

Newsletter 3rd Quarter 2008

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The Explorers Club Washington Group had the summer off to explore and has started the fall speakers and dinner programs held at The Cosmos Club. Our September speaker was Curt Westergard whose lecture was entitled, "Site Planning at 1376 feet, use of surveillance aerostats to explore views from proposed skyscrapers." Curt specializes in documenting the visual impact of and the views from planned tall structures like skyscrapers, high-rise buildings, cell towers, power lines and bridge towers. These views not only improve site planning by identifying the most efficient floor plan layout, but also produce impressive panoramas generating excitement for the projects and marketing campaigns. His tethered balloons, with various payloads of cameras, are also used for homeland security border surveillance.

Our October 17th luncheon meeting featured Dr. Stuart B. Nelson '92 who was co-leader and scientific advisor of Project Nautilus 2005 which rediscovered the world's first Arctic submarine scuttled off the coast of Norway in 1931. This expedition launched a submersible 1,138 feet below the surface to document the famous submarine known as the Nautilus. Any Explorers Club members visiting the Washington, D.C. area are encouraged to contact us to attend our events or visit our web site www.explorersclubdc.org.

Our chapter's student grants program continues to assist graduate and undergraduate students in our geographic region with their field explorations. If you know of any students in our area that may qualify for a grant, please urge them to contact us. One of our past grant recipients, Christina Marie Kennedy, recently informed us that she was accepted to the U.S. Fulbright Student Fellows Program, NASA Earth System Science Graduate Fellowship program and received a grant from the Cosmos Club Foundation Grants-in-Aid to Young Scholars Program!

This summer Explorers Club members Robert Atwater '05, Josh Grossman '07, Robert Hyman '93 and Lew Toulmin '04 participated in a search and recovery expedition looking for missing aviator and explorer's club medalist, Steve Fossett. They joined over 20 other volunteers to carefully search areas identified by a senior defense analyst with specialties in search theory and planning who conducted detailed scenario reconstruction and probability mapping for the search. Team members safely searched on foot a large area that included three canyons, between 6,000 and 11,000 feet in elevation, in the Wassuk mountain range of Nevada with no injuries or sickness occurring. While the team was disappointed that no crash site was located, the areas searched were carefully recorded with GPS tracks. Daily search teams did encounter rattle snakes, bears, coyotes, wild horses and observed an abundance of mountain lion tracks. This expedition collaborated with the NASA Search and Rescue Mission Office at Goddard Space Flight Center and the World Wind Project at Ames Research Center to field test their 3-D terrain visualization software in search planning for missing aircraft. The objective of this cooperation was to provide search and rescue user feedback that can be used to improve the software or other techniques for search planning.