

# Desktop Exploring

National Geographic site more than science



KEVIN O'NEILL / STAFF ARTIST

**N**ational Geographic Magazine has a reputation of being a high-quality publication. Outstanding photography, graphics and writing are reproduced nearly flawlessly on the printed page. So it's no surprise that the organization's website, [nationalgeographic.com](http://nationalgeographic.com), is also produced with the same high standards.

If the site were just a gallery of images from the magazine it would be well worth visiting, but it's much more than that. It does have its share of amazing photos of people, places and animals from all over, under and out of this world. But it also has compelling videos, maps, games, music, blogs and more, covering a dizzying array of subjects.

Some people might have a mistaken impression that National Geographic is a dry, academic review of nature, history and science. Nothing could be further from the truth. Its reporting on the state of the world is timely, topical and in-depth.

## Contemporary coverage

This month, for instance, the history of opium production in Afghanistan is explored, shedding light on the sometimes deadly problems it causes worldwide today. The science coverage is cutting edge and impacts our lives. Tuesday on the site, a video was featured announcing the completion of the biggest census of marine life in history. Its results will be used in addressing prob-

lems such as global warming, world hunger, clean air and more.

Coverage of world cultures is not limited to obscure tribes in jungles halfway around the globe, or ancient civilizations, though they are covered. Contemporary, popular culture is also covered. When the Oscar nominations were announced this week, one of the films nominated was "Restrepo." It's a National Geographic documentary that follows a platoon of American soldiers in Afghanistan for a year. There are trailers, interactive graphics, behind-the-scenes coverage of the movie and more on the website.

Closer to home, there's a special report on the site detailing the Marcellus Shale gas rush in Pennsylvania. There are articles, photo galleries, maps and interactive graphics covering the science, economics and environmental impact on the state.

## Today's technology

Because National Geographic has such a strong focus on science, it's no surprise that its online product makes good use of the latest technology. The site offers numerous applications and games for mobile devices, including content designed specifically for the iPad. An interactive version of the magazine, with additional photos, videos and animation, is available by subscription.

The site also is integrated with social media sites, such as Facebook and Twitter. You can even purchase digital versions of all the

back issues of the magazine on a set of six DVDs, or on a 160GB hard drive.

The website is so deep and broad that there's not enough room in this column to cover all of its features. There really is something for everyone on it. Photographers not only will appreciate viewing the stunning images, but they also can learn from the pros who shoot them via the Photo Tips section. The Travel section will help in planning that exotic trip you've always wanted to take. The Kids section will keep little ones busy for hours with fun, educational games and activities. The online store offers educational and inspirational books, prints, videos and lots of other unusual items. It's easy to spend hours exploring the site.

## Endless exploration

When a site has this much content, the design and navigation are critical to providing a pleasant user experience. The design is visually engaging. Almost every page features world-class photography that is a feast for the eyes, and the information is organized in an easy-to-follow fashion.

There are numerous tabs at the top of the home page to navigate around the site. Many of those tabs reveal subsections when you roll over them. The pages are full of text and picture links to take you to different areas. There's so much content that often you get diverted from an article that interests you, and it takes a while to find your way back.

**KEVIN O'NEILL** is a graphic artist for The Times-Tribune. Contact him at [koneill@timeshamrock.com](mailto:koneill@timeshamrock.com) with links to your favorite websites.



KEVIN O'NEILL

*InSites*