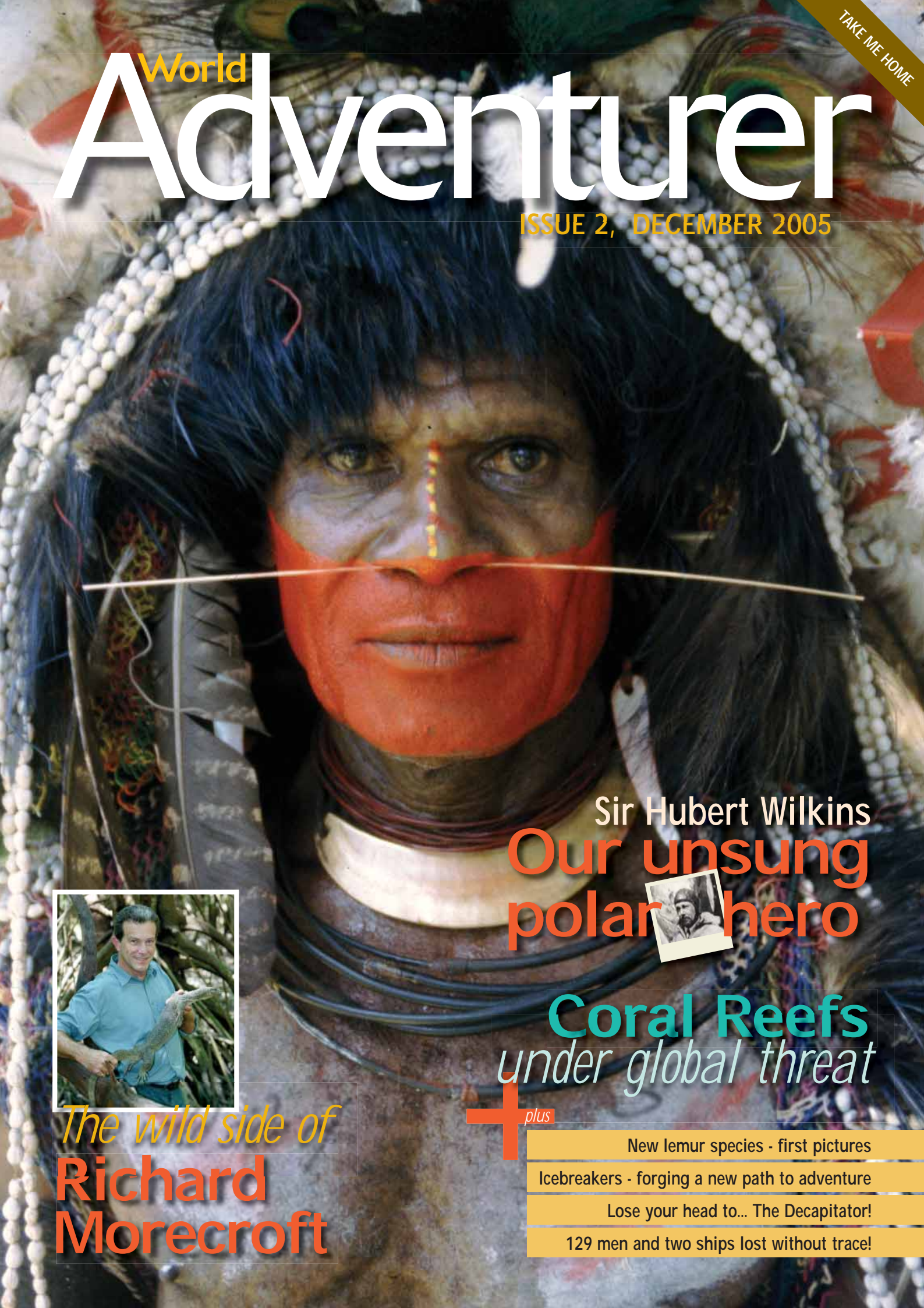


TAKE ME HOME

World Adventurer

ISSUE 2, DECEMBER 2005



Sir Hubert Wilkins
**Our unsung
polar hero**



Coral Reefs
under global threat



- New lemur species - first pictures
- Icebreakers - forging a new path to adventure
- Lose your head to... The Decapitator!
- 129 men and two ships lost without trace!



The wild side of
**Richard
Morecroft**

A Hull warrior in the Papua New Guinea Highlands
resplendent in a wig fashioned from cuscus fur,
seeds, flowers, feathers and human hair.

World Adventurer

www.worldadventurer.net

CHAIRMAN AND PUBLISHER

Dennis Collaton

dennis@adventureassociates.com

MANAGING EDITOR

Stewart Campbell

stewart@adventureassociates.com

EDITOR

Roderick Eime

editorial@worldadventurer.net

ART DIRECTOR & DESIGNER

Luca Balboni

www.lucabalboni.com

CONTRIBUTORS

John Borthwick

Dr Steve Bourget

Dr Tony Gherardin

Eric Matson

Chris Ord

Len Zell

ADVERTISING ENQUIRIES

Tatyana Kovalyov

phone (+61 2) 9797 6180

fkov@mbx.com.au

PRINTED BY

Offset Alpine

PUBLISHED BY



adventure
associates

197 Oxford Street

(PO Box 612)

Bondi Junction, NSW 2022

phone (+61 2) 9389 7466

fax (+61 2) 9369 1853

www.adventureassociates.com

A.B.N. 12 001 118 332

NSW Travel Agents Lic. No. 2TA000351



CATO

Council of Australian Tour Operators

IGTOA

Dear Adventurer



Firstly thank you to the great many who wrote, phoned and emailed your thoughts about our new magazine. All of us here at Adventure Associates were truly uplifted by your feedback. And thank you for sharing your photos and stories, some we have chosen to include in this issue.

When I look back over my last thirty years in adventure travel, I can't help but notice how things have changed – but also how some things stay the same.

In the '70s we lauded the arrival of the new mega-jets, lead by the ubiquitous 747 'Jumbo Jet'.

Then there are the new huge cruise liners, capable of carrying thousands of passengers in total luxury, complete with shopping malls, restaurants and casinos. So spoilt are they, many even choose to stay aboard when the vessel berths at a new port.

Now the travel research and marketing gurus are extolling the 'new' travel passions. I see words and phrases like "transformational experiences" and "experiential travel" tossed about by the latest experts like a cure for the common cold. Well we at Adventure Associates have delivered exactly that for over thirty years!


If I've learned anything in my time, travel and adventure is a fundamental of the human psyche. Famous adventurers and discoverers like Cook, Magellan, Darwin, Shackleton and countless others remind us of our inherently inquisitive nature and relentless quest for new experiences. Not that I need vindication, but it astounds me that some

people, usually so-called experts, have only now uncovered what Adventure Associates travellers have known for decades.

Sure, the modern explorer travels with a camera instead of a gun, buys souvenirs instead of plundering and spreads goodwill not disease. But travel remains one of the core motivators in our society next to, according to the trendy advertising executives, cash and cars.

Please stay in touch with us, because our tradition of unveiling new and exciting destinations continues. Over the next few months we'll announce yet more "experiential travel" destinations, as well as additional departures to the ones that fill so quickly.

And, thanks to your suggestions and enquiries we have included yet more of the sort of stories you so enjoyed in Issue 1.


Dennis Collaton

contents

- 2 Editorial
- 3 News
- 4 Rankin Island Riddles
- 5 The wild side of Richard Morecroft
- 6 Icebreakers: Pushing the limits
- 8 Spirit of the Sepik
- 9 Photo Gallery
- 10 The Decapitator
- 11 Let Sleeping Gods Lie
- 12 In Search of Sir Hubert
- 14 Barrier Reefs Under Global Threat
- 15 Aye Aye Captain
- 16 Quo Vadis - Namibia
- 17 Get into top gear for adventure
- 18 Two ships and 129 men missing without trace
- 19 Patagonia Drama

Readers Competition

We have five fabulous travel and adventure DVDs and \$250 travel vouchers to give away, which will be announced in the next issue of World Adventurer Magazine.

To enter, answer each question below from the information found on the Adventure Associates website at www.adventureassociates.com

- 1 How thick is the hull of the Yamal?
 - 2 Where is Million Dollar Point, and why is it so named?
 - 3 Name the ship that holds the record for furthest south.
 - 4 In which city will you find Hotel Monasterio?
- ▶ And in 25 words or less, what is your dream travel destination and why?

All entries must be received by no later than 31 January 2006.

Enter by post, fax or email to win@worldadventurer.net

Tell us your latest adventure!

Share you latest "world adventure" with us in words and pictures.

Each published story receives a DVD and \$250 Gift Voucher. About 500 words, with two or three pics is ideal.

2005 Big Bird Race ends in tragedy

After the success of the 2004 Big Bird Race where all contestants finished, the 2005 event appears to have created only losers.

The brainchild of Australian-based conservationist, Tim Nevard, the event was designed to draw attention to the plight of the migrating Shy Albatross as it flies from Tasmania to South Africa. Celebrities and royalty alike backed the birds as they were tracked by electronic beacons on their mighty annual journey – almost 10,000 kilometres.

On the finishing date, August 4, none of the 17 tagged birds had

crossed the line in Durban and neither were any of the beacons still responding. Race organisers fear the birds were most probably lost to their major threat - long-line fishing. Albatross dive to catch and eat small fish near the surface. Long-line fishers use thousands of baited hooks that are often taken by seabirds before they can sink. The birds are hooked, dragged underwater and drowned in their thousands and many species of Albatross are endangered as a result.

More info:

www.bigbirdrace.com



Icebreaker Kapitan Khlebnikov - Roderick Elme

Attempt at furthest south

Adventure Associates newest icebreaker expedition to deepest Antarctica will attempt to better the 90-year-old record held by the famous Norwegian, Fridtjof Nansen aboard *Fram*.

a new record for furthest south by any ship. Numerous attempts and claims were made since then, but *Fram's* record stands undisputed. Almost 90 years to the day, *Kapitan Khlebnikov* made an attempt in unusually favourable ice conditions, but fell tantalisingly short.

The year 1911 was the apex of Antarctic exploration. The famous Norwegian explorer, Roald Amundsen, pipped Scott to the South Pole and the 'heroic' Englishman and his crew perished on their return.

In early February 2006, *Kapitan Khlebnikov* will again attempt to better this enduring feat at the Bay of Whales during her expedition cruise, "The Great Antarctic Explorers".

More info:

www.adventureassociates.com

When Amundsen's supply ship, the *Fram*, captained by Nansen, moored in the Bay of Whales on 14 January 1911, she immediately set



Roderick Elme

Gifts to Siberia

Following success in Madagascar and Bhutan, Adventure Associates and their passengers again made valuable donations to isolated communities in the Russian Far East. Parcels of fabric, sewing supplies, tools and sundry hardware were distributed to villages along the remote Chukotka Peninsula. These proud, hardy and infinitely

resourceful native people suffer only remoteness from civilisation as we know it, making it difficult for them to obtain items we would otherwise take for granted. Pictured is Expedition Leader, Australian biologist Jane Wilson, with the villagers of Yanrakynnot and a box of useful "goodies".

Tasmanian Shy Albatross in flight - Courtesy Bird Race



Emperors marching our way

In the Antarctic, every March since the beginning of time, the quest begins to find the perfect mate and start a family. This courtship will begin with a long journey – a journey that will take them hundreds of miles across the continent by foot, in freezing cold temperatures, in brittle, icy winds and through deep, treacherous waters. They will risk starvation and attack by dangerous predators, under the harshest conditions on earth, all to find true love.

The epic movie, "March of the Penguins" is due for release in Australia early 2006. Narrated by Morgan Freeman, it follows one of the most remarkable journeys in the entire animal kingdom – that of the Emperor Penguin, the only animal to live and breed on the floating sea ice..

More info:

www.marchofthepenguins.com



Emperor Penguins and young - Guillaume Dargaud

RANKIN ISLAND RIDDLES

Photos: Len Zell



By Len Zell

the initial mapping, probing and photography was completed. An amazing discovery for us was that in each of the 1.5m diameter pool-like structures was evidence of tool manufacture including tool blanks and flakes.

From this visit a preliminary report was written and sent to the WA Museum and University of New England (UNE). The following year Dr Moya Smith from the WA Museum (WAM) had arranged permission for us to collect from the site on condition of minimal or no disturbance. Prior to the trip we had also had discussions with Prof Peter Flood from UNE about the massive wall structures or beach ridges found on the island. The walls had been formed from the eroded materials washed off the headlands between the walls. In addition Peter was interested in the beachrock we had seen and its likely age.

We were able to collect several old coral skeletons from the wall for dating purposes and these were labelled and packed carefully. On board the ship we were excited by what we had found and what the possible explanations were. Back at the lab we packed up the specimens and sent them off for dating, wrote up the report for the WA Museum and UNE and waited.

The dates came back and – they were exciting because at 4565 years before present this fitted with the high sea stand then of about

2m above present allowing the wall to have been a fish trap. But we have no proof, and the corals could have been picked up off the beach a few years ago and built into the wall recently. So we developed a set of suggested guidelines for the use of the island for those with permission to go there and possible research targets to try to answer the questions. For me – it's a fish trap! 🐟

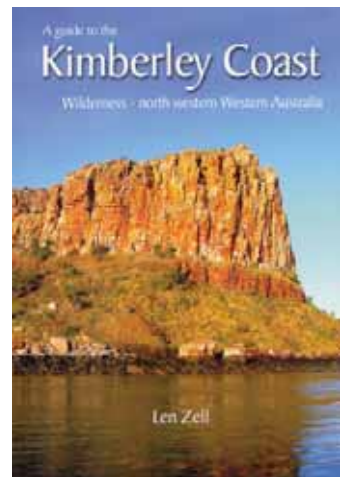
When confronted with a 80cm high human built wall stretching for over 75m on top of a massive rock wall similar to that of a water reservoir that looks like it was built by bulldozers one's mind jumps to all sorts of conclusions. The small wall looked like a fish trap but is 2m above present sea level. How was the big wall formed by the sea and when and then who built the small wall and when? Is it a fish trap, a ceremonial wall, a protection against invaders or something built by some very energetic and bored people? Well we are still trying to work it out. There are Aboriginal ceremonial rock walls of very different configurations nearby in the Kimberley.

spectacular geological phenomenon like the rest of this incredible coast. In 2003 an expedition on board Coral Princess went ashore to check out three amazing pools, each of about one acre when seen from the air. Once ashore we found the pools were dry and on the enclosing walls another manmade wall with a curved 'hook' at the end. Also a small cave with evidence of human occupation, several small mined areas and dozens of smaller "pools" in the rock walls each about 1.5m across. Sadly, we were not equipped to fully analyse our discovery and had to leave on the next tide.

Several weeks later we were able to revisit Rankin and this time we had GPS units for mapping, more plans for photography and some fine metal probes for the cave floor sediment depths. All

Perched just off the Kimberley Coast adjacent to the mouth of Walcott Inlet is Rankin Island. To casual observers it is just another

Len Zell has written the Lonely Planet guide to diving the Great Barrier Reef, A Guide to the Kimberley Coast and co-authored the Wild Discovery Guide Shark Bay-Ningaloo Coast and Outback Pathways - WA. He is a respected field guide and his books can be found at good bookshops or online at www.wilddiscovery.com.au



The wild side of Richard Morecroft



Viewers of ABC TV will no doubt be familiar with Richard's confident, urbane delivery of the nightly news over a period of twenty years. Those same viewers will also be aware of Richard's very badly kept secret – his unabashed fondness for wildlife.

Like so many children growing up near uncleared land, the lure of scurrying critters was ever-present.

"There were several undeveloped blocks near our house in Salisbury, just north of Adelaide," recalls Richard, "I was forever on the hunt for frogs, toads, lizards and, much to my parents' alarm, snakes. Much later on, I even had a pet Diamond Python."

Then came the little orphaned flying fox that spent many hours comfortably parcelled away inside Richard's shirt (simulating a mother's care), even when reading the news. When the documentary, *Raising Archie*,

produced by the ABC's Natural History Unit, went public, there was no keeping a lid on it. In fact, the modest production went on to win two ATOM awards and effectively became Richard's springboard into a whole new media genre.

"I'm delightfully surprised at the impact Archie made on people. I'm still asked even now, some fifteen years later, if I still have him and how he is," says Richard, "Archie really became an ambassador for his species and hopefully helped dismiss some of the stigma they suffered from as just a 'flying pest'."

Since Archie, the initial foray into wildlife seems to have become

permanent. Richard now works in executive positions with WIRES (Wildlife Information and Rescue Service) and the Taronga Zoo Foundation. *Raising Archie* went on to become a best-selling book and led to further publishing exploits, both alone and with his partner, Alison Mackay, including *Wolves of the Sea* and *Impossible Pets*.

As well as an in-demand corporate speaker, Richard is never too far from the glare of studio lights. He is now very comfortable in his role as presenter of ABC TV's "Goes Wild".

Richard and Alison also enjoy travelling to exotic locations in search of interesting animals. Their journeys have taken them to the Antarctic, the Galapagos, Yosemite, French Polynesia and, closer to home, the World Heritage rainforest at Cape Tribulation. However, sometime encounters with the unusual can be sometimes as close as your front yard.

"Alison and I were enjoying a relaxing stroll along the beach at Vincentia, near where we live when we noticed a large mass on the sand. It looked like a seal – and it was – but not a more common fur seal or sea lion, but a leopard seal.*

"It was a young male, the seal equivalent of a teenager I suppose, and in fine physical shape. I called National Parks and they told me it was "not that uncommon" for the occasional Leopard Seal to find its way this far north."

And where are you going on your next "safari"?

"There's so many intriguing lands and animals still left in the world, so places like Madagascar and the Amazon - where numerous delicate species are hanging on - still hold a lot of attraction for me." 🐾

Richard Morecroft Goes Wild airs weekly on ABC-TV every Saturday at 6.30pm. For program information, visit: www.abc.net.au/wild/

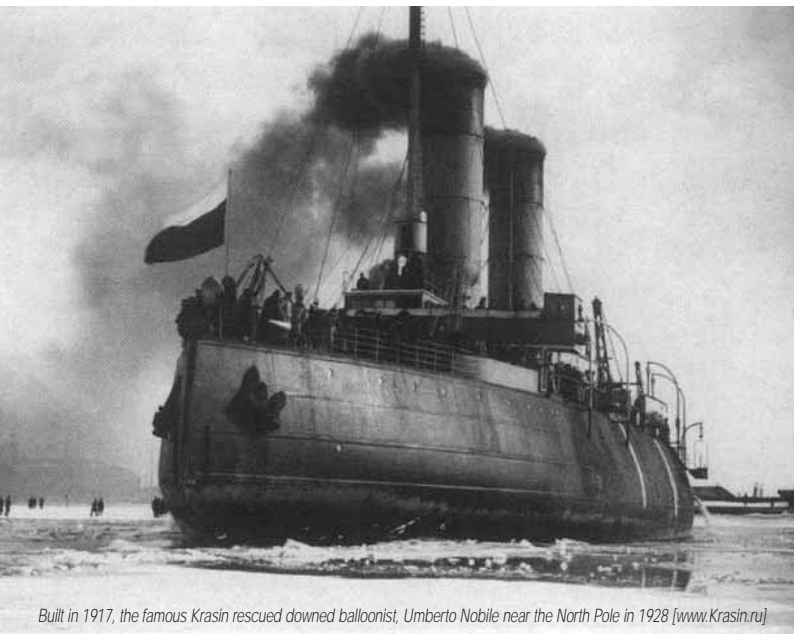
*Stewart Campbell, Adventure Associates CEO and frequent expedition leader comments: "Leopard Seals are a cherished sighting even in their home territory - the deepest Antarctic. They prefer to feed on penguins, so perhaps the nearby fairy penguin colony at Jervis Bay was the attraction? I've even heard a story of a Leopard Seal being found with a Platypus in its stomach."

Alison Mackay



icebreakers Pushing the limits

Modern shipbuilding now allows us to travel to the most remote regions of the world's frozen oceans. Enter the icebreaker!



Built in 1917, the famous *Krasin* rescued downed balloonist, Umberto Nobile near the North Pole in 1928 [www.Krasin.ru]

Despite the use of special, ice-strengthened designs, the force of nature prevailed over man's insignificant craft. Shackleton's *Endurance*, perhaps the strongest wooden ship ever built, was only powered by a tiny 350hp steam engine - nowhere near enough power to force her 350 tonne hull through the thick Antarctic ice - ultimately dooming her to an icy grave.

Commerce, war and exploration fuelled the urgency for ships capable of not only withstanding the enormous forces of the shifting ice, but to actually break through it and create a channel other vessels could follow. Because each country had such vast Arctic coastlines, Russia, Canada and the USA were the driving forces behind this new maritime technology. Russia, however, can probably claim the first use of an icebreaker when the *Pilot* was used to maintain shipping lanes between St Petersburg and the nearby naval base at Kronstadt where she was built in 1864.

At the very end of the 19th Century, Russia introduced the world's first true icebreaker, the *Yermak*. On her maiden voyage, she astounded the maritime community by immediately setting a new northernmost record for a ship when she explored to 81° 21' N on her maiden voyage to Spitsbergen in 1899. The *Yermak*

gained hero status when she freed an icebound Russian battleship and, while on the same mission, rescued fifty stranded Finnish fishermen from an ice floe.

Convinced of their value, Russia added the *Krasin*, the world's first "linear" icebreaker to her fleet. Built in Newcastle, England to Russian order in 1916, she was crucial in maintaining the Northeast Passage to the Far East along Russia's northern coastline. She brought the icebreaker to world-wide attention again when, in 1928, she rescued General Umberto Nobile and his crew who had crashed at 82° above Spitsbergen on their failed attempt to reach the North Pole by airship. The 6,000 tonne, 100m *Krasin*, amazingly, is still afloat today.

Russia continued her illustrious reputation with icebreakers when she launched the world's first nuclear-powered surface vessel in 1957, the *Lenin*. She was decommissioned in 1989 after a chequered career and is currently laid up in the Russian port of Murmansk where she will apparently become a museum ship.

In 1975, Russia launched the world's most ambitious icebreaker yet, the *Arktika*. She was a new class of vessel and the largest and most powerful icebreaker ever constructed. Two 160 tonne



Diesel-electric icebreaker, Kapitän Khlebnikov, smashes through the Arctic ice pack. [pic: Rod Eime]

When the first Arctic explorers starting venturing north, some five hundred years ago, in search of the supposed riches beyond the ice, they encountering numerous problems. Not the least of them being that their flimsy wooden ships kept sinking when they ran into the inevitable ice pack.

The pursuit of the fabled North West Passage from the Atlantic to the Pacific brought numerous sailors undone as they pushed deeper into the frozen wilderness above what is now Canada. In fact, the most celebrated failure, that of Sir John Franklin in 1845, saw two ships and the entire complement of 129 men disappear.

Navigating the treacherous and capricious ice pack was an

immensely arduous task even for the most skilled seamen. When the ice closed in around their ship, men would go out onto the ice and physically cut it away with huge saws while another party dragged the ship through the tiny passage like mules. Any progress was painfully slow and if the currents were unfavourable, the ice would carry them backwards despite their best efforts. The other great, ever-present danger was for a ship to be completely trapped by a rapidly freezing icepack. Probably the best known example is Sir Ernest Shackleton's 1914-16 expedition, where his ship, the *Endurance*, was beset for 281 days in the ice before finally being crushed by the enormous lateral pressure of the frozen ocean.

nuclear reactors power steam turbines which, in turn, drive six electric generators providing an unprecedented 75,000 hp (max) to three fixed-pitch propellers. Her displacement is 23,455 tonnes. In a impressive demonstration of her superior design and performance, the *Arktika* became the first surface vessel to reach the North Pole when she cut a swath through the Arctic pack ice to reach 90° N on August 17, 1977. The journey took her a little over a week from her home port of Murmansk, although she could have kept going for another five years before needing to refuel. Four sister vessels were constructed over the subsequent ten years, with the last ship, the *Yamal* (from the Nenets language: End of the Earth) finally launched in 1992.

At the time of *Yamal's* launch, the Russian icebreaker fleet was in disarray. Previously funded by the Soviet government, they now had to pay their own pay and, apart from regular transport and escort duties, soon began to carry Western adventurers to unheard-of destinations, including the North Pole. In a curious twist of fortune, the sudden availability of the world's most capable fleet of icebreakers and ice-class vessels (including the conventionally powered *Sorokin*-class icebreakers) for free-market commercial use, has exploded the adventure travel market. Today, voyages to the far reaches of Antarctica, the fabled NorthWest Passage, the North Pole and elsewhere can be booked as easily as picking up the phone.

In 1991, Adventure Associates' chairman and managing director, Dennis Collaton, was one of the first to take such a voyage and thus recognise the possibilities.

"I walked out onto the deserted shore of the New Siberian Islands with some of the crew of the *Sovetskiy Soyuz* and there on the beach was the most enormous woolly mammoth tusk. No one could lift it. It was a struggle just to get it upright," recalls Dennis. "It was then that I realised how incredibly special these remote destinations were and how privileged I was to be there."

"You develop an enormous respect for the fragility and delicate balance of our environment when you visit these incredible lands," continues Dennis, "and it makes you want to work just that much harder to preserve them."

Since then, thousands of modern expeditioners have experienced the life-changing thrill of a voyage to the polar extremes of our fascinating planet aboard one of these extraordinary vessels. 🐾





Spirit of the SEPIK

From the shore it must look like a bad case of "Bwana Vistas". Six of us are chugging down Papua New Guinea's Sepik River in a dugout canoe — enthroned in wicker easy-chairs.

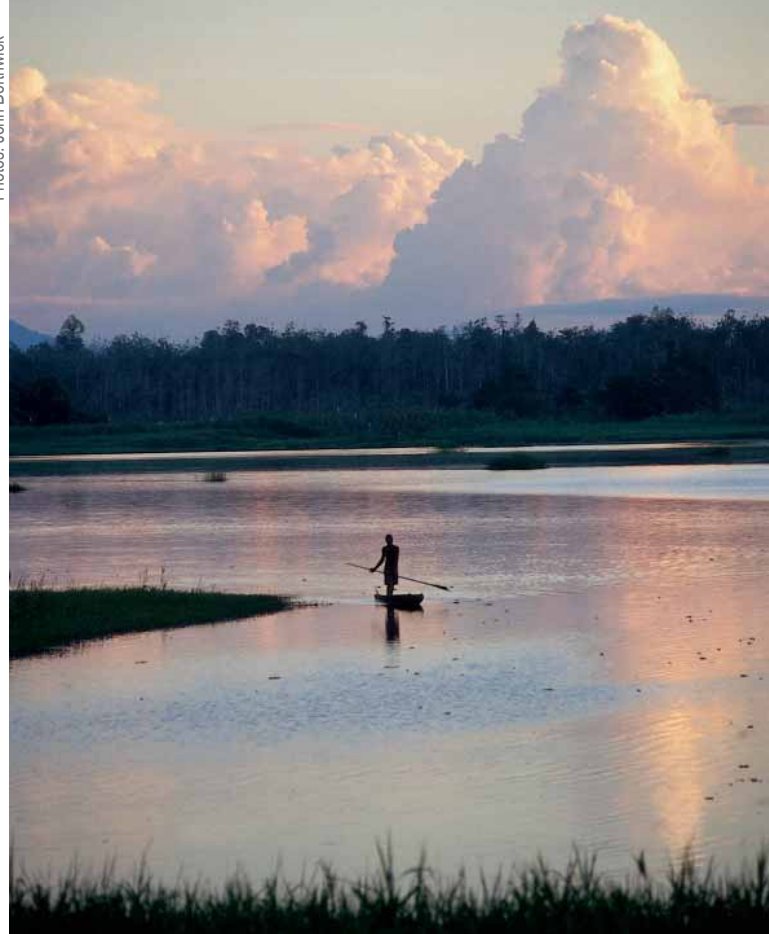
Not only that, but we're shrouded against an equatorial sun by more headwear than an Arab in mufti. So, we look a tad silly? — it allows us to spend three days slipping back through time on this glittering river, without kneeling all day as sun-crisped cripples.

The Sepik is one of the largest rivers in the world in terms of water flow; starting its 1120 kilometre journey in PNG's central mountains, it travels in a long western loop into and out of Irian Jaya before meandering east to the sea below Wewak.

Brown and broad, it picks its way across the plains, changing course at will, leaving a maze of dead-ends, ox-bow lakes, swamps and lagoons. No place to be a lone wanderer, unless you have month of Sundays, a bucket of kina and a PhD in mazes.

In Korogo village we visit a 50-metre long, two-storied *haus tamburan* whose upper floor is given over entirely to the works of local carvers. In this adumbral "big house" gallery, huge faces, figurines, totems, penis sheaths, birds and ubiquitous puk puks (crocodiles) throng the gloom. Giant masks extend their tongues in proto-Kiss grimaces. The prices start at around 15 kina (approximately AUD\$15) for works that we will later see in Australian boutiques with a 10 times mark-up. The fertility carvings are striking. Though the exaggerated genitals and occasional copulatory postures might be viewed by wowers as "proto-porn", within the Sepik belief system of sympathetic magic, these creations are simply life, its origins and evocation.

In one big house we see, but cannot photograph, the "orator's chair". Alois explains that during a



major dispute, such as over land or sorcery, antagonists can be required to sit in this magical chair, which, according to belief, permits only the truth to be told by its occupant. A liar is soon reduced to a sweating, trembling mess.

The distinctive grinning faces on the decorated Aibom pots prove irresistible to half our group. When these join the proliferation of masks and carved stools we have already gathered, our canoe looks like a floating garage sale. 🖐️

Water hyacinth-clotted lakes, stilt villages, kids paddling by on slender, crocodile-prowed dugouts, levitating herons, sago makers, canoe builders, village crocodile pens ... the Sepik's gallery of images is endless. We divert from the river and slide through a channel into the lush Chambri Lakes where we put ashore at the village of Aibom, noted for its bonfire-baked pottery.

John Borthwick is one of Australia's most widely published travel writers. Winner of numerous awards, John is also the author of two acclaimed travel writing anthologies; *The Circumference of the Knowable World* and *Chasing Gaugin's Ghost*.

MORE INFO: www.johnborthwick.net



PAPUA NEW GUINEA



Few places remain in the modern world today where such pure, vibrant and exuberant culture exists. Experience all the colour and energy of Papua New Guinea and her islands with us aboard Oceanic Princess.

11 days. Cairns to Rabaul/Rabaul to Alotau/Rabaul to Cairns from AU\$6950



adventure associates

Phone: (+61) (02) 9389 7466
Toll Free (Australia): 1800 222 141
www.adventureassociates.com

Thank you to the Adventurers who travelled with Adventure Associates recently and for sharing their best photos.

Send your top shots to World Adventurer at:
editorial@worldadventurer.net
or by mail to:
PO Box 612,
Bondi Junction NSW 1355

All published images will receive a AU\$250 Travel Voucher from Adventure Associates.



Carole Anne Fooks
Chameleon - Madagascar

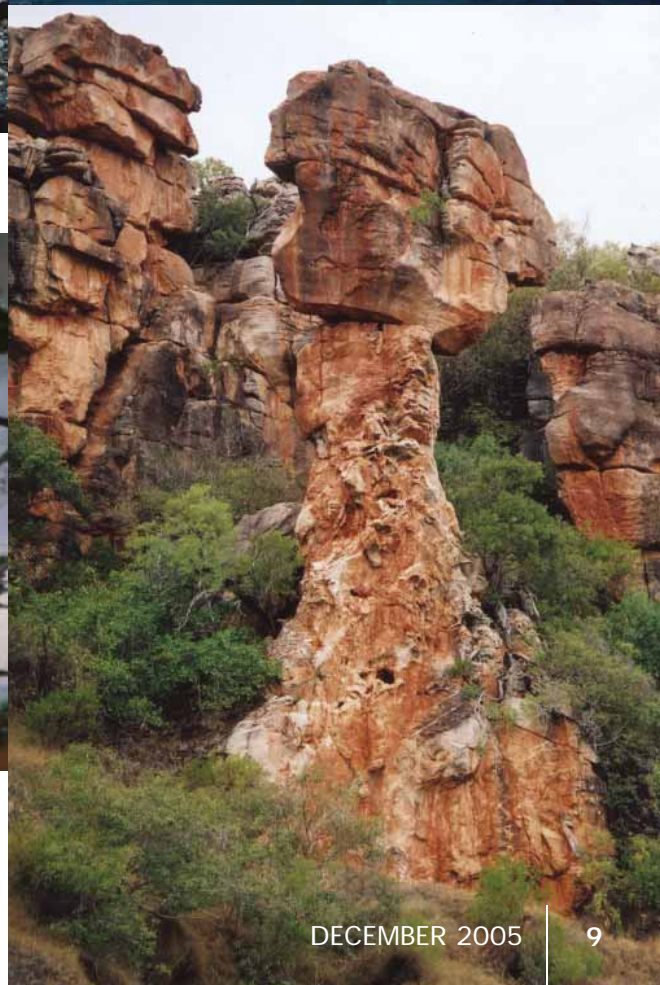
Jill Wharton
Davey Reef and Cay, Great Barrier Reef



Lee Treddinick
Iceberg at Cuverville Island



Elisabeth Knight
Rice Fields, Bhutan



Ken Jackson
Kimberley, Port Frederick Harbour

THE DECAPITATOR

An image or pure terror emerges from the pre-Incan ruins of northern Peru. Was he real, or a stylised "boogie man"? Archaeologists are only now demystifying this horrific character – and their discoveries are unsettling.



Dr Steve Bourget/UTexas

all they heard was the pounding of their own hearts. Once inside they witnessed one of history's most gruesome sacrificial rites: A Moche priest adorned in gold slit their throats one by one. Those in line who didn't turn away or faint saw a priestess catch the blood in a golden goblet for the priest to drink. Scholars know about these ceremonies by studying Moche artwork, like the frieze of naked prisoners discovered on Huaca Cao Viejo's plaza wall. Bones of sacrifice victims—incorporated into the frieze and buried under the plaza floor—show evidence of extreme torture before the grisly executions.

The Moche civilisation were an advanced agricultural and deeply superstitious people living on the northern coast of Peru, some 500 kilometres north of the capital, Lima. Only in the last decade are scientists discovering and analysing the recent haul of artefacts unearthed from unlooted tombs found near the city of Trujillo.

Previous finds had been heavily vandalised and plundered since the demise of the Moche empire around 800 AD. It was known from their enormous mud brick pyramids, that the Moche were advanced in ceramics and metallurgy, producing many beautifully ornate items that discoverers have labelled "museum quality". The motifs found have raised more questions than answers surrounding the Moche's obviously complex beliefs and rituals.

at the site known as El Brujo (the Wizard). As the workers carefully dusted the intricate friezes, nightmarish images of brutal sacrifice and carnage emerged.

Featured in glorious colour interpretations by National Geographic magazine, author Peter Gwin let his imagination loose when describing how he imagined the scene in the plaza of "The Temple of Doom";

Themes of amputation and decapitation feature largely throughout Moche imagery and sculpture. Scholars continue to debate the significance of these representations. Were they ritual punishment, crude surgery or some other mysterious sacrificial rite? A great many bones have been unearthed with mutilated and truncated limbs, lending support to the theory that this brutal practice was widespread within the culture.



One of the most puzzling icons of the Moche is a recurring symbol featuring an intensely grotesque face represented in mosaics, friezes and ceramics. This fearsome character has become known as the 'decapitator' after very recent excavations of the Huaca Cao Viejo

For prisoners of the Moche, Huaca Cao Viejo's elaborate art was likely among the last sights they saw. Naked, bleeding, and bound with nooses, they were led into the ceremonial plaza. Perhaps they heard the Pacific surf rolling onto the beach in the distance; perhaps

Without a written language, the only clues to the mystery of this long-vanished culture come from their vivid and disturbing art which can be seen (if you dare!) at many of the accessible sites in this archeologically rich region. 🗺️

1300 658 844
www.traveldoctor.com.au



...for a safe and healthy journey
The doctor knows best.

Lord of Sipan

Explore the Moche civilisation and all its splendour with the 5-day, "Lord of Sipan" tour. From AU\$1050



adventure
 associates

Phone: (+61) (02) 9389 7466
 Toll Free (Australia): 1800 222 141
www.adventureassociates.com



Let's sleeping Gods lie

By Roderick Eime

I'm almost ashamed to admit that it was the altogether incredible author, Erich von Daniken, who fired my fascination with far-off and mysterious lands.

When Chariots of the Gods burst onto TV screens in the early '70s, I was but a naive, goggle-eyed youngster all too ready to consume these wild theories. But quite apart from perpetrating outlandish notions of alien interference, the charlatan von Daniken did introduce me to some of the little known mysteries of the ancient world.

The magnificent and mysterious realm of the Mayas of Central America, the perplexing and complex Nazca lines of Peru and the huge, stony-faced inhabitants of Easter Island intrigued me to the point of near-fanaticism. It was then that I resolved to visit each of these fascinating locations and discover for myself the wonders within.

Now, some thirty years later and with a modicum of wisdom in tow, I am beginning to cross these enigmatic sites off my very short list. Each visit duly dispels any rumours of extraterrestrial involvement, but rekindles anew my childlike enthralment with the persistent mysteries.

En route to South America, I arranged a stopover on the tiny Isla de Pascua, more commonly known as Easter Island thanks to the Dutchman, Jacob Roggeveen, who rediscovered it in 1722. This improbable little speck in the Pacific is officially the most remote habitation on the planet and for

several centuries the indigenous Rapa Nui people lived in splendid isolation. Just how and from where they arrived has long been a raging debate amongst anthropologists and archaeologists. An enigma made all the more intriguing by the fact that almost all of the oral history is hopelessly garbled and the skills required to read their ancient tablets was lost to Peruvian slave traders in the 19th century.

Today the "navel of the world" is a delightfully relaxed Chilean outpost, over 3500 kms from Santiago and pleasantly devoid of the modern, vulgar trappings of international tourism. Unfortunately the island of about 4,000 inhabitants is also almost completely devoid of indigenous Rapa Nui thanks to the intervention of slavers, missionaries and the inevitable diseases that travel with white men. 20,000 tourists however come and go each year and the convoluted LanChile airline schedules are such that a three or four day stay is almost mandatory.

Flying to Easter Island is an adventure in itself. Your first clue comes when the aircraft begins to descend into what appears to be a completely featureless ocean. No telltale atolls, lagoons or reefs to signal the impending destination. Craning for some clue, I caught sight of a few forlorn Moai along the west coast immediately before flight LA834 touched down on the ample runway. The huge strip at Mataverí is actually the longest in Chile and was upgraded by NASA to serve as an emergency strip for the space shuttle.

It's hard to imagine that Easter Island was possibly once the world's largest bird colony, replete with terns, albatross and petrels in apparently boundless plenty. The landscape, now merely lush pastures dotted with imported eucalypts to shelter sheep and livestock, was once an impenetrable palm jungle, all laid waste for the glory and gratification of the stony ancestor gods who later stood silently by while their world crumbled into mayhem. Their mute complicity however did not go unpunished and the emaciated, battle-weary villagers turned on their nonchalant idols, beheading them, toppling them and thrusting their uncaring faces into the mud.

My own Rapa Nui experience lasted a mere three days and as I strolled

out to the waiting aircraft laden with little mini-moai souvenirs, I felt there was still more to explore. All the wanderings amongst the giant mute moai, the caves, the petroglyphs and the long list of theories and postulations still manage to raise questions faster than I can find answers. To my mind, Easter Island should keep at least some of its secrets intact to intrigue and entice mystery-hunters and preserve its hard won enigmatic appeal. The lessons likely to be revealed by more energetic study will almost certainly add to the already unpalatable morals derived from self-worship and aggrandisement. Let sleeping gods lie, I say. 🙌

More info:
www.rapanui.cl



Galápagos and Easter Island

14 May to 3 June 2006
17 September to 7 October 2006

The mystery of Rapa Nui and the biological fiesta of the Galapagos.

From AU\$ 9,990 Twin Share



adventure
associates

Phone: (+61) (02) 9389 7466
Toll Free (Australia): 1800 222 141
www.adventureassociates.com



In search of SIR HUBERT

Australia's "other" polar hero still remains something of a mystery to his hero-worshipping countrymen.

While his Australian contemporaries, Sir Douglas Mawson and Frank Hurley enjoy the modern notoriety of their achievements during the "heroic age" of polar exploration, the equally breath-taking exploits of the adventurous boy from Adelaide, Sir Hubert Wilkins, are often overlooked.



Born in 1888 in South Australia's scenic Clare Valley, Hubert Wilkins was the youngest of the 'golden era' explorers. (Hurley 1885, Mawson 1882). Driven by the desire for adventure and an escape from the harsh rural life on Australian Victorian-era farms during the historic drought of 1895-1902,

"the bravest man I have ever seen"

General Sir John Monash

Hubert also believed he could improve the lot of farmers with better long-term weather forecasting and ecological management.

His family, stricken by the drought, moved to Adelaide in 1903, but Hubert, fascinated by the world as a whole, was in Sydney by 1909 working as a newsreel cinematographer. This took him to England and later the Balkan War in 1912, where he is credited with creating the first ever movie footage of actual battle scenes.

On his return to London, he joined the ill-fated 1913 Canadian Arctic Expedition mounted by the notorious Vilhjamur Stefansson. When Stefansson abandoned his men on the *Karluq*, stuck fast in the polar ice, Wilkins escaped with his leader to Point Barrow, Alaska, to discover the world engulfed in war. He returned to his earlier vocation of war correspondent and, unlike the more famous Frank Hurley, Wilkins was twice decorated for bravery whilst filming forward of enemy lines on the Western Front in 1917.



Capt. Wilson Brown, Hubert Wilkins, and Commander Sloan Danehower

After the war, he joined the All-Australian crew (ironically in place of the unqualified Sir Charles Kingsford Smith) for the England-to-Australia air race in the quest for the 10,000 pound reward offered by the Australian Government. His aircraft, a Blackburn long-range bomber named the *"Kangaroo"* crashed in Crete with engine trouble.

Wilkins next turned to the Antarctic, but his efforts began badly with the ineffectual Cope Expedition of 1920 and Shackleton's tragic death aboard *Quest* in 1922. Despite this, the British Museum rewarded him with his own two-year expedition to the Australian outback.

It was his next exploit that gained him international recognition – and his knighthood. With *Pilot*, Carl Ben Eielson, he flew a single-engined Lockheed Vega from Alaska to Spitsbergen, the first such flight. In another ironic twist, Kingsford-Smith flew one of the heavy Fokker Trimotors Wilkins rejected for Arctic duty across the Pacific Ocean into the history books.

Back in Antarctica in late 1928, Wilkins, Eielson and their trusty Vega, now fitted with floats, flew mapping sorties over Graham Land (Antarctic Peninsula) from Deception Island and the pair became the first to fly over the continent as well as map uncharted land from the air.

After another history-making, around-the-world journey aboard

the *Graf Zeppelin* in 1929, Wilkins embarked on his most ambitious and perhaps foolhardy attempt in 1931. He wanted to prove (and be the first) that submarine travel was possible under the Arctic ice cap. Unfortunately his choice of craft, a pensioned-off ex-WW1 US 'O' Class submarine, renamed *Nautilus*, was not up to the task. His crew, upon learning of Wilkins' plans, partially disabled the craft to prevent, what they reasonably believed, would be a suicide mission. He was, however, able to prove that a submarine could work beneath the polar ice and some thirty years later the world's first nuclear-powered submarine, appropriately named *Nautilus*, did reach the North Pole completely submerged.

After this, Wilkins went on to further map Antarctica by air with the millionaire explorer, Lincoln Ellesworth. Unable to find work at home in Australia, he contracted himself to the US Military during WWII in a variety of roles including espionage and Arctic survival.

Despite his impressive list of 'firsts' and pioneering adventures, the proudly patriotic Sir Hubert Wilkins remains sadly overlooked by a country that so reveres its heroes. In the end, it was the US who took his ashes to the North Pole aboard the submarine *USS Skate* on 17 March 1958. 🇺🇸

More info:

www.sirhubert.com

Nautilus is towed into Portsmouth harbour with engine trouble



Walk this way

Come with us to the land of superlatives -- the coldest, windiest, driest, and highest of all the major landmasses in the world.



Choose from small-ship expedition cruises to the beautiful Antarctic Peninsula region - or the incredible icebreaker expeditions to remote continental Antarctica including the Ross Sea region...



Whatever your Antarctic dream, Adventure Associates can make it reality. Cruises to the Antarctic Peninsula start from just US\$2900 per person or, for the determined adventurer, fly to the South Pole.



adventure
a s s o c i a t e s

Phone: (+61) (02) 9389 7466
Toll Free (Australia): 1800 222 141
www.adventureassociates.com

Coral Reefs Under Global Threat.

The world's coral reefs are under increasing pressure from local and global-scale environmental impacts. Will we lose forever one of the planet's greatest underwater attractions?

Every year around 2 million visitors travel to the world's largest living structure; Australia's Great Barrier Reef. Whilst marvelling at the 2,000 species of fish that inhabit its 2,000 kilometre long mass, they snorkel, dive and frolic in the crystal clear waters and kick around 6 billion dollars into Australia's economy.

Although protected by both UNESCO's World Heritage treaty and Australia's own Marine Park legislation, the Great Barrier Reef is crying out for help. Due mainly to rising greenhouse gases, global warming is having a subtle, yet widespread effect on the fragile and sensitive corals.

"Rising sea temperatures increase the frequency of mass coral bleaching events," explains Eric Matson a research scientist at the Australian Institute of Marine Science, "Corals live only 1-2°C below their upper thermal limit



Eric Matson/AIMS

and sustained periods of water temperatures above this threshold stresses the coral and the symbiotic algae (the essential partner for reef-building corals) are expelled."

The frequency of mass coral bleaching events has increased since the mid-1970s, matching the rise in global temperatures. In 1998 (the hottest year on record) bleaching was observed in the majority of the world's coral reefs and approximately 16% are estimated to be permanently damaged.

Continuing research by AIMS and other bodies is trying to determine more accurately the factors that impact on the growth and recovery of the world's corals. It is clear that reefs protected from other human impacts (such as overfishing, pollution etc) are more resilient.

"Increasing atmospheric carbon dioxide (CO₂, the principal greenhouse gas) is also changing the chemistry of the oceans. About 30% of the CO₂ released into the atmosphere by human activities

since the Industrial Revolution has been absorbed by the oceans," continues Eric, "Changing the ocean chemistry essentially shifts the geochemical equation by which these organisms 'calcify'. The implication of continued change in ocean chemistry due to rising CO₂ is that these organisms will not calcify as well as they did in pre-industrial times and thus produce weaker skeletons and grow more slowly."

It seems therefore, that in the foreseeable future at least, the coral reefs are currently the best we'll ever see. The risk we face is that, unless global climates stabilise, we could see the gradual destruction of the reefs as they succumb to a combination of both man-made and natural pressures. 🙌

More info:

www.aims.gov.au

Eric Matson is a Marine Scientist attached to the Climate Change Team in the Conservation and Biodiversity Group at AIMS and also a popular Adventure Associates tour leader.

Great Barrier Reef First Hand

Cairns, Townsville, Cooktown, Lizard Island, Pelorus Island, Dunk Island, Thetford, Ribbon and Moore Reefs are just a sample of the exotic locations – some exclusive to us!



4, 5 or 8 days cruises aboard Coral Princess and Coral Princess II From AU\$1114



adventure associates

Phone: (+61) (02) 9389 7466
Toll Free (Australia): 1800 222 141
www.adventureassociates.com

AYE AYE CAPTAIN



Images Courtesy of DreamWorks Animation SKG

Earlier this year (Adventure News Feb-Mar 05) we brought you the news of Dr Steve Goodman making new discoveries in the wilds of Madagascar. The 'good' doctor has again struck ecological gold with the discovery of yet two more species of lemur not, as you might expect, in some hidden corner of the mysterious island continent, but in one of the most studied regions of the land. The current tally of known lemur species is now forty-nine.

The newly discovered Microcebus lehilahytsara is the newest member of the expanding lemur family tree.

Also in April this year, the Bristol Zoo, where John Cleese first met his beloved Ring Tailed Lemurs, announced the arrival of their newborn Aye Aye. A highly specialised lemur characterised by its enormous ears and ridiculously extended middle finger adapted to extract bugs from under the tough bark of Madagascar's thorny trees.

Sent in search of the peculiar beast for the television documentary Last Chance to See, the late Douglas Adams, author of *Hitch Hikers Guide to the Galaxy* finally found one spirited away in the Malagasy forest. Staring at the ungainly animal, he described it thus:

"[The aye-aye] looks a little like a large cat with a bat's ears, a beaver's teeth, a tail like a large ostrich feather, a middle finger like a long dead twig and enormous eyes that seem to peer past you into a totally different world which exists just over your left shoulder." 🐾

More info:

www.fieldmuseum.org
www.bristolzoo.org.uk



Goodman's mouse lemur - Photo by Robert Zingg

Bristol Zoo's new baby Aye Aye, Kilana



Discovered too late to feature in a role in the children's movie, *Madagascar*, the two new species of lemur are comparatively tiny new primates. The first, *Microcebus lehilahytsara*, is named after Dr Steve from the Malagasy word for "good man". The other, *Mirza zaza*, is from the Malagasy word for child and is named as such to remind the children of Madagascar to preserve their incredibly fragile environment already on the verge of collapse through rampant deforestation.

MADAGASCAR

THE RAINBOW ISLAND

"I have travelled in these forests and I know well what wonders they contain"

Sir David Attenborough

Join us for our amazing once-a-year 22-day exploration of Madagascar. See for yourself some of the incredible lemur species as well as the rapidly diminishing endemic "spiny forest".

From AU\$9790 per person ex-Sydney or Melbourne.



adventure
associates

Phone: (+61) (02) 9389 7466
 Toll Free (Australia): 1800 222 141
www.adventureassociates.com

QUO VADIS - NAMIBIA

By Dennis Collaton

Unlike more fertile areas, the Namib Desert certainly encourages you to focus your attention. Not seduced by a plethora of colours and greenery as one would be further south in South Africa's lush Cape Province, you concentrate your gaze on the pumice and brown shades of the sandy desert or the bleached wadis of the magnificent sand dunes (among the world's highest), to rest your eye on the odd weathered tree or the ubiquitous and unpalatable euphorbia bushes, tenacious survivors of all the vicissitudes that the wind and scorching sun has to offer them.

You marvel at their fortitude, admire the green relief they bring to the simmering plains, but what really strikes you is their sculptured shape and form brought into stark juxtaposition against the taupe and azure blue background. It is these shapes and forms that stay in your memory like a Fred Williams landscape – only they are in your mind's eye as a broad expanse, not reduced to the confines of a sheet of canvas.

When it comes to tenacity, perhaps the strangest plant of all in this harsh terrain is the Welwitschia. Called by some a living fossil, the Welwitschia

"It is out of the question the most wonderful plant ever brought to this country, and one of the ugliest."

Kew, Regius Keeper of the Royal Botanic Gardens, 1863

Mirabilis (a fitting epithet) is a true survivor and is the only member of the cone-bearing group indigenous to Namibia.

It does however have characteristics of flowering plants. Although considered a tree with a vast root system, it produces during its up to 2,000 year life span, only two true leaves, the longest living in the plant kingdom, growing from its woody stem. The desert winds tear at the fibrous, evergreen leaf blades which sprawl untidily in the desert, shredding them into strips, which subsequently curl into snake-like



thongs, leaving the tips withered and dry – it is a rare sight and a truly remarkable phenomenon and survivor!

In fact it was this plant that first drew me to Namibia. One could say, it seems a hell of a long way to go for a plant – and it is. But I have always been drawn to the rare and unlikely of this planet. Viewing this odd child of Mother Nature, shredded, torn and forlorn is akin to looking history in the eye. No wonder on my return, when I close my eyes to recollect my journey, it is the Welwitschia that flashes before me.

For others it may have been the seductive beauty of the marvellous flora of Cape Province, the southernmost tip of the African continent. Yes that surely was beautiful – the wonderful proteas, leucadendrons and the extraordinary diversity of the species-rich fynbos. And let me not forget the jewel-like quality of the

Namaqualand spring flower display, which surely would have inspired Monet, should he have been able to visit, to an even greater expression, if that was at all possible, of his art.

For many it was also the geology and the fauna. Can we forget the "other world" Moon Valley landscape or the anticipation of seeing the distinctive, flat-topped Table Mountain looming ahead of us as we travelled south to the "fairest Cape of all".

Perhaps the elephant family carefully mindful of their playful offspring slaking their thirst at the lovely waterhole was the most tender and charming moment.

But for me, I have seen the Welwitschia! Grey green monochromatic survivor – this alone of all the wondrous things we saw on our Namibia, Namaqualand and South Africa Tour was the culmination of my journey. 🌿



adventure
associates

Phone: (+61) (02) 9389 7466
Toll Free (Australia): 1800 222 141
www.adventureassociates.com

Namibia, Namaqualand and South Africa

23 August to 17 September 2006 - 26 days



Get into top gear for Adventure



Security in the Bag

With all the fuss about luggage security, travel accessory importer, Korjo, have introduced a range of TSA compliant locks. These locks can be opened by security officials with a special tool without revealing your combination or destroying them – as is currently occurring with locked bags in the USA. RRP\$ 21.95

More info: www.korjo.com

Pack Light with PACLITE

At 310g, the Berghaus GORE-TEX® PACLITE® Helium fabric jacket is an adventurer's dream. This ultra lightweight, waterproof, multi-activity jacket is ideal for quick wind and water protection. Matching pants available too. In a range of colours and sizes for both men and women. RRP \$399.00

More info: www.berghaus.com



Pack a Pair of Popular Puppies

One of the most popular women's shoes on the market, Hush Puppies Classic Walker is a comfy, lightweight number that's easy to wear, pack and clean. Perfect for strolling the decks of your cruise ship, light hikes or just exploring shops and markets. In black, white or stone leather. RRP: \$119.95

More info: www.hushpuppies.com.au

Spray away from Lowepro

The Mini Trekker AW (All Weather) keeps the inclements out of your camera gear. As tested by World Adventurer editor – seen here in Siberia! RRP \$199.00

More info: www.lowepro.com.au

Wrap up with Icebreaker

This Merino wool boa is the 'ant's pants' of scarves. Made from ultra-fine, super absorbent merino wool, you'll never wear old Aunt Maud's hand knits again. In six wild colours (Cherry pictured) RRP \$49.00

More info: www.icebreaker.co.nz



Jetstream Out of the Wind

Too bad you can't pack the weather for your next trip, but you can insulate yourself from chilly winds with the Jetsream XTR Wind Stopper Soft Shell jacket. In a range of colours and sizes for both men and women. RRP \$299.00

More info: www.earthseasky.co.nz



THE ULTIMATE
ADVENTURE GEAR STORE

trek
&
travel

WALKING
JOURNEY
OUTFITTERS

t: 02 9261 3435
447 Kent St Sydney

10% discount to all Adventure Associates passengers.



Two ships and 129 men Missing without trace



So screamed the mid-19th century headlines when the ambitious polar expedition, led by the aging Sir John Franklin, failed to return after yet another abortive attempt to find the elusive North West Passage across the top of Canada.

Unlike Antarctica, exploration of the Northern Arctic began thousands of years ago with the Inuit tribesmen and by Europeans as early as 400 BC when the Greek, Pytheas, discovered Thule. Late in the first millennium, the Norwegian viking, Eric the Red explored Iceland and Greenland followed by Dutch, Russians and Englishmen.

The primary motivation for these exhaustive and expensive explorations was to attempt a passage from the North Atlantic through to the Pacific. Such a passage, it was postulated, would greatly reduce the travelling time to the rich trade regions of Asia and avoid the then current, treacherous routes via Africa and Cape Horn. Over a period of four hundred years, some of the world's most famous seafarers, including Lieutenant James Cook, attempted this journey, striving to make the passage from either end. Every effort was thwarted by the impenetrable barrier of ice, including the best-known catastrophe of polar exploration, the 1845 mission of Sir John Franklin.

Knighted by King George IV in 1823 after a patchy naval career, Franklin was appointed Governor of Tasmania in 1836. His reward for attempting to reform the barbaric penal colony there was removal from office in 1843, an event which probably drove him to accept the challenge to find the Northwest Passage and make history and shed his reputation for mediocrity.

Franklin's subsequent disappearance spawned a minor rush to the region as numerous searches scoured the frozen lands in the hope of turning up some clue to his whereabouts. Most of the larger expeditions were financed by Lady Franklin herself and her devotion to her lost husband generated many stories and ballads that tugged heavily on the heart-strings of English and Canadian society of the time.

For a full decade after his departure, these parties only turned up scraps of debris and a few marked graves. After abandoning their vessels, the *Erebus* and *Terror*, Franklin's oversized, ill-planned expedition

staggered on for weeks, probably months, before finally succumbing to hunger, cold and fatigue. Franklin's final resting place is still unknown.

It wasn't until 1905 that the legendary Norwegian explorer, Roald Amundsen, eventually completed a three-year journey in his specially prepared vessel, the *Gjoa*, a tiny 47 tonne former herring boat. Today, despite the vast improvements in navigation and shipbuilding, the Northwest Passage is still a virtually impenetrable waterway and is only navigable for a few short weeks each year. It still takes the hardest of polar icebreakers weeks to make the journey. ❄️



National Maritime Museum, London.



University of Alaska Fairbanks

Northwest Passage The Amundsen Route

17 July to 4 August 2006 - 19 days

Possibly the most famous of all sea journeys, the Northwest Passage was the navigators' "holy grail" for over three centuries. Follow the paths of these intrepid explorers with Adventure Associates' magnificent icebreaker voyage across the frozen realms of the Canadian Arctic. From US\$11,995. Please book early, this expedition regularly sells out.

www.adventureassociates.com/arctic/adventure



adventure
associates

Phone: (+61) (02) 9389 7466
Toll Free (Australia): 1800 222 141
www.adventureassociates.com

PATAGONIA DRAMA

"It's the end of the world and it's the beginning," Julio muses through a steaming cup of cocoa. "It's drama realised in earth, ice and water."

Sitting around the century-old estancia's fire we agree his is an appropriate epithet for the vast landscape that is Patagonia.

Southern Argentina's combination of sheer mountains, endless valleys, postcard lakes, gigantic glaciers and rolling gaucho plains has the ability to inspire the poet in anyone, even hardened men of the land like Julio.

But if anything, Patagonia conjures up images quicker than words and today it's one of the most photographed regions of nature in the world. Travellers are lured by countless adventure opportunities, from trekking Torres and Fitz Roy ranges to horse riding across estancias the size of small countries, walking over glaciers the size of cities and watching whales the size of trucks.

First stop is often the 600,000 hectare Los Glaciares National Park, a UNESCO Natural World Heritage Site stretching east along the Andes. A world of mountainous ice - over 40% of the park is covered by the stuff - it features 47 glaciers which track their way violently down to the green waters of Lakes Argentino and Viedma.

Not far from outpost town El Calafate is the most famous wall of moving ice, Perito Moreno Glacier. It remains one of the few glaciers in the world still advancing, the evidence a spectacular 'calving' display where large chunks of ice break away from the five kilometre-long face, crashing down sixty metres in thunderous applause.

Even more impressive is Upsala Glacier, the largest glacier in the park measuring over 60 kilometres long, seven kilometers wide and 80 metres high.

If the land of glaciers is Patagonia's attempt at abstract, then its mountain ranges are pure classical art. Approaching El Chalten, a four hour drive from El Calafate, the cathedral ranges of Torres and Fitz Roy - considered two of the most formidable challenges in the climbing world - provide towering backdrops to quintessential gaucho grazing country.

More sedate walkers (like us) are happy to hike into base camps located an easy day's walk away. En-route, we pass through Lord of the Rings-like beech forests, scramble over rocky outcrops and follow meandering, crystal-clear rivers before emerging to face a moderate climb up to snow-line lakes resting at the mountains' knees. Each and every rest stop reveals breathtaking views featuring a palette of colours crying out to be captured by an artists' brush.

With earth and ice covered, it's time to head east, back over the plains to the Atlantic coast and Peninsula Valdez.

One of the world's premier wildlife viewing reserves, the Peninsula provides the perfect playground for the Great Southern Right Whale. Over 3,600 frisky giants come to frolic in the area's protected coves between May and December every year. A kind of desperate and dateless meeting area for whales, Valdes doubles as the Southern Hemisphere's largest maternity ward: whales return here to give birth exactly one year after their last watery lovemaking session.

Travellers witness the amorous action up close and personal from boat launches, the wrestling whales often nudging up close to the bow.



Also on the Patagonian wildlife menu are huge colonies of elephant seals, sea lions, Orca whales, Commerson and Dusky dolphins, guanaco's (llama-like), nandu (ostrich-like) and a plethora of other bird-life. One hundred kilometres further south at Punta Tombo is South America's largest colony of Magellanic penguins.

On our final night we sit around a crackling estancia fire contemplating the huge array of life and beauty seen on our travels through southern Argentina. Outside, the vast space that is Patagonia stands stiller than the

crisp night yet continues its invisible process of creation. Dramatic stuff indeed. 🍷

Adventure Associates offers a vast range of tours in Patagonia. From short 3-day excursions to comprehensive 19-day cruise packages. From AU\$450. Phone (02) 9389.7466 or visit: www.adventureassociates.com/patagonia/

Chris Ord is a colourful and dynamic young travel writer and photographer. Currently editor of the cheeky "Get Lost" travel magazine, Chris is also widely published in the general travel media..

MORE INFO: www.thetravelrag.com



I love a sunburnt country...



*A land of sweeping plains,
Of ragged mountain ranges,
Of droughts and flooding rains,
I love her far horizons,
I love her jewel - sea,
Her beauty and her terror
The wide brown land for me!*

From 'My Country' by Dorothea Mackellar (1885 - 1968)

When Dorothea McKellar penned those now immortal words one hundred years ago, she captured forever the essence of Australia and its wild and beautiful landscapes.

True to the spirit of her verse, our brand new luxury expedition yacht, Oceanic Princess, sails the jewel sea to destinations that will ignite your sense of adventure.

The rugged Kimberley, the sublime Great Barrier Reef and the remote and untamed islands of the Coral Sea are just some of the enriching itineraries available for the traveller who wants to go wild in comfort.



adventure
associates

Phone: (+61) (02) 9389 7466
Toll Free (Australia): 1800 222 141
www.adventureassociates.com



CORAL PRINCESS CRUISES