

Acclaimed Nature Artist Completes Journey Through the “Land of the Thunder Dragon”

UK Artist Paints the Flora & Fauna of Bhutan in Artists for Conservation Foundation's 4th Flag Expedition

Vancouver, B.C., CANADA (May 31, 2007) - Artists for Conservation (AFC), formerly the Worldwide Nature Artists Group, is proud to welcome Pollyanna Pickering back from her incredible journey into the eastern Himalayas. Pickering is the first western artist to comprehensively document Bhutan's wildlife and habitat in a series of paintings. Her journey was made possible through a grant from the AFC's Flag Expedition Program. The AFC's mission is to support wildlife and habitat conservation, biodiversity, sustainability and environmental education, through art that celebrates our natural heritage.

The objective of the AFC's Flag Expeditions Program is to make possible the artistic field study and rendering of endangered species or habitats deserving of greater public attention with strong emphasis on the study of unique and threatened habitats and rare or endangered species in remote parts of the world.

"Who knows what undiscovered secrets this mystical terrain is hiding? My aim is to capture the atmosphere and spirit of the Himalayas, and document the breathtaking diversity of life in this mountain kingdom," said Pickering, prior to embarking on her 21st expedition, her most ambitious and challenging project yet. Past excursions have included treks into China, Namibia, Transylvania, India, Siberia, Kenya, Central America and the Arctic, to name a few.

Bhutan jealously guards its lifestyle and ancient traditions, and respecting these values was first and foremost on Pickering's agenda. Jeff Whiting, President and Founder of the Artists for Conservation Foundation praised Pickering's indomitable spirit and perseverance.

"The world will be fascinated as it follows Pollyanna on her landmark artistic journey to Bhutan. We anticipate seeing some magnificent artwork of some rarely seen subjects of Bhutan's natural heritage. We are excited and proud to have been able to support Pollyanna on this Flag Expedition, and to help share her stories, photos and art with the world. We take exceptional pride in knowing that her efforts will serve to directly support wildlife and habitat conservation in that region."

The month-long journey into Bhutan began on March 28th taking Pickering and her daughter Anna-Louise, an accomplished wildlife photographer, the entire width of the Himalayan kingdom, giving them the opportunity to experience first hand the incredible range and diversity of the habitat, forestation and wildlife found in this land least touched by modernity—a land that houses almost 75% of the world's most endangered plant and animal species. All animals in Bhutan are protected by the Buddhist ethic, which prohibits killing, thus respecting all life and holding that a healthy environment is essential for both material and spiritual happiness.

Pickering had four key target species that she hoped to sight. She was fortunate in finding three – the Red Panda, the Golden Langur, and the Clouded Leopard. The Snow Leopard was her fourth target species, but like the yeti, it too remained elusive. Pickering, however, did manage to speak to several older Bhutanese villagers, who told stories of encounters with the Migoi (yeti), who have the power of becoming invisible; hence, why so few people see them. Myth? Hard to tell, since Pickering was shown a yeti scalp in a monastery temple, which she was able to sketch.

Pickering sketches extensively while in the field, working in pencil and charcoal, making quick studies to capture the essence of her subjects. She works in a variety of media, but primarily in gouache, on board and canvas. Her work, following an expedition, includes landscapes of the area studied, wildlife portraits, and 'study sheets' showing typical behavior of her subjects.

"The paintings will bring visions of a Himalayan landscape to many people who will never have the opportunity to travel to this remote and unspoiled region of the world. There is no substitute for the inspiration which comes from the visit to the habitat, and the sketches made *in situ*," notes Pickering, adding that some of her motivation came from the symbols of Bhutan's religion – the colorful prayer flags which flutter throughout the landscape, as well as the temple paintings.

“Bhuddist art aims to transmit, in symbols or signs, a spark of the eternal stream of life and consciousness – a noble tradition to aspire to. We have rarely left a country so optimistic for the future of its habitat and wildlife. Bhutan will remain an invaluable sanctuary for some of the world’s most endangered species,” concludes Pickering.

On her return to her studio in the U.K., she will complete 50 pieces of original artwork for a major exhibition and gallery shows. These will highlight the natural history of a Kingdom about which remarkably little is known in the west, and also stress the importance of conserving the ecology of the region. Along with her sketches, paintings, photography, and video clips, Pickering has also prepared a detailed journal documenting her experience during the month-long adventure. She will also be publishing a book on her findings, and lecture tours are already scheduled well into 2008.

The AFC will be posting a high-resolution presentation of Pickering’s “Flag” journal on the AFC website over the next few weeks. Ongoing coverage of her expedition, including her photo essay and blog can be found at: www.natureartists.com/flagexpeditions.

About the Flag Program:

The objective of the Flag Expeditions Program is to make possible the artistic field study and rendering of endangered species or habitats deserving of greater public attention with strong emphasis on the study of unique and threatened habitats and rare or endangered species in remote parts of the world. For more information on the Artists for Conservation (AFC) Flag Program, or sponsorship opportunities, please visit the Expedition Web site at www.natureartists.com/flagexpeditions/.

For further information:

Artists for Conservation (AFC)

www.natureartists.com

AFC Flag Expeditions Program:

www.natureartists.com/flagexpeditions

Pollyanna Pickering:

www.natureartists.com/pollyanna_pickering.asp

A low-resolution photo of Pickering with young Buddhist monks holding the AFC Flag (shown with the Foundations’ former insignia, the WNAG), is included in the backgrounder document for this release. A high-resolution version is available upon request. If using, please credit: Anna-Louise Pickering, courtesy of the Artists for Conservation Foundation.

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

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