

The Explorers Club

Northern California Chapter

January 2011

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

Story Night

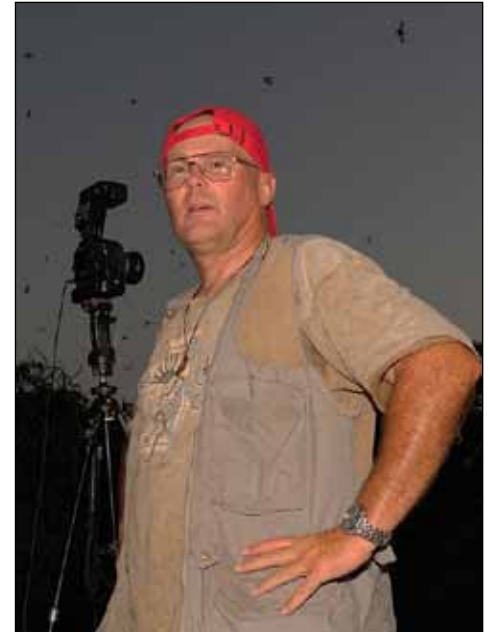
Short Tales by Your Fellow Explorers

San Francisco — January 21, 2011



The 'rule' is that each invited speaker is to tell a short vignette, a tale that happened while they were on an expedition. Purposefully we have not asked them to reveal their story, beyond the title.

Note venues and dates with care.
San Francisco, CA
Our next meeting is at 6:30 on
January 21, a **FRIDAY** evening,
at the University Club.



If last year's Story Night, when chapter authors spoke of their books, is an indication, we should be in for a delightful evening of surprises.
Come and find out.

Joan Boothe: "Tourists to the Rescue"

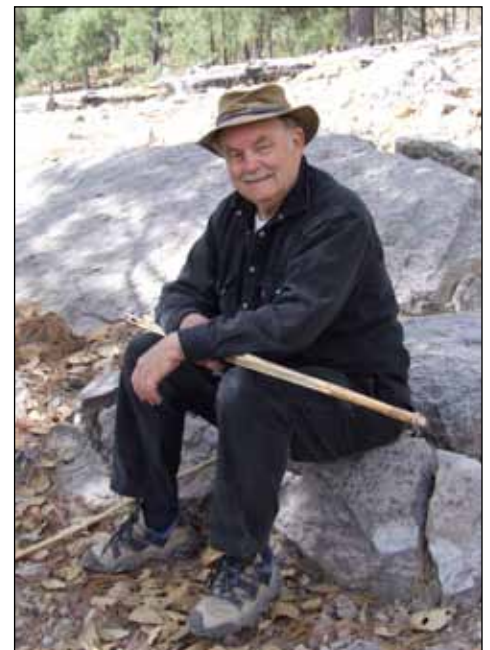
Chuck Davis: "Killer Whale Encounter at Wuvulu Island, New Guinea"

Peter Hemming: "Night People"

Ken Howery: "A Death on Kilimanjaro"

Lee Langan: "Moving Up the Yukon"

Neal Mueller: "The Everest of Swims; Swimming Across the English Channel"



New Guinea — Loving it, Even with those Poison Birds

San Francisco — November 19

Jack Dumbacher is a newly elected Fellow of The Explorers Club, and he debuted on November 19, by talking about a favorite subject: his discovery of and research about poisoned birds of New Guinea. The appreciative members and their guests were delighted. Outlined were the details of exploration in a wild place remaining on our planet involving the skills and knowledge of indigenous people schooled in the ways of antiquity. Most birds are not toxic; why these? And, how? To what purpose? And, the role of serendipity in the progress made in resolving these questions.

New Guinea, as we have been told by anyone that has visited there, is a magical place until recently hidden away from the ravages that modernization can bring. This huge island, second only to Greenland in size, with a thousand languages and rich in diversity (and mineral wealth) and colorful traditions, is a jewel for studying the roots of mankind. Animals are equally diverse, including the birds. As an ornithologist, Dr. Dumbacher stumbled upon the Hooded Pitohui when he licked a scratch after one was trapped in his net. His mouth tingled. Good thing he is a grown human, subsequent research showed that the poison he encountered could kill a mouse in minute amounts! The natives warned him to avoid these trash birds. He dove into a study to answer why.

The feathers and skin of this species was indeed highly poisonous although he had some difficulty convincing his colleagues. That is until one (Dr. John Daly, an animal poison specialist) agreed to analyze what this might be. To everyone's surprise it was a deadly poison, the same used by head hunters in the Amazon Basin that they extracted from poison frogs. An ocean away!

The hows, whys and how-comes of these unusual poison-laden birds have been largely answered, thanks to his research and numerous trips to the lowlands of New Guinea, with the help of modern chemical analysis and native folk lore. The source of the toxin is an unusual beetle (*nani sani*); the purpose? It certainly repels varmints—from tiny lice to devouring snakes. They have learned not to mess with the pitohuis!

Jack has also bridged the gap between the black magic of the unknown and the clarifying analytics of modern science. Indigenous peoples listen and learn as he describes the study of details that lead to an understanding about the reactions and reasons various poisons are useful. Dr. Dumbacher's research, as Curator of Ornithology and Mammalogy at the California Academy of Science, goes well beyond the poison birds and beyond the mystical island of New Guinea—but the pituitui do get attention!



Sara Shoemaker Lind

Jack with landowners of the Koi Klan, Herowana Village (top)
Dr. Dumbacher & Chair Nichols at the University Club, November 19
Yellow-headed Kingfisher (*Syma torotoro*), just one of the beautiful birds of New Guinea

1st Report, Inner Mongolian Flag Expedition Honolulu — December 13

Our Chapter just explored new territory. We held the first Explorers Club meeting in Hawaii on December 13, at the University of Hawaii in Honolulu. Thirty-two members and their special guests attended. The whole event was put together by Cameron McNaughton Ph.D. (a leading researcher in oceanography and air pollution.) Our Chair Alan Nichols and his wife Becky represented the mainland segment of our Chapter.

Alan gave a talk on Mongolia and especially his discovery of the sacred mountain where Chinggis Qa'an was buried. An informal meeting was held after the talk among the Hawaii-based Members and Fellows of the Explorers Club addressing the question if they wanted to form their own Chapter. The consensus was that they would prefer to be a part of our Chapter. They will hold their own special meetings on occasion, encourage Chapter speakers to speak at their event if they came to Hawaii, and consider special field trips both in Hawaii and California—all open to members from both Hawaii and the mainland. Nine of the 14 Explorers Club Members in all the Islands of Hawaii attended this event including **Edward Carus, Suzanne Finney, Victoria Garshnek, Megan McCorrison, Cameron McNaughton, Guido Carlo Pogliasco, Diane Ragone, Bob Sanders and Jonas Vibell.**

To listen to Jack on the web, see: http://fora.tv/2010/03/17/Expedition_Papua_New_Guinea_with_Jack_Dumbacher

The Corner Chair—

Congratulations, We all made it into another year. May all of us be successful; however, each of us might define success. But, more importantly may we all find Happiness in 2011...I'm certainly happy about our first 2011 sparks; thanks to Kay Schmieider January 21's Story Night will be a *lala-paloza!*

Our field trip leader Yvonne Hurson is setting up an exciting winter survival course Feb 5 (I'm going to build my first snow cave and sleep in it; anyone want to help us keep warm!)

They changed the rules on us but we still won the membership contest with the most "activated" new members of any chapter in the world--by "activated" they mean they paid their dues, but in my book it means they are ready to contribute-- my Exhibit 1 will be Story Night with three new members telling us stories, Ken Howery, Neal Mueller, Chuck Davis.

We have our own rising star in the West; Dr. Cameron McNaughton put together an extraordinary group of explorers for the first-ever Club meeting held in Honolulu; living in Hawaii he had never been to an Explorers Club meeting until this one that he organized!

One of our biggest Chapter Assets is Lee Langan, newsletter Editor, member of the international Board, advisor to me about the machinations of headquarters' politics that affect our chapter, and constant supporter of our activities...For years Lee and Mort Beebe have taken care of our Chapter meeting's "Sound and Light", but now affable Jim Hurson has taken over. (Thanks Jim.)

If anyone wants to volunteer or start an Explorers Club project as your New Year's Resolution, let me know--Happiness is guaranteed!
—Alan Nichols FN84

NorCA Snow Field Trip February 5-6, 2011

Our first Field Trip of 2011! Let the fun begin! Save Saturday, February 5 for a crash course in winter survival. We'll be heading for the Sierras for a scenario-studded trek into the snow. Experience it all first hand— Ski Patrol/Mountain Rescue style. More details to follow in communications for those who wish to sign up— contact Von Hurson:

trekking@sonic.net

Alan is planning on an overnight! However, this is not an essential part of the trip.

Chapter Dues Due! Pay for 2011

Thanks for making 2010 another banner year for our chapter. We have enjoyed continued record attendance for extraordinary speakers, established adventuresome and educational field trips, and enjoyed each other's company. As a result of your participation and contributions, our Chapter remains one of the most successful and active of the National organization—evidenced by winning the membership drive!

2011 will continue this trend, with your constant help. We have more fascinating speakers already signed up plus new field trips and events being planned. To maintain our ability to bring you these events and activities we ask that you support your chapter with annual \$25.00 dues for the calendar year. Remitting is easy. You can pay "digitally" by Paypal or by sending a check to our Treasurer Sue Estey.

Introducing the Exploring Spirit! An Avocation of Our Webmaster

This year was the twelfth year going to Yosemite with my sixty 11-year-olds. Yup, I've been doing this since before this crop was born. This program has been organized with teacher friends through a public school in Sacramento County. We spend a week, every November, teaching these students about natural history. My first kids are finishing college now.

It had snowed just before we got to Yosemite, but the snow line was at about 6,000 feet. Since the Valley rim is above that, and the Valley floor is below that, it was perfect. We had a lovely dusting of white in the distance without having to walk in it.

The pictures, a glimpse included here, chronicled our adventures as we hiked to the base of Nevada Falls one day and the base of upper Yosemite Falls the next (1,000' of climbing each). <<http://www.diggles.com/yi/2010-11/>> is a slideshow I did using Adobe Photoshop Lightroom.

We also were recorded by the USGS Merced River stream-gauge webcam at <<http://ca.water.usgs.gov/webcams/happyisles/archive/201011101030.html>> (Sorry; it's in Flash so anyone using an iPad can't see it!)

I go back to this magical spot in early March to teach geology and photography to an art class from Mountain View High School, my other teaching gig. —Mike Diggles, FN-92 (Chapter Webmaster)

Note that Mike has been our webmaster since forming the very first web site in the Explorer Club in 1994! It contains our history and can be accessed at <www.explorersnorca.org>, which jumps to his personal server.



PHOTOS COURTESY MIKE DIGGLES



Mike has clearly been able to absorb the challenge of keeping sixth-graders busy and excited about the great outdoors.

January 2011



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

Story Night — January 21 — University Club

Northern California Calendar of Events

(Venues will be identified as soon as known.)

Our Next Events

January 21, 2011. Story Night
member tales. University Club

Future Events

February 11 Adventures with a Purpose
Richard Bang University Club
March 19 ECAD
Maya Prophecies Waldorf-Astoria
March 25 Medical Exploration in Iraq
Tom Cromwell, MD University Club
April 22 The Storied Ice
Joan Boothe University Club
May 20 Dead Men Tell Tales
Alan Nichols University Club
June 18 Angel Island Picnic

Earlier Events (2010)

April 30 Seth Shostak
Are We Alone in Space? University Club
May 8-9 Seashore Field Trip/lunch
Point Lobos, Monterey Peninsula, Hick's home
May 21 Left Bank/Rive Gauche
Music of the Antarctic Expeditions Stanford
June 5 Angel Island Picnic
July 1 Marcel Robischon
'Discovering the Redwoods. University Club
September 17 Don Johanson
Lucy and Our African Origins University Club
October 29 Josh Bernstein
Expeditions and the Media University Club
November 19 Jack Dumbacher
Poison Birds of New Guinea University Club
December 5 Alan & Becky Nichols
Chair's Member Reception Tiburon
December 13 Alan Nichols
Mongolian Flag Expedition Honolulu

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

USE PAYPAL!

January 21: University Club, San Francisco

Date: Friday January 21, 2011
Place: University Club
Time: 6:30 - reception
7:15 - dinner
8:00 - talk
Cost: \$49 in advance; \$60 on the 21st
Students: \$33. (2011 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 January 21, 2011 Story Night
Cost: only \$49 (for members and sirdars) \$33 for card-carrying students
Name: _____
Address (if changed): _____
Companion: _____

Please reserve by Jan 18!

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 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; 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.