

Craig Mathieson - a real life explorer

Polar Ambassador Craig Mathieson is a real life professional explorer. He has been spending time in primary schools involved in the Polar Explorer Programme [1] sharing his knowledge and experiences.

Craig's talks have included his close encounters with polar animals and descriptions of how their bodies are adapted to cope with the harsh environments. He has also shared with pupils his methods of coping with such extreme conditions. In preparation for expeditions Craig spends many hours towing tyres through woods and up hills to build his strength for sledge pulling. He also takes on a very high calorie diet that includes a breakfast consisting of huge bowls of porridge and banana followed by 6 boiled eggs followed by 6 raw eggs. Pupils were surprised to hear that he does not actually like the taste of chocolate but, as it is a high energy fuel, he manages to eat it by wrapping it in slices of salami.

Craig is the first man to have successfully reached each of the poles in his first attempt. He described how during these expeditions he has experienced temperatures as low as -70°C , a temperature at which the enamel shattered off his teeth and the liquid in his eyeballs froze. His dream of conquering the South Pole came after 21 years of hard work and meticulous dedication and he shared with pupils how he had to snap the frozen tears of emotion off his cheeks when he finally reached the Pole.



Figure 1 - Pupils from Carmodean Primary School modelling some of Craig's expedition clothing.

Reference

[1] <https://www.stem.org.uk/welcome-polar-explorer-programme>.

Polar Explorer Programme

The Polar Explorer Programme encourages and supports schools who are keen to raise aspirations and attainment in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) and aims to inspire the next generation of scientists and engineers.

Polar Ambassadors across Scotland have already begun their work and are helping schools to take part in a range of activities, including:

- in-school professional development for teachers;
- free access to resources and activities, which have been curated to link with the commissioning and operation of the ship, the Sir David Attenborough;
- ideas and suggestions to support schools' outreach activities.

Through their work with schools Polar Ambassadors help to increase:

- enjoyment and engagement in STEM subjects and extra-curricular activities;
- confidence in learning science and in scientific enquiry skills;
- awareness of the importance and relevance of science to society, and the role this plays in relation to helping people live with and adapt to climate change;
- knowledge of career opportunities available to pupils who study STEM subjects.

Free resources, further information about the programme and how to get involved are available here: <https://www.stem.org.uk/welcome-polar-explorer-programme>.