

# FIELD NOTES

The Geography Students' Association Newsletter

Volume 2

Issue 5

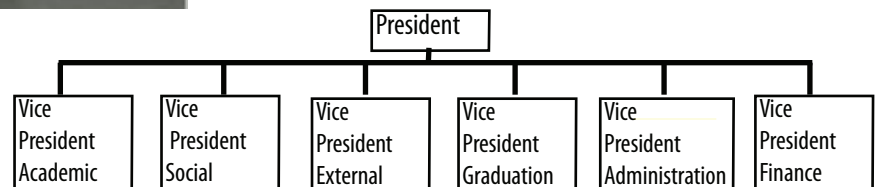
February, 2009



**Out with the old,  
in with the new.**

Got a great idea for how the Geography department and the Geography Students' Association could better serve undergrads? Make it happen! We're now accepting applications for the 2009/2010 GSA Executive. If you have enjoyed coming out to GSA events, reading this newsletter, or even spending time with other Geography students and faculty in the building, this is your opportunity to get more involved in the GSA. Details on positions and activities are on the GSA website ([www.ams.ubc.ca/clubs/gsa/exec.htm](http://www.ams.ubc.ca/clubs/gsa/exec.htm)). You'll also find the application on the site.

**Remember that all applicants are encouraged, regardless of previous involvement with the GSA!**



**Applications due Friday, March 6th.**

**E-mail [ubcgsa@hotmail.com](mailto:ubcgsa@hotmail.com) with any questions.**

**Candidates will be selected by the outgoing GSA Executive and a short interview.**

## What's Up with the GSA? Upcoming Events

**Come on out to our meetings, every other Thursday at 12:30 pm in Room 215. All are welcome!**

**Apply to be a GSA Exec**

**Monday, February 23rd - Friday, March 6th**

Make your mark in the Geography Department! Apply to be an Exec on the 2009/2010 GSA. More info available on the GSA website

**WDCAG Conference**

**March 5th-7th**

**Vancouver Island University in Nanaimo**

A delegation from UBC Geography is heading out to Nanaimo to see what other students are researching, meet members of the Geography community, and have some fun on the island with other members of the GSA!

**Wynn & Cheese with special guest: Dr. Simon Donner**

**Thursday, March 12th, 12:30 pm**

Join Department Head Graeme Wynn, undergrad chair Sally Hermansen and special guest Dr. Simon Donner for a free lunch and thoughtful discussion about UBC Geography. Ask Dr. Donner about his research, which focuses on how climate change affects people and aquatic ecosystems. Spaces are limited, so e-mail [ubcgsa@hotmail.com](mailto:ubcgsa@hotmail.com) to get on the guest list!

**GSA Team Meeting**

**Thursday, March 12th, 12:30-1:30pm**

**GEOG 215 D/E**

Join the GSA at our regular general meeting to find out more about what's planned for the rest of the semester, and get the inside scoop on who'll be running the show as next year's GSA exec.

**Career Night &**

**Thursday, March 19th 4:30-5:30**

Get the scoop on the job prospects from past Geography grads.

**Geopardy Bzzr Garden**

**5:30-9:00**

Kick back and show off your smarts at our Trivia Bzzr Garden!

**Geogala**

**Thursday, April 2nd 6:30pm-11:00pm**

**Cecil Green Park House**

It's THE ticket of the year. Members of the UBC Geography community, including Faculty, Staff, Grad Students and Undergrads, are gathering at the classy Cecil Green Park House to celebrate the end of another great year in style. Tickets: \$30. E-mail [ubcgsa@hotmail.com](mailto:ubcgsa@hotmail.com).

## IF YOU WANT SOMETHING DONE RIGHT, DO IT YOURSELF

### Rory Babin's Student Directed Seminar

## GEOGRAPHY 442: THE FOOD NETWORK

If you expect to get anything out of the world, you've got to do it yourself. That is, of course, if you're willing to put up with the amount of red tape and bureaucracy to get the job done. Luckily for me, I am more than willing to put up with it. When I approached our advisor, Karen Young, about why there is no course on the Geography of Food, she suggested I create the course myself. I went through the rigorous process of applying, preparing a syllabus, readings list, procuring a faculty sponsor (Juanita Sundberg), and attending many workshops on how to facilitate a seminar. Suddenly, I was



thrust into the fast-paced and exciting world of course planning. There I was, head-to-head with the likes of Trevor Barnes and David Ley, vying for strategic classrooms and valuable timeslots in the middle of the day to host my seminar.\* The course is a broad look at the various factors that influence the geography of our food, with each week divided into a different discipline—ranging from food policy to economic linkages, and from environmental issues to socio-cultural factors—for a more holistic view of our food system. Each student in the class selects his or her favourite dish to study throughout the course and creates a portfolio of research on that one dish. If you have any questions about this particular seminar, or would like to know more about student-directed seminars in general, please do not hesitate to contact me at rorybabin@gmail.com.

\*Fun Fact: It wasn't even a competition, as I was told most pointedly that I was not able to get a timeslot during the day until all other classes had been finalized. In fact, any class during the day would need to have been held in Osborne, hence my current—and highly coveted—6-9pm Tuesday timeslot in the Geography building.

*Rory Babin hails from Grand Forks, BC. He is the VP External of the Arts Undergraduate Society, Executive Editor of the Trail Six Undergraduate Journal of Geography, and the former Vice President of the Geography Students' Association.*



**Above: Rory contemplates how to improve the Geography department during a GSA Bzzr Garden. Top Right: Rory takes his place in the food network.**

## INVASIVE SPECIES AND NATIVE TREE INVENTORY IN JERICHO PARK

At Jericho Park, one of the largest urban greenspaces in Vancouver, just decades ago the land stood bare of all but ornamental trees, when the land was used as a military base. It's hard to imagine when surrounded by the dense forest stands that make up important habitat, but this land has

a long history of disturbance. As a result of these continuing human impacts, the developing human habitat has not progressed through any expected patterns of succession, but has been overwhelmed by invasive species.

Red alder makes up most of the major forest structure, but most significant trees are expected to die and quickly decompose in the next decades. Dense and vigorous invasive species have

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# GEOGALA

**When:** April 2nd at 6:30pm

**Where:** Cecil Green Park House  
6251 Cecil Green Park Rd., UBC

**Who:** Anyone taking Geography courses with an interest in the subject or the Department. Majors, Minors, Bachelors, Masters, Professors, Staff – *this means you and your friends!*

**What:** This year we're continuing our newly established tradition, classing up the event – and keeping it UBC-centric – by holding it at the beautiful heritage Cecil Green Park House. UBC Catering has provided a delicious menu – check it out below.

Tickets: \$30

You can buy tickets in the coming months from any member of the GSA Exec.

Head to Cecil Green at 6:30 for a night of dinner, dancing (only if you want!), prizes, drinks, and networking with your professors and fellow students.



**Students and faculty settle down for a delicious meal at last year's Geogala (above)**

**Prof. Sally Hermansen and Alex Burkholder boogie the night away (right)**  
**The scenic Cecil Green Park House (below)**



prevented trees that would take over the habitat role of alder from establishing.



**Students from the invasive species and native tree inventory project close out the day with project leader Rita Zamluk and Andrew Appleton from Evergreen**

Over Reading Week, 9 students from GEOG 207 and GEOG 472 elected to forgo travels to tropical beaches or snowy mountains, instead meeting

early each morning to address this problem with representatives from the Jericho Stewardship group and Evergreen, an environmental non-profit organization. As part of the Reading Week Community Service Learning Projects, these geographers used knowledge from studies in biogeography and training in spatial analysis to produce a method to inventory the distribution of invasive species and native trees throughout Jericho Park.

The data we collected will help Jericho Stewardship Group to target management efforts to most efficiently manage the overwhelming growth of invasive species through removal efforts and strategic planting of the essential native trees. The spatial data will also be used to produce a GIS as a baseline to assess the success of future management efforts.

As we trekked through the park, we developed valuable field skills in vegetation identification and mapping while learning how GPS can be used to effectively track spatial data.

# CONTINENTAL DRIFT

## South Georgia: Seal of Approval

BY MARYBETH THOMPSON

It is said that if you can describe South Georgia, then you've never been. I'll give it a go, but please don't hold the island accountable for the limitations of the English language or pale reflections of photographs.

After nearly a week of pitching and rolling across the tumultuous Southern Ocean aboard



**Marybeth at Godthul with Oakum boys (young king penguins) and adult king penguins**

the icebreaker MV Polar star, terra firma was a welcome reprieve. Although I had heard that South Georgia rivalled the Galapagos, I was sceptical that this island I had never even heard of could live up to the hype. Our 'expedition' was set: we were to spend four days exploring the island before continuing on to the Antarctic Peninsula. As our zodiacs approached the shore, curious fur seals escorted us through the fog. Some rolled amongst the kelp while others would porpoise alongside us to get a better look.

While fur seals are majestic in the water, on land they are formidable. Over the pitiful mewls of the pups, the adults bark, snarl and roar menacing warnings to announce their territory. To skirt the throngs it is essential to chart your course carefully, and hope they don't charge; they have severe personal space issues and those flashing teeth can do some serious damage. An adult

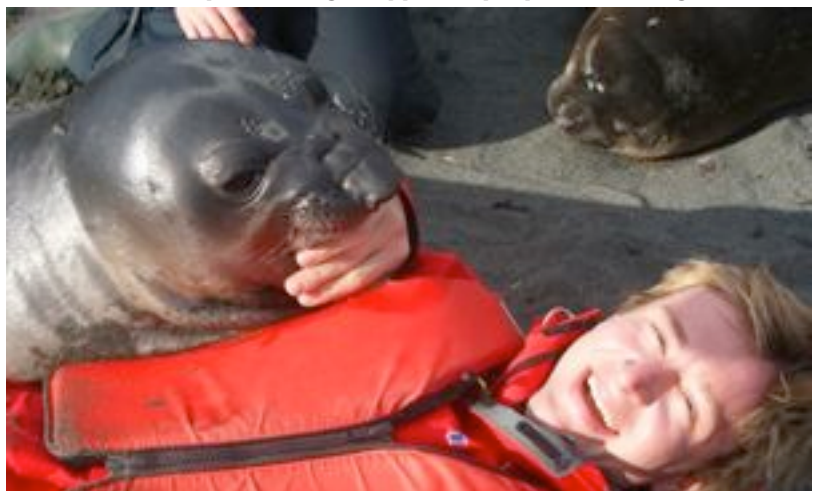
male fur seal can weigh up to 450 lbs and run faster than you could hope to on this cobbled terrain. The best defence is to stay out of their way. The beaches are so densely packed, however, that it's all too easy to stumble into claimed territory or find an unfriendly face peering from the tussock grass. When this happened all we could do was stand our ground, and try to look imposing while clacking rocks.

Not being one for pride, I timidly waited for a friend after a particularly nasty fur seal charged relying on the theory of 'strength in numbers'. Meanwhile, the chaotic assault of sounds was incredible: waves crashed on the shore; thousands of king penguins chortled as if playing the kazoo; trilling chicks called out for food; and crooning exaltations from the gentoo penguins competed with the belching, snorting, blowing, gagging, flatulent reverberations of elephant seals. All of this somehow managed to stay audible over the barking fur seals scuttling across a pebbled beach, towards the panicked sound of clacking rocks. Yes, this was quite the place!

Perhaps some background is in order. Twenty million years ago South Georgia was part of the Andes range in Tierra del Fuego when it splintered off and travelled 2092 kilometers east to reposition itself in the sub-Antarctic. The nearly 5000 square kilometer island located in the Scotia Sea just beyond the winter icepack limit plays the important role of home and breeding ground to many. Most prominently, fur and elephant seals, four species of penguins - macaroni, gentoo, chinstrap and king - reindeer (introduced for hunting by Norwegian whalers), and three species of endangered albatross.

It is not just about the wildlife though, South Georgia is filled with nearly as much historical significance as it is beauty. The island has

**Chris Bateman, zodiac driver extraordinaire, getting gummed by an elephant seal pup, known as a "weiner". They weigh several hundred pounds, and are quite friendly. Not having any land predators the animals are quite willing to approach people for investigation.**



Seal of Approval continued on page 5

been a British overseas territory since 1775, when Captain Cook described it as "not worth the discovery." While today the shores hum with life, it wasn't long ago that the fur trade and whaling industry silenced the island.

Since the late 1700's the sub-Antarctic island was used as a base for hunting seals and subsequently whales. Indeed it was the seal hunts that spurred much of the Antarctic and Southern Ocean exploration. Between 1792 and 1793 over 50,000 fur seals were clubbed and enough elephant seals lanced to fill 3,000 barrels with oil. The thick pelts of fur seals were so sought after that by 1825 the seals were believed to be extinct. Meanwhile the demand for oil rendered from elephant seals led to the slaughter of the last two seals on the island in 1885.

It was with the economic shift to whaling, that seals eventually began returning to the area, as both the demand for their pelts and oil decreased and food availability increased. However the seals continued to be hunted on and off until 1964 when the whaling industry collapsed.

The first whaling camp on the island was estab-

lished in 1904. Grytviken, one of the better known whaling towns, had a population of 300 Norwegians. Now all that remains is a church, a few buildings and the rusty remnants of the 2 story oil tanks and the



**Male, female and fur seal pups on the beach at Fortuna Bay, where we started the last leg of Shackleton's walk.**

machinery used to process and render the animals. Whale vertebrae, rib and jaw bones are scattered amongst the seals that now cover the landscape. The beached whaler, Petrel, sits defeated in the background - her harpoon gun aimed futilely towards the sky. At one time Grytviken reduced 25 whales per day, including the Guinness Book of Records holder for largest animal that ever lived: a female 108-foot blue whale. When Grytviken closed in 1965, 175, 250 whales had been processed. The baleen was used for hoop skirts and umbrellas, while the oil powered

lamps and flowed into cosmetics and lubricants. Grytviken is also the final resting place of the intrepid Sir Ernest Shackleton, buried against convention with his head to the south. Shackleton is most noted for the failed 1914 Trans-Antarctic Expedition, where after a journey of nearly 1,600 kilometers of toiling over uncharted land and sea in treacherous conditions himself, Crean and Worsley stumbled into the Stromness camp looking for assistance for the 24 men still stranded after the *Endurance* sank in the Weddell sea.

The magic of South Georgia is complicated; it transports you to a place where time stands still. There are no complications to distract you from all the fascinating, and sordid bits of history that occurred on that small swath of land. You are moved and mesmerized by it, you are in it. Walking through twisted remnants

of the past transports you. In following Shackleton's footsteps between Fortuna Bay and Stromness a deeper understanding is achieved. As you sit on the beach completely emerged in sounds, sights, and regrettably, smells, the sun reflects off grounded icebergs and your mind is clear. I have never been to a place where attempts at descriptions were more futile.

*Marybeth Thompson travelled to the Antarctic Peninsula, stopping in South Georgia, in December 2008.*

## Save the Date - The SCARP Student Symposium

March 12th - 14th 2009

A Two Day Symposium Exploring the Meaning and Implementation of Sustainable Ideas

Run in conjunction with the Geography Department, SALA and SFU.

This conference will touch on many urban planning issues and include exciting mobile tours with some of Vancouver's most respected practitioners.

Topics Include: Affordable Housing \* Resilience of Government \* Institutions in Climate Change Planning \* Intercultural Communications and Multicultural Planning \* Collaborative and Participatory Design \* Regional Water Governance and More

[www.cfis.ubc.ca/sustainaHOW.html](http://www.cfis.ubc.ca/sustainaHOW.html)

[scarpsymposium@gmail.com](mailto:scarpsymposium@gmail.com)

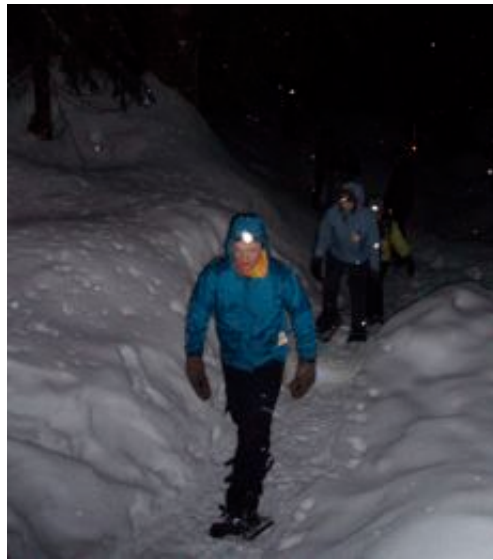


# SNOWSHOEING TRIP Mount Seymour

On a chilly Friday evening an intrepid group from the GSA peered out into the fog and hail as our bus lurched up the snowy road on Mount Seymour. We disembarked and strapped on snowshoes and headlamps to take to the trails for our guided nature walk. We heard about traditional remedies from woodland plants, the unique forests found on the slopes, and biotic interactions between the species surrounding us.

Mostly, we bravely cut our course through the woods, experiencing the quiet and wonder of the snowy landscape.

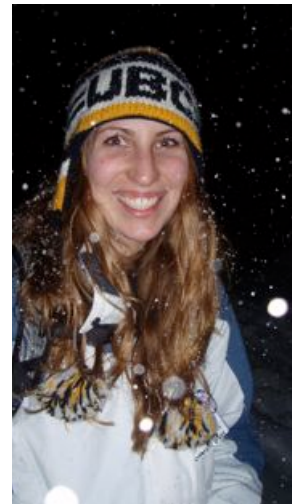
Between snowball fights, a few rounds of predator vs. prey, and great company, we made the most of our brief escape from the city!



A good time on the bus ride back



The snowshoeing crew enjoys some hot cedar before heading home



Chelsea enjoys the falling snow



Our fearless leader, Chad.



Lauren tries out some western redcedar needles - a traditional cure for scurvy



Michael makes a mark in the night.





