



Remarkable Aussie polar explorers smash record in epic Greenland crossing

(Sydney, June 2, 2017) After battling through icy gale force winds and bitterly cold temperatures reaching upwards of minus 20, renowned Aussie polar explorer Geoff Wilson (47) and his adventurer son-in-law Simon Goodburn (27) have not only become the first Australians to traverse Greenland unsupported from the south to the north, they have also become the fastest in history to achieve the feat, smashing the previous record by an astonishing 24 days.

In completing the epic journey from Greenland's southern tip to the Inuit town of Qaanaaq in the north in just 18 days, harnessing the ferocious Arctic winds by using kites to help drag themselves and their 150kg sleds along the way, Wilson and Goodburn shattered the previous benchmark of 42 days*.

They reached their destination at 9.30pm local time on May 31 after a 15-hour slog on the final day through unimaginable crevasse-filled terrain.

The journey of 2,160km is significant from an Australian polar perspective for the following reasons:

- It is the first Australian south to north crossing of Greenland on skis
- It is the fastest south to north unsupported trek on record**
- The duo's mileage over 18 days set several Australian records**

"We are elated to be finished, all safe and well, and to do it in record time is unbelievable. It hasn't sunk in yet," said Geoff from Qaanaaq.

Geoff, an experienced polar explorer, led the expedition accompanied by his son-in-law. “Simon has performed admirably, an absolute pleasure to adventure with. I pushed him hard, and he never came up short. This was a very tough journey and we both found our edge, learning more about ourselves in the process,” Geoff said.

“Above all, it’s a triumph of the human spirit, a reflection on how well a duo can work together when an atmosphere of respect and hard work is embraced, and how a grizzly father and his Gen Y son-in-law can share a tent for night on 20 days and yet come out with even more respect for each other,” he added.

The feat is all the more remarkable given that the men had no frozen tundras to practice their kiting technique on.

Hailing from the Gold Coast on Australia’s east coast meant the men had to visualise soft sand beaches as vast plains of snow and ice, and in place of sleds, which had already been shipped to Greenland, they hauled tyres across the beach instead.

Controlling and maneuvering the kites whilst avoiding perilous dangers such as deep, icy crevasses took huge amounts of stamina and focus, recalled Geoff.

On more than one occasion, the men came close to disaster, almost losing their kites, first when Geoff lost control of his, with Simon pouncing on the runaway kite to save it from being blown away into the icy wasteland, then later in the trip when Geoff did the same for Simon.

Surviving on just a few hours of broken sleep every night, during the four or so hours of darkness the region has per day during this time of the year, when zero visibility means it becomes too perilous to operate the kites, the men built ice walls before bunking down to minimize the effect of the wind lashing their small tent, but the noise of the elements outside still resulted in disturbed sleep at best.

While the conditions were brutally punishing for most of the trek, Geoff said there were also moments of absolute wonder that punctuated the adventure.

Geoff is a pioneer who has mostly self-funded his dreams whilst operating a full time veterinary business with multiple clinics.

Geoff’s wife Sarah Wilson is full of admiration for Geoff and how he goes about acquiring the knowledge he needs to help him achieving his dreams.

“He is as comfortable in the Antarctic and Greenland as he is in the Sahara Desert or crossing vast landscapes or oceans by kite. Geoff is an expert in all environments, kiting or hauling. His genius is in acquiring the information he needs to achieve his goals, as well as his incredible resilience and fortitude,” said Sarah.

The Nansen’s Cross Expedition is named after Fridtjof Nansen, who at 27 years old, became the first person to cross Greenland from the east coast to the west coast in 1888. Simon, who is married to Geoff’s daughter Jade, is also 27.

“I’m so proud of my husband and my dad for this achievement. It’s truly extraordinary,” said Jade Goodburn.

The expedition has been filmed for a one-hour documentary to screen on National Geographic Channel later this year.

<http://5thelementexpeditions.com/nansenscross/>

**The previous official record was 42 days, held by E.McNair-Landry and S.Copeland, 2010*

***To be officially verified*

About the adventurers:

Dr Geoff Wilson

Founder of 5th Element Expeditions and world record holding adventurer. Geoff is most at home in desert environments, both hot and cold, as well as being well-versed in endurance and using kite-based technology. Most notably, Geoff holds the fastest crossing of Antarctica in history. He completed the journey in 53 days – solo and unsupported (2013/14). Geoff also initiated and participated in the first kite-assisted crossing of the Sahara Desert 2009. He was the first person to kite Australia to Papua New Guinea. Geoff is passionate about delivering purpose-driven adventure and seldom sets out to complete anything without it being attached to a worthy cause – in this case, the McGrath Foundation.

Simon Goodburn

With a heart after the wild places, Geoff’s expedition protégé, (and son-in-law) Simon Goodburn is also an experienced expeditioner in his own right. In recent years, Simon has developed an affinity with human endurance in a number of hostile environments, as well as an ever-growing obsession with kite-flying. His first major expedition was accompanying Geoff as they kite-boarded across the Torres Strait in 2012. Since then, he has become a kiteboarding instructor as well as leading polar survival training courses in the back-country of New Zealand. Simon has a knack for keeping a level head under extreme duress.

The Nansen’s Crossing Expedition is made possible with the support of sponsors: Letz Travel, Wildearth, Picture Wealth, Ecolodges Indonesia, Woods Hatcher Solicitors, Rhythm Snowsports, Pure Snow and TR Telecom.

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