**Filmmaker rescued from Yukon wilderness**

**Cuts short survivalist experiment for National Geographic series**

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A British documentary filmmaker who had hoped to rough it out in the Yukon wilderness is instead recuperating back home in London, after health concerns forced him to call for an emergency airlift out of the bush last weekend.

Ed Wardle, 34, was supposed to spend three months in the Tincup Lake area alone — armed with a camera, a rifle and a fishing rod — as he filmed a series titled  *Alone in the Wild* for the National Geographic Channel and Britain's Channel 4.

The idea was for Wardle, described by National Geographic as "just a guy who lives in London and loves the outdoors," to test his technical and physical abilities against the rugged terrain and document how long his passion for living wild would last.

**'Thousand-mile stare,' guide observed**

But on Aug. 22, just seven weeks into the experiment, a starving Wardle set off the satellite transmitter signalling that he needed to get out.

"He had the thousand-mile stare at the end of it," location guide Rob Toohey, who flew in to pick Wardle up, told CBC News on Friday.

"He went as long as he could. He lost a lot of weight, He found that living on grayling and blueberries and the odd porcupine just wasn't doing it for him."

On a video journal entry posted on National Geographic's website during Week 5, a sombre Wardle admitted he wasn't doing as well as he thought he would.

"I kind of thought I was getting on top of the food thing and eating enough, but I've lost a lot of weight recently. I took my pulse, my heart rate, last night and I stand in the high 20s. Normally at home, it would be up in the high 40s. I think that means my metabolism has slowed right down because I'm not getting enough food."

**Daunting task**

Wardle had a gun and a fishing pole with him when he began his adventure but discovered that gathering food was a daunting task.

"Sunny day," he wrote in a Twitter posting on Aug. 19. "Chopped firewood, fried porcupine livers, drank birch leaf tea. Be strong."

On Thursday, Wardle wrote his condition was finally improving after a few days at home.

"Thanks for the support," he said. "At low point, I lost almost two stone [28 pounds] in weight. Enjoying eating and back to 12 stone [168 pounds] already."

On the weekend after he was flown out, Wardle expressed no regret at the attempt.

"I went out there to see if I could live in the wild," he wrote. "It was the hardest thing I've ever done and the best. I did something extraordinary, and I lived my dream."

**Project criticized**

But some have charged the series with exploitation, suggesting that someone without survival training should never have been allowed to attempt such a feat in the name of entertainment.

"This is a pretty foolish enterprise," John Beyer, director of Britain's Media Watch, told the Daily Mail. "If Channel 4 are going to send people on this kind of expedition, they really must make sure they are up to it and have the skills necessary to survive."

The National Geographic Channel decided to go ahead with the broadcast of the series even though the mission was uncompleted.

Series producer Dick Coalhurst told CBC News his team is working with the footage Wardle shot during his time in the Yukon, with the goal to broadcast the episodes in September.

Yukon government officials are assessing the impact Wardle's TV experiment might have on tourism, said Rod Raycroft, the government's overseas tourism marketer.

"It's kind of early to say whether it's good or bad," Raycroft said. "Ed's survival is a good thing, obviously."

The territorial government had spent about $25,000 assisting in the National Geographic production, Raycroft said.

**'He knew what he was getting himself into'**

The National Geographic Channel described Wardle in a biography as "a very competent outdoorsman [with] no particular survival skills or knowledge."

However, the native of Scotland had previously climbed to the summit of Mount Everest as series producer of the show *Everest: Beyond the Limit,* and last year he filmed an expedition to the North Pole.

The Yukon government's outdoor trainer, Kris Gustafson, said he gave Wardle a 90-minute primer on bear safety and wilderness survival when he arrived in the territory in June.

"He knew what he was getting himself into and he seemed, I think, very genuine," Gustafson said.

"Last thing I said was, 'You're probably going to lose a bunch of weight in the next little while,' and I'm sure that's exactly what happened."

**Similar attempts**

The lure of conquering the northern wilderness has drawn others to try similar projects, with varying levels of success.

Canada's Outdoor Life Network has broadcast three seasons of *Survivorman*, in which filmmaker and survival expert Les Stroud would spend seven days in remote locales with little or no food, water or equipment.

Albertan Charlie Russell, son of renowned Canadian naturalist Andy Russell, has spent years living among brown bears in Russia and was the subject of the BBC documentary *Bear Man of Kamchatka*.

But living in the wilderness has its perils.

In 2003, documentary filmmaker Timothy Treadwell and his girlfriend, Amie Huguenard, were killed and eaten by grizzly bears in Katmai National Park in Alaska.

Treadwell's tragic demise came after 13 summers spent living alone among the bears. His story became the subject of the 2005 Werner Herzog documentary *Grizzly Man*.

And in 1992, a 24-year-old Californian named Christopher McCandless hiked into the Alaskan wilderness with no supplies or equipment to see how he would fare. He was found dead of starvation four months later.

McCandless's story was the inspiration for the Jon Krakauer book and Sean Penn movie *Into the Wild*.

**In a couple of paragraphs, compare and contrast Ed Wardle and the ‘man’ in “To Build a Fire.” How are their experiences similar or different? Do these men have anything in common?**