seraj, was being performed at a nearby stone shrine. The shrine is dedicated to a yogini, a wild nature goddess with dangerous cosmic energy and a healthy appetite for blood. The yoginis' mystique is so strong that locals avoid even talking about them. Powerful as Shringi Rishi may be, he's impelled to pay homage to the goddesses and ask for their protection.

Busy gurs were using their supernatural powers to divine the future. Just as die are cast and tea leaves are read in other cultures, black mustard seeds are counted in the Seraj. The seeds are handed out in seemingly random pinches and one's future is foretold by the number of seeds one receives. Goaded on by the crowd, I suspended my disbelief in predestination and accepted some seeds from a gur. My number was disappointing, and I was motioned to take a second try (inauspicious again), and a third (auspicious, at last). My repeated tries probably broke with tradition, but in India, where "the guest is God," dooming me to an ill-fated future would have been the greater sin.

The crowd suddenly shifted to Shringi Rishi's temple and all eyes were on its gabled roof. Two goats, facing opposite directions, were straddled across its apex. A hush fell over the crowd and the goats were swiftly beheaded. Their blood was left to purify the temple until Shringi Rishi returned again. Even the vegetarian Shringi Rishi hasn't foresworn this age-old practice, one of many things in the Seraj that can't be explained.

The peak emptied out quickly after this climactic event. In a sprawling pasture below the peak, slaughtered goats were being divvied up and nothing edible was left to waste. I reached into my pocket for the lucky mustard seeds, let them slip through my fingers and drop to the sacred ground, and started the long walk down.

Of Gods and Mustard Seeds Copyright © 2015 by Suzanne Klotz

## WHAT A NIGHT THAT WAS! Photos by Douglas Eng and Richard Tenaza



Honor Roll of Chapter Members, Sirdars, and supporters who have paid their voluntary annual dues for 2015.

Berg, Barbara  
Blumberg, Marion  
Boothe, Joan  
Boothe, Barry  
Chokas, Ann  
Clever, Karoli  
Clinch, Nicolas

Crowder, Wendy  
Dolan, Thomas  
Dolan, David  
Dvorak, Don  
Dvorak, Elaine  
Estey, Sue  
Ewing, Lesley

Follestad, Eric  
Hemming, Peter  
Hirzel, David  
Hose, Louise  
O'Kane, Teresa  
Jepsen, Anders  
Jepsen, Kathy

Johnson, Fred  
Judd, Kathy  
King, Stephen  
Knowles, Jonathan  
Langan, Karine  
Langan, Lee  
Michel, Christopher

Serne, David  
Shoemaker, Sara  
Smith, Stephen  
Stewart, Zack  
Tenaza, Richard  
Von der Porten, Ed  
Wren, Sherry

## Summer 2015



Chair: Joan Boothe MN'07  
415 346-5934  
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Webmaster: Mike Diggles FN'92  
Newsletter: Anders Jepsen FN'03  
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### **Northern California Calendar of Events**

(Venues are identified as soon as known.)

#### **Our Next Event**

##### **Upcoming Events (2015)**

June 13 . . . . . Chapter Picnic  
. . . . . Angel Island  
September . . . . . Arjun Gupta  
. . . . . TBA  
October . . . . . Lowell Thomas Meeting  
October . . . . . David Imus  
The Art of Cartography . . . . . TBA

#### **Earlier Chapter Events (2014)**

May 23 . . . . . Dr. Meg Lowman  
Forest Canopies . . . . . City Forest Lodge  
June 8 . . . . . Summer Gathering  
Gene & Sybil Boudreau's home, Sebastapol  
June 20 . . . . . FIELD TRIP  
USS Hornet . . . . . Oakland  
September 26 . . . . . M.E.A McNeill  
Apiary Science . . . . . City Forest Lodge  
October 11 . . . . . Lowell Thomas Award Dinner  
. . . . . Bowers Museum, Santa Ana, CA  
October 24 . . . . . Dylan Burge  
Botany Field Trip . . . . . Golden Gate Park  
November 21 . . . . . Tony Liang  
An exploration into cancer . . . . . City Forest Lodge  
December 10, . . . . . Holiday Party  
February 27 . . . . . Nicole Crane & Giacomo Bernardi  
Romance & Discovery Under the Sea . . . . . Pomeroy  
March 21 . . . . . ECAD  
American Museum of Natural History New York  
March 27 . . . . . Dr. T. Mark Harrison  
Earth's Geochronology . . . . . Pomeroy  
April 24 . . . . . Dr. David Ainley  
Last Ocean (& NorCA election) . . . . . Pomeroy  
May 21 (Thursday) . . . . . Meg Lowman  
Underground Tour, CA Academy of Sciences

Send address changes and  
corrections by email to Steve Smith  
[ecnca@oceaneearth.org](mailto:ecnca@oceaneearth.org)

## UPCOMING EXPEDITIONS

**June 8-28, 2015** Ulithi Expedition Update Explorers Club Fellow Nicole Crane 'FN'97 called for volunteers to join her and her science team, along with Rick Saber, past NorCA EC Chapter Chair, to work with outer island communities on reef conservation and management. Since that announcement, Ulithi Atoll has experienced a major destructive storm. Updates can be found at [onepeopleonereef.ucsc.edu](http://onepeopleonereef.ucsc.edu). Donations through PMA at these links:

<http://www.pmapacific.org/contribute/give/index.php> (say Ulithi relief) OR  
[http://ulithimarineconservation.ucsc.edu/wp-content/uploads/2013/12/Gift\\_form.pdf](http://ulithimarineconservation.ucsc.edu/wp-content/uploads/2013/12/Gift_form.pdf)

**August 2015** — Travel down the Nelson River in Canada to York Factory with the Fara Heim Expedition to search for the lost warships of the 1697 Battle of Hudson Bay. For information, please call (262-960-2959) or email David Collette ([david@faraheim.com](mailto:david@faraheim.com)). For more information re Fara Heim, go to [www.faraheim.com](http://www.faraheim.com)

**November, 2015** ----- Northern California Chapter member Peggy Day MN'84 is planning a expedition to Bhutan in November and will have room for up to 8 individuals. For more information, contact Peggy at [mizday@me.com](mailto:mizday@me.com)

**March, 2016** ----Dr. Bob Schmieder reports a change in size of ship and timing of the Heard Island expedition.. The revised travel date is around March 2016. For more information,

## A NEW MOMENT IN AVIATION

I have just witnessed, as have countless others, the take off of Solar Impulse II from Nanjing, China, headed across the Pacific for an estimated six-day flight to Oahu, Hawaii. It was an emotional moment, a moment my own impulse ran down my spine. The pilot is André Borschberg; his partner Bertrand Piccard; both are members of The Explorers Club; both are among the most congenial and humble men I have ever met; they are remarkable in their accomplishments and goals; they have taken their dreams and made them possible, in itself astonishing. But, it is not just their dream, they do this to focus all men on the goal that the technology they have harnessed benefits us all. The future is clean; we must use it; it can be done. What an exciting expedition! Follow the progress at [www.solarimpulse.com](http://www.solarimpulse.com).

—Lee Langan FN'99, May 30, 2015, 11:40 PDT.

Saturday, June 13, 2015

Saturday, June 13, Angel Island, 10:00 am.....

**Date** SATURDAY, June 13, 2015

**Reserve** \_\_\_\_\_ spaces

**Place:** Angel Island

**Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

Address (if changed): \_\_\_\_\_

**Time:** 10 am to 3 pm

Companion: \_\_\_\_\_

Meal choice\*:

**Cost:** No charge; Please advise Joan Boothe ([hoodooskr@aol.com](mailto:hoodooskr@aol.com)) or (415) 346-5934 if you will be there, for planning purposes.

### **We have an established PayPal account.**

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