

Friends of



Newsletter 2007

INSIDE

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A welcome from Martyn Roberts, President of the Friends of Biosphere Expeditions.

This newsletter is packed with some of the highlights from the last year, but one that I wanted to underline was the tremendous news that **Biosphere Expeditions won the Best Volunteering Organisation award at the World Travel Market in November**. This award comes out of the recommendations of people who have been on expeditions (something that makes it a very special award for Biosphere) and the organisation then has to answer some very detailed questions relating to how activities are conducted and the commitment of the organisation to sustainable development issues. Biosphere won against a very strong field of organisations that strive to work 'responsibly' and Biosphere is rightly proud of the award. The news came through whilst I was on the new Brazil expedition, an amazing experience in itself, and it underlined to me just how special the experience with Biosphere really is.

In an ever-changing conservation environment, it is Biosphere's innovative approach to volunteering and conservation that sets them apart. There is a clear understanding that the benefits of the expedition work must be shared with local people, through the creation of jobs and sharing of expertise and skills, and that it is only through this approach that the long-term sustainability of the projects can be maintained. My Brazil experience brought this issue to life for me in 2006, and our MD talks about this in his article on page 2.

The other issue that I wanted to touch on is Climate Change. There has been an awful lot in the media about this issue over the last year and Biosphere takes it very seriously. The organisation has continued to work to reduce its carbon footprint (see Clare's article on page 6) and encourages team members to do the same through carbon offset for their travel. Staff have also been working to develop a new expedition, with scientists in the Spanish Pyrenees, which supports the collection of data to monitor global warming, and I am pleased to say that this expedition is nearly ready to launch.

I do hope that you enjoy the newsletter. Remember, none of the stories would have been possible without people like you.



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RESEARCH HIGHLIGHTS

by **Dr. Matthias Hammer**, Managing Director

Over the last year, 2006, Biosphere Expeditions ran eight projects, spanning four continents. About 300 people went into the field spending a total of 44 weeks conducting research and conservation work. But these impressive bare bones figures actually mask the huge effort that has gone into it all. From our scientists in the field setting everything up, to the Biosphere Expeditions office staff working in the background to keep it all running smoothly, to our expedition leaders in the field directing the efforts and looking after our expedition teams. So let me take this opportunity to say thank you to everyone who has made it happen. You know who you are and we couldn't have done it without you!

One of the biggest success stories of 2006 and January 2007 must be the discovery, against the odds, of Arabian leopard in the Musandam peninsula of Oman. Two years of expeditions and more than three months of work showed that Arabian leopard cling on in this remote part of the Middle East. This is an unexpected result, as we thought we would be documenting the local extinction of these beautiful cats. How wrong we were! And it just goes to show what can be achieved if almost 100 people put their minds to the task, their walking boots on and do the exhausting but rewarding work of scouring some remote mountain in Arabia for signs of one of the most elusive cats on the planet.



An Arabian leopard.

Our two new kids on the block in 2006, Honduras and Brazil have already had an impact. In Honduras we are helping our local partners, the Honduras Coral Reef Foundation, to set a baseline for the protection of the beautiful coral reef that is theirs to protect. It's the combination of survey divers, commitment and skills that we provide that is making the difference there. With our help, they now have the dedicated project they need to assess the status of their reefs, monitor change over time and react to any detrimental effects there may be. As I write this our 2007 team is in the field, probably diving right now, adding more small pieces of information crucial for the Honduras Coral Reef Foundation and the protection of the world's reef systems.



Flying the flag in Honduras!

In Brazil the mere fact that an international group of scientists and helpers has turned up has galvanised local efforts. This is an effect that we see time and time again and one that must not be underestimated. We bring resources, skills and jobs for local people together with people from all over the world to assist often under-funded and remote projects. The effect this has on local people and scientists is often astounding. People start realising that we come from thousands of miles away to see and study their wildlife. This generates pride and a new way of thinking about their natural resources, seeing them as an asset, rather than a threat. Of course, we can't change the world, and people's attitudes moulded over many generations overnight, but perhaps we can provide an impetus for something bigger and the basis for real change with local co-operation. This is the only sustainable way that may work eventually.



Recording data in Brazil.

But back to our local partners and scientists, and Brazil, where our presence has stimulated local NGOs into forming a concerted effort to protect jaguars and pumas in the Atlantic Rainforest. Led by our field scientist, Dr. Marcelo Mazzolli, they have pulled together and formed an action plan. Much of this plan depended on the data collected by our expedition, but it was our presence and the interest we showed in the plight of these two cats, that helped most in bringing people together. For us, this is about as rewarding as it gets. And I hope it is for you too. ♦

HOW BIOSPHERE CAN CHANGE YOUR LIFE by Daniela Tindl, Germany & expedition Oman

There is a beautiful sentence which is an important guide for my life: "Your thoughts can move mountains". It is something like the law of the universe! If you really want something with your heart, you will find it!

I was at a point in my life when I was thinking about a very important question: What do I really want in my life? Is what I'm doing making me happy and does it make sense for me? It seems to be a long-term-project to find this out. I took a semester off from my studies. At that time I was studying sport and geography. I'm a very nature-loving person, so I decided to make a few trips with my bicycle and my tent. A few days before I left, a friend of mine told me about the organisation "Biosphere Expeditions" and that it was possible to win an expedition to Oman working for something worthwhile. The next day, I visited the Biosphere Expeditions website. I was amazed at the great projects they had and sent them my application. Actually, all I wrote was coming from within, so I wrote what my heart was telling me. I had a good feeling and started a trip the next day from Beograd to Greece. After that, I went cycling in Ireland for six weeks and then a hitchhiking tour with a donkey in the Pyrenees (I wonder how that word? Ed.). I thought ok, I don't have a lot of money for making big environment projects, but I can do my own little project, so I put a sign on my bike: cycling, ecologically friendly, being fit, respecting other cultures and nature instead of sitting in the car was the motto behind it. And lots of people started talking to me because of the sign on my bike, so it was a success, very small, but it was a start. Because I met a lot of cyclists in Ireland, I started to ask them if they are interested in forming a sort of association. So they put a sign on their bicycle as well. After a while I thought there must be something bigger, where you can reach out and touch more people like a chain reaction! For me this beautiful chain reaction is called "Biosphere Expeditions".

On the way to Greece, somewhere in Albania, where it's not easy to find a computer, I checked my e-mails and found a beautiful message, which made me very happy. Biosphere Expeditions had invited me for the final selection day in Germany. I was so happy to get this chance!

Oman competition

On 1st September I went to Düsseldorf by car, slept in a tent on a playground for children and went to the competition on the next day in the morning. I had such a great day and enjoyed it so much that I nearly forgot the word "competition". For me it wasn't really a competition, because even if I didn't win the top prize of going to Oman, I would be a winner at the end of the day, since the experience itself was

already a big prize for me. And so it was. I won a lovely day and great experience as well. I really enjoyed building the bridge together because for that you need team work! Team work is such a great thing. In my opinion this is what any great company is based on! If I have a great, powerful, positive thinking and homogenous team I can reach every goal with them.



The author setting up a camera trap in Oman.

Oman expedition

In one sentence: It was great, brilliant, fantastic, wonderful, powerful. I had a lot of great experiences and the most important thing is that we worked for a good cause - The Arabian leopard!

I could write pages about this expedition but it would exceed the space I have by far. I would like to give you a few impressions on the way. It was such a great feeling to do something important and valuable for nature and its animals. To live in and with the nature was great. I LOVED IT! For me the expedition was one of the best things I did in my life and I would love to support projects like this again. The wonderful memories you have after an expedition will always be in your mind. I would really recommend to everybody to be part of an expedition! Don't miss this great experience in your life to do something for nature. ♦

EXPEDITION FOOD

by *Claudia Krejci*, Operations Manager Germany

It was around 8 p.m. when our small team returned to our mountain hut after an exciting and exhausting research day in the Nizke Tatra mountains. The next thing to do was to cook our dinner. So we got out the gas cooker, the cutlery and the food. Spaghetti with tomato sauce and tuna was on our menu. Actually it is not really easy to cook a dinner for eight hungry expeditioners on a windy mountain ridge and in the darkness, using headlamps as your only light source. After we finally succeeded in getting the water and spaghetti to boil, we eagerly shared our creation.

“An army marches on its stomach” they say and meal times on expedition are essential for relaxing, recharging batteries, updating each other on research progress and so much more. It may not always be Michelin star material – although on some it is! – but it’s certainly always local. On some expeditions there is a cook preparing the meals for the teams, on others cooking is part of the team experience and is shared between the team members. Of course the food is also dependent on the environment in which the expedition takes place and what local produce is available.



Jungle dining room.

In the Amazonian rainforests, like in Peru or Brazil, for example, there are fruits which you will not easily find in Europe which are a treat. But there are no refrigerators in the jungle, so don't get too friendly with the cute chickens that accompany you into the jungle.....

By contrast the cooking in Namibia is rather more like we are used to at home, except the main course is often antelope meat. But it comes with a wide range of salads and side dishes, and often as a casserole. I have been told that one could compare it with German cooking, so the old colonial influence is still around.

When you visit the nomads in their yurts in the Altai, you cannot avoid the famous mare's milk, together with sheep's milk, something that can, if you are lucky, be served along with cooked sheep's bowels... These dishes are regional delicacies, which you are offered proudly. For our western stomachs these dishes may take some getting used to!



Breakfast in the Altai mountains.

In Slovakia the food is rather similar to our western cooking. The cooks know how to create delicious meals, which are needed after walking all day in the forests and ridges. Particularly popular is the traditionally baked potato bread, which can be purchased in a small shop down in the village from a lovely old lady. All you need to know to get this is the word “sklep”.

Another important issue to expedition food is whether special dietary needs can be catered for. Vegetarian food, for example, is not a problem; you can easily survive in all locations. Other special diets are usually not a big problem either. After all, the local cooks are usually very creative and it is amazing to see what feasts they come up with from what looks like just a few ordinary ingredients! But if you are worried about this, just give us a ring and we'll talk you through it. Most importantly – don't let it hold you back! I myself, being highly allergic to almost everything, can assure you that so far I have survived all the expeditions I have been on. ♦

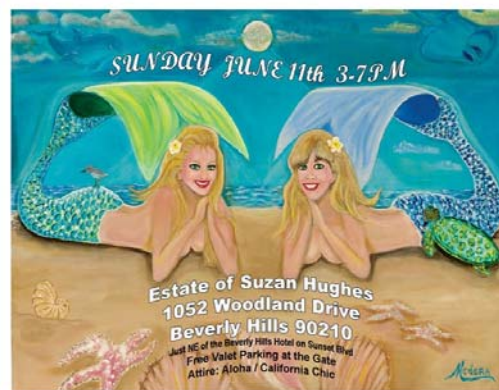
A HOLLYWOOD FUNDRAISER

by **Erin McCloskey**,
Operations Manager North America

Before moving to Los Angeles, my experiences at fundraising events hosted by environmental organizations were more like family gatherings. There was sort of kinship among the attendees; everyone had that green hippy gene in their DNA. Most would be wearing Birkenstocks (even in Canadian winters one simply wears the classic wool sock in the sandal!) and there would definitely be a dreadlock or two and a lot of hemp... in various forms. There was no obvious differentiation between what the guys wore compared to the gals — they could likely borrow from each other's wardrobes without any social implications.

In Hollywood, there is a different kin with a different gene: the bling gene! The events are star- and diamond-studded affairs. And while their wardrobes may be quite a bit less androgynous, and often a bit more outlandish, both sexes share an appreciation for peroxide, cosmetics and cosmetic surgery and compete with each other on the jewellery count. Reef Rescue was a Reef Check fundraiser held at the Beverly Hills estate of Suzan Hughes, a former actress, Miss Petite U.S.A., and ex-wife of the late Mark Hughes, founder of Herbalife International. I mingled poolside, sipping a mojito, and instantly gravitated to the other guests who looked like they felt as out of place as I did... sure enough, they were staff of either Reef Check, Heal the Bay, Baykeeper or other relevant organisations. What I gleaned from the bling-laden guests was that they could tell what people were more important to mingle with but that they didn't really have any knowledge of the environmental issue at hand. In fact, the guest of honour, Jean-Michel Cousteau, son of the legendary Jacques Cousteau, actually chastised the crowd reminding them that our reason for gathering was for the coral reefs, not for personal PR and networking reasons. It was a bit harsh, and my eyebrows did raise, having never heard this speech at any of my hippy gatherings. It didn't really matter though; it was

a no-brainer that this was a good cause, and a large crowd had come out in support even if it was for the pleasure of being seen doing so. TV celebs, songwriters and a couple of "mermaids" (one a former Playboy bunny) kept the audience entertained— for this was indeed a show more than an information forum. The main fundraising component was a live and silent auction, with donations from within the glitz and glam community. There was a range of value from spa packages and cosmetics to art and jewellery. These items and the



contents of the goody bags given to each guest would be shunned by my hippy colleagues as they were truly oblivious to any green code (non-biodegradable spa products, jewellery made of pearls and seashells of unknown origin, hair mousse, mermaid Barbie dolls, and a lot of excess plastic packaging on everything). The most impressive auction item was a signed copy of one of Jacques Cousteau's books and it was the least popular bidding item! However, and most importantly, this event raised a LOT of money — much more than the T-shirt sales generated at my hippy events where money seems to just circulate within the environmental community because they don't reach out beyond their green club. Networking within the leagues of rich and famous is what Los Angeles is all about. Reef Check wisely knows how to tap into this and I think we should look forward to a lot more bling in Biosphere Expeditions' future, albeit with tongue-firmly-in-cheek! ♦

MINIMISING OUR IMPACT

by *Clare Fothergill*,
expedition leader and environmental consultant

There is a growing trend for companies to take into account the environmental impacts of their actions. In response to the current and anticipated climate changes being experienced worldwide, governments and consumers are placing pressure on organisations to count the true environmental cost of operations. Even an organisation such as Biosphere Expeditions whose business is focussed on conservation research, needs to ensure that it takes account of all the environmental impacts associated with its projects.

Without the research activities that Biosphere Expeditions supports and is involved with, less would be known and understood about individual species and habitats across the world, many of which are critically endangered. The work Biosphere Expeditions conducts is an essential contribution to the preservation of the natural world. The paradox arrives, however, when travelling to, working in and living close to remote and pristine environments actually results in some form of negative environmental impact. It is an inherent aspect of expedition life that there will be an effect created directly by the presence of the expedition team. It is essential to understand, therefore, what these impacts are and make a significant attempt to avoid or reduce these to a minimum wherever possible.

Biosphere Expeditions has always placed a great deal of emphasis on general environmental awareness on all of its projects. By the very nature of the work it is involved with i.e. conservation, a key consideration when establishing new study areas to avoid significant negative impacts wherever possible. To ensure that this is not purely lip service Biosphere Expeditions have now developed an 'environmental checklist' for all of their expeditions to incorporate key issues into the overall management of each project. The checklist covers a variety of topics from sourcing local supplies to formulating a waste management plan.

Many of Biosphere's projects are located in protected or designated areas and to obtain permission to operate in such areas often requires certain environmental management practices to be followed. The use of energy and how it is generated is an integral part of the checklist which ensures that low energy and/or renewable sources are utilised. Waste both general and human is another key issue which has to be tackled effectively as part of an overall reduction in impact. Some countries that Biosphere Expeditions operates in have well established infrastructures that welcome segregated waste and provide recycling options. In other areas where such services are not available, the best environmental options have to be sought out. The

approach is not to have a blanket policy that covers all localities, but rather to seek out the solutions that are the most effective and appropriate for that country or region.

The checklist will be applicable to both existing and new expeditions alike and requires expedition leaders, scientists, local support staff and team members to work closely together to ensure that environmental issues are not only considered, but that practical solutions are sought.



Alternative energy solutions at the biological station base of the forthcoming Pyrenees expedition.

Whilst the Biosphere team are putting measures in place before an expedition occurs, team members arriving in country are also expected to make an effort to minimise their own impact. Minimising the use of water is an obvious issue to tackle particularly in localities when there are water shortages. Where off-road vehicles are used training sessions are provided to team members to ensure that the local terrain is not damaged through erosion or excessive rutting. Team members are also encouraged to offset the carbon footprint of their journey to and from the assembly point on each expedition.

Biosphere Expeditions in collaboration with Climate Care have calculated the carbon footprint of each expedition which includes flights of all staff members, fuel used for transportation of team members conducting research and energy utilised over the whole expedition. Whilst it is not possible to conduct conservation research on an international level without some impact on the levels of greenhouse gases the offset programme ensures that Biosphere Expeditions projects are carbon neutral. The offset donation contributes to projects which promote the use of renewable energy sources as well as researching energy efficient technologies.

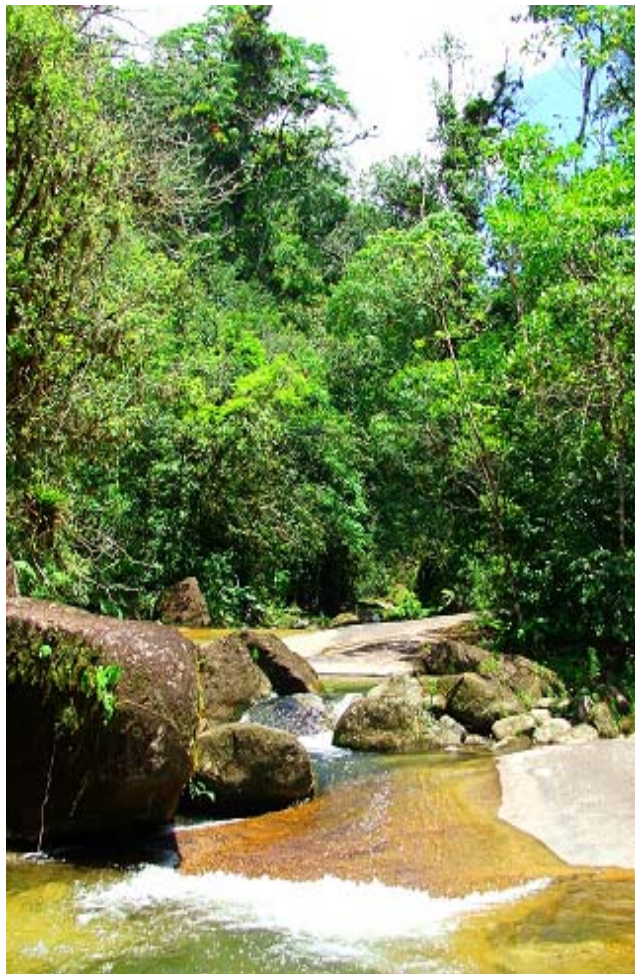
Even for an organisation such as Biosphere Expeditions that has always had conservation as its core value, it is an increasingly pertinent exercise for organisations to incorporate environmental management into every day operations. Whilst we all like to think we are doing our 'bit' for the environment it is essential that we continue to strive to protect our increasingly vulnerable planet. ♦

RAINFORESTS

by *Alison Tebbit*

If you have ever surfed the internet for information on rainforests you can only be humbled by what you read. In a world where we worry about energy consumption, tax increases and street crime, the sheer wonder and complexity of the rainforest certainly puts things into perspective. If the worst should happen as far as our everyday disasters are concerned we can, in all likelihood, repair the “damage” within a couple of generations, but once we have lost the rainforests this would be, as Pulitzer Prize winning biologist Edward O. Wilson once said, the “folly that our descendants are least likely to forgive us for”.

At least 80% of the developed world’s diet originated here, anti-cancer drugs such as Vincristine together with 70% of the world’s 3000 plants that are used to fight cancer also originate here and yet nearly half of the world’s species of plants, animals and micro-organisms will be lost over the next 25 years due to rainforest deforestation. Or, another way of looking at it is that 137 plant, animal and insect species are lost every single day due to deforestation.



Atlantic rainforest of the Brazil expedition study site.

Even Brazil, one of the richer countries in South America, struggles to pay off loans and whilst the continuing pressure on land use for quick fix returns for industry and communities is partially understandable it inevitably adds to the threat. Land that is stripped of its native plants and habitats then becomes in effect “wet deserts” as despite its lush appearance the soil is nutrient poor and is exhausted after three or four crops. Research and education, both of the West and South American countries, must be the crucial first step in understanding and re-evaluating our respect for this amazing resource.



Macaws.

So, whilst elephants, whales, dolphins and other “popular” creatures are easy to identify with, I am making a plea for the rainforest! The need to understand and record the biodiversity of the world’s rainforests is crucial to the survival of the local people as well as mankind’s long-term prospects. In Brazil the management of previously unstudied areas frequented by jaguars and pumas is a rare opportunity to make a real difference to our appreciation and preservation of these habitats.



Butterflies at the Brazil base camp.

If you want to enjoy some of the richest, most abundant flora and fauna you are ever likely to see and encounter one of the most truly original habitats left in the world, then this is the chance to make a difference and ensure that it survives for future generations. ♦

SOME DAYS IN THE LIFE OF THE BRAZIL EXPEDITION 2006

by *David Moore*, expedition leader

3 November

We've just arrived back at the Matinhos town base after three days up at the jungle base camp where we have been setting up the camp and getting everything in place for team one's arrival on Sunday.

We set up the first tent platform on Tuesday and began creating the tracks around the section of forest, which is now the newly named 'Palmito Grove' tent complex. We recruited the help of some of the farm workers, which meant we could also spend our time on clearing the trails, ordering the equipment, chopping wood for the fire, getting rid of the junk, rearranging the house, building the outdoor shower (it's amazing what you can do with bamboo and palm leaves!), finishing off the data sheets and much more! You'll also be pleased to hear that we also tracked down our cook, Olga, who lives a little further down the river and who made a great first impression in the kitchen.

10 November

With six camera traps and six track traps set on quadrat 1 and a good progress on quadrat 2 today, there is lots to report from the first week here in the forest.

Our food supplies for two weeks along with twelve team members and luggage made for a cosy boat ride and we weighed down quite heavily on the final approach through the mangrove before arriving at base camp. The rains had made the track up to camp and the surrounding trail very slippery, but by evening time we were more or less settled in to the camp and acquainted with its workings, ready to launch in to a jam-packed training day on Monday. We spent quite a lot of time explaining the workings of the GPS and how to take compass bearings, etc. before venturing out in to the jungle. There Marcelo gave us instructions on how to set up the camera traps, one of our main tasks for this first week. With our brains full of all these details, I think we were pleased to get out in to the field on Tuesday to make our first 'recce'.

Once familiar with the main trail of this quadrat 1, we split up on the Wednesday with two teams heading out to place camera traps 30 to 50 metres off the main trails and two other teams cutting secondary trails out in order to place traps further inside the jungle. Whilst the camera trap setters made good progress, the trail blazers found it tough going and their route blocked by dense thicket. Thursday saw a second more concerted hacking effort (while the other teams had the lighter task of smoothing over mud squares to create track traps) and with a further six traps set, we were able to consider quadrat 1 'loaded and primed'!

The generator is on late tonight so we have electricity flowing for the lights and are recharging some of the equipment. Whilst a few of the team members have headed off for a well-earned bit of sleep, the rest of us are sitting here, chatting and quaffing our "51" Cachaça, the local "truck drivers" rum.



Puma caught in a camera trap.

25 November

Three days of sunshine and sweltering heat have meant a run of good days out in the field. Robin, Ali and Alice made a full scale recce of 'Peccary Island' on Wednesday, exploring all corners, setting five camera traps and confirming its island status i.e. no overland trails. They found armadillo, fox and racoon tracks and spoke of a pungent smell of 'cat' in several locations. The rest of the team went over to quadrat 3, walked the hilly Rua Iguaçú and established more camera traps.

Meanwhile the rest of us set off on another exploration trek, this time to the end of quadrat 2 as far as the wide track and then off on new trails in search of the fabled jaguar river. The locals have talked to us about this spot, which we hoped we would be able to reach on foot. Though we managed a good 15 km, we found our progress hampered in both directions by impassable rivers. The GPS map is proving very useful for logging these new trails and letting us see where we've been in relation to the surrounding topography.

30 November

Tuesday was the start of our camera recovery operation. While Rich and Brian recovered the closer cameras of quadrat 2, Ali and Tom managed to bring back all of the cameras from quadrat 3, having great fun making their way back through the underwater track. This day was my chance to discover the charms of Peccary Island as I headed off with the team to recover the cameras planted over there (one of which contains a good shot of an armadillo). ♦

UP AND COMING EXPEDITIONS

by **Dr. Matthias Hammer**, Managing Director

As always we have a few things in the pipeline, but also as always, at this stage it's uncertain whether proposals will turn into full blown expeditions. It's a long and laborious process to develop an initial contact and proposal into an expedition. A process that takes years, typically two to three. This is because many things need to come together for a Biosphere expedition. First and foremost there is the scientific content. We need to know that the project has a strong research and/or conservation grounding and that there is a need for it locally. To establish both of these factors we require our scientists to submit fully developed research proposals. This proposal needs to include a rationale for the project, information on how laypeople can make a significant contribution, a literature review, expected outputs, etc., etc. It is then assessed within Biosphere Expeditions as well as peer reviewed.

Beyond the science, there are budgets to be written, discussed and approved, safety nets and procedures to be created and tested, field visits to be made, base camps to be found, logistics to be sorted – you name it. And suddenly a couple of years doesn't seem such a long time after all!



One of the projects being assessed at the moment is making use of our existing networks in Oman, where we are hoping to survey and research the marine and terrestrial wildlife and natural resources of the Daymaniyat Islands Nature Reserve and the Musandam peninsula to assess tourism, education and training opportunities that do not conflict with conservation plans.

The Daymaniyat Islands Nature Reserve is Oman's only fully marine reserve, declared by Royal Decree in 1996. The stunning marine and islands environments are still in a near-pristine condition, and support globally significant nesting sea turtles and seabirds and a range of other marine wildlife, including some of Oman's best-developed coral reefs.

Another project under consideration was initiated by Dr. Marcelo Mazzolli, our local scientist for the Brazil puma & jaguar expedition. He is hoping to add a Sumatran tiger project to the Biosphere Expeditions portfolio, but here things are in their very early stages.



Sumatran tiger caught in a camera trap © Indonesia/WCS.

Finally, and a bit closer to our European home, we are looking at a project in the Spanish Pyrenees mountains working on bearded vultures and climate change with a Spanish NGO in this amazing and remote landscape.



Proposed study site in the Pyrenees.

Watch this space for further development and www.biosphere-expeditions.org/expeditions on which ones make it to coveted Biosphere status. ♦

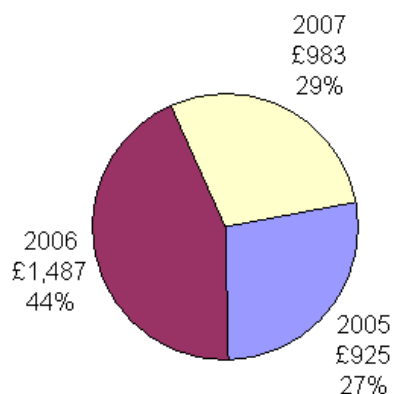
FRIENDS STATUS REPORT & ACCOUNTS by Katherine Wilden, Director

The Friends of Biosphere Expeditions were created in August 2005 as a non-profit society in response to requests from expedition team members to stay involved and up to date. Martyn Roberts, a veteran of now six expeditions (Namibia, Altai, Brazil, Slovakia & Azores), was a driving force in their creation and became the Friends' first President, a post he still holds today.

Soon after the Friends' creation, the first two members joined up on 9 August 2005. Today we have almost 50 members, two of them life members with one of them from Kyrgyzstan! Members hail from the UK, Germany, Austria, Australia, Canada, the USA, France and Kyrgyzstan, and there is about an equal split between those who have been on expedition with us before and those who have not, so we are managing to convince both sides of the fence.

Recent months have seen a drive towards increasing membership. We are now reminding returning expedition participants about the Friends on several occasions and hand out membership information materials on expedition and at events that we attend. The new website, due to be launched later this year, will also give prominent exposure to the Friends.

To date we have raised £3,395 through membership fees (see below). 100% of this is currently sitting in a society endowment fund and we do not deduct any administrative fees, as the Friends are run on the back of existing Biosphere Expeditions staff time and resources.



Funds generated through the Friends. Note that the 2007 figure is low, because only half of 2007 has passed at the time of writing.

Our intention is to let this build up to £5,000 and then ask our local scientists and partners to submit small grant applications, which we will assess internally and externally for their merit before making small grants, for example to train up local staff, build local capacity, purchase essential research and conservation equipment, etc.

We will of course keep you informed on all of this in future editions of this newsletter. ♦

BITS AND PIECES



We now have an entry on the free web encyclopaedia [Wikipedia](#). Thanks to everyone who has contributed to it.

We have also started a library of expedition clips on [YouTube](#). Go check it out! There's lots to see.



An overview of all our research sites, base camp locations, assembly points, office locations, etc. is now on [Google Maps](#).

The new website is scheduled for the end of 2007. Tentative launch date is now 1 December 2007.



The new Australia office is scheduled to open its doors towards the end of 2008 in Melbourne.



Dolphin bowriding our research vessel on the Azores.

EXPEDITIONS 2007/8

Our expeditions (overview at www.biosphere-expeditions.org/expeditions) for 2007/8 include **Slovakia** | Chamois, wolves & bears study | Aug-Sep 07 | www.biosphere-expeditions.org/slovakia **Namibia** | Cheetah, leopard & brown hyaena conservation | Sep-Nov 07 | www.biosphere-expeditions.org/namibia **Brazil** | Jaguar & puma study | Nov 07 | www.biosphere-expeditions.org/brazil **Oman** | Arabian leopard study | Jan-Feb 08 | www.biosphere-expeditions.org/oman **Honduras** | Coral reef survey | Mar-Apr 08 | www.biosphere-expeditions.org/honduras **Azores** | Whales & dolphin research | Apr-May 08 | www.biosphere-expeditions.org/azores **Altai** | Snow leopard conservation | Jul-Aug 08 | www.biosphere-expeditions.org/altai