

INTRODUCTION

After experimenting with being open for the monsoon last year with lacklustre results, we have reverted to our original procedure of being closed from mid-June to early September. As well as ensuring a complete break for the staff to take well-earned monsoon leave, the quietness up on the hill around the lodge encourages wildlife. Our penultimate guests even saw a Common Leopard (*Panthera pardus*) outside Room 6 early one evening! Rest assured, it slipped quietly away...! The diversity of fauna is amazing considering how close one is to the ever-expanding city of Pokhara. We regularly see leopard, Jungle Cat (*Felis chaus*), Yellow-throated Marten (*Martes flavigula*), Small Indian Mongoose (*Herpestes auropunctatus*) among others. Our TM Pokhara Bird Checklist stands at 288 species sighted, with four new sightings this past season. A particularly memorable one was a Pallid Harrier (*Circus macrourus*) at Harpan Khola in January. Likewise, our Butterfly Checklist shows we have sighted 252 species in the lodge compound alone. The lodge is thus a wildlife haven as well as a resort where guests from around the world can relax and escape the pressures of the modern world. This is as we wish it.



NEWS

The season ended well – we had slightly fewer guests than last year (down 6%) which compares well with the industry. Our commercial results are sound, with an increased profit bonus for the staff this year. A big thank you to all our guests, agents, supporters who have visited or sent their clients over the past season; we appreciate the tough economic climate and realise the constraints this places on travel and holiday budgets. We are thus being more flexible, holding our rates for 2010, and adopting other incentives to help mitigate these very real difficulties.



Lisa Choegyal, Director of Tiger Mountain Pokhara Lodge, has been appointed as Honorary Consul designate for New Zealand in Nepal. She succeeds long time Tiger Mountain consultant, Miss. Elizabeth Hawley. We wish her many congratulations as she continues the strong links between New Zealand and Tiger Mountain. We hope that this will further strengthen ties with New Zealand and encourage more visitors to Tiger Mountain. Lisa has also been appointed as Director for Strategy and Marketing on Tiger Mountain Nepal's new Advisory Board.

Marcus Cotton is re-appointed as Managing Director of Tiger Mountain (Pvt.) Limited. He has also become Chief Executive of Tiger Mountain Nepal to assist in the coordination and direction of the various companies of the "family." This means he spends half his time in Kathmandu and half at Tiger Mountain Pokhara Lodge. He notes that the combination of Kathmandu office and frontline operation work is appealing and a great challenge. He is also confident that TM Pokhara will not change because of his periodic absences – except perhaps for the better! The team at the lodge is more than capable of running the show.



Tiger Mountain Pokhara Lodge has maintained strong links with the Brigade of Gurkhas whose recruiting, welfare and pension camp in Pokhara is a focal point for the large Gurkha community in West Nepal. Many visitors associated with the Gurkhas have visited the lodge this year including Field Marshal Sir John Chapple, a long time supporter of Tiger Mountain, visited with his family – three generations – just before heading to Tiger Tops for Christmas with Jim Edwards. General Sir David Richards, Commander-in-Chief, British Army, and Lady Richards visited for an informal dinner while on an official visit to see the work of

the Gurkha Welfare Trust. Major General Simon Mayall, Deputy Chief of the Defence Staff, visited at New Year during a visit to British Gurkhas Pokhara and was surprised to find several friends staying at the lodge who had served with him! Other great supporters of Tiger Mountain include Adrian and Anne Griffith and their children, Hattie and Phoebe (who we all hope will join tiger Tops as a Naturalist in due course). Col. Adrian leads all the Gurkha Welfare Scheme projects in Nepal – a major series of development works that enhance the lives of ex-servicemen and their communities. Run with clear thinking and a sound military approach, as well as being able to utilise the effective services of retired Gurkha personnel, the projects deliver on time and on budget – more than can be said for most “official” aid projects! David and Joanna Thomas, a retired officer of 2nd Gurkhas, represents another aspect of the special relationship between British officers and the Gurkhas. Owners of the famous Thomas’s London Day Schools, the Thomas family has established the CAIRN Trust which works splendidly to support rural education in the hills of Nepal – home to 84% of the population. They build schools, provide educational materials, scholarships, and special facilities for those most in need. This shows the wider commitment of individuals as well as major organisations through the Gurkha connection to provide pragmatic support to Nepal’s “cheerful, strong and resilient, yet incredibly poor people.” More can be discovered on their website www.cairntrust.com.

Staff Profile:

This newsletter we profile Chettra Kumal, one of our team of hard working Stewards. Chettra’s home is in Meghauri, the village bordering Chitwan National Park, which has long supplied dedicated staff to Tiger Tops. He has been at the Lodge since its opening. His cousins work at Tiger Tops so his family have long links with Tiger Mountain Nepal. Be it working in the dining room, tidying bedrooms for guests, or assisting at the Bar, Chettra’s smile and easy charm has won him many friends among our guests. His confidence and English speaking skills have developed impressively over the past couple of seasons and he is often found practicing his conversation with guests!



Responsible Tourism:

The Sustainable Action Group meets regularly and is gradually working with local groups in the village, Mother’s Groups and Youth Clubs, to encourage better waste management and recycling. The village is already good and recycles almost all glass bottles and metal scrap. However, paper and plastic, the bane of all our lives, is still a problem. The Action Group has been working with the local municipalities to see how they can assist in sound management of plastic waste.

The Responsible Tourism Audit is rather delayed, as we have just been too busy to give the final detailing the attention it deserves. However, we hope to have the systems in place by September, only a couple of months behind planned schedule.

We are pleased to have reached the long-list of the Virgin Holidays Responsible Tourism Awards 2009 again – as in 2008.

Projects and Community Support:

Shillinge Community Forest Users' Group had a meeting with us to consider future programmes with the support of TMPL and the International Trust for Nature Conservation. We all agreed that there was need to consolidate the successful fencing and management of the existing areas before embarking on new elements.

Our two local schools, Shiva Shakti and Amar Jyoti are both doing well. The major construction work at Amar Jyoti is complete so the classroom space is now sufficient – although, with its success at School Leaving Certificate, I suspect they will need even more classrooms soon, such is the popularity of the school. Guides, Sanu Adhikari and Hari Pariyar, are working to develop a teacher development programme in conjunction with People & Places – a UK responsible volunteer tourism specialist.

The Sustainable Action Group are working with Mothers' and Youth Clubs to encourage improved waste management in the community – we have provided waste drums for recycling and will assist the clubs to make the village a litter free area.

New Services:

After a visit to Delhi in May (112°F / 44°C), the redecoration of the bedrooms has moved ahead and orders placed for new curtains, upholstery and bedcovers, which will lighten up the rooms, giving a fresher, feel. Yes, the Monk's Robe bedcovers have finally been consigned to history! It is sad that the range, quality, and quantity of material just cannot be found in Nepal. We spent many hours with local suppliers before venturing to India, in accordance with our "buy local" policy. However, our supplier in India also promotes entirely local materials and much will be made by tribal communities in Rajasthan and elsewhere.

Images of Tiger Mountain

Another view of Tiger Mountain Pokhara Lodge - the Essence of Tranquillity....



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