

THE SCIENTIFIC EXPLORATION SOCIETY

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April 2005 saw a team from The Scientific Exploration Society (SES) embark on a three-week expedition to the Gulf of San Miguel and the Pearl Islands.

Whilst there the expedition completed a survey of an extraordinary vessel - the wreckage of a submarine built in 1864 lying in the shallow waters off a remote island. Originally thought to be a relic of World War II, it was concluded that the vessel had in fact been built for the American Civil War, but after failing to be adopted by the US Union Navy was used solely for the purpose of gathering pearls.

In addition to the examination of the wreckage, the expedition also included studies of long forgotten Spanish forts in the Gulf of San Miguel; thought to have been built to defend against hostile Indians from the Darien Region, in the 18th Century.

Over the course of their three-week trek, the 18-man expedition team had to contend with the region's diverse terrain as well as the severe storms that are typical of the area as the dry season comes to an end. Establishing and maintaining effective communications was vital in ensuring not only the expedition's success but more importantly the crew's safety as well.

Taking into account the remote region, extreme weather conditions and the team's communication requirements, NSSL sponsored the expedition by providing the SES with a Nera WorldCommunicator (NWC), as its primary mode of communication.



Taking just minutes to set-up, the NWC is a small, lightweight, yet robust unit that provides remote users with a single 64kbps ISDN channel, giving them access to email, voice, fax and data functionality anywhere in the world; an ideal solution for communications between the expedition site and HQ.



The expedition to Panama was a resounding success; achieving its objectives as well as allowing the team to assist the Darien Health Authority in providing much needed medical services to the local population. Commenting on his return, expedition leader John Blashford-Snell said, "It has been a fascinating and very worthwhile project".