



HIMALAYAN ENVIRONMENT TRUST

HIMALAYAS ONLINE

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HONY. EDITORS

VOL. 10 NO.3
OCTOBER, 2010

1. GANGOTRI REALLY SHRINKING – PHOTOS NOW AND THEN
2. HEALING THE MOUNTAINS
3. A SURGE IN GLACIERS IN KARAKORAM RANGE
4. NEW FOOTAGE SHOWS TIGERS CAN THRIVE IN HIMALAYAS
5. EVEREST’S BIGGEST MYSTERY HAS BEEN SOLVED
6. 1ST HIMALAYAN DAY CELEBRATED
7. UTTARAKHAND TO BE THE FIRST STATE TO ESTABLISH SPECIAL AUTHORITY ON GLACIERS AND CLIMATE CHANGE
8. RETRACING FOOTSTEPS: MALLORY DID REACH EVEREST?
9. NOW, INTERNET ACCESS ON EVEREST

Gangotri really shrinking

Mail Today 19/7/2010

The first ever 'Repeat photography Expedition in the history of Indian Mountaineering has just concluded, but it has brought some bad news.

Comparison of photographic records shows the Gangotri glacier has receded 3 kms in 144 years.

The six member team sponsored by the Indian Mountaineering Foundation recreated the position of the glaciers in the region and compared it with landscape photographs taken by British photographer Samuel Bourne in 1866. Global positioning system and other web based tools for precision-mapping of the area were also used.

Expedition lead by Harshwanti Bisht made following observations:-

*Photographic evidence proves there was no gap between Chaurangi Bamak glacier and Gangotri glacier. They were earlier together at the junction in 1866.

*The Chaurangi Bamak has shifted by around 400 m from Gangotri.

*Condition of Raktban Bamak, Chaurangi Bamak and Meru Bamak is critical

*Condition Kirti Bamak, Ghanohim Bamak, Swachanda Bamak and Maini Bamak is healthy.

*Thickness of the glaciers has gone down.

*Glacial pools in record numbers discovered.

*These pools damage glaciers.

Healing the Mountains

Economic Times 18/7/2010

Dabur's has initiated a medicinal plant project christened 'Dehi me dadami te (You give me; I give you) in the Himalayan Kingdom.

Under its nursery programme, it has set up high altitude satellite nurseries in Marpha, Marang, Nuwakot & Dolakha districts. These nurseries grow over six million saplings of high value medicinal plants like Akarkara, Padamchal, Lauth Sall, Kut. The plantation has employed many women who are involved in the stages like seeding transplanting etc. A green house facility with computers installed in the villages to regulate the temperature and other geophysical conditions has also been initiated. These medicinal plants are used in various products which the company produces.

This project is of the first of its kind in the entire South Asia to get recognition for eco friendly and consideration oriented work. ***Projects like this are definitely the need of hour.***

A surge in glaciers in Karakoram range

Indian Express, Chennai (22/7/2010)

Not all glaciers are melting! If the ice in the Himalayan ranges has been melting fast, then scientists have seen a reverse phenomenon in the Karakoram range where a surge has been noticed in the main and tributary glaciers.

According to European glaciologist working in the High Altitude Research station in the Himalayas, **K2 range of mountains have been reporting an increase in the glacier formations.** The Karakoram Range in northern Pakistan and adjacent India and China is one of the main glacierised areas of the region, together with Pamirs and Tien Shan. Some of the largest valley glaciers in the world can be found there, culminating in the aggregation of four of the longest glaciers in Asia around the K2 and Gasherbrum groups.

Because ‘disappearing’ glaciers is the main prognosis for ongoing climate change, Karakoram events may seem good news. After all glacier melt water from the Karakoram dominates the flow of the main Indus and Yarakand rivers. As resources and hazards, they directly affect the lives of some 200 million people in surrounding dry lands.

COOL CAT – An elusive species



An elusive species of Greater and Trans Himalayas, a little is known about snow leopards.

WWF-India conducted field surveys in 2008-09 to study snow leopards in two states _ Uttarakhand and Himachal Pradesh – and evidence of snow leopards existence was collected. Since it was difficult to ascertain whether the evidence was only of snow leopards, the scats were analyzed during DNA techniques. While some of these indeed were of snow leopards in Uttarakhand, the unfavorable weather conditions and lack of time affected the survey in Himachal Pradesh. The evidence collected from this region was not of snow leopard. Similar surveys are also on in Kargil region.

Such surveys intend to document base line information about snow leopards and predators such as brown bear, Tibetan wolf and prey species such as Asiatic ibex and Ladakh urial. Besides, the survey will help one understand the causes and intensity of large carnivore human conflicts in Kargil. Also it will be effective in terms of the developing mitigation strategies.

Interestingly, Ladakh is the only region where active snow leopard projects are going on and complete data is available in terms of status, distribution and abundance. (check on some details from snow leopard wala article. (photograph of snow leopard to be added)

New footage shows tigers can thrive in Himalayas

(Indian Express (chennai) – 21/9/2010)



A film showing tigers roaming wild in the foot hills of the Himalayas could provide the “missing link’ to an ambitious plan to try to them from extinction in Bhutan.

The film is the first real evidence showing that tigers can thrive and breed in the hills which are over 13000 ft above sea level. At current rate tigers will become extinct in around 15 years. Conservationist Dr. Alan Rabinowitz said the discovery took them one step closer to an ambitious plan

to link up isolated tiger population across Asia with a “Corridor” where they are safe from humans.

“Tigers are though of as a jungle creatures and there is a pressure on their habitats from all sides. Yet we now know they can live and breed at this altitude which is a safer habitat for them. Bhutan was the missing link in this tiger corridor.”

Everest’s biggest mystery has been solved

Statesman, Delhi 10/8/2010



The greatest mystery in mountain climbing involving the death of two British mountaineers who might have climbed Mount Everest in 1924, nearly 30 years before Edmund Hillary and Tenzing Norgay reached the world’s highest summit, has been solved, claim Canadian and Indian Researchers.

Legendary British adventurers George Mallory and Andrew Irvine disappeared near the summit of Mount Everest in 1924 and their death has remained a mystery in the history of mountaineering for 86 years. Mallory’s body was found in 1999 during an Everest expedition, but Irvine’s body has remained untraced to this day. There is belief in some mountaineering circles that two men had actually reached Everest’s summit and were on their way back to their base camp when they perished in 1924. they say if the camera Irvine was carrying is recovered it could contain evidence to prove that they achieved the feat almost 30 years before Edmund Hillary and Tenzing Norgay.

But now two Toronto university professors and an Indian researcher say that an extreme plunge in barometric pressure, a blinding blizzard and sudden oxygen deprivation were the key factors in the pair’s death. They came

to this conclusion after studying long overlooked meteorological records and other accounts of the weather on the day the British mountaineers vanished.

1st Himalayan Day celebrated

TOI 10/9/2010

September 9 came to occupy a very important place for a vast group of people, connected largely in their concern for the Himalayas. The first Himalayan Day observed in the country was marked by rallies and public meetings in which NGOs, local government officials and activists demanded that in the name of the preservation of the hill ecology, local communities could not be displaced or isolated.

In Delhi, a meeting was addressed by stalwarts like Sunderlal Bahuguna and Dr. Karan Singh who outlined that unrestricted developments of the hills on one side and the Government's greening policy under which locals were being displaced was leading to wide discontent among the people.

Noted environmentalist from Dehradun, Dr. Anil Joshi stressed the need for public discussion on dams that have been created in the Himalayas. He also raised questions as to why people who would be most affected with such forms of development are never consulted?

Uttarakhand to be the first state to establish special authority on Glaciers and Climate change.

(PIONEER 9/9/2010)

Though there are many academic institutions involved in research on the condition of glaciers and climate change, Uttarakhand will be the first of its kind to work on the practical aspects of climate change and its impact on glaciers.

Uttarakhand Space Application Centre (USAC), nodal agency of this authority will be headed by Chief Minister, Uttarakhand, Shri Ramesh Pokhriyal Nishank.

USAC will focus on the practical aspects of research on the condition of glaciers and effect of climate change on the Himalayas in Uttarakhand. The authority will also frame guidelines for ensuring the protection of glaciers in the State. USAC will also use dynamic data available through satellite imaging provided by ISRO.

Retracing footsteps: Mallory did reach Everest?

TOI- 13/9/2010



Climbers have for decades wondered whether British national George Mallory did reach the summit of Mount Everest with his partner Sandy Irvine in 1929, almost 25 years before Edmund Hillary and Sherpa Tenzing.

It seems that the Mount Everest's biggest mystery has been solved after US climber Conrad Anker, who discovered Mallory's body on Mount Everest in 1999, retraced the doomed explorer's footsteps on the mountain. Anker used 1920's clothing and equipment to see, if in theory atleast, Mallory and Irvine could have beaten Edmund Hillary. A documentary film, *The Wildest Dream, Conquest of Everest*, shows they had succeeded. Mallory and Irvine died on the mountain after being seen 8000 feet from the summit.

"It was harder than I expected. But it is possible Mallory and Irvine could have done it," the Sunday Express quoted Anker as saying.

Now, Internet access on Everest

TOI (31/10/2010)



Climbers would now be able to make video calls and surf the Internet on their mobile phones while at the top of Mount Everest.

A subsidiary of Swedish phone giant said that it had set up a high speed third generation (3G) phone base station at an altitude of 5200 metres near Gorkshep village in Everest region. The coverage of the network will reach up to the peak of the Everest.

The installation will also help tens of thousands of tourists and trekkers who visit the world's highest mountain every year. Climbers previously depended on expensive and erratic satellite phone coverage and voice only network