



SCIENTIFIC  
EXPLORATION  
SOCIETY

# SCIENTIFIC EXPLORER

Annual Review 2023

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**DISCOVER  
RESEARCH  
CONSERVE**



*Scientific  
Exploration  
Society  
is  
your portal  
to  
the world of  
scientific  
exploration,  
research  
and  
conservation  
of the  
planet.*

# Dates for your 2024 Diary

DATE/TIME	EVENT	LOCATION
Tuesday 30 January (6pm for 7pm talk)	<b>Explorer Talk</b> Paul Niel – <i>Project Avenger</i>	Coopers Arms (Chelsea)
Saturday 17 February	<b>Quiz Night</b>	Motcombe Village Hall (Dorset)
Monday 26 February	<b>Fundraising Dinner</b>	The Oriental Club (London)
Tuesday 27 February (6pm for 7pm talk)	<b>Explorer Talk</b> Alex Bescooby – <i>The Last Overland</i>	Coopers Arms (Chelsea)
Thursday 7 March	<b>Advisory Board Drinks Reception</b> Hosted by SES Chair Peter Felix and June Felix	London
Wednesday 27 March (6pm AGM, 6.30pm for 7pm talk)	<b>Annual General Meeting and Explorer Talk</b> Craig Cohon – <i>Walk It Back</i>	The Park Tower Hotel (Knightsbridge)
Sunday 21 April	<b>London Marathon</b> Team SES	London
Tuesday 30 April (6pm for 7pm talk)	<b>Explorer Talk</b> Kate Coleridge – <i>Mongolian Khan Khentii</i>	Coopers Arms (Chelsea)
Tuesday 28 May (6pm for 7pm talk)	<b>Explorer Talk</b> Anders Andersen – <i>Rules of the Rainforest</i>	Coopers Arms (Chelsea)
Tuesday 25 June (6pm for 7pm talk)	<b>Explorer Talk</b> Rosie Stancer and Pom Oliver – <i>Sinai Peninsula</i>	Coopers Arms (Chelsea)
Tuesday 24 September (6pm for 7pm talk)	<b>Explorer Talk</b> Leon McCarron – <i>Wounded Tigris</i>	Coopers Arms (Chelsea)
Wednesday 16 October	<b>Oscars of Exploration Presentation Evening</b> – proudly sponsored by <b>RSK</b>	Royal College of Surgeons (London)
Tuesday 29 October (6pm for 7pm talk)	<b>Explorer Talk</b> James Kempton – <i>Expedition Cyclops</i>	Coopers Arms (Chelsea)



# SCIENTIFIC EXPLORATION SOCIETY

DATE/TIME	DESCRIPTION	LOCATION
Tuesday 12 November	<b>Zaire River 50th Anniversary Celebration</b>	Royal Geographical Society (London)
Tuesday 26 November (7pm talk)	<b>Explorer Talk</b> Catherine Hauw – <i>Effects of Lead Ammunition Hunting on Namibian Cheetahs</i>	Virtual Talk via Zoom

Please  
visit SES on  
**EVENTBRITE\***  
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to **ALL**  
events.

\*Avoid missing out by FOLLOWING us on EVENTBRITE and get notified about all our events as and when they are launched!



# Message from the Chair

## Dear Members

I am delighted to be writing my Chair's report at a time when SES is going from strength to strength. Several initiatives are under way to enhance its programming and activities and to provide greater financial sustainability for the future.

The Oscars of Exploration held at the Royal College of Surgeons in October was a great success and generally regarded as the best yet. Wonderfully organised by our great team who both selected the awardees and planned the evening. The Oscars has become the highlight of our calendar. Many thanks to Diane Allen and Nikki Skinner and, of course Hen, for their hard work. Thanks also to former SES Explorers, Amber Carter and James Kempton, for their very professional compering.

Our audience was thrilled to hear from the awardees of the five Explorer Awards and four Honorary Awards, even though several could only accept their awards from overseas by video. Congratulations to all recipients for your pioneering work and leadership.

Our programme of Explorer Talks at the Coopers Arms in Chelsea continues to often packed out audiences. The friendly and informal ambience listening to tales of derring-do and scientific exploration makes these evenings more and more popular.

Our digital publication 'Exploration Revealed' is now into its third edition and provides insight into the realities of scientific exploration while providing helpful hints and information. Congratulations to SES trustee Briony Turner and SES member Alicia Colson for their initiative in creating this valuable publication.

To extend our impact, we are reaching out to other organisations active in the youth or adult exploration sector to collaborate and find mutual interests. We have already had successful talks with the Youth Explorers Trust (YET) which promotes safety standards for young people from schools, The Scouts, Duke of Edinburgh's Award Scheme, Air Cadets and others that employ exploration for leadership and personal development training. We are delighted that the Chair of YET, Haydn Tanner, has agreed to join the Advisory Board.

More discussions continue with the Armed Forces and others that see the virtue of collaboration with SES as an adult extension of young people's often transformational experiences in exploration. We have also been reaching out to alumni of Operations Drake and Raleigh/Raleigh International of whom there are more than 55,000 around the world!

I am very pleased to welcome additional members to our Advisory Board. Annabel Heseltine is a well-

known travel journalist, Doug Thompson, an expert in fundraising, David Taylor-Smith a former Operation Raleigh participant and expedition leader and two awardees, Reza Pakravan, an intrepid filmmaker, and commentator on environmental issues and Preet Chandi, polar explorer.

During this year we have embarked upon an ambitious fundraising campaign with a target of £200,000 to be spent on increasing the value and number of awards but also to provide funding for more staff to work in crucial areas such as membership development, PR, marketing, and fundraising.

All contributions to the campaign both large and small will be greatly appreciated and will help the Society take our impact to a new level at this time of great urgency for the planet. Please contact Hen or me to discuss your contribution or legacy commitment.

It only remains for me to thank all our members, supporters, and staff, under Hen's outstanding leadership, for your help in sustaining and developing our important Society.

With kind regards

**Peter Felix**  
pmfelix9@gmail.com

# Journey of Discovery

*Colonel Martin Romilly OBE wrote **Journey of Discovery** on the 50th Anniversary of the Great Abbai Expedition, which was celebrated at the Royal Geographical Society in 2018.*

*'What is there to be discovered?' we did ask,  
First descent of the mighty river was our task.  
The team of river men was selected, readied, and deployed,  
A base camp was set up and the boats prepared.  
Some made for the lake to find the source of the river,  
Fervently, we did inquire 'will we deliver?'*

*On the mighty river, engines started we departed, **Kitchener** in the van  
Next came **Wingate**, then came **Sandford** followed by **Cheesman**.*

*Progress was serene until the first crocodile was seen,  
Into the Black Gorge whose steep banks were blue-black in colour  
Forty miles of cataracts and whirlpools often a metre deep were covered,  
Then through the Western Cataracts, hard going there we suffered.*

*Water bushed, we stopped to repair our boats and to explore  
Zoological collecting and archaeological surveys to the fore.  
The medics happened to come across some ailing locals  
A range of basic treatments they were gladly given.  
Back to cataracts and whirlpools, through thick and thin,  
The difficult first half completed, let the hard part begin.*

*Nine men in three rubber boats took on the remainder of the mighty river  
Overcoming cataracts, vortices, and volumes of gushing water  
In spite of capsizing and duckings, real progress was made.  
Suddenly the raging water claimed one of our brave river men,  
A great sadness descended on us all  
We had lost a friend who walked tall.*

*With great courage the crews of **Faith**, **Hope** and **Charity** completed the task  
Back to base camp, showers, hot food and with comfort to bask.*

*The Emperor was generous in his praise  
Given at his palace where he received us all,  
Graciously recognising that our achievement was some feat  
So helping to make our homecoming very sweet.*

*The mighty river discovered though not tamed,  
Revealed to you though not named.  
The river is not white, the river is not green,  
The lake is not golden, nor is it black.  
Gladly to give you another clue,  
Recall that the mighty river is blue.*



Martin Romilly on the banks of the Great Abbai River

***Journey of Discovery** continued on page 15...*

# Our Class of 2023

## 2023 Explorer Award Winners

### **SIR CHARLES BLOIS EXPLORER AWARD FOR SCIENCE & ADVENTURE**

**Winner: SERGIO NOLAZCO PLASIER – Exploring Sinchimarka (PERU)**

An award of £5,000 and the exclusive title '2023 Sir Charles Blois Explorer'

Sergio is a Peruvian ecologist with a passion for wildlife and remote exploration. He has conducted scientific research in South America and Australia and biodiversity surveys throughout much of the Peruvian Andes. Sergio's Exploring Sinchimarka expedition is the first comprehensive scientific exploration of the Sinchimarka forest, an exceptionally well-preserved and remote high-altitude Andean Forest. This remnant forest is home to *Polylepis*, a tree species that has evolved to grow higher than any other tree species on Earth, and was home to the Pre-Columbian Sinchimarkan community, harbouring unique biodiversity and archaeological assets. A team of researchers will assess the dynamics of its biodiversity through seasons, search for new species, and document the cultural knowledge that has survived through centuries of colonialism.



Sergio's scientific interests include the study of animal behaviour, sexual selection, parental care and the evolution of ornamental traits, the ecology and population parameters of threatened species. He has conducted fieldwork in diverse locations, including the Amazon, Atlantic Forest, Andes Mountains, Equatorial Seasonally Dry Forest, and the Australian Kimberleys. Sergio completed his undergraduate studies in Peru, where he did most of his research on birds, especially targeting threatened species. After, he went to Brazil to do his Masters in daddy long-legs spiders. He recently finished his PhD studies at Monash University studying birds and the evolution of biological ornamentation.

### **ELODIE SANDFORD EXPLORER AWARD FOR AMATEUR PHOTOGRAPHY**

**Winner: REZA SAPUTRA – Bird's Head Peninsula Orchids (INDONESIA)**

An award of £7,000 and the exclusive title '2023 Elodie Sandford Explorer'

Reza works as a Forest Ecosystem Specialist and lives in the first conservation province in the world; West Papua, Indonesia. His research is focused on the conservation of orchid species, often involved with fundamental-for-conservation research such as taxonomy, conservation assessment, ecology, and in-situ conservation areas management. He is a member of the Orchids Specialist Group, Species Survival Commission, IUCN.

Reza's expedition will explore the centre of the Bird's Head New Guinea pristine forest, the western slope of Mts. South Tamrau Nature Reserve, never explored by botanists or naturalists. Reza will be photographing orchids and their habitat, as well as preserving material for herbarium samples, in order to write species descriptions and illustrations for the 'Orchids of Bird's Head Peninsula' book project. He has responsibilities to maintain and ensure that the Bird's Head New Guinea Forest ecosystem stays in good condition, to make it sustainable, and benefit local people. His office protects 28 conservation areas spread all over the West Papua and Southwest Papua Province, with total area more than 1.7 million hectares. Therefore, Reza has a great role to help the development of these provinces. He has published several books and scientific articles on the diversity and conservation of plants particularly orchids.



### **JUDITH HEATH EXPLORER AWARD FOR BOTANY & RESEARCH**

**Winner: DEWI LESTARI – Rafflesia Expedition (INDONESIA)**

An award of £5,250 and the exclusive title '2023 Judith Heath Explorer'

Dewi is a botanist and junior researcher at The Research Centre for Plant Conservation, Botanic Gardens, and Forestry BRIN (National Research and Innovation Agency) Indonesia. Dewi has participated in expeditions to study Indonesian biodiversity in Java, Bali, Sumatra, and the Kalimantan Islands. She has concentrated her research over the past few years on seeds Araceae, and *Rafflesia* conservation.

Dewi's expedition will be carried out in Teluk Sumbang, Berau, East Kalimantan, a remote and barely accessible area, that is reported as a new record habitat for



Rafflesia. Its landscape consists of karst, forests, and the sea that require endurance, strength, and agility to navigate. The expedition team will work closely with local communities to enable knowledge-sharing initiatives. The expedition objectives are to confirm the Rafflesia species, investigate the population and ecological habitat, ethnobotany, and social data of the surrounding people. The team will collect samples and specimens for further study and conduct ex-situ conservation research on this species in Purwodadi Botanic Garden.

Dewi is excited about the opportunities that lie ahead and the valuable knowledge and experiences that will be gained through this expedition. Passionate and determined to make this expedition a resounding success, she believes that it will contribute to Rafflesia's scientific research and raise awareness about the importance of Rafflesia conservation.

Dewi completed her master's studies in Tropical Biodiversity Conservation at IPB University in 2013

## **SES EXPLORER AWARD FOR INSPIRATIONAL & SCIENTIFIC TRAILBLAZING** **Winner: SARAH TUBBS – Conserving Cambodian Cetaceans (CAMBODIA)**

*An award of £7,000 and the exclusive title '2023 SES Explorer'*

Sarah is a marine mammal researcher, and conservationist focused on answering key ecological questions to inform conservation policy in developing countries. She is Founder of The Cambodian Marine Mammal Conservation Project, and Co-Founder of NGO Khmer Ocean Life.



Sarah's expedition will fill baseline knowledge gaps on population sizes and distribution of Cambodia's endangered and cetacean species that is threatened with extinction and currently lacks knowledge on population sizes and distribution, which hinders effective conservation action. During this 10-week expedition, local research assistants will be trained, and boat surveys will be conducted throughout the full coastline. Sarah will work in close collaboration with local NGOs, students, and the Cambodian Fisheries Administration throughout the project. Ultimately, findings will be used by resource managers to help shape effective management strategies.

Sarah has extensive amounts of research and fieldwork experience across Africa, Asia and Europe, and is passionate about combining natural and social science with stakeholder engagement and capacity building, to directly influence the conservation of endangered marine mammal species. She is predominantly concerned with answering key conservation-focused questions on species population sizes, distribution and threats, with a primary focus on supporting research in developing countries.

Sarah has a BSc in Marine Biology from Newcastle University, an MSc in Marine Mammal Science from the University of St Andrews and is currently completing her PhD at Newcastle University.

## **NEVILLE SHULMAN EXPLORER AWARD FOR EXPEDITION FILMMAKING** **Winner: NATALIE KNOWLES – Kayapo Defenders of the Amazon (BRAZIL)**

*An award of £7,000 and the exclusive title '2023 Neville Shulman Explorer'*

Nat is a Canadian conservationist, with a background in anthropology, geography, and ecology, and a passion for remote wild landscapes and the diverse cultures of the world. Nat uses participatory research to address the root causes of deforestation, resource extraction, climate change and biodiversity loss and push the boundaries of scientific thinking to include diverse knowledges.

Nat's expedition will work with the Kayapo Indigenous communities of the Xingu River. Kayapo communities have defended their 10.5 million hectares of pristine Amazon rainforest from rampant deforestation for generations. This expedition will engage Kayapo youth citizen-scientists in remote wildlife monitoring and participatory video to enhance community-based conservation and document the importance of traditional Kayapo knowledge, culture, governance, and lifestyles for large-scale conservation.



Through her work Nat aims to empower underrepresented voices and transform how western society relates to protection protects and lives within nature. This expedition was developed by and for Kayapo Indigenous community members to empower and enhance their community-based conservation.

Nat has worked on community-based conservation tourism projects with Kayapo Indigenous communities since 2015 and was named a 2020 UN Young Champions of the Earth regional finalist and awarded The Explorer's Club Rolex Grant for this work. She holds a Master of Science in Biodiversity Conservation Management from the University of Oxford and a Bachelor of Arts in Anthropology and Geography from the University of Denver.

# 2023 Honorary Award Winners

SES Honorary Awards recognise and celebrate those individuals who have achieved great things, and whose passion, determination, and grit are an inspiration to us all. This year's winners certainly meet the criteria.

## SES YOUNG SCIENTIFIC EXPLORER

*Proudly sponsored by Peter and June Felix*

### Winner: MYA-ROSE CRAIG

Mya-Rose Craig, also known as Birdgirl, is a 21-year-old British-Bangladeshi birder, race and environmental activist. Her passion for birds led to her setting up her charity Black2Nature when she was 14 years old, which organises free nature camps for inner city visible minority ethnic children and campaigns for equal access to nature. Mya-Rose fights to stop climate change and biodiversity loss, ensuring global climate justice, all of which are interlinked. She has published three books, *We Have a Dream*, *Flight*, and her memoir *Birdgirl*.



Mya-Rose has campaigned to protect species from extinction and fight against environmental damage since she was eight years old, when she started to blog about conservation. She writes the successful global website, *Birdgirl*, which has received over seven million views

She has won countless awards and accolades, is an ambassador for several organisations, has written articles for multiple publications, including BBC News Online, The Times, The Guardian, The Sunday Observer, The Sunday Telegraph, The Independent, Daily Mail, The Metro, New Statesman, Big Issue, New Internationalist, and Friends of the Earth Magazine, and has delivered over 50 inspirational talks about our environment and the benefits of nature.

She has travelled all her life, visiting all seven continents by the age of 13, for which she feels very fortunate, and that has highlighted the need for climate change, global conservation, equal access to the natural environment, and visibility for minority ethnic peoples. Mya-Rose is currently studying Human, Social, and Political Sciences at St John's College, Cambridge.

## SES PIONEERS WITH PURPOSE

*Proudly sponsored by Craig Cohon*

### Winners: JUST A DROP

Just a Drop is an international development charity that brings life changing, sustainable safe water, sanitation and hygiene projects to communities. Their project work is currently focused throughout Cambodia, India, Kenya, Nicaragua, Uganda and Zambia. They have reached over 1.9 million people in 32 countries since they began in 1998. Safe water changes everything. It improves health, education, women's rights, leads to secure food sources, economic growth and brighter futures. It completely transforms lives, especially those of women and children.



Just a Drop works with communities to implement solutions which best suit their needs, such as rainwater harvesting systems, wells, sand dams, biosand filters, latrines, and sanitation and hygiene training. They've also developed food security, menstrual health and micro-finance programmes, which further support community development and economic growth. Across all Just a Drop's Projects, sustainability is the most important factor. Their solutions are designed and developed to last, for maximum benefit to the communities they serve. They believe in transforming lives for the long-term and monitor their projects for a minimum of seven years after completion.

As well as contributing to the UN Sustainable Development Goal 6, Just a Drop impact a total of 12 out of 17 of the UN Sustainable Development Goals. They also measure the carbon footprint of their programmes across the world and the organisation itself and are a carbon neutral organisation with a strategy to become net zero.

## SES EXPLORER OF THE YEAR

### Winner: PREET CHANDI MBE

Preet Chandi, also known as Polar Preet, broke two Guinness World Records in 2023; the longest solo unsupported one-way polar ski journey for a woman, and the longest solo unsupported one-way polar ski journey overall! In 2022, she became the first woman of colour to complete a solo expedition on the continent.

With an iron will that has led Preet to making history and breaking barriers in the world of adventuring, the focus of her expeditions has always been to inspire as many people as possible. She passionately believes that no matter where you are from or what your starting point in life is, you can smash the glass ceiling into a million pieces by creating your own definition of 'normal' on the journey to success.

Preet's full time role is as a physiotherapist in the British Army where she has completed large scale exercises/ deployments in Nepal, Kenya and South Sudan. She completed her Sports and Exercises Medicine MSc in October 2021 and, during her second expedition to Antarctica, conducted research on the physiological data she gathered.

In 2022, she completed more than four months of school talks all over the UK, reaching more than 18,000 students. That same year, she was appointed a Member of the Order of the British Empire (MBE) as part of the Queen's Birthday Honours.



## SES LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT

*Proudly sponsored by Christopher Wright FRGS*

### Winner: COLONEL JOHN BLASHFORD-SNELL CBE

John has organised and led hundreds of expeditions with his most recent expedition taking place in July 2023 and involved him and his team travelling to Khan Khentii, Mongolia, to carry out community aid projects including giving dental and medical help to the local people and performing archaeological, biological, and zoological tasks with Mongolian scientists. He is perhaps best known for his Blue Nile and Darien Gap expeditions. He was the first to complete the drive from Alaska to Cape Horn, has navigated almost all 2,700 miles of the Zaire (Congo) River, taken an ambulance boat to a remote tribe on the Amazon, and delivered a Grand Piano to the Wai Wai people of Guyana. A BBC film of this helped to raise \$2 million to conserve the tribal area.



In 1969, he and his colleagues formed Scientific Exploration Society, which became the parent body for several worldwide ventures launched by the then HRH the Prince of Wales. He then raised funds and selected a team to run Operation Drake involving 400 young explorers from 27 countries. Ultimately a much larger global youth programme was organised and by 1992 Operation Raleigh had enabled 10,000 young people from 50 countries to take part in challenges and expeditions around the world. Now, as Raleigh International, over 50,000 young men and women have benefitted from this unique programme.

In 1993, he became Chairman of a £2.5 million appeal to establish a centre to provide vocational training and guidance for the young of Merseyside. This Centre now known as 'The Door' has helped over 40,000 less privileged young people.

John's work has been recognised by the award of the CBE, the Seagrave Trophy, the Livingstone Medal of the Royal Scottish Geographical Society, the Patrons Medal of the Royal Geographical Society and the Gold Medal of the Institute of Royal Engineers. He has also received medals from Bolivia, Colombia, Mongolia and the Explorers Club (USA).

He has written 16 books, broadcasts and lectures whilst continuing to lead expeditions worldwide.

For more information about this year's Honorary Award winners and how to follow their progress and donate to their causes, please visit their websites.

**Mya-Rose Craig** ([www.birdgirluk.com](http://www.birdgirluk.com))

**Just A Drop** ([www.justadrop.org](http://www.justadrop.org))

**Preet Chandi** ([www.polarpreet.com](http://www.polarpreet.com))

**John Blashford-Snell** ([www.johnblashfordsnell.org.uk](http://www.johnblashfordsnell.org.uk))

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# 2023 Oscars of Exploration

The 2023 Oscars of Exploration was our best yet! Generously hosted by the Royal College of Surgeons for the second year, we celebrated our incredible Class of 2023 as they received their awards. We were particularly excited to have awarded our Founder and Honorary President, John Blashford-Snell, with SES Lifetime Achievement and very much enjoyed learning more about the man behind his Life of Exploration during his interview with Rosie Stancer. Huge appreciation to all our winners, sponsors, supporters, presenters, volunteers, Advisory Board, Council, members, and the incredible team at The Royal College of Surgeons. Please visit our YouTube channel to see a short film of the event (made by filmmaker Ty Rediff) and below are a few photos (taken by photographer Frances Eyre) which I hope you enjoy.



Sir Charles Blois with last year's winner, Amber Carter, who accepted his trophy on behalf of Sergio Nolasco Plasier who was unable to join us on the night.



2018 Elodie Sandford Explorer, Eleanor Flatt, accepting the trophy on behalf of Reza Saputra who was unable to join us on the night.



2023 Neville Shulman Explorer, Natalie Knowles, with her award supporter Neville Shulman CBE.



SES Trustee Diane Allen presenting Preet Chandi with SES Explorer of the Year.



SES Young Scientific Explorer Mya-Rose Craig with her award sponsors Peter and June Felix.



SES Pioneers with Purpose, Fiona Jeffrey, Founder of Just A Drop with proud sponsor Craig Cohon.



Colonel Martin Romilly OBE congratulating John Blashford-Snell and explaining how SES was Founded!



SES Advisory Board Chair, Rosie Stancer, with John Blashford-Snell.



2023 Oscars of Exploration presentation ceremony in the incredible Lumley Library.



The Just A Drop team, winners of SES Pioneers with Purpose.



John Blashford-Snell with the Just A Drop team and their sponsor, Craig Cohon.



John Blashford-Snell with SES Lifetime Achievement sponsor, Christopher Wright.



SES CEO Henrietta Thorpe and SES Explorer Awards Manager Nikki Skinner.

# A few expedition updates...

## News from our Explorers

### Emi Koch – 2022 Elodie Sandford Explorer

Emi spent this past year collaborating remotely with young learners and local educators from rural fishing villages in Nigeria, Madagascar, and India, and in person at local schools along Peru's Northern Coast, Amazon, and the Andes. Working with the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization, they co-created a curriculum leveraging the first international policy instrument to safeguard small-scale fisheries' rights to social-ecological well-being into an interactive curriculum. The "Small-Scale Fisheries Guidelines Curriculum" strives to enable young learners and educators from fish-dependent communities to gain and contribute to a kaleidoscopic understanding of fisheries in the context of food security and poverty eradication while monitoring the local implementation of the guidelines. Emi and educators piloted the lesson plans and enrichment activities through her non-profit, Coast 2 Coast (C2C)'s travelling art festival for human-planetary health, Festival Somos Mar, where teachers, students, and C2C's team of "edutainers" weaved investigation with imagination to explore important themes within their social and ecological surroundings.



Local fisherman casting his luck for Lisas (Lobitos, Peru 2023).  
Photo by Nelson Bayona Huaman.

Emi's focus this year has also been planning for her upcoming expedition, "Ong Nam Hai – The Quest for Lord Fish," which explores Vietnam fishing communities' culture of whale worship, working with local fishing villages to map their local temples filled with the bones of deceased marine mammals that residents tried to return to sea. After unexpected delays, she is thrilled to return to the villages she worked with as a Fulbright Fellow in early 2024.

Emi lives in Lobitos, an isolated fishing village in Northern Peru, where you can find her facilitating Coast 2 Coast's workshops, programmes, and festivals at the local school or in the local line-up surfing.

### Wendy Mustaqim – 2022 Judith Heath Explorer

Unexpected delays occurred for the expedition of heather plants to Mount Kemiri. He continued finishing many delayed works in exploring the tropical rainforests, climbing the highest summits in the northern Gayo Plateau, and exploring the mountainous regions of



Wendy investigating a heather plant from Mount Bur Ni Telong (Northern Gayo Plateau, Indonesia 2023).

Sulawesi. While exploring many places, he routinely published results while lecturing at Universitas Samudra, Aceh, Indonesia. Some new species of heather plants orchids new to science from Indonesia were unearthed, partly still in the final stages of publication.

Extensive fieldwork of the heather plants in the northern Gayo Plateau was also successfully carried out. Some long-lost species were successfully seen in the wild like the endemic herbaceous *Pyrola sumatrana* and *Rhododendron frey-wysslingii*. Many previously unexplored areas were visited including the second-highest summit in the northern Gayo Plateau, Mount Bur Ni Keliyeten (2,639m above sea level) in search of plant specimens with the main aims of heather plants and other subalpine dwellers.

Besides that, many forest fragments in the northern Gayo Plateau have been successfully explored to gather data for the IUCN Red List conservation assessment. Wendy's next planned journey is moving south to Mount Kemiri which is the continuation of serial expeditions in the mountainous regions of northern Sumatra. A presentation to the authority of Mount Leuser National Park, was given early this year and a verbal agreement was made. Careful planning is currently being prepared to avoid the possibility of bad weather that usually occurs at the end of the year due to the arrival of the rainy season.

### Bethan John – 2021 SES Explorer

Across Bolivia, a network of Indigenous women are fighting to protect their forests against destruction by companies who have forced entry into their ancestral territories. Between October and November 2022, Bethan John (a freelance journalist) and Eilidh Munro (a documentary filmmaker) travelled to two remote regions of Bolivia – Madidi National Park and Tariquía National Reserve. They were there to work alongside Indigenous activists, Ruth Alipaz Cuqui and Paula Gareca, who are leading the fight against violations to environmental and human rights. Bethan said: "Ruth and Paula's dedication to protecting Mother Earth and defending Indigenous rights is truly remarkable; Latin America has one of highest murder rates in the world for environmental activists, so Ruth and Paula are risking their lives as they stand



Bethan and her team (DEFENSORAS, Bolivia)

up against gold, oil and gas companies to defend their ancestral homes from destruction.”

While Bethan and Eilidh were in Bolivia, the reality of the threats to Protected Areas became very real, as the government announced that they would open up three of the country’s most important National Parks to gold mining.

Bethan said: *“We were just travelling out of Madidi National Park as this announcement was made, after spending time with an Indigenous women’s group, facilitating workshops for the co-creation of a short film about the impact of gold mining on their community. It was astonishing to hear that the government was going to open up the country’s National Parks to this hugely destructive industry.”*

The government’s announcement was met by an outcry from the scientific community, environmentalists and Indigenous rights defenders. Bethan and Eilidh were able to publish an article with Al Jazeera, titled ‘Bolivian activists push back against mining industry’, which documented events as they unfolded. Thanks to this intense public pressure, the government was forced to make a u-turn and annulled the agreement that they had signed with the gold mining companies. This was a huge win, but it demonstrates the threats that Indigenous People and their ancestral territories are facing every day.

### Jody Bragger – 2021 Sir Charles Blois Explorer



Jody has been preparing for his expedition to rediscover the ‘lost’ Wondiwoi Tree Kangaroo in Papua which is now confirmed (after much drama regarding permits) for June 2024. The expedition has gained a partner with funding from Stanford University in the United States alongside the existing partners of the SES and University of Oxford.

In the interim he has been busy on several multiyear conservation projects. He raised financing to support ten Ukrainian National Parks for two years and has spent most of the last year on the ground in the country. The parks range from Europe’s largest wetlands, ancient forests and of course, the famous Ukrainian Steppe and were

effectively unfunded after the invasion due to the collapse in the country’s finances.

Beyond Europe he has started the restoration of 2,800 sq/ km of tropical forest and savannah matrix ecosystem in the western area of the Democratic Republic of Congo. Like many national parks in the region, it is under severe pressures from deforestation, hunting, and illegal fires. He hopes the project his company, Tellus, is implementing in the reserve can act as a model for further protection and restoration in sub-Saharan African countries.

Beyond the conservation frontlines he graduated this year with a distinction in a two-year masters in Biodiversity Conservation from the University of Oxford which he completed full time alongside his conservation work. His graduation also allowed him to return to living in Catalonia and he is now making the most of having the Pyrenees back on his doorstep.

### Iris Berger – 2020 SES Explorer

Iris has spent the first half of 2023 in South India collecting data for her PhD. Her research focuses on identifying management options and policies that can help reconcile food production with biodiversity conservation. The challenge is that increasing the agricultural productivity of a landscape makes it typically less hospitable to wildlife. However, increasing productivity is needed to meet food demand and mitigate the expansion of agriculture into natural ecosystems.



Her research aims to identify context-specific solutions to overcome this productivity-biodiversity trade-off. Iris’s field research involves conducting bird surveys in remote forests as well as rice fields and interviewing farmers. She happens to work in some of India’s least researched and least accessible regions. Whilst this has obviously brought a lot of challenges with it, the unique and humbling experiences she gained far outweighed the costs. For example, Iris has been staying with incredibly generous tribal people who are often, rightly, weary of outsiders. However, they were quick to make Iris feel part of their family and prepare daily feasts of curry that made Iris certainly not lose weight despite the strenuous fieldwork. Since returning from India, Iris has been largely desk-bound in Cambridge, analysing her data. However, she did manage to squeeze in a trip to Rwanda to present at an international conservation conference (and obviously went to see the mountain gorillas afterwards).

### Craig Nuttall – 2020 Rivers Foundation Explorer

In 2023, the Garhwal Mountain Rescue Project continued its vital work to improve healthcare access to pilgrims and villagers in the Garhwal Himalayas. Over the past year, Craig focused on establishing a civilian critical care helicopter transport team, that services the Garhwal range.



This newly formed team played a crucial role during the summer pilgrimage season in the Garhwal Himalayas, swiftly airlifting injured and sick Hindu pilgrims to major hospitals via helicopters. Collaborating with the Government of India, they secured essential funding for acquiring a dedicated helicopter, promising to significantly enhance their operational capacity.

Another integral facet of this project was the establishment of a telemedicine center at the All India Institute of Medical Sciences in Rishikesh. This center has further improved healthcare access in the Garhwal region, enabling remote consultations and medical guidance, particularly for communities in the most remote areas. The project's impact during the past year has been profound, with countless lives saved as they addressed the long-standing challenge of healthcare accessibility in the remote Garhwal Himalayas.

Looking forward, plans are in motion to expand helicopter transport services to other underserved regions of India. The aim is to improve healthcare accessibility in remote areas and ensure prompt emergency medical assistance reaches those in need.

### Catherine Kim – 2019 Elodie Sandford Explorer



Group photo with marine science students at the National University in Timor-Leste after a presentation while on expedition (Dili, Timor-Leste, 2019).

The year has brought some new things to Dr Catherine Kim including teaching. She successfully taught her first course, Geospatial Information Science, as a lecturer at the Queensland University of Technology in Brisbane. Dr Kim has continued her research with the Reef Restoration and Adaptation Program with her coral rubble research on the Great Barrier Reef. In July, she helped her PhD student, Tanya Dodgen, deploy her rubble stabilisation experiment on Moore Reef. They staked 12 aluminium security mesh panels to rubble on the reef and Tanya will be testing whether this helps stabilise the rubble encouraging faster rubble binding by organisms such as algae and sponges. The site will be revisited every four months for the next year to collect data on the stabilised rubble patches compare to control, non-stabilised areas.

Catherine has also continued to lead an interdisciplinary group of students and researchers to develop a flood vulnerability index for Brisbane City following the floods in 2022. Flood vulnerability considers not only flood exposure, but also the sensitivity and adaptive capacity of the population. The research team has developed a proof-of-concept index and held a workshop with stakeholders such as the Brisbane City Council and Australian Red Cross. At the workshop, the FloodReady app linking a personalised information from an interactive quiz with the backend flood index was co-designed and conceptualised. This project was selected as a finalist in the Natural Hazard Research Australia's Disaster Challenge and Drs Jess Hopf and Kate Saunders pitched the project to a panel of judges with Catherine in Melbourne in mid-October. The team was name runners-up and took home a \$2,000 prize. The three finalist pitches are viewable on YouTube: <https://www.naturalhazards.com.au/disaster-challenge/>

### Charlotte Austwick – 2019 Rivers Foundation Explorer



The Women's Group (Belize, 2023)

In January 2023, Charlotte returned to the jungles of Belize, accompanied by two teammates, to deliver books to the Maya, which were created as a result of her SES-funded expedition in 2020. The books were delivered to everyone who was involved in the project, with several copies being left at the school and at Tumul K'in Maya Centre of Learning, whose staff helped to proofread the stories.

The books were extremely well received, and the Maya were delighted to see their own languages written into an accessible resource. A particular highlight was seeing the children trying to read the Q'eqchi' stories in 'A Treasury of Mayan Tales' and then using the Q'eqchi' alphabet book to decode how to read the words.

Charlotte intends to continue to work with the community. She hopes to create more educational resources and is assisting with establishing an indigenous led museum. Stay updated with Charlotte at [www.charlotteaustwick.co.uk](http://www.charlotteaustwick.co.uk).

### Eleanor Flat – 2018 Elodie Sandford Explorer

Eleanor has been leading an incredible team of veterinarians and biologists for Osa Conservation to execute the first-ever deployment of GPS-tracking devices on the king vulture (*Sarcoramphus papa*). This involves incredibly difficult fieldwork that takes place in remote tropical rainforest locations. To catch vultures, you need incredible patience as you sit in a hide for 12 hours a day monitoring smelly bait, waiting for a vulture to arrive.

King vultures are the largest obligate scavengers in Central America, making them a key player in the neotropical

scavenger network, delivering critical waste services, and reducing the spread of diseases. Yet, they are understudied (with only 23 studies on this species existing), and on the decline. With a mere one study investigating their movement ecology and one study looking at their threats. Furthermore, research on New World vultures is greatly biased in space, with the US representing about half (49%) of all studies and almost no studies have been executed in Central America. We must understand king vulture movements and the threats affecting their animal health and fitness. Particularly, because in some areas of their geographic range (such as Mexico) populations are already considered extinct.



Eleanor releasing a king vulture after it was deployed with a GPS device in Costa Rica. Photo by Lucy Kleiner.

Eleanor and the team have now successfully caught 79 vultures of 5 species with a special focus on king vultures: deploying GPS tracking devices on 47 vultures in Costa Rica, 28 vultures in Peru, and, 4 vultures in Ecuador. Generating a total of 112,1991 GPS locations so far.

During vulture captures, biometric measurements are taken, and biological samples are collected to understand animal health and how illegal environmentally damaging activities (such as hunting and goldmining) can impact this vital species. This work will unveil new ecological information for the king vulture and will ensure effective conservation. Additionally, this work will fill many data gaps and help prevent a potential future crisis for the new world vultures.

**SES EXPLORERS**  
**£35 per annum**  
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## ...Journey of Discovery continued from page 5

Once the expedition's kit was back in the home base at John Blashford-Snell's Army quarter in Chiseldon, he called a few team members together to wrap the expedition up. The date was October 1968. This was effortlessly and quickly concluded, so the conversation soon turned to the future, to the 'Where Next?'

As well as John and Martin Romilly, Roger Chapman, Jim Masters, and Richard Snailham were present. A lively debate followed with John suggesting that he could find another 'big river in Africa'! This was the genesis for the Zaire River Expedition, for which Martin and Richard were to carry out a detailed reconnaissance in December 1971.

After several cups of coffee, the topic of conversation switched to the 'What Next?' This covered some wide-ranging ideas on the future of the amazing bunch of people, who had carried out the first descent of the Blue Nile (the Great Abbai). Do we disband the team? Do we continue? If so, in what form? Throughout these discussions there was a unanimous

desire to keep together and to continue; how, in what form? Two words dominated the discussion: **Scientific** and **Exploration**. They were deemed to be very important in their own right, but joined together they would make something unique and very special. Thus, **Scientific Exploration Society** was conceived and the acorn for its growth was planted. It sprouted the next year and SES was founded in 1969 with John the first Chairman. That acorn is now a massive oak tree with SES members on every branch. However, there is only one person at the top of the tree, he is John Blashford-Snell.

John is an amazing explorer with a global reputation. After the Blue Nile came the Darien Gap, then the Zaire River. All three were major expeditions, which were successful under John's courageous leadership. He is quiet (most of the time!), he is a thinker and he engages with everyone from Emperors and Princes to the young on their first expedition. Above all, John is a shrewd judge of people. He selects the right people to the key appointments in

his expeditions, he knows what is required of them, John tells them; he is most successful.

Operation Drake was established for young explores under the patronage of HRH the Prince of Wales. Then a much larger youth programme Operation Raleigh was organised. As a result, thousands of young people have been challenged and had their lives changed for the better. A wonderful, memorable achievement by John.

John's work has been recognised by the award of the CBE, having been appointed MBE for his outstanding leadership of the Blue Nile Expedition. John holds explorer medals from both national and international organisations. Even so, he was visibly moved and thrilled to receive SES Lifetime Achievement at the 2023 SES Oscars of Exploration. This award is so richly deserved by a remarkable leader, a remarkable explorer, and a remarkable man.

Photo from the Great Abbaï Expedition, 1968, On board Kitchener, L-R Joe Ruston, Martin Romilly, John Blashford-Snell and Barry Cooke (behind John).



Photo by 2020 SES Explorer, Iris Berger, Moyen-Bafing Lion Project (Guinea)



Photo of 2018 Elodie Sandford Explorer, Eleanor Flatt, deploying a camera trap to monitor a carcass in the rainforest to identify vulture activity (photo by Marco Molina).



# Top Tips from our Explorers

## **Bethan John**

Go into an expedition with curiosity – keep it at the forefront of your mind and your approach. In challenging situations, it is common to become closed off, defensive, ridged or even self-righteous. By asking yourself, ‘what’s interesting about this?’, especially when you’re feeling challenged, it will lead you to a deeper understanding.

## **Craig Nuttall**

### **When You Are Working To Help Others, Things Seem To Work Themselves Out:**

It’s remarkable how challenges can find solutions when you have a genuine commitment to helping others.

### **A Compelling Story Helps Others Feel Motivated To Help With Your Project:**

Sharing a compelling narrative about your project’s mission and impact can inspire others to join your cause and contribute their support.

## **Catherine Kim**

Share your story, findings, and media with everyone! Present to groups like government, students, and community groups – you never know what opportunities will come your way by putting yourself out there.

## **Eleanor Flatt**

My biggest top tip to anyone who is embarking on an expedition or tough scientific research is to keep going. You know it will be tough but never give up. Also trust your team and if you do, they will have your back and you can get each other through anything. My final tip is always have a secret bag of Haribo for the tough days!

## **Emi Koch**

While on an expedition, even in the most remote locations, I am mindful that I am exploring someone’s backyard... whether that be a community of people, animals, plants, or even spirits! Connecting

with locals is such a grounding way to become present within a space and embody what it means to be a respectful guest.

## **Catherine Hauw**

Finding a job in wildlife conservation can be hard, and I know what I am talking about! But you can do it!

### **Network and Collaborate:**

Building connections within the wildlife conservation and veterinary communities is invaluable

### **Stay Committed and Adaptable:**

Wildlife conservation work can be challenging, and setbacks are common. Stay committed to your goals and remain adaptable in the face of unexpected obstacles.

### **Continuous Learning:**

The field of wildlife conservation is dynamic, with new research and techniques emerging regularly. Keep learning and stay updated on the latest developments in the field.



2019 Rivers Foundation Explorer, Charlotte Austwick, with her expedition team (Belize, 2023)

## News from the Editors



We have had an exciting array of articles this year – if you are yet to read Issue 3 take a look: [bit.ly/ER-issue3](https://bit.ly/ER-issue3)

We've also had a few changes in the editorial team. Emma Miller, who oversaw and contributed articles to our health and wellbeing section in Issues 1-3, has stepped down. We are grateful for the ideas, enthusiasm, and contributions she provided during that time and wish her all the very best for the future. We have welcomed a new Designer, Alex Kerridge, and a new editor, Michael Murphy, onto the team – find out more about them and more about our plans for the year ahead below.

### LOOKING AHEAD

Looking ahead to 2024, we have decided to move towards a fast-track publication process, whereby we will publish articles as soon as they have completed our editing (magazine) / peer-review (academic) processes on Zenodo (<https://zenodo.org/communities/exploration-revealed/about>), enabling authors and readers alike to benefit from 'Zero Waiting Time' for publication. Once there are enough articles for a full digital magazine, we will publish the new collection of articles as an Issue. SES members will of course be alerted to new Issues.

### PUBLICATION SPONSORSHIP

Publication would not be possible without the

time and commitment of our contributors and editors and the generosity of Issue sponsors who for this year were SES and Dr Alex Finnen. This sponsorship is vital for covering the cost of plagiarism checks for the academic articles, stock image purchases and the costs associated with the digital publication platform. If you are interested in sponsoring an Issue, or joining the editorial team, please email: [explorationrevealed@ses-explore.org](mailto:explorationrevealed@ses-explore.org)

### OUR NEW DESIGNER



Alex Kerridge is the graphic designer for Exploration Revealed magazine. Alex works freelance as a graphic designer in the day and is a self-styled armchair scientist and holiday adventurer.

### OUR NEW ADDITION TO THE EDITORIAL TEAM

Michael Murphy is an anthropologist and researcher whose work investigates how extreme journeys change identities. He has worked in humanitarian contexts in the Middle East, South

Asia, the Horn of Africa, and Central America, as well as conducting research in UCL's Space Research Cluster. He specializes in qualitative analysis and participatory research methods.



Michael is currently an associate researcher at University College London, after completing his MSc in Migration Studies from Oxford University. He is interested in covering...

- Country profiles
- Epic fails
- Ethical dilemmas
- Expedition impact
- Expedition logistics
- Expedition revealed
- Extreme expeditioning
- In-country connections
- Tales from the field
- Young Scientific Explorers.

His background has given him a particular interest in the human sciences!

If you have relevant experiences to share and would be happy to be interviewed by one of our editors or wish to submit an article, please email: [explorationrevealed@ses-explore.org](mailto:explorationrevealed@ses-explore.org)





Find out more about this incredible expedition at:

[WWW.EXPEDITIONCYCLOPS.ORG](http://WWW.EXPEDITIONCYCLOPS.ORG)

# Expedition Cyclops: The search for Attenborough's 'lost' echidna

*By James Kempton*

**2022 SES Explorer, Dr James Kempton, shares a riveting account of his incredible Expedition Cyclops...**

Some 8,300 miles from the Royal College of Surgeons, the institution in which I received the SES Explorer Award that realised my expedition plans, lie the Cyclops Mountains, stretched along New Guinea's northern coast. They were the setting of Expedition Cyclops, a project three and a half years in the making that brought together team members from England, Greece, Hungary, Canada, the USA, and Indonesia. I led the team with the aim of making the first ever northern ascent of the mountains, to collect data on the ecology and evolutionary history of the Cyclops, and to search for an enigmatic mammal unseen by science for 62 years.

The Cyclops Mountains first entered Western consciousness in 1768

when, sailing past what is now Indonesia's Papua Province, French explorer Baron Louis de Bougainville recorded, 'a high, mountainous land' containing '*les deux cyclopes*'. He approached no closer than ten leagues from the shore, but even at that distance, the gigantic twin peaks of Mt. Dafonsoro and Mt. Rara dominate the view. The twentieth-century explorer-scientist Evelyn Cheesman later explained Bougainville's reticence to draw nearer when she wrote of the jagged rocks and razor reefs that repel boats from the Pacific coastline. Pristine rainforest rises almost vertically from the shore, vaulting up into the perpetual mists that obscure the peaks of the mountains. Cheesman's contemporary Ernst Mayr said, 'the slopes drop precipitously into the sea on their northern side and are quite inaccessible there'.

Equipped with thousands of sampling tubes, 70 litres of preservative

chemicals, a field microscope, and a generator, among a host of other kit, my team and I set out to do what Mayr and Cheesman thought impossible: to ascend the northern Cyclops. We took with us students from Uncen (Papua's main university), whom we taught biodiversity survey methods so they might lead future research in Indonesian New Guinea. And together we searched for that 'lost' enigmatic mammal, the only scientific knowledge of which is found in a storeroom of the Netherlands' natural history museum in Leiden.

Possessing the quills of a porcupine, the snout of an anteater, and the feet of a mole, Attenborough's long-beaked echidna is as much a chimera as its mythological namesake. Like the duck-billed platypus, it is a monotreme — a member of the egg-laying mammals that have evolved independently of other mammals for over 200 million years.

Attenborough's long-beaked echidna, named after the celebrated broadcaster and naturalist, is only one of five monotremes known to have survived to the modern-day. Before Expedition Cyclops it had not been seen by science since its 1961 discovery in the Cyclops Mountains by Pieter van Royen, a Dutch botanist. The specimen he collected is now under lock and key in the Leiden museum. If the species was still alive, our expedition wanted to find it.



The first ever photograph of Attenborough's long-beaked echidna.

In this search, we had two advantages over earlier scientists. The first were camera traps: devices triggered by motion that acted as remote sentinels in the forest, watching for animals around the clock. Our second advantage was the strong relationship we had forged with customary landowners of the Cyclops. By wonderful serendipity, I met Pascal Norotouw in an Oxford lecture theatre in March 2020. Pascal is from Papua, from a village on the north coast of the Cyclops Mountains called Yongsu Sapari – he and his family belong to one of seven clans that live in this village. They have survived on the Cyclops' northern slopes for centuries, in terrain that Mayr and Cheesman had once judged inaccessible. With Pascal's help and with the assistance of Iain and Malcolm Kobak — brothers who lead Yappenda, a fantastic Papuan development NGO – we built strong bonds between the expedition team and the community over several years.



The magical but brooding rainforest of the Cyclops Mountains. Here forest guide Zacharias Sorondanya is perched near the top of a sacred peak.

Above 900 metres in altitude, the northern Cyclops are untouched even by those who live there. We soon discovered why. Ascending the Cyclops is like climbing ladders whose rails are clad in spines and thorns, with rungs of rotting wood, and frames enshrouded by snapping vines and falling rocks. The pristine environment owes much to the reverence that the clans have for the Cyclops. Many areas are held as sacred, and kept off-limits to all but the initiated. To our great honour, the expedition team received special permission to walk on these lands, some of which had never before felt the tread of human feet. On the expedition's sixth day, we approached the boundary of a sacred peak, and our guide Zacharias Sorondanya turned to us with gravity. He explained that from this point forward, we must not speak the names of places, plants, or animals that we saw,

lest we invoke the ire of the mountain's spirit guardian. She controls the fate of those passing through, it is said. Some travel without incident. Others have returned vomiting blood, after encountering a realm in which lives a leviathan-on-land — a serpent so big that the giant Araucaria tree grows from its back.

We spent three weeks living in the rainforest. The search for water was unremitting. We toiled endless hours to find it, to carry it, to filter it.

We slept on fern leaves under tarpaulins. With our Papuan guides from Yappenda – Ruben, Meli, John, and Sili – we bore the exigencies of expedition life: malaria, broken bones, staphylococcal skin infections, and the interminable assault of leeches. One leech left Jeff Wonda – a student from Uncen – with a story we will never forget. One thousand metres up the mountain, it fell into his eyeball, where it remained lodged for 33 hours, rebuffing attacks from tweezers, salt water, and medical saline. Only after being doused in ethanol did it finally succumb — and so nearly did Jeff.



The foreboding landscape of the northern Cyclops Mountains that had repelled earlier explorers.

In total, over both northern and southern slopes, we climbed in excess of 12,000m. We deployed eighty camera traps across the entire elevational gradient of the range. And it is thanks to these traps that we made a very special discovery. In the very last sequence of camera trap footage, from the final SD card collected on the final day of our final mountain ascent, we recorded three photos and one video of Attenborough's long-beaked echidna. This is the first footage ever recorded of the species. It verifies that this fascinating creature, last seen in 1961, still lives in these remote mountains: a precious remnant of 200 million years of evolutionary history.

*Expedition Cyclops* was supported by the generosity of the Scientific Exploration Society. Also supporting the expedition were Merton College, the Royal Geographical Society, the Scientific Exploration Society, Re:wild, the University of Oxford's Expeditions Council, Royal Holloway University, Reconyx, Derek Williams, Chris Peri, and other generous individual donations. The expedition would not have been possible without the support and assistance of Yappenda, Indonesia's Research and Development Agency, Papua BBKSDA, and Universitas Cenderawasih.

# A few highlights...

## Endorsed Expeditions

### Catherine Hauw: Effects of lead ammunition hunting on Namibian Cheetahs 2023

Catherine, a French wildlife veterinarian, journeyed to Namibia to investigate the effects of lead exposure on both wild and captive cheetahs and leopards. This research was part of her Master's programme in Wild Animal Health at the Royal Veterinary School, conducted in collaboration with the Zoological Society of London (ZSL) and the Cheetah Conservation Fund (CCF).

Her time in Namibia was nothing short of enchanting, and during her stay, she delved into the examination of cheetah bones, some of which dated back up to 30 years. This exploration aimed to highlight the adverse consequences of lead exposure resulting from the use of lead ammunition in hunting practices, a method still employed by many sanctuaries for large carnivores in the feeding of cheetahs and leopards.



Catherine doing the anaesthesia of a cheetah (South Africa 2021)

Catherine's study represents the first-ever investigation into comparative lead exposure among carnivores in Southern Africa. Her findings were revealing. Captive cheetahs exhibited the highest levels of lead in their bones, suggesting a significant concern. Equally noteworthy was the discovery that leopards, due to their opportunistic feeding behaviours, often consume carcasses and offal left behind by hunters, which are frequently contaminated with lead bullets. Consequently, wild leopards displayed higher levels of lead in their bones compared to their wild cheetah counterparts, who primarily rely on hunting. Lead is a highly toxic heavy metal known to induce various neurological symptoms and affect multiple organ systems. This discovery underscores the potential peril to wildlife. While lead-free ammunition alternatives exist, and some governments are already initiating lead bans, the need for additional scientific literature to substantiate these concerns remains paramount.

Hence, Catherine aspires to pursue a doctoral study on lead exposure in wild carnivores across Southern Africa. Her objective is to demonstrate that not only lead from ammunition but also lead from mining activities can have a detrimental impact on endangered animals. Her ultimate aim is to advocate for a transformation in our

actions, not only for the sake of the animals but also for the preservation of entire ecosystems and the well-being of humanity.

### Carla Huynh: Constraining deglaciation in southernmost Patagonia 2023

PhD researcher Carla will sail to remote islands in the Tierra del Fuego archipelago to study past glaciation and climate changes in the region. The team of four from Edinburgh and Santiago will be dating the abandonment of glacial moraines surrounding the Santa Ines and Cordillera Darwin icefields, building upon a 2022 field season to nearby Isla Clarence and Isla Capitan Aracena. The research aims to help improve our understanding of complex land-ocean-atmosphere interactions in southern Patagonia, which experiences some of the strongest winds and sharpest precipitation gradient on the planet.

### James Chapman: Project Amu Darya 2023

The team have spent the last five weeks travelling through Uzbekistan and Karakalpakstan. Their mission is to record an oral history of the Amu Darya river, starting from its vibrant delta in Urgench, through to the barren desert of the former Aral Sea. Three undergraduate students from Oxford University are partnering with the State University of Khorezm and the State University of Karakalpak to conduct this expedition. Together, the team aims to use an oral history film as a way to understand the ecological and historical factors responsible for the Amu Darya's decline, and the downstream Aral Sea Crisis.



In 1960, the Aral Sea was the fourth-largest lake on Earth. Now, it has shrunk to a tenth of its original size, mainly due to the extensive irrigation of its largest tributary – the Amu Darya. The team will be interviewing individuals, NGOs and students around Moynaq. This once-thriving fishing town, nestled along the shores of the Aral Sea, now sits over 150 km from the seashore. In only 60 years, Moynaq has gone from an island in the Aral Sea's delta to an island in the Aral Sea's desert. The Project Amu Darya film will be released in 2024. Follow [@project.amu.darya](https://www.instagram.com/project.amu.darya) for the updates on the research and filming processes.

[WWW.SES-EXPLORE.ORG/EXPEDITIONS](http://WWW.SES-EXPLORE.ORG/EXPEDITIONS)

# Reconnect with SES...

## Affiliations with our Heritage

We are delighted that 2023 has seen us reconnecting with our past and joining arms with partners in the world of exploration to increase our footprint and voice to ensure our planet is protected for future generations. Many of our affiliations are with organisations that form part of the Society's incredible heritage of which we are really proud, such as Operation Drake and Operation Raleigh (now Raleigh International).



Jeremy Fish (left) and his team on a RUKS Meet

### Raleigh UK Society

One such affiliation is Raleigh UK Society (RUKS). Led by Jeremy Fish, RUKS was established in 2018, at the request of Raleigh International, to re-ignite the passion for Raleigh among its alumni and bring together like-minded people. RUKS has a private Facebook page with over 1,700 members who have been involved in Raleigh since its inception or just recently.



A RUKS Meet

### RUKS Meet

Activities are organised around THREE themes:

**ACTION:** Taking positive action and supporting local communities through volunteering, focusing predominantly on climate change, homelessness, and mental health.

**ADVENTURE:** Organising activities to bring alumni together who share a sense of adventure. Activities include hiking, canoeing, and surfing where our shared passion

and excitement for getting out into the world is what connects us all.

**SOCIAL:** There are so many Raleigh alumni across the UK who remain unconnected with RUKS and reconnecting with this vast network of school-leavers, leaders, founders, graduates, and changemakers with a huge range of backgrounds, ages, and experiences is a key aim of RUKS. Connecting, having fun, and sharing knowledge and experience, so that we can learn and grow together, is the key to our success.

### RUKS Meet Impact Reports

RUKS regularly gather to carry out community aid projects and Impact Reports are produced from every Meet detailing the work carried out which helps to raise awareness of the issues.

### Special SES membership for Raleigh Alumni

We have created a special membership for Raleigh alumni (UK alumni £50 a year and Global alumni £35 a year). If you are a Raleigh alumni (or are in touch with any Raleigh alumni), SES would be delighted to welcome you back into our community and hear all about what you have been doing since these life-changing expeditions. Visit [www.ses-explore.org/join-us](http://www.ses-explore.org/join-us).

### Raleigh International

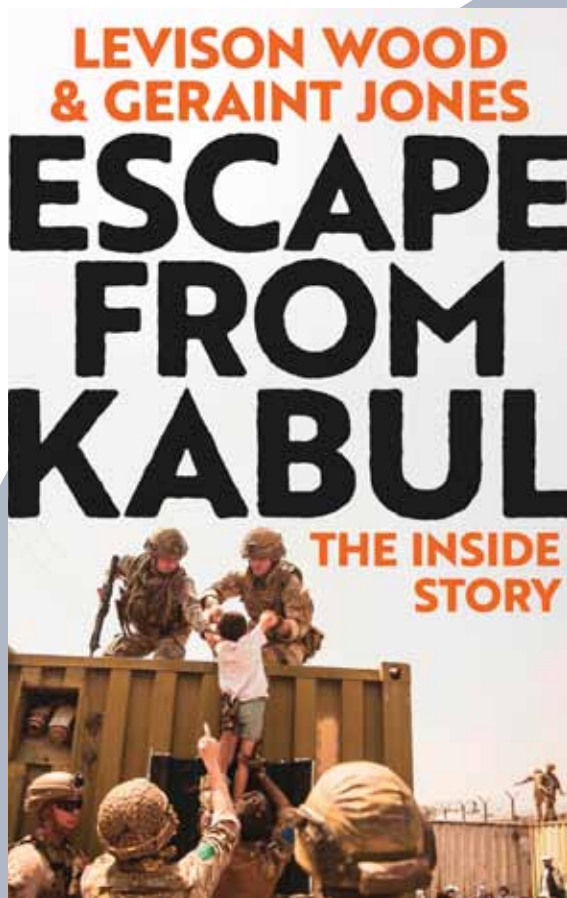
Impact Travel purchased Raleigh International (RI) in 2022 to continue to offer volunteering expeditions around the world alongside Impact Travel's portfolio of educational and experimental travel programmes. RI empowers young people worldwide to develop their skills and take action on the issues they care about, all whilst making a positive, long-lasting impact in the communities they work. They do this through Raleigh Expeditions: challenging and fun international volunteering experience.

RI is excited to extend an exclusive discount for SES members – 15% off all Volunteer Manager roles for their expeditions in Costa Rica and South Africa. Roles include Logistics Coordinators, Medics and Photographers, and each play a key role in the success of their expeditions. If you are 25 or above, seeking adventure and eager to support young people on their life-changing journey, please get in touch: [info@raleighinternational.org](mailto:info@raleighinternational.org). RI merchandise can be purchased online via the shop: <https://theraleighshop.org>.

RUKS works with RI to provide a pipeline of volunteers and participants. Referrals through RUKS also attract special discounts for participants in RI expeditions.

*For Raleigh International expedition details and to reconnect with Raleigh alumni, please email:*  
**[raleighalumnisociety@gmail.com](mailto:raleighalumnisociety@gmail.com)**

# Books, Books, Books...

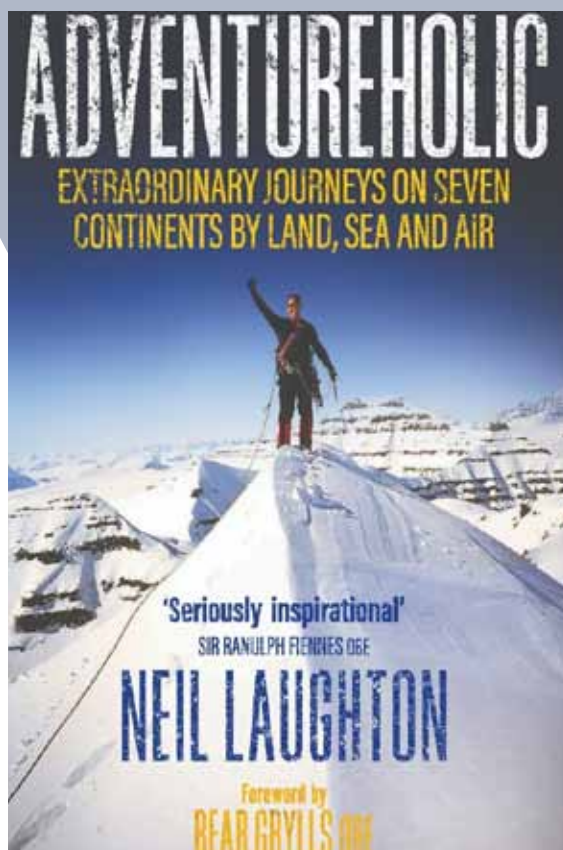


## **Levison Wood & Geraint Jones – ESCAPE FROM KABUL**

Levison (still a member of the Reservist Army, who fought in Afghanistan with the Parachute Regiment in 2008 and who is also a member of our Advisory Board) and Geraint (who served as an infantry soldier in Iraq and Afghanistan 2009-2010) were both involved in the operation, though they were not on the ground. They have had exclusive access to the soldiers, sailors and airmen who took part in the mission, as well as those who rescued the Afghan allies.

This is the first account of Operation Pitting, the evacuation of Kabul in August 2021, which will go down in history as one of the most unexpected events in modern times. In an eerie replay of the disastrous British retreat from Kabul in 1842, coalition troops withdrew from Afghanistan after twenty years of military campaigning. The subsequent collapse of the Afghan government and its army shocked the world, as a resurgent Taliban gathered its forces and swept across the country. Thousands of Afghans who had worked with the allies were left to the meagre mercy of the Taliban. As the Taliban went door-to-door to execute 'collaborators', a small international task force set out on a daring mission to evacuate as many Afghans and their families as possible.

Drawing on a wide range of first-hand accounts – the politicians and officers who planned the trans-continental rescue, the young soldiers who were faced with the unenviable task of keeping a crowd of thousands of desperate people at bay, former interpreters and soldiers of the Afghan Special Forces who made it out - Escape from Kabul is the harrowing true story of Operation Pitting and the Kabul airlift.



## **Neil Laughton – ADVENTUREHOLIC**

Neil is a former Royal Marines Commando, helicopter pilot, Special Forces officer, and SES Chair from 2017 to 2022. He then became an entrepreneur, founding a dozen businesses in a variety of industries, two of which were sold to a FTSE 100 in 2011. He is currently focusing on building floating houses, running the Penny Farthing Club and mentoring business owners/CEOs. His lifelong passion for adventure had led him to organise and lead more than 50 expeditions on seven continents by land, sea, and air, the most exciting of which are featured in his book.

Adventureholic tells the stories of Neil's most unforgettable and daring adventures yet. From summiting Mount Everest with Bear Grylls and playing cricket at the Geographical South Pole to piloting the world's first road-legal flying car on a 10,000km journey across the Sahara Desert to Timbuktu, running with bulls, and train-surfing in Myanmar, Neil really has seen and done it all.

Readers are invited to join Neil on a roller-coaster ride around the world, gaining the necessary insight, confidence and inspiration to add a little more adventure to their own lives.

## David Grann – THE WAGER

From 1994, encouraged by the eminent anthropologist Thor Heyerdahl, Scientific Exploration Society undertook eight expeditions in South America (known as the Kota Mama expeditions). Led by the Society's Founder and Honorary President, John Blashford-Snell, they aimed at showing that ancient people could navigate from Bolivia to the Atlantic in traditional reed boats. During these expeditions, the wreck of HMS Wager, an 18th-century man of war was discovered. After 2001, these expeditions became devoted to archaeological, geological, and community aid projects in Bolivia.

Author David Grann has recently written a book about HMS Wager, which is soon to be made into a film by Martin Scorsese and starring Leonardo DiCaprio. The book is set in 1740 and follows the story of HMS Wager as it sets sail across the Atlantic with a covert mission to intercept a Spanish treasure ship off the Chilean coast. It covers the hardships endured by the sailors as they rounded Cape Horn, where the strongest currents in the world pounded the ship so hard even veterans reeled.

*Available  
to buy  
from all  
good  
bookstores.*

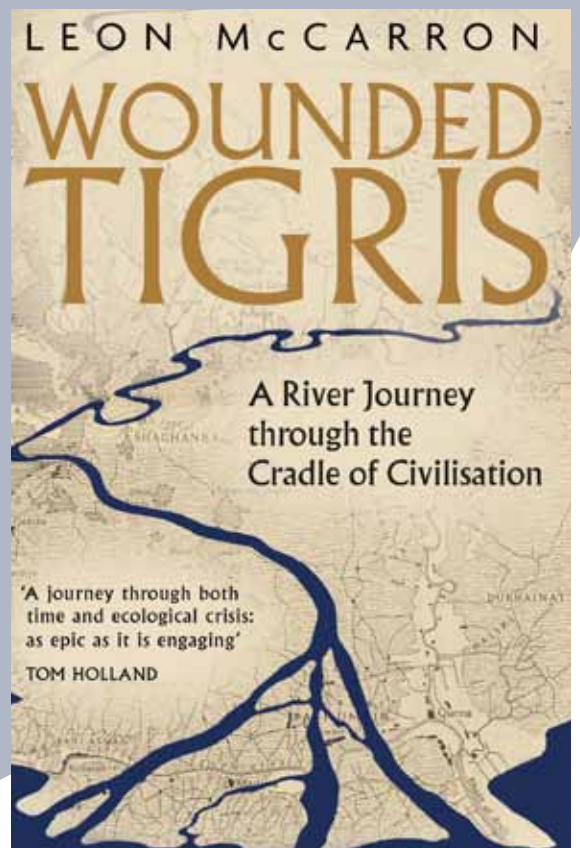
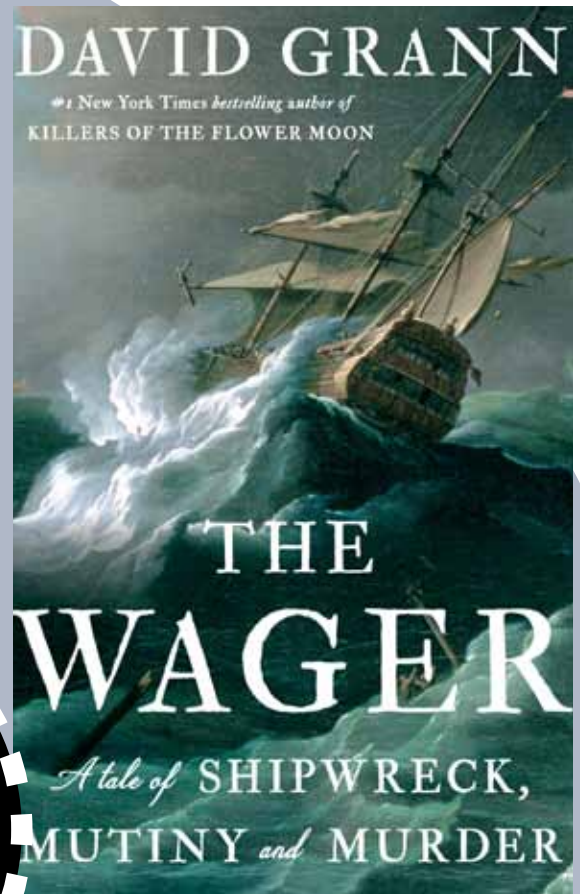
## Leon McCarron – WOUNDED TIGRIS

Leon is a Northern Irish adventurer, filmmaker and author. He is a Fellow of the Royal Geographical Society, and specialises in storytelling via long distance, human-powered journeys. Most recently, he walked 1000 miles from Jerusalem to Mount Sinai along a series of new hiking trails in the region.

The river Tigris is in danger. It has been the lifeblood of ancient Mesopotamia and modern Iraq, but geopolitics and climate change have left the birthplace of civilisation at risk of becoming uninhabitable.

In 2021, Leon travelled by boat along the full length of the river, in search of hope. From the source, where Assyrian kings had their images carved into stone, McCarron and his small team journeyed through the Turkish mountains, across north-east Syria and into the heart of Iraq. Passing by historic cities like Diyarbakir, Mosul and Baghdad, McCarron kept the company of fishermen and farmers, but also artists, activists and archaeologists who rely on the flow of the river.

His book details his incredible journey from source to sea, and poses the question: what does it mean if we lose one of the great rivers of civilisation?





The Voices of the Vezo films are available to watch at:

[WWW.VOICESOFTHEVEZO.ORG](http://WWW.VOICESOFTHEVEZO.ORG)

# Amber Carter

## *Voices of the Vezo (Madagascar)*

**Amber Carter was awarded the 2022 Sir Charles Blois Explorer Award for Science & Adventure for her Voices of the Vezo expedition and we are delighted to share an account of her riveting expedition...**

Along the turquoise waters of southwest Madagascar live the Vezo, a people whose livelihoods and culture have been intricately connected to the ocean since their arrival in Madagascar some 2,000 years ago. In villages nestled between the coast and Madagascar's unique endemic spiny forest, the dry conditions limit the possibilities of agriculture. Meanwhile, isolation and poor road infrastructure hampers opportunities for other types of economic development. Consequently, the Vezo people continue to rely almost completely on ocean for their food security and income, just as their ancestors have done for millennia.

However, like millions of other small-scale fishers living across the tropics,

the livelihoods of Vezo fishers is on a knife's edge. Overfishing is driving down fish populations and climate change and habitat destruction threatens the fragile mangrove, seagrass and coral ecosystems on which they rely.

Over their lifetime, elders in Vezo communities have witnessed an unprecedented transformation of Madagascar's marine environment. They have seen the inception and rapid evolution of industrialised fishing, as well as the consequences of habitat destruction and climate change.

In a region where the culture of written documentation is low, this transformation has largely gone undocumented. Elders hold invaluable knowledge about historical ecosystem conditions critical for informing locally relevant fisheries management and conservation measures. Yet, as this generation ages, the window to document this knowledge is rapidly closing.

Motivated by these challenges, "Voices of the Vezo" (VOTV) emerged, a community filmmaking initiative and research project led by Amber.

Amber's Explorer Award supported a 10-week expedition to Madagascar from October to December 2022, during which time the VOTV team supported local youth to create short films that would document the transformations of the marine ecosystem and its profound impact on Vezo lives.

This project was a collaborative effort, between Amber and a local Vezo filmmaker Symphorien Maniry Soa, who has been using film and music as educational tools on health and environmental issues for several years.

Throughout the two-month expedition, the VOTV team held filmmaking workshops in four villages – Andavadoaka, Ambatomilo, Tampolove and Ampasilava. Travel in this remote region of Madagascar is a particular challenge, with a



single rough sand track connecting the coastal villages and limited access to reliable vehicles. The team employed various modes of transportation, including traditional zebu carts and wooden dugout canoes (lakas) to transport themselves and the filming equipment to the villages.

The first part of the filmmaking workshops were dedicated to training, incorporating engaging activities and games designed to introduce camera skills and interview techniques. Following this training, the youth took charge of the cameras, conducting interviews in their local community and shooting footage of lives to help tell their story.

Once the filming was complete, the youth groups took on the task of creating the story and editing the films. They used large sheets of paper to create storyboards, mapping out the sequence of interviews and footage. Subsequently, Amber and Symphorien translated these storyboards into finished films that could be shared with the community.

After the films were completed, the VOTV team would put on a community film night. They would create a make-shift cinema – using a large sheet, a projector and speaker – and show the films created by the youth alongside local music videos.

These evenings were highly popular and drew audiences of up to 200 people.

Overall, 31 Vezo youth took part in the workshops and seven short films were created. The films are excellent documentation of past Vezo culture and traditions including fishing techniques that are no longer used and the origin stories of each of the villages.

They also provide stark evidence of how the marine ecosystem has changed over a single generation. For example, elders recount tales of times when swimming in the sea was restricted by the presence of sharks, while many of the younger generation, in stark contrast, have never encountered a living shark.

VOTV revealed the impactful role of participatory video as a community engagement tool. The Vezo youth that created the films described learning how the ecosystem has changed since their grandparent's generation and feeling motivated to help change the situation.

One of the unexpected, yet exciting outcomes of the project came in the village of Ambatomilo. For several months, the community in Ambatomilo had struggled to reach a final decision on creating a no-take

zone (an area closed to fishing) to help restore fish populations. After community members watched the VOTV film and heard the strong endorsements for a no-take zone from community members, a collective recognition emerged. This newfound awareness catalysed decisive action, and the no-take zone has since been successfully implemented.

Following the success Voices of the Vezo, the team have published a scientific article in the journal *Frontiers in Human Dynamics*. The article discusses the potential applications for participatory video in community-based conservation and management and providing practical guidance on how to carry out a participatory video project.



Amber flying the SES Flag



# Obituaries

## VISCOUNT SHANE GOUGH (1941-2023)

We are sad to report the passing of Shane Gough, an enthusiastic supporter of the Society.

After school at Winchester College and a Cadetship at the Royal Military Academy, Sandhurst he was commissioned in the Irish Guards following a family tradition. Although descended from Field Marshal Hugh Gough, the 1st Viscount Gough, Shane did not remain in the Army but became a stockbroker. However, he was an active Freemason and took part in Operation Drake's expeditions in Papua New Guinea and Kenya.



Viscount Gough with 2019 Gough Explorer, Scott Pallett (2019 Oscars of Exploration)

Later he became a close friend of Captain Jim Masters, once SES Treasurer and a leading member of the Society. As a result, Shane supported the campaign to help a facially disfigured girl that the SES Kota Mama 3 expedition found in a remote Amazon village. Shane also supported the Society's Explorer Awards programme via his Gough Explorer Award for Medical Aid & Research which was presented annually at the Oscars of Exploration event.

Scott Pallett, recipient of the 2019 Gough Explorer Award for his Rangers First expedition, said of Viscount Gough...

*"I will be forever grateful for his support, time, and advice. The best thing we can surely all do now is continue to endeavour in our work in the humanitarian spirit which he epitomised."*

He was a most kind and generous man who will be greatly missed by many friends.

## Jennifer Ellenger

Members will be very sad to learn that Jennifer Ellenger, a trustee of the Jersey Scientific Exploration Society, passed away after a sudden but short illness. Jenny was on John Blashford-Snell's expedition in Bolivia and had been on a number of others including those in Mongolia, Assam and Bardia.

A professional PR executive, she lived in Jersey where she was involved with several charities and swam most days of the year in the sea. On SES-supported expeditions

she played a leading role in the community aid projects, especially the distribution of reading glasses. She also collected funds to provide books for schools in remote areas.

Jenny was a lively character with a great sense of fun and was very much the life and soul of the ventures. She will always be remembered for her organisation of splendid Burns Suppers in the field. She loved animals, and wildlife studies and conservation were of particular interest to her. On all the projects she showed a great interest in helping the local people, especially the children.



Jenny Ellenger with the Jersey flag in Lake Titicaca

Her final activity on the Bolivian expedition in November 2022 was to plunge into the waters of Lake Titicaca from the deck of a reed boat, crying *"I always wanted to swim in the highest navigable lake in the world."* And she didn't find it unduly cold!

The Society and her many friends have lost a lovely, caring and generous hearted member who was a great credit to her home island. Our deepest condolences go to her long-term partner, Steve.

## Warrant Officer David "Ticky" Wright RE (1933-2022)



Ticky Wright (middle) with John Blashford-Snell

Many older members will be saddened to learn that "Ticky" has passed away at the Royal Hospital, Chelsea.

A much loved and respected Grandfather, Royal Engineer Ticky began his Army life at the Apprentice College, Chepstow and went on to serve in Malaya, Korea and

during the nuclear tests on Christmas Island in 1957/58. Later he was posted to Aden and Canada.

He played an important part in the epic Blue Nile expedition 1968, helming the assault boat that made the extraordinary journey upstream to come to the aid of John Blashford-Snell's river party after they had been attacked by bandits.

In 1971/72 Ticky helmed the Avon inflatable raft during the crossing of the Darien Gap, which successfully carried the vehicles over several rivers and the great Atrato Swamp. He had a narrow escape when an inflatable was swept under the Colombian Navy gun boat.

A man of sharp good humour, he possessed valuable engineer skills and was a most industrious and likeable member of the team. He was indeed an inspiring soldier with a kind heart. Our condolences go to his family.

### Dr Ken Hedges

The British Trans-Arctic Expedition, led by the remarkable Wally Herbert, made one of the most incredible polar journeys in the period 1967-1969. Surviving attacks by polar bears, fracturing ice, and temperatures down to -50 degrees centigrade, the team were forced to overwinter for five months on the frozen waste. Their safe return was overshadowed by Apollo 11's moon landing, but their patron, Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh, called it "*among the greatest triumphs of human skill and endurance*".

The scientific results of the expedition proved to be a valuable legacy.



Dr Ken Hedges (Canadian Geographic)

The team doctor was Ken Hedges, a courageous medical officer with the SAS, who had served in action worldwide but only fired a shot once and that was to scare off a hungry polar bear. Ken was a keen member of the Society and kept in touch with John Blashford-Snell offering medical advice for expeditions. A mildly eccentric explorer, he amazed people in his Canadian hometown by wandering about at -12 degrees centigrade in thin jacket and slacks. His neighbours dismissed this as a typical British whimsy. However, Ken claimed his polar expeditions had permanently altered his body thermostat and he did not feel the cold.

Sadly, Ken passed away aged 88 but before he died, he wrote:

*"If any journey is to be worthwhile, it must embrace a personal validity. For there is within us an innate yet vulnerable faculty that seeks an accountable purpose for any and every task we might undertake. This is the human spirit, a vessel of discovery for the meaning of life and how we should live it."*

The energy that had driven him to cross 3,800 miles of pack ice never dimmed. He was indeed a fine example and an inspiration to us all.

### Graham Walker

Many former members of Operation Raleigh will remember the energetic and enthusiastic chair, Graham Walker who very sadly passed away in October 2023.



During his extraordinary life, he accomplished remarkable feats, including leading the challenging quest for the prestigious America's Cup on behalf of Great Britain. His team emerged victorious in numerous Admiral Cup events, and on his classic yachts, he won both the Panerai trophy multiple times and the Rolex trophy on three occasions. He had a passion for rugby with which he was actively involved as a player, coach, and spectator. His enthusiasm for all things automotive was evident as he actively participated with his collection of various classic cars in races, rallies, and events.

As Chair of Operation Raleigh, he often visited the expedition in the field and John Blashford-Snell recalls being with him on a hair-raising helicopter flight over the glaciers in Patagonia. He showed no concern when the engine spluttered once or twice while crossing the vast sea of ice. On landing he simply smiled and said "*Well that was fun wasn't it.*".

Graham went on to help revitalise Pathé News into a valuable digital archive. This remarkable and generous hearted man will be mourned by all who knew him. Men of this calibre are few and far between these days.

### Rosa Bennington-Sears

*Tribute kindly provided by Nicky Dunnington-Jefferson*  
Rosa Bennington-Sears, along with her husband Hugh, were enthusiastic members of two SES expeditions and

the Society was greatly saddened to learn of her death; Hugh died some years ago. Rosa and Hugh first came to the Society via the David Shepherd Wildlife Foundation (DSWF) which collaborated with SES on the January/February 1999 expedition to survey remote Alaungdaw Kathapa National Park in Burma (Myanmar), north west of Mandalay.



Rosa Bennington-Spears with the solar cooker and John Blashford-Snell (far right)

Rosa was catering officer, in charge of the solar cooker project. A solar cooker arrived from India with elephant scientist Dr Surendra Varma, but was damaged in transit. Rosa, undaunted by the state of the cooker, immediately began to experiment. Under her instructions repairs to the cooker were affected and a few days later she took it to Payawa Elephant Camp where the oozies (elephant handlers) were based. The cooker was set up with rice and tested to demonstrate its skills to the villagers; to Rosa's delight the rice was cooked. She returned the following day armed with more rice, chicken wings and assorted vegetables and conducted another successful experiment. Over the next two days further visits were made and the headman set four pots of rice cooking.

The objective of solar cooker use was to try and persuade the local people to reduce their dependence on firewood collected from the forest. Based on the experiments that Rosa conducted, the cooker was handed over to the villagers for their use and was received enthusiastically. It was concluded that a solar cooker would be of great benefit to the villagers but that a larger and more robust model was required. Rosa also distributed gifts (pens, candles, rulers, cotton reels, note books etc.) to the villagers with whom she'd established a great rapport. And she bravely tackled the 'Address to a Haggis' at a belated Burns Night amidst much merriment.

Rosa and Hugh also participated in the 2001 SES expedition to North East India and contributed considerably to the success of this trip. The team visited Nagaland, Assam, and Meghalaya, with a view to undertaking future projects in this region. Rosa was a fine artist and friends will miss her beautiful sketches, especially of elephants, which she sent at Christmas.

### Yuanqi Wu (1988-2023)

*Tribute kindly provided by Amy Hong*

Ten years ago, Wu teamed up with Amy Hong to explore the wildlife of Tibet on a SES-supported expedition. As a fresh graduate from Nottingham University's MSc Biological Photography and Imaging programme, Wu deployed all his learnings enthusiastically in the field. He used GIS techniques to record the locations of the black-necked crane nesting sites, which marked the first study in the region since the work of the International Crane Foundation in the 1990s, and certainly the first study since the completion of the China-Tibet railway

and highways. He played with innovative wildlife filming techniques, disguising GoPro camera to capture the lives of local species by using their natural curiosity, a technique independently used by BBC: Penguins – Spy in the Huddle. He even exercised engineering skills when the 4x4 broke down in the middle of the Tibetan mountains, as the team was fleeing from a snowstorm towards the end of the expedition.



Yuanqi Wu with Yunnan snub-nosed monkey

This SES expedition marks the beginning of Wu's career as a professional wildlife cinematographer, who then captured many magnificent species in China and brought them to the world stage for the first time. Wu's work on Yunnan snub-nosed monkeys, together with Mark Fletcher and Jacky Poon as part of Nature: Mystery Monkeys of Shangri-La, was nominated for Emmy Outstanding Nature Programming 2016.



Wu was also one who touched many people's lives with his passion. During his study in England, he was well-liked among his cohort and fitted into the culture here with ease. After he returned to China, he continued to contribute as a tutor at the training camps hosted by Wild China ([www.wildchina.cn](http://www.wildchina.cn)), a Chinese non-profit organisation dedicated to conservation through the lens, and via public engagement talks across the country.

As Dr Thomas Hartman, Chair of MSc Biological Photography and Imaging Programme at the University of Nottingham said, it is apparent that his (Wu) light shone brightly during his time with us. His accomplishments will be remembered as a testament to the wonderful person he was.

### JOIN OUR LEGACY CIRCLE

No matter how large or small, gifts left to SES in Wills are particularly special to us, and are one of the most powerful ways to make a lasting impact. Please consider joining our LEGACY CIRCLE and help secure our future for years to come. For more details, please contact Gail Lloyd ([gail@ses-explore.org](mailto:gail@ses-explore.org)).

# Proud flyers of the SES Flag



SES Advisory Board member, David Taylor-Smith, at Muckle Flugga at the end of his 2,400km walk up the entire length of the British Isles from the Scilly Isles to the top of Shetland.



Wendy Mustaqim, 2022 Judith Heath Explorer, Northern Gayo Plateau (Indonesia 2023)



The SES Flag at a place it has never been before – the start of the River Nile – kindly taken by Mike Laird!



Bethan John, 2021 SES Explorer, on her DEFENSORAS expedition (Bolivia).



Charlotte Austwick, 2019 Rivers Foundation Explorer, delivering the books to the same Mayan community in Belize who helped her create 'A Treasury of Mayan Tales' and 'A Q'eqchi' Maya Dictionary as part of the Voices of the Maya project.



Craig Nuttall, 2020 Rivers Foundation Explorer on his Garhwal Mountain Rescue Project (Garhwal Himalayas).



John Blashford-Snell and team (Mongolian Khan Khentii expedition, July 2023).



Emi Koch, 2022 Elodie Sandford Explorer, while facilitating participatory photography workshops with the Yanesha indigenous community in Peru's Amazon Rainforest (Santo Domingo, Peru 2023). Photo by Ros Lerner.



Lifeboats

If you're  
struggling in the water ...

Tilt your head  
back with ears  
submerged

Relax and move  
your hands to help  
you stay afloat

**FLOAT TO LIVE**

## Medicine Chest

### *On Drowning by Dr Sam Allen*

**Dr Sam Allen, Dean of the Faculty of Travel Medicine at the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Glasgow, writes on drowning and how it is going to become more prevalent...**

In 2020, a 10-year-old boy, Raviraj Saini, was reported missing after being washed out to sea at Scarborough. He survived, thanks to remembering advice he had seen in a RNLI safety film, and was found lying on his back with arms and legs

spread-eagled, trying to remain calm whilst calling for help. [See BOX 1]

About 400 people die each year in the UK from accidental drowning. The number of fatal accidents is predicted to increase due to the recent popularity of paddle-boarding and wild water swimming in the UK. Sadly, children under 14 years, especially boys, are the most at-risk group. In adults, alcohol consumption is a major risk factor.

Drowning is an under-recognised cause of death in travellers, and when adjusted for exposure time, will far exceed the risk from motor vehicle accidents. About a third of deaths occur in tourists who only swim during their overseas vacation. Official figures do not do justice to the actual number of deaths from drowning since shipping accidents (eg. ferry disasters), natural disasters (eg. tsunami) and migrants lost whilst crossing open water – tragedies that

kill thousands each year – are not included.

Cold water immersion has gained popularity for its physical and mental health benefits. Many will have experienced the involuntary increase in pulse rate and shivering before stepping into a cold shower. This ‘anticipatory thermoregulation’ was first described by the long-distance runner and sports scientist, Tim Noakes.



Sudden cold water plunge results in a cold shock response characterised by a gasp reflex and increase in breathing, heart rate and blood pressure. The hyperventilation can cause a transient, and not unpleasant, euphoric hallucinatory effect. Once the ambient temperature falls, the body will respond by conserving

core body heat until it can no longer maintain heat and hypothermia sets in.

## Signs of HYPOTHERMIA

- *Uncontrollable shivering*
- *Slurred or mumbled speech*
- *Slow, shallow breathing*
- *Weak pulse*
- *Clumsiness or lack of coordination*
- *Drowsiness or very low energy*
- *Confusion or memory loss*
- *Loss of consciousness*

Temperature loss disproportionately affects small children due to their greater surface area to body mass ratio. Toddlers suffering hypothermia may appear pink.

Brain oxygen requirements fall in proportion to hypothermia so that victims of cold-water immersion may survive resuscitation even after a prolonged period in cold water.

The world is already seeing increase in floods due to climate instability. A recent example of the catastrophic nature of flood water was the breaching of two dams in Libya after Storm Daniel in September 2023. Much of the coastal town of Derna was destroyed. At least 4,000 people were confirmed dead with another 10,000 are reported missing. Sadly, drowning is going to become more prevalent.

Modern cruise ships and passenger planes have water safety built into their design. However, whether the vessel stays afloat, or sinks will be dependent on the malfunction and prevailing weather and sea conditions. Helicopters that carry their engines and rotors on top will flip over when landing in distress on water leaving passengers little time to escape. Some helicopters employ flotation bags for maritime emergencies.

## FLOAT TO LIVE

- F Fight** your instinct to panic or swim hard
- L Lean** back in the water to keep your airway clear
- O Open** your body up, extend your arms and legs, pushing your stomach up
- A Actions** – gently move your hands and feet to help you float
- T Time** – in 60-90 seconds, you will be able to control your breathing

BOX 1



**Dr Sam Allen**

BSc(Hons) MBChB DTMH FRCP  
FFTM-RCPS(Glasg)



# Partnership and Sponsorship

## *lots of fun opportunities available*

### **SES Supporter**

**£20,000 pa**

We are seeking unique individuals who will become the Society's Supporters and share our vision to advance scientific discovery, research and conservation, and inspire the younger generation to find answers to combat the ravages of pollution and climate change, and ways to divert the extinction crisis.

Contact **Peter Felix** (pmfelix9@gmail.com) or **Henrietta Thorpe** (henrietta@ses-explore.org).

### **SES Oscars of Exploration Sponsor**

**£15,000 pa**

We are seeking a unique individual who will become Sponsor of our Oscars of Exploration programme and who recognise the importance of awarding grants to inspirational and scientific trailblazers, and of building a thriving community of explorers who work tirelessly to discover, research and conserve.

Contact **Nikki Skinner** (nikki@ses-explore.org).

### **SES Explorer Award Sponsorship**

You can enable the next generation of scientific explorers by supporting a bespoke award, a series of awards, or contributing to a collective award, and in doing so, you can encourage, recognise and reward a rising star who will carry their supporters name with pride as they embark on their journey into the world of scientific exploration.

We are seeking sponsorship of £5,000 and £10,000 (or contributions of a minimum of £2,000 towards SES Explorer Award for Inspirational & Scientific Trailblazing).

Contact **Nikki Skinner** (nikki@ses-explore.org).

### **SES Honorary Award Sponsorship**

**£10,000 each pa**

Our Honorary Awards recognise and celebrate those individuals who have achieved great things, and whose passion, determination, and grit are an inspiration to us all.

There are four Honorary Awards:

- **SES Young Scientific Explorer**
- **SES Pioneer with Purpose**
- **John Blashford-Snell Explorer**
- **SES Lifetime Achievement**

Thanks to the generous sponsorship of **Christopher Wright** (SES Lifetime Achievement), **Craig Cohon** (SES Pioneer with Purpose), and **Peter and June Felix** (SES Young Scientific Explorer), we are only seeking sponsorship for **John Blashford-Snell Explorer** (formerly SES Explorer of the Year).

Winners of this award include Preet Chandi MBE, Nimsdai Purja MBE, Chaz Powell, Steve Backshall, Louis Rudd MBE, and Vanessa O'Brien.

Sponsor this award and be the one to hold the privilege of presenting it to the winner at the annual **SES Oscars of Exploration**.

Contact **Henrietta Thorpe** (henrietta@ses-explore.org).

### **SES Oscars of Exploration Presentation Evening**

**Supporting Sponsor – £3,500 pa**

The Society's Explorer Awards and Honorary Awards are presented to inspirational leaders and scientific trailblazers each year at our

prestigious presentation evening in London – the **SES Oscars of Exploration**.

RSK Group is our generous Headline Sponsor at this unique event (and has been for the last four years). However, we have recently introduced a Supporting Sponsor opportunity enabling you to join with us and celebrate the next generation of scientific explorers.

Contact **Nikki Skinner** (nikki@ses-explore.org).

### **SES Explorer Talks Sponsor**

**£10,000 pa**

We organise a full and varied programme of Explorer Talks each year (see Dates for your Dairy 2024 for an example of the calibre of speakers). These talks are held at a central London location and give like-minded people the opportunity to get together and listen to an inspirational speaker in a relaxed and fun environment.

Contact **Henrietta Thorpe** (henrietta@ses-explore.org).

### **SES Publications Sponsor**

**£6,000 pa**

We are looking for a Publications Sponsor to support the production of this vital means of sharing all our expedition and exploration news. Publications include:

- **Scientific Explorer Annual Review**
- **Oscars of Exploration Event Brochure**
- **Exploration Revealed and our e-Newsletters**

Contact **Henrietta Thorpe** (henrietta@ses-explore.org).



# Sincere Thanks

## for your generous support

Without sponsorship, donations, and gifts-in-kind, it would be impossible for us to do the work we do. We are extremely grateful to the following for their generous and vital support.

*Craig Cohon, Christopher Wright FRGS, Vanessa O'Brien, Peter and June Felix, Sean Hotung and Dr Mary Jean Reimer, Neville Shulman CBE, Jane Davis FRGS, Robin Edwards, Konstantin Sidorov, Simon and Jennifer Murray, Colonel Martin Romilly OBE, Jeremy Catt, Colonel Paul Arengo-Jones CVO\*, Julian Butter, Trevor Humphreys, Lynette Dodds, Joan Crampton, Mrs M Dick, William J Holmes, Major, USAF, Ret., Dick Snailham, Sally Ireland, Nigel Winser, Mark Entwistle, Gordon Banks, Sir Peter Lampl, Sue Sljivik, Sandra Charitable Trust Chris Brown, Judith Heath\*, Rivers Foundation, Viscount Gough\*, Friends and Family of Elodie Sandford, Sir Charles Blois Bt, The O'Hea Charitable Trust, The Rowan Bentall Charitable Trust, Pam Coleridge\*, Kate Coleridge, Vanessa Coleridge, Egerton Sykes\*, Tony Metherell Charitable Trust, London Technology Club, RSK Group, Base Camp Foods, Texenergy and the Trustees of SES.*

*\*Deceased.*

## How you can support SES

### London Marathon

Each year a team of five energetic and enthusiastic individuals, run the London Marathon to raise funds for SES. If you are interested in joining the team and would like to find out more, please contact **Vicky Hankinson** (admin@ses-explore.org).

### Raise funds for SES

Please consider hosting an event, such as a Quiz Night, to raise funds for SES. SES Membership Manager **Gail Lloyd** regularly organises excellent local events to raise money for SES and can let you know how she does it, and the fun you can have in the process! Contact **Gail Lloyd** (gail@ses-explore.org).

### Make a Donation

Please consider donating to SES. You can make donations in the following ways:

- **JUSTGIVING** – one-off and regular donations can be made via JUSTGIVING (type *Scientific*

*Exploration Society* in the charity search)

- **CHARITIES AID FOUNDATION** – one-off and regular donations can be made via CHARITIES AID FOUNDATION (type *Scientific Exploration Society* in the charity search)

- **CHEQUE** – cheques should be made payable to **Scientific Exploration Society** and sent to Gail Lloyd, Scientific Exploration Society, Expedition Base, Motcombe, Shaftesbury, Dorset SP7 9PB.

We commit to using any donations received in an efficient and cost-effective way to secure the future of SES.

### Increasing your Donation via Gift Aid

We can claim Gift Aid on donations made to SES, currently an extra 25p for every £1 can be claimed at no extra cost. To qualify, you need to be a UK taxpayer and pay income tax and/

or capital gains tax at least equal to the total tax charities reclaim on such donations. If you pay tax at a higher rate, you can claim further tax relief through your Self-Assessment tax return.

### JOIN OUR LEGACY CIRCLE

No matter how large or small, gifts left in Wills are particularly special to us, and are one of the most powerful ways to make a lasting impact. We know that every legacy represents someone who cares passionately about the Society and wishes to make a real difference to the work we do.

We encourage you to consider leaving a legacy to SES in your Will and join our **LEGACY CIRCLE**, thus securing our future and the mission of our Founder and Honorary President, Colonel John Blashford-Snell: to support and encourage Pioneers with Purpose.

Please contact **Gail Lloyd** (gail@ses-explore.org).



# SES Accounts

## Statement of Financial Activities for the year ended 30th June 2023

	Unrestricted fund £	Restricted fund £	2023 Total funds £	2022 Total funds £
<b>INCOME AND ENDOWMENTS FROM</b>				
Donations and legacies	39,572	38,389	77,961	38,479
<b>Charitable Activities</b>				
Charitable Activities	16,155	-	16,155	15,259
Other trading activities	51,944	-	51,944	41,870
Investment income	1,714	-	1,714	112
<b>Total</b>	<b>109,385</b>	<b>38,389</b>	<b>147,774</b>	<b>95,720</b>
<b>EXPENDITURE ON</b>				
Raising funds	16,770	-	16,770	17,517
<b>Charitable activities</b>				
Charitable Activities	65,142	36,245	101,387	106,013
<b>Total</b>	<b>81,912</b>	<b>36,245</b>	<b>118,157</b>	<b>123,530</b>
<b>NET INCOME/(EXPENDITURE)</b>	<b>27,473</b>	<b>2,144</b>	<b>29,617</b>	<b>(27,810)</b>
<b>RECONCILIATION OF FUNDS</b>				
<b>Total funds brought forward</b>	<b>235,122</b>	<b>12,701</b>	<b>247,813</b>	<b>275,623</b>
<b>TOTAL FUNDS CARRIED FORWARD</b>	<b>262,585</b>	<b>14,845</b>	<b>277,430</b>	<b>247,813</b>

## Balance Sheet at 30th June 2023

	Unrestricted fund £	Restricted fund £	2023 Total funds £	2022 Total funds £
<b>FIXED ASSETS</b>				
Investments	100	-	100	100
<b>CURRENT ASSETS</b>				
Debtors	1,155	-	1,155	952
Cash at bank	292,483	14,845	307,328	284,729
	293,638	14,845	308,483	285,681
<b>CREDITORS</b>				
Amounts falling due within one year	(31,153)	-	(31,153)	(37,968)
<b>NET CURRENT ASSETS</b>	<b>262,485</b>	<b>14,845</b>	<b>277,330</b>	<b>247,713</b>
<b>TOTAL ASSETS LESS CURRENT LIABILITIES</b>	<b>262,585</b>	<b>14,845</b>	<b>277,430</b>	<b>247,813</b>
<b>NET ASSETS</b>	<b>262,585</b>	<b>14,845</b>	<b>277,430</b>	<b>247,813</b>
<b>FUNDS</b>				
Unrestricted funds			262,585	235,112
Restricted funds			14,845	12,701
<b>TOTAL FUNDS</b>			<b>277,430</b>	<b>247,813</b>

Please see the full accounts emailed to members for Notes details.



# SES Charity Information

## Honorary President

Colonel John Blashford-Snell CBE, DSc (Hon), D Eng (hc), FRSGS

## Chair

Peter Felix CBE

## CEO

Henrietta Thorpe

## Honorary Treasurer

David Zeitlin

## Honorary Solicitor

Jenny Wordsworth

## Council Members

Peter Felix CBE (*Chair*), David Zeitlin, Diane Allen OBE, Barbara Jeffrey, Trevor Moss, Briony Turner

## Co-opted Council Members

Jane Davis FRGS, Jenny Wordsworth, Dr Alexander Finnen, Lucy Shepherd, Reza Pakravan

## Honorary Vice Presidents

Phyllis Angliss, Wendy Bentall FLS, John Davies, Sir Ranulph Fiennes Bt OBE, Pen Hadow, Neil Laughton, Andrew Mitchell, Richard Snailham MA, FRGS, Rosie Stancer, Lucy Thompson

## Advisory Board

HSH Duke Leopold d'Arenberg, Steve Backshall, James Balfour, Philip Beale FRGS, Mark Beaumont BEM, Dame Dr Claire Bertschinger, Colonel John Blashford-Snell CBE, George Bullard, Preet Chandi MBE, Simon Chinn, Craig Cohon, Jane Davis FRGS, Robin Edwards, Peter Felix CBE, Sir Ranulph Fiennes OBE, Ben Fogle, Dr Jane Goodall DBE, Bear Grylls OBE, Pen Hadow, Annabel Heseltine, Sean Hotung, Neil Laughton, Jennifer Murray, Simon Murray CBE, Vanessa O'Brien, Reza Pakravan, Major Timothy Peake CMG, Ollie Phillips, Dr Mary Jean Reimer, Neville Shulman CBE, Konstantin Sidorov, Rosie Stancer (*Chair*), Prof Mike Stroud OBE, Haydyn Tanner FRGS, David Taylor-Smith MBE FRGS, Douglas Thomson, Paul Turner, Per Wimmer, Levison Wood, Christopher Wright FRGS

## SES Expedition Base

CEO Henrietta Thorpe ([henrietta@ses-explore.org](mailto:henrietta@ses-explore.org))  
Explorer Awards Manager Nikki Skinner ([nikki@ses-explore.org](mailto:nikki@ses-explore.org))  
Membership & Finance Manager Gail Lloyd ([gail@ses-explore.org](mailto:gail@ses-explore.org))  
Executive Secretary Victoria Hankinson ([admin@ses-explore.org](mailto:admin@ses-explore.org))  
Film Trusts Ros Wardall  
Honorary Logistics Officer Dave Smith ([dave@ses-explore.org](mailto:dave@ses-explore.org))  
Archivists Ros Wardall and Val Smith

## Governance & Policy Committee

David Zeitlin, Trevor Moss, Henrietta Thorpe

## Finance & Fundraising Committee

Peter Felix CBE (*Chair*), Colonel John Blashford-Snell CBE, David Zeitlin, Barbara Jeffrey, Jane Davis FRGS, Trevor Moss, Henrietta Thorpe, Nikki Skinner

## Awards Committee

Diane Allen OBE (*Chair*), James Borrell, Edward Cooper, Lucy Shepherd, Helen Spencer, Nikki Skinner

## Events Committee

Peter Felix CBE, Colonel John Blashford-Snell CBE, Barbara Jeffrey, Jane Davis FRGS, Henrietta Thorpe, Nikki Skinner, Gail Lloyd

## Expeditions & Science Committee

Nikki Skinner, Trevor Moss

## Learning & Development Committee

Charlotte Austwick

## Overseas Representatives

Econ Yolima Cipagauta (Latin America), Major General Joe Singh MSS, MSc (Guyana), Professor Terbish (Mongolia), Captain John Hinchliffe (Myanmar), Ato Solomon Behre (Ethiopia), Jill Weir (Canada)

## Volunteers

Charlotte Austwick ([charlotte@ses-explore.org](mailto:charlotte@ses-explore.org))  
Eleanor Drinkwater ([eleanor@ses-explore.org](mailto:eleanor@ses-explore.org))  
Liv Grant ([liv@ses-explore.org](mailto:liv@ses-explore.org))  
Alex Kerridge ([explorationrevealed@ses-explore.org](mailto:explorationrevealed@ses-explore.org))  
Michael Murphy ([explorationrevealed@ses-explore.org](mailto:explorationrevealed@ses-explore.org))  
Melissa Eisdell - Corporate Partnerships ([melissa@ses-explore.org](mailto:melissa@ses-explore.org))  
Ray Baldock (Operation Drake alumni)  
Greg Morrissey (USA)

## Voluntary Advisors

Anthony Belchambers, Julia Thorold

## Registered Office and Charity Number

Mullins Mead, Donhead St Mary, Shaftesbury, Dorset SP7 9DS  
Charity Number 267410

## Bankers

Natwest Bank plc, The Commons, Shaftesbury, Dorset SP7 8JY

## Independent Examiner

Dr Shona Wardrop CA, Chariot House Limited, Chartered Accountants, 44 Grand Parade, Brighton, East Sussex BN2 9QA

SES co-operates with SES Jersey.

## NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN

### Scientific Exploration Society Annual General Meeting

6pm on Wednesday 27 March 2024 at The Park Tower Hotel (Knightsbridge)

### AGENDA

1. Apologies for Absence
2. Minutes of the last Annual General Meeting
3. Matters Arising
4. Chairman's Report
5. Treasurer's Report and Adoption of Accounts
6. Election of Council Members
7. Re-election of Auditors
8. Any Other Business

Registered Office: Mullins Mead, Donhead St Mary, Shaftesbury, Dorset SP7 9DS  
January 2024

By order of the Council



**SCIENTIFIC  
EXPLORATION  
SOCIETY**

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Scientific Exploration Society is a registered charity (NO 267410), incorporated in England as a company limited by guarantee (NO 1145214). Registered Office: Mullins Mead, Donhead st Mary, Shaftesbury, Dorset SP7 9DS.

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