

Seacology's Success Duane Silverstein San Francisco

Duane Silverstein (MN04) has honed his skills of managing philanthropy to a fine art of creating numerous small projects which help people and places. He formed the not-for-profit Seacology, Inc. to help improve conditions on islands, where it is known that species extinction is rampant. Driven by a desire to help slow this degradation of island life—human, animal and plant—he believes the accumulating impact of privately-sponsored micro-projects can be effective. He has shown that listening to the locals can bring benefits that save the ecosystem, the native culture and the local economy. He showed slides of numerous completed projects, in a captivating story, that demonstrate success.

Seacology has completed over one hundred undertakings across the Pacific and Indian Oceans. These range from building community centers, to school rooms, to warfs and viewing platforms. In each case the formula is simple: ask what the local village people want, organize the supplies and logistics to allow local people the opportunity to build, find the funds to do this (often less than \$25,000), and complete an agreement to do this in exchange for protecting a nearby habitat. Tens of thousands of acres have become designated wildlife refuges as a result.

To bring the reality of this suc-

Duane Silverstein receiving 'thank you' gifts from Chair Steve Smith & Vice Chair Lee Langan (right)



cess to the benefactors, Seacology offers travel to potential sites and repeat trips when a project is complete. These explorations, which they have identified often by word-of-mouth because of their success so far, have a very practical impact on those able to help and to those where the work takes place. These micro-projects are not considered gifts by the locals, for they are charged with protecting their environment in return. The alternative, all too often, is to consume these resources to raise the money to do what the project accomplished! They are, in every case, appreciative of the alternative offered to them; they fully understand the win-win nature of the agreement. Duane told of many emotional thank yous from people who never thought they would benefit so. These genuine human reactions keep him encouraged each day.

All of the projects have a compelling reason to happen. Some even more than others. In northern Vietnam, among some of the most beautiful islands in the world, the Cap Ba langur monkey has been driven to near extinction, with less than 50 known to remain. Seacology arranged to support individual guards for each known animal to protect them from poachers. This has brought enough income to the local people that, in four years, the monkey population has begun to climb. A small salary is staving off the loss of a species! In Hainan, China, the gibbons have even fewer individuals left. Seacology is trying to emulate their Vietnam effort; an April trip is being



Duane Silverstein gone 'native' when showing appreciation to the locals who, in turn, are dancing to show theirs. Our speaker urges respect for both cultures in his agreements..

organized.

In Fiji whole islands have been rescued from development which would have had the effect of subjurgating the local population to the tourist tasks of support labor; a community center is what they wanted (and got) in return for protecting the local reefs and wilderness. In Sri Lanka a longwharf protects the fragile coastal coral. On the Maldives, a school was built to protect for harvesting the eggs of endangered sea turtles

The meeting at the Dolphin Club was crowded: a good turnout of explorers, Dolphin members and those who had been at the earlier reception for the Ocean Film Festival at the Maritime Museum. Thank you, Dolphin Club, for the wonderful venue and great support!

Duane is a new chapter member! This was his first meeting; he spoke well of it, as well as at it! Some may want to get involved his travels and Seacology; you can find details here:

www.seacology.org