

## **Connecting the Gems – Traveling the High Divide May 2010**

### **Executive Summary**

With this proposal we seek funding for a project to travel the High Divide by foot. By traveling one of the most important wildlife movement areas from the point of view of the wildlife, we will be able to uncover the realities of moving across this region like never before. We are two scientists/explorers, who have been named National Geographic Adventurers of the Year for the first-ever trek down the spine of the Andes Mountain Range. We are interested in places that are both ecologically important and wild. In this project we will gather information about wildlife dispersal and migration across the High Divide, and we will use that information to further the greater knowledge about this ecologically critical link between ecosystems in the northern Rockies and ultimately to see to it that this linkage zone remains intact.

### **The Project**

Two of the most intact and important ecosystems in the world's temperate zone are found in the Northern Rockies of the United States. The Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem and the Frank Church River of No Return Wilderness in central Idaho are large, wild landscapes that support rich and abundant wildlife populations. Today, these two areas are essentially ecological islands of protected habitats.

When populations of animals exist in isolation, they are left without the ability to maintain genetic diversity. Simply put, when wildlife can no longer migrate or disperse to new habitats, the long-term health of the population is in jeopardy. It is therefore essential that we maintain clear migration and dispersal routes between protected ecosystems. By connecting the gems that are these ecosystems, we can better ensure healthy populations of grizzly bears, wolverines, moose, mountain lion, and so many other species.

During the summer of 2010, National Geographic Adventurers of the Year, Deia Schlosberg and Gregg Treinish will team up with the Greater Yellowstone Coalition (GYC), the Craighead Environmental Research Institute (CERI), and the Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS), to uncover the mystery behind this region. By mounting an ecological expedition to travel the length of this important wildlife region on foot, Gregg and Deia will shed light on the infringements to connectivity, conditions of key habitats, current management practices, and perspectives of local people between these two great ecosystems in a way that has never before been documented. Relying on interviews with the key people involved including biologists, land managers, private land owners, and government agencies, as well as the scientific literature, Deia and Gregg have begun an in-depth research project to gain the highest possible level of insight into this region. What they have found is that there remains a further need for

ground testing the results of previous hypothetical studies that have not been able to move as the wildlife move. In addition to gathering scientific data while walking the region, Deia and Gregg will document the project for a film, which will help make this issue accessible to the greater public.

By traveling at the natural human pace of walking, Gregg and Deia plan to gain the greatest possible access to some of the most remote and least understood areas of ecological concern. Walking the most likely dispersal and migration routes, Deia and Gregg will be collecting information on the choices that moving animals are forced to make. By documenting specific instances of fragmentation, GYC, CERI, WCS, and other agencies working to promote and protect connectivity will be able to focus their efforts in the areas of greatest need. By creating a professional-quality film focusing on these important issues, we hope to build more awareness, involvement, and public support for protecting and restoring these key corridors, and for promoting wildlife connectivity in general.

Gregg, a wildlife biologist, will be relying on experience gained as a field biologist, as a mountain guide in both Colorado and Montana, and during a most recent trek down the spine of the Andes with Deia, which earned them a National Geographic Adventurer of the Year award in 2008

Deia, a master's candidate in Science and Natural History Filmmaking at Montana State University and National Geographic Adventurer of the Year, will focus her abilities on the presentation of what we find throughout the course of this project. Deia has a degree in Earth Sciences and will be contributing to the scientific components of the trip as well.

### **The Expedition:**

We anticipate the route to be around 400 miles through some of the most rugged and remote portions of the Northern Rockies. The trek itself should take around 1 ½ months to complete, though we are leaving a bit of extra time for fires, weather, and other unforeseeables. The route we will follow is based on standard least cost path (LCP) analysis conducted for the grizzly and wolverine by CERI and the WCS. We intend to stay primarily in the highest priority areas for both species as developed by these models. Traveling entirely on foot, and following the most likely migration and dispersion routes, we will gain an otherwise unattainable understanding, from the point of view of the wildlife, of an area that conservationists throughout the world have determined to be essential in promoting genetic diversity within wildlife species. Working with the land managers and biologists, Gregg and Deia will follow a protocol established in order to preserve the scientific integrity of the data and the DNA samples they collect along the way. In addition, there is possibility of setting up camera traps in areas that scientists have determined should be inhabited by certain species, but due to their remoteness, have not been subject to direct studies. We anticipate 3-4 camera traps being set along the way.

## **The Preparations**

For several months, Gregg and Deia have been conducting an in depth research project in order to gain insight as to the overall picture as well as the microcosms of the localized portions of the trek. Working closely with GYC, the team has gathered specific information including but not limited to the dispersal and migration patterns of the mammals in these areas, wildlife behaviors, habitat assessments, resource availability, human impact, existing conservation practices, and future predictions for localized impacts caused by climate change. This has been and will further be accomplished by meeting with key wildlife officials, researchers, and private land owners, reading scientific articles and land use reports, and conducting several scouting missions between now and the summer of 2010

## **PROJECT OUTLETS / EXPOSURE:**

We expect to publicize our project in the following ways:

1. *Project Website* – Preparations as well as during trip updates will be published on the web -- see [www.connectingthegems.org](http://www.connectingthegems.org) .
2. *Wend Magazine*- We have been confirmed for a 3000 word feature in the footprints section of the winter '10 issue.
3. *Greater Yellowstone Coalition Website* – Gregg and Deia will thoroughly document the journey on the GYC website including updates from the field
4. *Craighead Environmental Research Institute website*
5. *Corporate Partners Websites* – we currently have confirmed nine outdoor industry sponsors for the project
6. *Facebook/twitter*-we will dedicate a facebook page to the journey and are open to other social media outlets as well
7. *YouTube* – A sponsor branded film will be placed on You Tube/Vimeo
8. *DVD* – An important consideration even in the era of new media. DVDs will be distributed to donors, community members, and volunteers in project areas, additionally we hope to market the film to be sold to the general public
9. *Film Festivals*- Gregg and Deia plan on entering the film in several outdoor film festivals including but not limited to: Jackson Hole, Telluride, Banff.
10. *Lecture Series*- Deia and Gregg plan to speak about their findings following the journey

## **About Deia and Gregg**

Deia Schlosberg grew up in the woods of Upstate New York. Since then she has earned degrees in Earth & Planetary Science as well as Visual Communications at Washington University in St. Louis. She has volunteered in Europe and Africa, worked as an environmental educator in the White Mountains of New Hampshire and in Montana, and has worked as a senior field instructor for a wilderness therapy school in the Colorado

Rockies. Deia is also a published illustrator, photographer, designer and writer. Deia is the first woman to walk the length of South America south of the equator, for which she was awarded the National Geographic Adventurer of the Year award in November of 2008. Deia is currently pursuing a master's degree in Science and Natural History Filmmaking. She also has a wilderness first responder.

Gregg Treinish discovered his passion for the outdoors at the age of sixteen while on a backpacking trip in British Columbia. After earning a B.A in Sociology from the University of Colorado at Boulder, he has pursued that passion. Gregg has worked as a whitewater guide, a ski instructor, a field instructor, a senior field instructor, and as a team leader for wilderness therapy programs in Colorado and Montana. He has traveled to five continents and continues to explore our world. In 2004, he completed the 2,174-mile Appalachian Trail, and in 2008 the first ever trek of the Andes Mountain Range, which took more than 22 months and 7800 miles to complete. He was awarded the National Geographic Adventurer of the Year award in November of 2008 for this accomplishment. After completing the trek in early 2008, Gregg began working as an assistant on a Pallid Sturgeon study on the Missouri River in Montana, and as a Spotted Owl researcher in California. Since, he has worked tracking lynx and wolverine in the Bridger Mountain Range, and the mountains near Helena, MT. He feels a deep desire not only to explore this planet, but also to document the impact that humans have had on it. He believes that there is a fundamental change that must occur in human thought, and that for too long we have treated the Earth as existing for people and for our benefit alone. Gregg will continue working to promote awareness and to enact change in this thinking. He is currently a student at Montana State University and is majoring in Ecology and Evolution; he will complete this degree prior to trip departure. Gregg also has a wilderness first responder medical certification as well as a Colorado whitewater guide certification.

**Connecting the Gems  
Expense Budget  
April – December 2010**

<b>Gear</b>	<b>\$ 3,600</b>
<b>Data Collection/Research</b>	<b>\$ 4,040</b>
<b>Food/Transportation</b>	<b>\$ 2,400</b>
<b>Documentation equipment</b>	<b>\$ 2,500</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$12,540</b>

**In addition, we expect a contribution of \$7,635 in in-kind goods and services.**

<b>GRAND TOTAL (plus in-kind)</b>	<b>\$20,175</b>
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