



**Artists for
Conservation™**
Supporting Nature through Art

BACKGROUNDER FOR NEWS RELEASE (April 22, 2008)

Artists for Conservation's Seventh Flag Expedition in Support of the Endangered Lake Baikal Seals of Russia - The World's Only Indigenous Freshwater Seal.

About the Artists for Conservation Foundation (AFC)

The Artists for Conservation Foundation (AFC) is a non-profit group of the world's leading nature artists, whose mission is to support wildlife and habitat conservation, biodiversity, sustainability and environmental education through art that celebrates our natural heritage.

Founded in 1997 as the "Worldwide Nature Artists Group" by Jeffrey Whiting - a prominent Canadian artist, author, biologist and professional software engineer - the Group was renamed in 2007. The Foundation's strength lies in its membership and represents a who's-who of nature artists worldwide, including well-known names such as John Banovich, Robert Bateman, Guy Coheleach, John Seerey-Lester and David Shepherd. New members are admitted by invitation only, through a juried process, and only as placements become available. The Foundation dedicates its resources to nurturing its world-class community of nature artists and leveraging this pool of talent to support its mission through a variety of programs and initiatives, including:

- Facilitating art sales to raise funds for conservation
- Supporting artistic field research expeditions to study endangered species and threatened habitats.
- Maintaining the world's largest virtual gallery of nature art.
- Recognizing individuals for their work in support of the conservation cause.
- Producing an annual art exhibition in support of conservation, and an accompanying book and international touring exhibit.
- Planning and spearheading large-scale international environmentally-themed art projects.

Through its "Flag Expeditions" program, the Foundation offers fellowships to artists, supporting artistic field research in remote areas of the planet, with a strong emphasis on raising awareness to threatened habitats and endangered species. In the Foundation's "Art for Conservation" program, artists collectively pledge millions of dollars to conservation organizations and programs around the world. The Foundation also supports the conservation cause with a monthly award, recognizing individual artists for their dedication to conservation and with the annual prestigious "Simon Combes Conservation Award".

Today, the Foundation is the most progressive and prestigious organization in the world of nature art and represents hundreds of millions of dollars in artwork, though it does not take any brokerage fees or commissions on sales made by its members. For the first ten years of its operation, benefiting in part from a donated state-of-the-art technological infrastructure, the Foundation was sustained entirely on membership dues and volunteer labor, although it now seeks patrons, donors, sponsors and partners to enable the continued expansion of its activities. For more information, please visit www.natureartists.com.

About the AFC Flag Expeditions Program

The AFC Flag Expeditions Program was created to make possible the field study and artistic rendering of endangered species or habitats deserving of greater public attention. There is a strong emphasis on the study of unique, threatened habitats, and rare or endangered species in remote parts of the world.

Upon return from the expedition, participating artists are required to submit to the Foundation, a written journal and sketchbook of their journey, photos with the AFC flag in situ, a signed flag and video footage when possible.

The AFC provides funding, as well as prominent exposure in a growing number of venues including on the AFC Web site, for each artist and each expedition. Each year at least two Fellowships are offered - each worth up to \$5,000 US.

The Program is open only to AFC Signature Members, who can apply to obtain financial support and the privilege of carrying the AFC flag on their journey. To find out how to become a Signature member, please review our Join Us section.

To-date, the AFC has granted 6 fellowships through this program:

- AFC Flag Expedition #1 - "Observing & Portraying the Endangered Harpy Eagle & its Habitat"; Recipient: David Kitler
- AFC Flag Expedition #2 - "The Sacred Source - A Portrait of the Ganges"; Recipient: David Rankin
- AFC Flag Expedition #3 - "The George River Boreal Forest Expedition"; Recipient: Robert Mullen with AFC artists Robert Bateman and Lindsey Foggett
- AFC Flag Expedition #4 - "The Flora & Fauna of Bhutan - An Artist's Journey through the Land of the Thunderdragon"; Recipient: Pollyanna Pickering
- AFC Flag Expedition #5 - "Painting the Painted Dogs - Artistic Study of an Endangered Hunter"; Recipient: Alison Nicholls
- AFC Flag Expedition #6 - "Cross River Gorillas – The Most Endangered Primate"; Recipient: Daniel Taylor

The AFC's Flag Expeditions website documents past expeditions and highlights new ones yet to be run. For more information about the program, please visit www.natureartists.com/flagexpeditions/.

About the Expedition to Russia:

Working in cooperation with research centers near Lake Baikal in north-eastern Russia, and with the Baikal Watch and the Baikal Wave conservation organizations, Terry Woodall will be in the field from mid-June to mid-July, 2008, observing and recording the Baikal Seal (also called "Nerpa") in its habitat. He will research current information on its status in the natural world at research centers near Lake Baikal and meet with as many people of the Baikal region as possible to encourage the conservation of their special ecosystems and stress the importance of the Nerpa as a world wildlife treasure.

The Baikal Seal is the only indigenous freshwater seal in the world, although a small number of a sub-species of ringed seals has been found inhabiting Lake Lagoda and Saima Lake [the two connect] in Finland. This population has existed in these lakes for many generations although these lakes in Finland are connected to the sea by a man-made canal. The Russian seals on the other hand are isolated thousands of miles from the nearest sea in Lake Baikal which is the largest and deepest lake in the world. It is located in the Zabaikalsky National Park, which encompasses the Holy Nose Peninsula and the Ushkanin Islands, the primary haul-out area of the seals. This national park adjoins the Barguzinsky Zapovednik conservation area, one of the first in Russia, established in 1916 to protect the sable. Wildlife found in this huge area include brown bear, mountain goat, snow sheep, reindeer, elk, moose, Siberian Roe, wild boar, musk deer, white tailed deer, lynx, wolf, wolverine, and dozens of other fur bearing animals including the sable and ermine.

The ecology of the lake is tied to the well-being of the seals, and many efforts and ongoing studies have been made on their behalf. The seals are dependent on adequate ice floes during a short molting period that is critical to their reproduction, which could be affected by global warming and is of particular interest concerning their future. They have been hunted since prehistoric days, and their numbers are monitored and controlled today, as hunting continues. Counts and estimates vary, but about 60,000 animals seems to be the consensus. Hunting quotas are set according to these figures and the health of

the seal populations. The main threats to the seals are poaching and pollution. Through his artwork, Woodall hopes to encourage more interest in this unique ecology. The Baikal Seal's molting and birthing rely on a small window of opportunity dependent on the seasonal ice cycles. Their successful reproduction can be threatened by disrupted ice cycles.

Working with a recognized research/conservation organization is very important to the success of the expedition. There are research organizations working in the area, including Baikal Wave, which has focused on protection of the Nerpa. Baikal Wave has extensive research available, and will assist with local logistics and information on the Nerpa. With few tools, Terry will carve freeform pieces in the field as part of the artwork resulting from the expedition. An objective of the expedition is to present and donate a large Nerpa carving to an appropriate entity active in the conservation of the Nerpa.

Woodall will make presentations celebrating the seals, beginning with the Baikal Watch and Baikal Wave conservation organizations in Irkutsk, the major city close to Lake Baikal. From there, the AFC flag will be presented at the Limnological Institute in Listvyanka, a town on lake Baikal, 40 miles from Irkutsk. The institute is a research center for the science and biology of the lake, and includes a nerpaquarium. The next Flag presentation will be at the Bolshoye Goloustnoye Center for Ecology, 2 hours north of Listvyanka.

To draw attention to their future plights and to encourage awareness of this pinniped world, Woodall will be creating and exhibiting wood sculptures of these creatures under the theme "Pinnipeds - The Ice is Moving". Woodall has spent many years sculpting a variety of pinnipeds after observing them from Oregon coastal headlands near his studio, and he considers them his favorite subjects. .

About Artist Terry Woodall (excerpt from biography on AFC website):

Terry Woodall [b. 1951] specializes in Myrtlewood sculptures of Northwest oceanic and woodland wildlife. A third generation Oregonian, he traces his Northwest woods heritage to the early logging days. Today, Terry salvages downed wood for his artwork, while maintaining a deep appreciation of his native forests, coastlines and its wildlife. His Southern Oregon studio and family home of 25 years is in a coastal rain forest close to the Pacific Ocean.

In the early 70's, studying art at the University of the Americas near Mexico City sparked Terry's interest in art and other cultures. After two years in Mexico he returned to Oregon and set his sights on wood sculpture as an artistic pursuit. After finding a niche in the Myrtlewood cottage industry of the Oregon coast, Terry established Pacific Carvings, a business producing carvings for galleries and gift shops. Since that time, Terry has exhibited his art work at the Pacific Rim Wildlife Art show in Seattle; Sculpture in the Park in Loveland, Colorado; Waterfowl Festival in Easton, Maryland; San Dimas, San Bernardino and Fallbrook, California art shows; and numerous local showings in Southern Oregon. During a cultural exchange art exhibit in Choshi, Japan, Terry's carving "Beaver State" was presented to the mayor of Choshi. Dozens of wildlife sculptures by Terry Woodall have a home in Japan.

What inspires you to create your works? "It's all about beauty, awe-inspiring, natural beauty; from the crimson surface of a salmon-filled waterway to the depths of polished, marbled wood grain, I am driven to reveal both the marvels of my medium and capture the graceful action of wildlife."

Do you have any specific goals? "Absolutely. By highlighting successful recovering species in my artwork I hope to encourage and persuade people to recognize the victories made in preserving wildlife - a 'celebrate the species' approach, applauding those who have worked so hard to help make it happen and encouraging more success in the future."

From 1993 - 2002 Terry Woodall exhibited in the Portland, Oregon Audubon Society "Wild Arts Festival" which included an art piece donation each year. Through art donations, Terry has helped support the Hawk Creek Wildlife Center, East Aurora, New York; Umpqua Valley Watershed, Southern Oregon; Illinois Valley Water and Conservation District, Southern Oregon; Howell Nature Center, Howell, Michigan.

For More Information:

Terry Woodall's Flag Expedition: www.natureartists.com/terry_woodall.asp

Terry Woodall's Biography: www.natureartists.com/woodall

AFC Flag Expeditions Program: www.natureartists.com/flagexpeditions/woodall2008/

Artists for Conservation Foundation: www.natureartists.com

Media Enquiries:

For interviews with artist Terry Woodall and/or Jeff Whiting, President and Founder of the Artists for Conservation group, please contact:

Jeff Whiting
President & Founder
Artists for Conservation Foundation Inc.
(604) 608-2392
jwhiting@natureartists.com