

# BEST IN SHOW



**Ann Lockley's off-roading heart gets racing when she attends the first ever Overland Expo Show in the windswept Arizona desert – an event bursting with amazing vehicles and some of the most talented off-roading giants in the world**

**F**or the first time in North America, expedition-ready vehicles, gear, participants and world travellers converged to educate, to learn, to experience and to celebrate the art of vehicle dependent travel. Over 50 exhibitors and 200-plus participants took seminars, enjoyed hands-on driving classes, relaxed while listening to renowned presenters, and benefited from meeting others within the overland community. The historic town of Prescott,

Arizona (an hour and a half northwest of Phoenix) hosted the first Overland Expo in late April at the Yavapai Downs Race Track. This venue provided ample area for camping in the grass overflow parking area and a dirt track that proved an ideal set-up for feature vehicles. The desolate area in the middle of the track had a massive earth-moving machine turning the barrens into off-road driving courses. Within the grandstand there was ample area for classrooms and the theatre



Participant Paul Robinson and instructor Tom Collins proudly display the Land Rover flag next to Paul's Range Rover Sport

A well-outfitted Sportsmobile tackling the first obstacle on the off-road driving course



**Graham Jackson explains the mechanics of articulation**



**The dust that became an integral part of OVE expo 2009**



**Kristina Hall (front right) teaching during the Women's Off-Road Driving Seminar**

for lectures and the expansive asphalt area surrounding the building allowed vendors to set up in the relative protection from the frequently harsh wind and searingly boiling sun.

Roseann Hanson of ConserVentures LLC, an event management and conservation consulting firm, organized Overland Expo 2009. Roseann has a long history of adventure travel as a journalist, conservation program director and guide along with her husband, Jonathan Hanson, editor of *Overland Journal*. With a

background rich in overland travel, Roseann has spent a good portion of her life behind the wheel of 4x4s, integrating 'conservation, science, outdoor skills, and cultural awareness'. Sponsors included *Overland Journal*, Overland Training and Expedition Portal as well as many other companies and organizations directly linked to the overland community.

'Overlanding' and the overland community is a growing phenomenon in North America. In the last five years, the perception has shifted, taking

this idea of 'overlanding' and developing it into a pastime that attracts enthusiasts from all age groups and income brackets. Unlike 4x4ing where the object is to overcome an obstacle or a trail, overlanders use off-road vehicles as a means of exploring the world around them.

#### SCHOOL BEGINS

"I was truly overwhelmed with the entire weekend," said visitor Walt Gibson. "I met so many great people, everyone with the same passion. It didn't matter if they

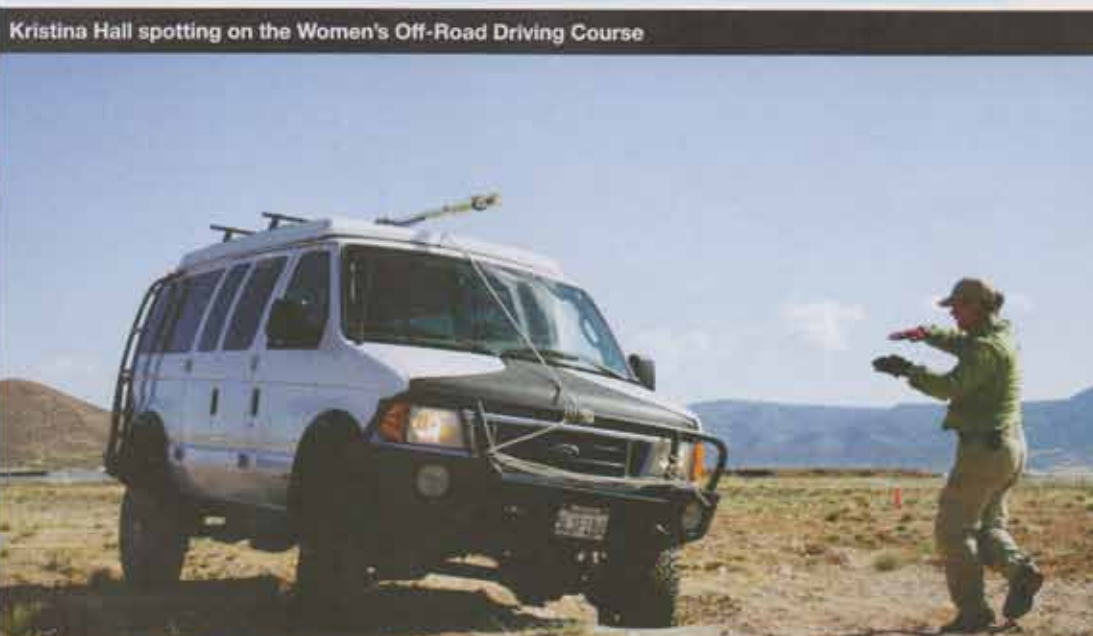
were staff, instructors, vendors or long time overlanders. Everyone was so helpful to those, like me, who are new to this great adventure activity."

Friday morning included a warm and friendly welcome from Roseann, an introduction to many of the instructors and leaders, and a typically entertaining welcome message from Jonathan Hanson and *Overland Journal*.

The three days of the event were split into 50-minute classes and presentations or one hour and 50-minute



**Expert Tom Collins explains the intricacies of two-foot driving**



**Kristina Hall spotting on the Women's Off-Road Driving Course**



Toyota of Dallas and Jacque Arnonidin developed the Overland Edition Toyota Tacoma for the event

hands-on training seminars that were repeated throughout the weekend so that everyone could attend all the classes.

The Off-Road Driving seminar taught by Tom Collins, a North American Land Rover legend, was filled to capacity. Tom's background in off-highway driving includes organising and leading the Great Divide Expedition in 1989; US Team Coordinator for the US Camel Trophy team from 1990 to

1998 and as one of the 1987 team members. He currently consults for Land Rover and is an integral part of its off-highway instructional team. His easy manner and quiet wit are now as legendary as his driving ability.

Another packed house, but on the other end of the spectrum, enjoyed world traveller Stephanie Hackney's 'Overlanding: A Chick's Perspective' which attracted an equal amount of both sexes. Her background

as a model and make-up artist seemed an odd if not intriguing match for overlanding, but her obvious passion and knowledge were quickly apparent. Her seminar touched on topics not usually discussed when we think of adventure travel including: how to deal with leaving friends and family behind, overcoming fear, life on the road, managing roles in male-dominated societies, travelling safely and how to re-enter your 'normal' life.

## VEHICLES AND VENDORS

"I found the Expo a great three days of learning," explained visitor Paul Robinson, "engaging with the presenters, getting to know some of the personalities such as Tom Collins, Bill Baker, Scott Brady, Jonathan and Roseann Hanson, Graham Jackson and many others. Ironically, as an avid consumer of good quality expedition



A fully-loaded Sportsmobile on the off-road driving track



Holt Webb's Defender 90 that runs purely on veggie oil

products, I had the chance also to meet some of the vendors in person – Bajarack, Expedition Exchange and others. Everyone to a tee was open, friendly, and in a very engaging mood to share experiences, talk about their new items and pass on their recommendations.”

Spread over the Yavapai Downs, the feature vehicles definitely gave one the “kid in a candy store” kind of feeling. The Sportsmobiles and Global Expedition Vehicles: the J8; Overland Edition Toyota; the Overland Edition Jeep Wrangler Unlimited; the Land Cruiser that ran entirely on veggie oil; the Ecamper; Disabled Explorers FJ Cruiser; The Wheelers for the Wounded custom build Jeep Unlimited; Unimogs, the Unicats, and even a neat 4WD Volkswagon Westfalia were all on display for the participants to drool over. Vendors ran the gamut as well, from Adventure Trailers to Ex Officio adventure clothing, BajaRacks, Total Vision, and from ARB to Tuffy Security Products to name a few. You name it, it was represented at the amazing OVEExpo ‘09!

### THE FINAL HOORAH!

A particular highlight of the weekend was the Overland Expedition Flag presentation held at the banquet on the final night. This fantastic opportunity was open to all participants undertaking a unique trip prior to OVEExpo ‘10. Along with the flag, they were offered support from sponsors, gift certificates for equipment, an article in *Overland Journal* and free attendance to next year’s Expo where they would present the flag to the 2010 winners.

This year’s winner was the intrepid Holt Webb of Vanishing America. Holt is a professional photographer who is “travelling across America on veggie oil, capturing the unique aspects of our country and culture that are in danger of disappearing within the next few generations.”

Everyone attending the banquet agreed that Holt and his monumental project thoroughly deserved to win the first flag and maybe next year he will be the keynote speaker, presenting his very worthwhile project to next year’s participants: ■



The specially-built Jeep for Wheelers for the Wounded and Jason Halvik



Alan Feld's personal custom-made Search and Rescue Sportsmobile



Ursa Minor's Ecamper based on the Honda Element – a versatile improvement on an already substantial vehicle