

Surfers on wilderness missions can seriously help science. ASC's **Jordan Holsinger** explains exactly how.

Adventurers and Scientists for Conservation (ASC) is an organisation that hooks up outdoor enthusiasts with scientific researchers. Hikers, sailors, climbers and others who play in the wild are already out there gathering samples and data that get used by scientists. ASC is the go-between, linking those who need data with 'athletes'. They don't have any surfers on their books yet but there's no reason we shouldn't be able to help.

ADR: How does it work? Let's just say I'm going feral in Indonesia. What happens?

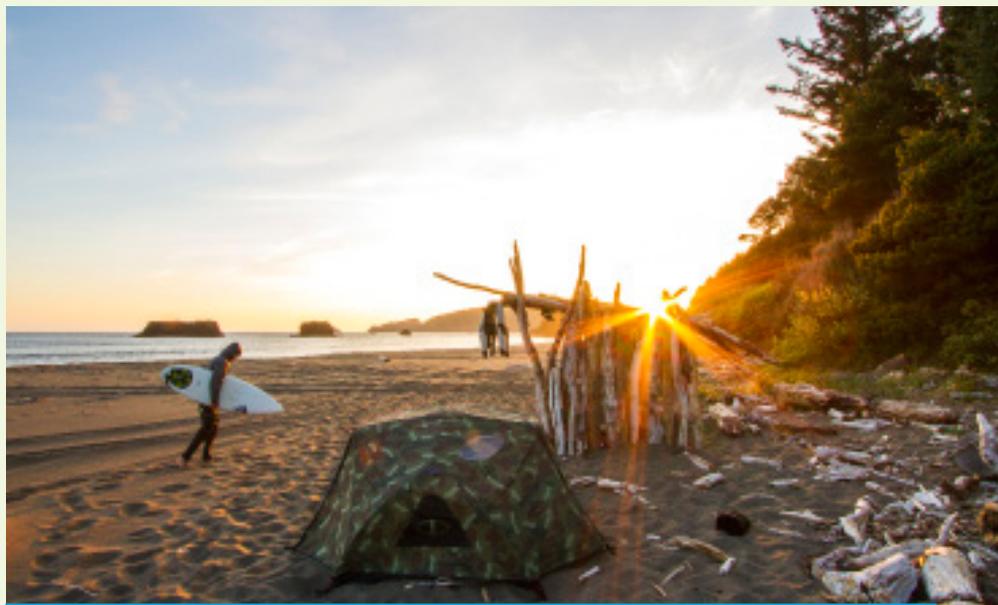
JH: We're primarily a connecting organisation. We connect athletes with researchers, so we help find relevant research projects: who's doing work in, for instance, Indonesian marine habitats? Is it a university or researcher in Indonesia; is someone elsewhere in the world interested in data from that region? We then get the two sides together, usually over Skype and email. ASC also helps develop protocols so that people out in the field know exactly what they're doing – how to do the sample/data collection and exactly what the purpose is. Then the researcher will send some materials – say sampling bottles or something like that – directly to the athlete. When the athlete retruns, those samples will go directly to the researcher.

An important part of what we do is making sure all our athletes understand the larger context of the projects we work on because nobody wants to just be a grunt out there collecting samples without understanding why they're doing it. So it's important for all of our athletes to be onboard with the projects, to understand the bigger purpose and to be excited about it.

So we just go to the website and sign up?

On the website you can look through the different projects we have going on. You can fill

THE BIGGER PURPOSE



Surf trippers heading into the wilderness can do something useful, too. Sign up with ASC and see how you can help.

out our 'find an advisor' forms on there. We work hard to make sure everyone gets connected with a project that fits with what they're doing. Sometimes we don't have anything right away but we try and find researchers who are interested and look for the right kinds of data-collection.

How robust is this considered in scientific circles? In the peer review process, will the science lose cred because the data/samples were collected by a long-haired feral surfer in Indonesia?

That's part of what we work really hard on. It's a key role: working with the scientists to develop protocols and making sure that all our athletes know exactly what they're doing. We make sure all the athletes are well trained in the projects they're participating in so we don't have issues like that. We make sure that all the data collected is usable and valuable.

How did this come about?

It started when our founder Gregg Treinish was hiking the Appalachian Trail in 2004 and began to think, 'I'm out here playing, but what actually is the bigger purpose?' So from that, this idea was born and it developed over a number of years. In 2011 he decided to throw all his chips on the table and start ASC. At the moment we have people climbing Mount

Everest, people sailing around the world, cycling across South America and so on. We don't want to pigeonhole ourselves – we want to reach out to all people who love to play outside and give them a greater purpose in their recreation. We offer the scientific community access to data that they wouldn't be able to get otherwise. It takes a lot of money and a lot of time to gather this kind of data, but what we're doing is mobilising this army of citizen-scientists – people trained to go out to the far corners of the globe and collect data that researchers just wouldn't be able to get.

Are you strictly science based? Or is there a humanitarian element, as well?

We are definitely on board with the humanitarian efforts but our mission is connecting athletes with scientific researchers. What we want to do is help everyday citizens contribute to important research that's going to help preserve the places they love to play. We want to make a difference, so we want to hear from the surf community on the kinds of places they care about preserving. It's about conservation, whether it's wildlife, land or the ocean, we want to make a difference.

To find out more and sign yourself up, go to: www.adeventureandscience.org