

## [NEWS]

# Where Adventure Meets Science

## Inside the ASC with founder/ecologist/explorer Gregg Treinish

BY ALLISON LEVY

The idea came to Gregg Treinish one November night in 2010 while eating at a local Chinese food restaurant in Bozeman, Montana: scientists need field data, but often don't have the time or resources to collect it, and people who enjoy the outdoors have a vested interest in conservation.

Treinish, a seasoned explorer and ecologist himself, wanted to combine adventure and conservation into a single discipline. Thus, he founded the Bozeman-based Adventures and Scientists for Conservation in 2011. The mission of the ASC is to bring the outdoor and science communities together to achieve conservation outcomes. In the three years since its inception, ASC has lent support to a number of organizations by pairing professional and amateur adventurers with scientific research projects around the world.

### HATCHING A PLAN

After Gregg Treinish, who is just 30, received a NatGeo award in 2008 for being the first person to trek the entire Andes Mountain Range unassisted, he moved to Montana to pursue a degree in ecology. He wanted to find a way to give back to the world he loved to explore. In a documentary now airing on PBS called Gregg Treinish: A MoveShake Story, he explained, "there are tens of thousands of athletes outside every day exploring every corner of the world—bikers, hikers, climbers, paddlers, etc. and anywhere they go there's a

scientist who needs them to collect data." He continued, "ASC is the dating service that puts these people together. We find athletes that are going to the farthest corners of the world and match them up with scientists that need data from those remote areas."

ASC filed as a Montana non-profit in 2011. By April of that year Treinish was running the organization under an advisory council. Fellow Montanan and NatGeo explorer, Conrad Anker, was the first board member. Funding was slow at first; the organization started with a \$150 donation. Guide services, consulting work and contributions (both monetary and gear related) from outdoor companies like Clif Bar, Osprey, Brunton, and Patagonia allowed them to piece together an operating budget.

### ASC IN ACTION

ASC works on several projects around the globe ranging from seeking protection for endangered species to finding solutions to pollution affecting our oceans. This includes working with national parks and state Fish and Wildlife agencies. Treinish explained, "These agencies are tasked with making management decisions that affect our experience outdoors and have the potential to impact wildlife and environmental management policies. The information we can provide to them in the form of scientific data collection only helps them make more informed decisions."

Data collectors apply as volunteers and are trained extensively on the collection protocol whether it's via Skype or field training with the scientists they will be assisting.



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A recent success story involves a project tracking Pine Marten populations in southeastern quadrants of the Olympic Peninsula. With the help of the head researcher on the project and volunteers enjoying the winter backcountry, they spent nearly two years tracking this elusive member of the weasel family. Remotely triggered cameras were baited and maintained in the snowpack by the volunteers. The result? With the help of ASC, the researchers found no evidence of Pine Martens – therefore providing the missing piece of information needed to spur lawmakers into action to protect the species.

### FUTURE AND ONGOING PROJECTS

Treinish continues to travel on expeditions to remote areas around the globe. His next journey is to the Okavango Delta in Botswana. Ongoing research includes the Marine Mi-

croplastics project conducted in conjunction with the Marine Environmental Research Institute located in Blue Hill, Maine. Now in its second year, volunteers collect liter bottles of ocean water that are analyzed for microscopic particles of plastics. ASC works with corporate partners and sponsors to affect a positive outcome from their findings, identifying the source of plastics and then working to find solutions on cutting down the negative environmental impact.

With over 1200 athlete/volunteers and data collected for over 120 scientists, the ASC is always looking for ways to expand its reach. Planning a trip? Anyone with a passion for the outdoors and an interest in conservation can contribute. To learn more about Gregg Treinish and the efforts of ASC, log on to their website [adventureandscience.org](http://adventureandscience.org).