



THE HIMALAYAN CLUB

Climbing and Beyond...

E-LETTER

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Climbs and Explorations

Eastern Himalaya

Unknown Arunachal - Exploring the remote mountains of the Eastern Himalaya

Beyul, or hidden valleys, are believed to be pockets of paradise hidden in remote parts of the Himalaya. Legend has it that these are places of peace and refuge from the outside world, protected by dangerous terrain and ferocious guardians. Some beyul are well known, some inhabited, while others are secret, only occasionally visited by spiritual seekers and adventurers; many are still unknown.

Recently I had the privilege of stumbling into a secret beyul in the remote Eastern Himalaya. In this article I have removed all references to the exact location of this place so that it may lie undisturbed till the next seeker rediscovers it.

We sprinted up a steep vegetated hillside; pulling heavily on branches and grabbing at tree trunks. I gasped at the thin air at nearly 4000m above sea level. My heart pounded wildly and head felt like it was going to explode. I stopped every few minutes and doubled over, wheezing for air. We had one hour to spare, only one hour to make it to a place where no one had ever been before. And we had only one chance at this, as both time and our supplies were running out. We had to put everything into this final push.

Huge spruce and fir trees towered over us, their branches drooping, heavily loaded with moss and dripping with long tendrils of old man's beard. My boots sank into the



The source of the River [Photo] Amar Dev Singh

ground, soft as a mattress, covered with a deep layer of moss. I swung my machete at the thickets of rhododendron to hack a path through the dense undergrowth. There were no paths here. There was no record of anyone ever venturing this deep into this part of the mountains.

We were following a river to its source, deep in a remote corner of the Eastern Himalaya in Arunachal Pradesh. We crisscrossed the river a number of times before reaching the final obstacle in our path – a series of waterfalls.

I clamoured over the lip of the final waterfall and could finally see the source, a lake, in the distance. It had taken years of planning and now I was finally there. I practically sprinted the final 20 metres to the shores of the lake and stood, hands on my hips, gasping for breath by the pristine shores.

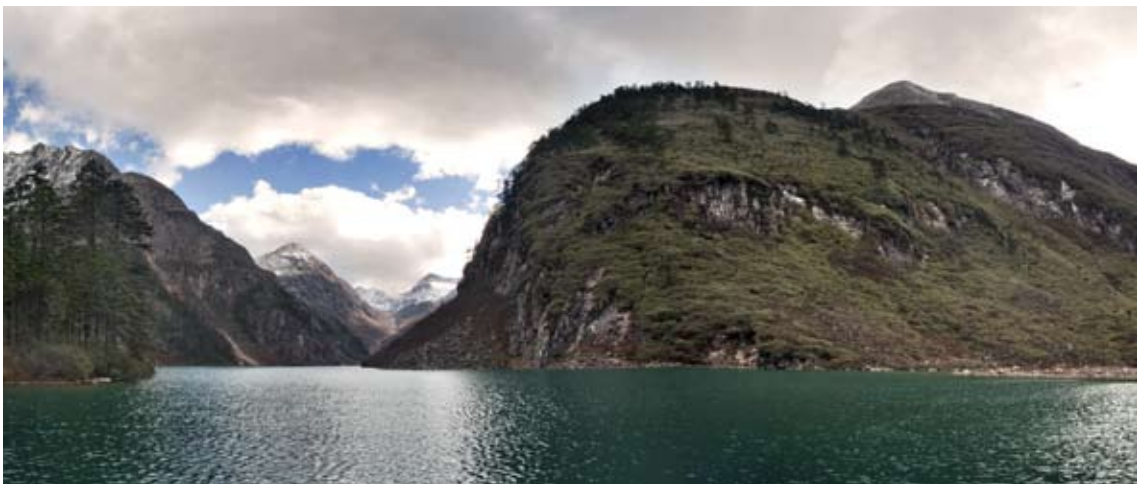
Steep mountainsides swept up from the lake edge to unnamed 6000m summits. The lake was like an emerald jewel set in granite, its clear placid waters dropping away steeply into dark unfathomed depths. I could see across to the far side where the glaciated valley climbed steadily leading to the border with Myanmar.

I felt a rush of pleasure as I took a moment to realise: we were the first humans to have the privilege to stand at this enchanted place.

Unfortunately we didn't have much time to spare. We had four hours of daylight and as much time to trek back to camp through trackless forest. I took one final glance before bouncing off across the boulders to join my companions.

Our Secret Compass team had flown in from all over the world on a warm October evening in Delhi. While we were from very varied professional backgrounds: IT specialist, financial analyst, ex-soldier, mining electrician etc.; we shared the one thing that had brought us together: a quest for adventure.

We caught a flight to the northeast region of India, then boarded a couple of SUVs and hit the road. It was the tail end of the monsoon and heavy grey clouds darkened the skies. The air was muggy and thick.



A panoramic view. [Photo] Amar Dev Singh



Along the River [Photo] Amar Dev Singh

Our heavily laden vehicles drove at breakneck speed through small towns and villages, swerving wildly to avoid cows, chickens, goats, cyclists, trucks and all manner of potentially deadly obstacles. The driver grinned broadly, displaying his beetlenut-red teeth, as the intrepid adventurers oohed and ahed in terror at the near misses.

On the second day we drove for over ten hours till we reached the trailhead near the Chinese border. It was late in the evening and already pitch dark. We unloaded our gear and stacked the bags in an empty room of a half-finished guesthouse.

In the morning the people from the local village turned up to offer their services as porters. Sorry, did I say offer? They demanded that we employ them for twice the regular rate. The negotiations started off very aggressively. They shouted their demands, gesticulating wildly with their arms.

The shouting and negotiations continued till late into the afternoon. We weren't getting anywhere. Eventually I agreed to the outrageous terms and we shouldered our packs and filed down the trail.

The trek started in a deep gorge; its steep slopes were covered in thick subtropical jungle draped in vines and the roar of the river echoed off granite cliffs. The track petered out into a faint game trail used by the occasional local hunter. We scrambled over broken ground; sometimes dropping down to the rounded boulders along the river and then climbing into the thick jungle on the hillsides and along the tops of vegetated cliff.

The route crisscrossed the valley a number of times and we had to cross the wild river on some of the sketchiest bridges I have ever seen. They were rude constructions made either of single logs or a couple of bamboos lashed together with vines which flexed and wobbled under our weight.

Later that afternoon we had made it to a suitable campsite, a sandy spot between some large river boulders – the only flat spot in this narrow valley.

We rose with the sun next morning, packed quickly and after a breakfast of sweetened porridge and cups of chai, entered the jungle once again. The route was much the same as the day before: tough going through sections of jungle, then down to the boulders along the river, then scrambling up steep sections of exposed roots and rocks.

Over the next few days we continued to hack our way through the jungle following the river through a variety of vegetation belts as we climbed higher into the mountains. Tall spruce and fir trees replaced the broad-leafed trees of the lower reaches. Most noticeable was the absence of vines, which had become the bane of our existence, tangling on our gear and pulling us back.

The river, our constant companion, roared by our side; rapids gave way to waterfalls as the terrain steepened. The trekking varied between grades of difficult, serious and deadly. We waded through waist high ferns, often having to crawl under or clamour over fallen trees.

While sorting through the supplies and reordering loads at camp every day we discovered that the porters had been indulging in wholesale theft of our supplies. By the fifth day it was obvious that the porters had stolen so much food that they had almost compromised the expedition. They had eaten through all their supplies and then stolen nearly a week's supply of food from our bags. I divided the remaining supplies into loads and retained only five of the porters and sent the rest back down the valley with all nonessential equipment. We had about another week's worth of food; just enough to get us to the source of the river and back.

We climbed through pine forest with dense undergrowth of bamboo and stunted rhododendron trees. At 3500m the valley flattened out and broadened into a textbook u-shaped glaciated valley. It was great to have a broad expanse of sky above our head after the days spent in the claustrophobic confines of the gorge and jungle.

We were out of the trees but the struggle was far from over. The forest continued all the way to nearly 4000m. The forest was now broken into thickets interspersed with large spaces of dense undergrowth. The river, now considerably smaller, was strangely silent as it meandered its way through the broad flat valley.

After only a few hours' walk we set up camp and had the afternoon off. It was a good opportunity to let our bodies acclimatise.

We rose early the next morning as we aimed to make our way to the source of the river at around 3700m and make it back to camp before dark. It was a lot easier travelling light but the virgin jungle was much denser.

By around lunchtime we still hadn't reached the source, which I calculated to be only six kilometres from camp. The dense undergrowth had impeded our progress and route finding was very difficult. My GPS indicated that we were only a kilometre away from the source and by my estimates we only had an hour to spare. We made a decision to travel as fast as possible and turn around in exactly an hour, whether we made it or not. We synchronised our watches and tore off up the mountain. I described this section at the start of the piece.

We made it back to camp just as night was falling. The cook had a roaring campfire and a hot meal waiting. Bellies full, we lay by a roaring campfire and stared in silence into the flames till late.

After a solid night's sleep we woke to a snow-blanketed landscape; heavy clouds and mist hung low in the valley. The porters started to pack the camp without asking us. I was puzzled as we were planning to stay for at least another day. They just snapped at me and said they were off down the valley to a lower camp. After much argument I had no choice but to agree to head back with them.

I fixed a meeting place and told them to go ahead. Maila Chetri, one of the porters, stayed behind with us. We hurriedly packed our gear and followed in their footsteps. After a few hours of trekking through the snow we got to the waterfall and scrambled down to the campsite; cold, wet and hungry. This was where we were supposed to meet but there was no sign of the porters. I thought they might have gone a bit lower to another spot.

But when we got to the second campsite there was no sign of the porters. At that moment I went cold, I realised they had abandoned us. They had taken off with all our food and kitchen gear. We were four-day's walk away from civilisation and all we had in the way of food were the trail snacks we carried in our packs.

Luckily Maila had stayed behind with us. I hurriedly unzipped his bag and found, to my immense relief, a couple of bags of pasta, an assortment of muesli bars and a few packets of soup. That coupled with our personal trail snacks would ensure that we could just about make it back.

We wolfed down a couple of muesli bars and headed further down the valley. The forest and the mountains, whose majesty we had revered on the trek in, now loomed over us like a predator watching our every move; waiting for us to make just one mistake.

The next day a few hours into our hike down the valley we spotted a couple of figures along the riverbank far in the distance. At first we thought it was one of the porters but then we noticed he was walking upstream, towards us. When we met up, we learnt they were from another village further down the valley and explained that they were looking for a hunter who was lost in the forest. I asked if they had seen any of the porters, who were from a rival clan. They had indeed passed them a day ago.



Looking Back. [Photo] Amar Dev Singh

They said we were most welcome to join them at their campsite a couple of hour's hike downstream.

When we arrived at the campsite the rescue team very generously presented us with a two-kilo bag of rice and refused to accept any payment. We gifted them a torch in exchange. It was good to be in the company of friendly hospitable people.

The next morning we bade farewell to our hosts and marched off into the jungle; spurred on by the thought that we'd be sipping a beer by the evening.

We hacked our way out of the gorge just as the sun was setting. Elated to be out of the jungle and back on easy ground, we bonded for a bit of backslapping and posed for group photos. Everyone profusely thanked Maila for sticking by our side.

We pounded out the last few kilometres back along a village track to the road head. I couldn't wait to get the heavy pack off my shoulders and savour a bottle of Kingfisher; sometimes dreams do come true!

By Amar Dev Singh

(Article, HJ Vol. 70)

Sikkim and Nepal Himalaya

Ascent of Pachermo West Face

Over seven weeks in October and November, Americans Rousseau and Villanueva climbed 2700 meters of technical new terrain in Nepal's Rolwaling Himal. They made a Grade V ascent of Pachermo's west face and reached 1500 meters on Tengi Ragi Tau (6938m) before descending, unable to find a safe bivy option.

Their expedition was one of several small climbing teams visiting the broad, U-shaped valley. "We were blown away by how much action was going on in the Rolwaling this year. There was no one else there on our last trip," Rousseau told *Alpinist*. "I think more people are going in there because the peaks are steep, super intimidating, and there is lots of new-routing potential."

They chose a line up the 1200m west face of Pachermo — a mountain that is frequently climbed via its north ridge by trekkers and acclimatizing alpinists, Villanueva says. Touching the Void author Joe Simpson knows it as the peak where, in 1991, he dislocated an ankle, ruptured a nostril and broke a cheekbone in a 200m fall.

Streams of solid neve and water-ice amid granite rock composed the lower face, but the desirable terrain dissolved into deep, unconsolidated snow as they moved higher. The pair summited after 12 hours of climbing. They followed the north ridge back to base camp in strong winds.



The Americans' new route up Pachermo, The West Face (AI4 M5, 1220m)



Villanueva starts up a “calf-crushing” section of Tengi Ragi Tau. [Photo] Alan Rousseau

Alan Rousseau paused, breathing hard at 6200 meters above sea level. Lifting his arms out of the neck-deep snow, he used his ice tools to clear his path upward. The light, faceted flakes sloughed back onto him, but he burrowed upward; his partner, Tino Villanueva, followed behind. The motions repeated for 60 meters. Another pitch higher, he and Villanueva emerged on the summit of Pachermo (6275m).

Next, they aimed for Tengi Ragi Tau, one of the higher summits in the Rolwaling Himal. Despite a number of attempts since the Nepali government opened the mountain and 102 others to climbing in 2002, the main summit of Tengi Ragi Tau has seen just two ascents. That year, a Japanese-Nepali team made its first and second ascent in siege style by the 1600m southeast face. The average age of the six Japanese members was 59 years.

This autumn, the Americans started up the untrammelled western aspect and reached 6200m before making camp. “All night we heard objects whizzing past us, with fortunately only small objects bouncing off our ultra-thin tent,” Rousseau told climbing.com. Though they made consistent progress the following day, the available bivy spots at 6500m were even more exposed to debris.

“Tino did not feel the rib offered enough protection. We debated for a bit, but I told Tino a vote to descend always trumps a vote to go on when a partner feels the situation is unsafe.” Rousseau wrote to Alpinist. “I was struck by a piece of ice on our first rappel so maybe he had a point.” Twenty-five rappels and more than eight hours later, their feet touched the base of the mountain again.

Adapted from Alpinist.com



The November attempt on Tengi Ragi Tau, where the climbers found difficulties up to WI5 M6 over 1500 meters of previously unclimbed terrain. [Photo] Tino Villanueva

Kumaun and Garhwal

Of Succinct Snow and Winter Warps

I got the cue for the trail from a report by Maninder Kohli in an earlier Himalayan Club newsletter. With not many leaves at disposal, Brahmtal seemed to fit the bill perfectly, more so considering the scenic drive to Lohajung through Ranikhet, passing through Someshwar valley, the traditional food bowl of Kumaun (a minor dislocation in the front axle enroute Deval from Gwaldam did give me goose bumps for the rest of the drive though, being the lone driver with no credible mechanical recourse).

Arriving in the mellow winter afternoon, Lohajung seemed to be recovering from the hangover of the Nanda Devi Raj Jat Yatra, and I was surprised to discover that the spacious interiors of the GMVN guesthouse were not the erstwhile musings of some colonial soul. Roopkund has mushroomed an unsustainable trend in my opinion, with the seasonality too skewed to render the large number of lodges and homestays unsustainable in the long run.

Brushing away the critique's vision, February presented us with the quintessential Kumauni outback, and Lohajung glistened, albeit with fair wind, in the winter sun, the villagers' solar panels competing in their quest for maximum night time reprieve. The rest of the evening was spent fixing porters and buying supplies, and the village quietly slipped into dusk without any electricity.

We started leisurely the next morning, my porters eager to hitch along with another group of 8-9 people, but the idea was abandoned shortly as they climbed very swiftly. The trail from the village climbed dustily for the first couple of kilometres before we finally snaked inside the thick oak and rhododendron canopy.

Hiking solo often gives one the leeway to be a tough taskmaster, and three hours later, we hit the first deep snow as we arrived at Khopariya Tal, a small, completely frozen lake that was to be our campsite for the day.

Quiet bemused at the clock reading just one o' clock, we camped in for a cooked lunch. Rest of the day was spent exploring Bekal Tal, which lay on the opposite side of the hill from Khopariya Tal. A small Nag Devta temple punctuated one end of the lake, and a decent amount of snow (~2 ft.) surrounded the periphery. I think I spotted a carp bubbling at the fringes of the lake, and the surroundings were heartbreakingly desolate and quiet. Yellow billed blue magpie and White tailed Nuthatch were the avian rewards for the day, and a Pale Clouded Yellow fluttered long enough for my camera shutter to relent. Shepherd hutments provided the luxury of a separate kitchen, and the wide expanse of winter line made up for a scenic twilight.

We woke up to another clear dawn, with Jungle crows scanning the campsite eagerly for breakfast. The morning was much more rewarding in terms of avifauna with leisurely sightings of Grey crested Tit, Spotted Laughing thrush and Himalayan Woodpecker. Marching up at around 10 o'clock, we hit the first real patch of winter



Different hues of Trishul and Nanda Ghunti from ridge top before Brahma Tal [Photo] Parth Joshi

snow climbing up from Bekal Tal. A half an hour steep thrash up led us to the first ridge, with Trishul and Nandaghunti finally staring us in winter brood. Scanning the wide expanse for a while, we maintained a brisk pace and arrived at Choti Jhandi a little past one o'clock. The walk down towards Brahmatal seemed an avoidable hike down with all equipment, and we decided to camp on the top itself, trading wind for that cockpit view.

Setting up camp and relishing lunch glazing ceaselessly over the mighty peaks, we started the hike down towards Brahmatal around two in the afternoon. This was some tough winter snow, and I immediately regretted leaving the gators at home (the trekking poles already utilized for setting up kitchen). The snow soft and up to neck deep in places, we decided to skip skirting the ridge to Brahmatal top and traverse down towards the lake. Fumbling and stumbling most of the way, we thanked the weather gods for the blue skies as we slowly approached the little brown dot that was the Nag Devta temple.

The lake itself, to be fair, was not in its true colours, but the snow tramping was a challenge to be relished in quiet a good weather. Trawling back up to the campsite on weeping socks, the wind threatened to play spoilsport for a while, but thankfully relented as dawn set in, and quite a large supply of wood ensured a cosy evening, with grandstand views of the peaks, Ali and Bedni Bugyals and Junargali.

Rising up to a grand view and aiming to reach Ranikhet by nightfall, we descended briskly towards Lohajung, two days' worth of climbing levelled in a three-hour sprint,

pausing only to catch a glimpse of a pair of Himalayan Weasel near Bekal Tal. I think 3-4 nights, the average duration prescribed in most itineraries, is a bit too long, and with proper gear, one can actually attempt a hike up Jatropani from the lake in that time.

- ▶ Summary: Winter trek to Brahmatal, Uttarakhand
- ▶ Team Member(s): Parth Joshi
- ▶ Additional Support: 2 porters
- ▶ Spotted Wildlife:
 - Birds: Yellow-billed Blue Magpie, White-tailed Nuthatch, Grey crested Tit, Spotted Laughing thrush, Himalayan Woodpecker
 - Animals: Himalayan Weasel
 - Butterflies: Pale Clouded Yellow
- ▶ No water sources, snow melted for all purposes

Dates: Feb 9-11, 2015

- ▶ Day 1: Lohajung (~2300m) to Bekal Tal (~3000m). 3 hour steep uphill hike, very little snow
Camp at Khopariya Tal
- ▶ Day 2: Khopariya Tal to Ridge Top (~4000m), 2 hour hike, medium snow.
Ridge Top to Brahmatal and back, 3-4 hour hike, heavy snow
Camp at ridge top
- ▶ Day 3: Hike back to Lohajung, 3-4 hours

By Parth Joshi

Karakoram

Nanga Parbat. Winter Expeditions

Nanga Parbat (8126m) has attracted a lot of climbers because of the challenges it presents. It has not been climbed in winter and as many as 28 expeditions have failed in winter to date. In winter of 2014-15, four expeditions attempted to climb Nanga Parbat from various routes but were unsuccessful. Here is a short report on the attempts.

Pole Tomasz Mackiewicz and Frenchwoman Elisabeth Revol - Nanga Parbat Winter Expedition 2014/2015. The north-west Diamir wall, unfinished road Messner-Hanspeter 2000. They reached 7800m

Excerpts from Elisabeth Revol' blog

We reached the altitude of 7800 m during the 10-day journey through the shackles of cold. The nights were extremely cold, and I do not think I slept during our 4 nights beyond 7000m. Experience or we tested our limits ... on the wire ... 30 expeditions have to give up on this mountain ... the conditions are really extreme ...

Short 10 days in the heart of the mountain, action to confront nature, wind, cold, sun, to get stuck in the tent, trying to move forward, to protect the ends of his body, to have confidence, to lose hope, to dream, to make predictions with Tomek ... Anyway we had a story in hostile and extraordinary natural environment, history is both simple and so complicated. Difficult to get his mind this mountain difficult to return to reality and yet we will have ...

Renunciation: difficult to give up yet this is an integral part of the activity. This mountain is a paradox, both pure and fierce. The weather can change in seconds making us prisoners. Wind can scream and run amok, it can pay cubic meters of snow. Many have tried and lost ... we are on the Nanga Parbat, never climbed mountains in winter, despite more than 30 expeditions in different ways.

I am pleased to have reached this altitude, I discovered the cold, the solitude ... peace that carries his house as the days and appreciates any progress, any step forward. On this mountain every day is a reward, a step into the unknown, a step towards the discovery of oneself and of its possibilities.

Russian Expedition on Rupal Face

Nikolay Totmjanin, Sergei Kondraszkin, Valery Szamało and Victor Smith attempted - Schell route on the Rupal Wall. They reached 7150m and were defeated by blizzard and cold weather. They retreated safely after a 45 day stay on the mountain. The whole feedback to St. Petersburg was transmitted through SMS - New use of technology!

The Himalayan Club

Annual Seminar

The Himalayan Club Annual Seminar was held on February 14 and 15 2015 at The Mysore Association Hall, Mumbai.



The HC Committee with outgoing President Brig. Ashok Abbey.

Sitting L to R : Nandini Purandare, Taniil Kilachand, Brig. Abbey, Deepak Bhimani, Rishad Naoroji
Standing L to R: Gp. Capt. V. K. Sashindaran, Rajesh Gadgil, Meher, Falgooni Mehta, K.B. Singh, Debabrata Mukherji, Ratnesh Jhaveri, Motup Chewang, Dr. Godbole, Ravi Mariwala, Divyesh Muni

It was inaugurated with a very interesting Kaivan Mistry Memorial Lecture by Lindsay Griffin titled *Escape from Mongolia*. He described his adventures in Mongolia and escape from an injury.



Kaivan Mistry Memorial Lecture - Lindsay Griffin talking about his escape from Mongolia

Tony Smythe was the recipient of **The Kekoo Naoroji Book award** for his biographical sketch of his father 'My Father Frank'. He talked about his book and his father at great length with many anecdotes and his memories.

On Sunday February 15, 2015 the theme of annual seminar ***Everest, Perspectives and Philosophies in Mountaineering*** was addressed.

Everest has attracted a lot of criticism and commercial climbing in recent years.



Tony Smythe receiving the Kekoo Naoroji Book award

A perspective on the theme was given by climbers and explorers from various backgrounds. The speakers included

Divyesh Muni, Dawa Steven Sherpa, Harish Kapadia, Umesh Zirpe and Dr. Murad Lala. The talks were followed by a lively discussion led by Brig. Abbey, our outgoing President.

Jagdish Nanavati Garuda Medal for the year was awarded to Ringzen Ladakhi a living legend, for exemplary service to mountaineers in 1960s and 70s. He was the backbone of all early explorations and climbed in the Manali area – The

Himalayan Club is proud to honour him for the exemplary services rendered by him to Mountaineering expeditions.



Intense panel Discussion led Col. Ashok Abbey

His role in serving members on such trips has led to many a successful expedition.

Now 83 years old and living in Manali he was unable to come in person to receive the award. Mr. Rajesh Gadgil while receiving the medal on his behalf paid him glowing tributes calling him a mentor to young mountaineers.

Jagdish Nanavati award for excellence in Mountaineering

was awarded to successful Rasa Glacier Expedition 2014. This exploratory expedition to the Eastern Karakoram in 2014 was led by Mr. Divyesh Muni. The



Spellbound Audience at the Annual Seminar



Sachin Nanavati presenting the Jagdish Nanavati award for excellence in Mountaineering to Divyesh Muni

team comprised of Vineeta Muni, Rajesh Gadgil and Atin Sathe. The expedition was successful in making the first ascent of two peaks - Tusuhm Kangri - 6219 m and Rassa Kangri - 6250 m the team also visited the Shukpa pass (6110 m), West Rassa la (5930 m) and crossed the East Rassa la (6000 m) into Sumur nala.

Kolkata Section

The Himalayan Club Kolkata Section celebrated the 87th Founders' Day at Rotary Sadan on February 20th 2015.

A packed audience were all attention as the four speakers covered a host of topics from the history of The Himalayan Club, climbing Peak 6212 in the Zaskar region, the Snowman trek in Bhutan and the hidden secrets of the east ridge of Kangchenjunga.

Chinmoy Chakrabarti, the first speaker presented through a series of historical photographs the history of The Himalayan Club beginning with its founding in Shimla. Interestingly, the first issue of the Himalayan Journal published in 1928 was also displayed. It was interesting to see photos of the great Kenneth Mason, author of Abode of Snow as well as stalwarts like Douglas Freshfield, Colonel Bruce etc.

Rupamanjari Biswas, the outgoing Honorary Local Secretary, then presented mementoes to past and present Committee members of the Kolkata Section of the Club, including Meher Mehta, Prabhat Ganguly, Pradip Sahoo, Kankan Roy and Priyadarshi Gupta. Niloy Chakraborty took over as Honorary Local Secretary while Rupamanjari Biswas became Vice President of the Club.

The young climber Aadrito Paul was the next speaker and he presented the Club's climb in July 2014 of Peak 6212 in the Zaskar region in the vicinity of Padum. The original objective of the expedition was Peak 6431 but due to technical reasons the route was changed. The final section of the climb through crevassed snowfields with falling rocks was both exciting and inspiring. Pradip Sahoo then felicitated the team members.

Chetna Sahoo was part of an all-women's team who completed the long Snowman trek in remote Bhutan. The trek takes around 20 days to complete and crosses eleven high passes the highest over 17,000 feet. Chetna's presentation through photographs brought to life the hidden world beyond Thimpu and Paro in the high altitude villages and desolate mountain country of Bhutan. It was most interesting to see that despite

the inhospitable terrain villages continue with their daily cycle of life and culture. Sadly the trek was done in June and the weather for most of the route was cloudy and raining which denied the team of the spectacular mountain vistas which makes this trek such a treat. Nevertheless the views of Jitchu Drake and Chomolhari were thrillingly close!

Anindya Mukherjee, described by Niloy Chakraborty, as a modern day explorer, presented a fascinating account of his journeys around the great east ridge of Kangchenjunga. In a series of exploratory missions, Anindya and his team were able to penetrate Tillman's "trackless vale of tears" up the Talung gorge in Sikkim and discover two new glaciers: the South Simvu and the Zumthul Phuk.

Their explorations revealed a number of unnamed and unclimbed peaks in the region. While the limelight remains on climbing the big 8000 metre peaks again and again, there is still an "Untraveled World" to quote Eric Shipton waiting to be discovered amongst the smaller peaks in the Himalaya!

Report Prepared by Sujoy Das

Mumbai Section

Banff Mountain Film Festival

The Banff Mountain Film Festival has taken an exciting turn. It will be travelling around India and the films will be screened at various locations as per the schedule

- ▶ Surat: 15th March 2015
- ▶ Mumbai: 21st March 2015
- ▶ Pune: 12th April 2015
- ▶ Delhi: 17th April 2015
- ▶ Vadodara: 26th April 2015
- ▶ Nasik: 10th May 2015
- ▶ Leh: 6th September 2015
- ▶ Bangalore: 19th September 2015
- ▶ Mussoorie: 22nd October 2015

A number of very exciting and interesting films are a part of it.

For more details and latest updates on the film festival, visit www.himalayanclub.org

Delhi Section

The Delhi Section celebrated the 50th anniversary of the 1st successful Indian Everest Expedition on April 8, 2015 in Delhi. They screened the film on the first Indian Ascent of Everest which was led by Capt. M.S. Kohli and put nine members atop Everest.

A re-birth of the London HC dinner



The AC/HC dinner in London. Near left on the foreground table is former local secretary Bob Pettigrew. To his left, and then working clockwise around the table, are Susan Band (wife of the late George Band), Patrick Fagan, Sara Day, Robert Vaughan (HC member but not AC), Henry Day, and, with his back to the camera, John Ward (HC but not AC). [Photo] Anna Lawford



New HC Hon local secretary Derek Buckle (left) in conversation with Lindsay Griffin. [Photo] Anna Lawford

recently published his autobiography, *Hanging On*. There followed a convivial evening, much enjoyed by all: feedback was overwhelming in the opinion that we should continue with this format at least biennially. There is also talk of future HC dinners as stand alone events.

With the event happening just four days after the Nepal earthquake, there was an opportunity during the evening to make

It has been four years since the Alpine Club sat down to a London Dinner, the Annual Dinner and AGM now, by preference, taking place during the autumn in a mountain area. However, in 2015 the AC Committee decided to hold a second, more formal dinner in London and it was thought appropriate to use this opportunity to resurrect the Himalayan Club dinner, which was traditionally held at a London club. Whilst many UK members of the HC also belong to the AC, there are

a few who don't, and former HC local secretary Bob Pettigrew kindly assisted with information about the membership so that an invitation to join the event could be sent to all UK HC members. And so on the 28th April, when a total of 98 AC/HC members and guests arrived at the Rag (The Army and Navy Club in Pall Mall) in time for the pre-dinner lecture, a wonderful and well-received life-and-times talk by Martin Boysen, who has



From left to right, Loreto McNaught-Davis (wife of the late Ian McNaught-Davis), Chris Bonington, Martin Boysen and Susan Band (wife of the late George Band). [Photo] Anna Lawford

a contribution towards emergency relief. Fourteen hundred pounds were raised from those present and subsequently donated to DEC's Nepal Earthquake Appeal.

Report by Lindsay Griffin

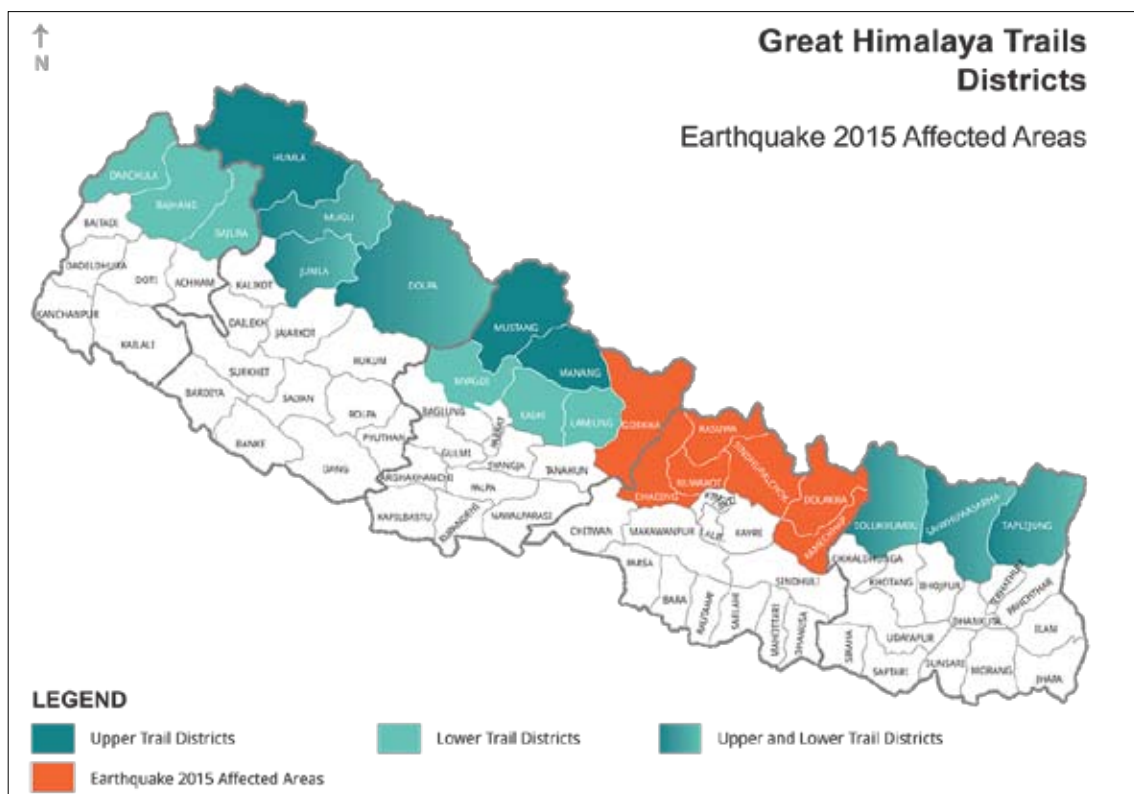
News & Views

A massive Earthquake Hits Nepal

A day after Nepal's devastating 7.8 earthquake (USGS estimate), the death toll has exceeded 2,500 people, according to reports in The New York Times, and elsewhere, and the number is expected to rise significantly. Climbers on Everest are trapped in Camps I and II, with others pinned beneath toppled blocks in the Khumbu Icefall. At least eighteen climbers are dead at Everest Base Camp and several dozen more injured, reports The Telegraph.

Since the quake on April 25, dozens of aftershocks have rumbled the area, the largest, with a magnitude of 6.7, recorded today, was located 42 miles from Kathmandu, the USGS has stated. Aftershocks continue to cause additional avalanches in the Himalaya.

The quake was at a depth of 9.3 miles, in an area 48 miles northwest of Kathmandu. The Kathmandu Valley has a population of 2.5 million, with many people living in unreinforced buildings, often made of brick, wood and mortar. Numerous houses



Earthquake map of Nepal

have since have crumbled, according to CNN. Tens of thousands of people are afraid to re-enter their damaged homes, states NPR.

“We went round the city this evening,” writes Alpinist contributor and CEO of Sherpa Adventure Gear, Tashi Sherpa, in an email. “Many monuments that stood the wear of time, are now lost forever. The impact of this horrendous earthquake was even acutely felt in our highest of mountains where the last count of victims was more than eighteen in another avalanche on Everest. Another April and another tale of a sorrowful spring.”

Initial reports indicate the Khumbu Icefall is too unsteady to cross. At dawn today, helicopters began evacuating injured climbers from Everest Base Camp, at 17,585 feet, and have completed seven trips, reports Mountain Trip.

The day of the earthquake, Alan Arnette sent out an audio recording from Camp 2 at 21,500 feet; you can listen to it [here](#). He notes damage to the Khumbu Icefall. Because of instability, the Icefall Doctors have retreated and are no longer tending the area.

“Teams at Camp 1 and Camp 2 seem to be OK, but anxious to get down to base camp,” Mountain Guide Jacob Schmitz told Mountain. “There have been only a couple of Sherpa who have descended through the icefall since the earthquake. There are many climbers missing still, and they expect to find more victims at base camp and in the icefall before this is all through. The Sherpa who descended through the icefall were able to hear some voices of trapped climbers on their way down.”

A 10:30 a.m. update from Mountain Trip reads: “Jacob is back in base camp after a trip up into the icefall this morning. They were able to determine that the route was relatively intact, and climbers were beginning to make their way down from the



Devastation at Everest Base Camp



Rescue efforts after the earthquake

upper camps.... There are some injured climbers from the upper mountain, and some with altitude illness that are being helped down through the icefall this morning. The search will continue in base camp and through the icefall for any other victims.”

On his blog, Jon Kedrowski explained that an explosion of snow and debris caused by a collapsed serac has destroyed 40 to 50 percent of Everest’s south-side Base Camp. He describes “a huge jagged point” on Pumori (7151m), located west of Everest that has fallen causing “the most devastating event to ever hit Everest Basecamp Proper.” Kedrowski says the fallen serac compressed air into the snow and ice where it crashed, causing “hurricane force wind” to erupt outward, throwing anything in its path about 300 feet across the glacier. Those who were able to hide behind large rocks were spared. Kedrowski says several tent sites have been levelled.

This earthquake marks the deadliest event in Everest history. Last year, on April 18, sixteen Sherpa, Tamang, Gurung and Nepali high-altitude staff died in a single ice avalanche in Everest’s Khumbu Icefall.

In 1934 an 8.0 quake struck Nepal, killing over 10,000 people, destroying most of Kathmandu.

Reports continue to come in about extensive damage in other mountain regions. Nepal’s news site, My Republica, says that another avalanche has struck Langtang Village, where more than 100 may have died.

From Great Himalaya Trail.com

Response to the Nepal Earthquake

Large number of countries responded to the calamity in Nepal through various gestures. Government of India was among the first to respond to the crisis, by launching a full-fledged rescue and relief operation codenamed Operation Maitri. Within 15 minutes of the quake, Prime Minister Narendra Modi responded, directing immediate dispatch of relief and rescue teams, including medical teams, to Nepal. By the same afternoon, ten teams from India's National, totalling 450 personnel and including several search and rescue dogs, had already arrived in Nepal; ten additional Indian Air Force planes soon departed to join them with further aid. In the immediate aftermath of the quake, India sent 43 tons of relief material, including tents and food.

The Indian Army sent three top military commanders, led by Major General J. S. Sandhu to Nepal to coordinate, oversee and fast-track the rescue, relief and evacuation efforts. The Indian personnel are working closely with hundreds of retired Gorkha soldiers of the Indian Army. The Indian Air Force mobilised its Ilyushin Il-76, C-130J Hercules, Antonov An-32 and C-17 Globemaster transport aircraft and Mi-17 helicopters for Operation Maitri.

Within half a day of the quake, Japan's government had offered emergency assistance. The Japan International Co-operation Agency (JICA) is sending 70 experts; they are scheduled to depart from Narita International Airport on 26 April, and will serve in Nepal for 7 days. The team includes experts from the Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the National Police Agency, and JICA, along with rescuers, search and rescue dog handlers, communication specialists, physicians, and field coordinators. The Association of Medical Doctors of Asia (AMDA) and Shapla Neer announced on social networking sites that they have begun coordinating their emergency assistance. The Japan International Co-operation Agency has sent emergency relief supplies worth ¥25 million.

The United Kingdom government provided 30 tonnes of humanitarian aid and 8 tonnes of equipment. This formed part of a £33 million (\$51 million) aid package, including around 100 search and rescue responders, medical experts, and disaster and rescue experts. An appeal by the Disasters Emergency Committee, an umbrella group for 13 UK charities, raised £50 million (\$79 million) in donations from the UK public. Engineers from the British Army's Brigade of Gurkhas began deploying to the region on 27 April 2015 to join others based permanently at the brigade's HQ in Kathmandu as well as with other Gurkha soldiers who were on Everest at the time of the earthquake who helped with immediate recovery efforts on the mountain.

On 26 April, Urban Search and Rescue Virginia Task Force 1 from Fairfax County, Virginia was deployed to Nepal from the Dover Air Force Base. Los Angeles County's Urban Search and Rescue California Task Force 2 was also sent to Nepal, and was scheduled to arrive on 28 April. U.S. Army Green Beret soldiers, who were in Nepal undergoing high-altitude training with the Nepalese army at the time of the quake, were to assist with rescue efforts, the U.S. has sent \$10 million in aid to Nepal as well.

Sources from Internet and Wikipedia

Himalayan Club's effort towards Nepal Earthquake relief

The Himalayan Club has raised significant resources through an overwhelming support from its members to help the victims of earthquake through its effort '**Project Nepal**'. It is currently working with the Indian Government to get permissions to send aid to rebuild parts of the routes in earthquake affected areas. The details of the same will be available in the next issue of E-letter.

The Science of Earthquakes

The April 25th earthquake in Nepal has destroyed housing in Kathmandu, damaged World Heritage sites, and triggered deadly avalanches around Mount Everest. The death toll is already reported as being in the many thousands. Given past experience, it would not surprise if it were to reach the many tens of thousands when everyone is accounted for.

Nepal is particularly prone to earthquakes. It sits on the boundary of two massive tectonic plates – the Indo-Australian and Asian plates. It is the collision of these plates that has produced the Himalaya Mountains, and with them, earthquakes.

Our research in the Himalaya is beginning to shed light on these massive processes, and understand the threat they pose to local people.

The April 25 quake measured 7.8 on the moment magnitude scale, the largest since the 1934 Bihar quake, which measured 8.2 and killed around 10,000 people. Another quake in Kashmir in 2005, measuring 7.6, killed around 80,000 people.

These quakes are a dramatic manifestation of the ongoing convergence between the Indo-Australian and Asian tectonic plates that has progressively built the Himalaya over the last 50 million years.

They are but one reminder of the hazards faced by the communities that live in these mountains. Other ongoing hazards include floods and monsoonal landslides, as exemplified by the Kedarnath disaster of 2013 which killed more than 5,000 people.

Earthquakes occur when strain builds up in Earth's crust until it gives way, usually along old fault lines. In this case the strain is built by the collision or convergence of two plates.

A number of factors made this quake a recipe for catastrophe. It was shallow: an estimated 15km below the surface at the quake's epicentre. It saw a large movement of the earth (a maximum of 3m). And the ruptured part of the fault plane extended under a densely populated area in Kathmandu.

From the preliminary analysis of the seismic records we already know that the rupture initiated in an area about 70km north west of Kathmandu, with slip on a shallow dipping fault that gets deeper as you move further north.

Over about a minute, the rupture propagated east by some 130km and south by around 60km, breaking a fault segment some 15,000 square kilometres in area, with as much as 3m slip in places.

The plates across this segment of the Himalaya are converging at a rate of about 2cm this year. This slip released the equivalent of about a century of built up strain.

Predicting quakes

While the occurrence of large earthquakes in this region is not unexpected, the seismological community still has little useful understanding of how to predict the specific details of such ruptures. While the statistical character of earthquake sequences is well understood, we are still unable to predict individual events.

Questions as to why such a large earthquake, in this specific location at this time, and not elsewhere along the Himalaya, continue to baffle the research community, and make for problematic challenge of better targeted hazard preparedness and mitigation strategies.

But with each new quake researchers are gaining valuable new insights. As exemplified by the ready availability of quality data and analysis in near real time provided by organisations such as the United States Geological Survey and Geoscience Australia, the global network of geophysical monitoring is providing an ever more detailed picture of how the earth beneath our feet is behaving.

Seismic gaps

New techniques are also helping us read the record of past earthquakes with ever greater accuracy. Our research collaboration – involving the University of Melbourne, the Jawaharlal Nehru Centre for Advanced Scientific Research and the Indian Institute of Science in India, the University of Victoria in Canada, and the Bhutan Government – is studying the earthquake geology of adjacent areas of the Himalaya in the state of Uttarakhand in India and in Bhutan.

Together we are mapping indicators of tectonic activity that link the earthquake time-scale (from seconds to decades) to the geological time-scale (hundreds of thousands to millions of years).

Using new digital topography datasets, new ways of dating landscape features and by harnessing the rapidly growing power of computer simulation, we have been able to show how large historical ruptures and earthquakes correlate with segmentation of the Himalayan front reflected in its geological makeup.

This is shedding new light on so-called seismic gaps, where the absence of large historical ruptures makes for very significant concern. You can read our latest research [here](#).

The most prominent segment of the Himalayan front not to have ruptured in a major earthquake during the last 200–500 years, the 700-km-long “central seismic gap” in

Uttarakhand, is home to more than 10 million people. It is crucial to understand if it is overdue for a great earthquake.

Our work in Uttarakhand and elsewhere is revealing how the rupture lengths and magnitude of Himalayan quakes is controlled by long-lived geological structures. While little comfort to those dealing with the aftermath of Saturday's tragedy, it is part of a growing effort from the international research community to better understand earthquakes and so help mitigate the impact of future events.

Funded as part of the Australian Indian Strategic Research Fund and DFAT aid programs, our collaborative work is a reflection of the commitment of our governments to international earthquake research.

From the conversation.com

Researchers explain mystery of India's rapid move toward Eurasia 80 million years ago

In the history of continental drift, India has been a mysterious record-holder.

More than 140 million years ago, India was part of an immense supercontinent called Gondwana, which covered much of the Southern Hemisphere. Around 120 million years ago, what is now India broke off and started slowly migrating north, at about 5 cm per year. Then, about 80 million years ago, the continent suddenly sped up, racing north at about 15 cm per year—about twice as fast as the fastest modern tectonic drift. The continent collided with Eurasia about 50 million years ago, giving rise to the Himalaya.

For years, scientists have struggled to explain how India could have drifted northward so quickly. Now geologists at MIT have offered up an answer: India was pulled northward by the combination of two subduction zones—regions in the Earth's mantle where the edge of one tectonic plate sinks under another plate. As one plate sinks, it pulls along any connected landmasses. The geologists reasoned that two such sinking plates would provide twice the pulling power, doubling India's drift velocity.

The team found relics of what may have been two subduction zones by sampling and dating rocks from the Himalayan region. They then developed a model for a double subduction system, and determined that India's ancient drift velocity could have depended on two factors within the system: the width of the subducting plates, and the distance between them. If the plates are relatively narrow and far apart, they would likely cause India to drift at a faster rate.

The group incorporated the measurements they obtained from the Himalaya into their new model, and found that a double subduction system may indeed have driven India to drift at high speed toward Eurasia some 80 million years ago.

"In earth science, it's hard to be completely sure of anything," says Leigh Royden, a professor of geology and geophysics in MIT's Department of Earth, Atmospheric and

Planetary Sciences. “But there are so many pieces of evidence that all fit together here that we’re pretty convinced.”

Royden and colleagues including Oliver Jagoutz, an associate professor of earth, atmospheric, and planetary sciences at MIT, and others at the University of Southern California have published their results this week in the journal *Nature Geoscience*.

What drives drift?

Based on the geologic record, India’s migration appears to have started about 120 million years ago, when Gondwana began to break apart. India was sent adrift across what was then the Tethys Ocean—an immense body of water that separated Gondwana from Eurasia. India drifted along at an unremarkable 40 mm per year until about 80 million years ago, when it suddenly sped up to 150 mm per year. India kept up this velocity for another 30 million years before hitting the brakes—just when the continent collided with Eurasia.

“When you look at simulations of Gondwana breaking up, the plates kind of start to move, and then India comes slowly off of Antarctica, and suddenly it just zooms across—it’s very dramatic,” Royden says.

In 2011, scientists believed they had identified the driving force behind India’s fast drift: a plume of magma that welled up from the Earth’s mantle. According to their hypothesis, the plume created a volcanic jet of material underneath India, which the subcontinent could effectively “surf” at high speed.

However, when others modelled this scenario, they found that any volcanic activity would have lasted, at most, for 5 million years—not nearly enough time to account for India’s 30 million years of high-velocity drift.

Squeezing honey

Instead, Royden and Jagoutz believe that India’s fast drift may be explained by the subduction of two plates: the tectonic plate carrying India and a second plate in the middle of the Tethys Ocean.

In 2013, the team, along with 30 students, trekked through the Himalaya, where they collected rocks and took paleo magnetic measurements to determine where the rocks originally formed. From the data, the researchers determined that about 80 million years ago, an arc of volcanoes formed near the equator, which was then in the middle of the Tethys Ocean.

A volcanic arc is typically a sign of a subduction zone, and the group identified a second volcanic arc south of the first, near where India first began to break away from Gondwana. The data suggested that there may have been two subducting plates: a northern oceanic plate, and a southern tectonic plate that carried India.

Back at MIT, Royden and Jagoutz developed a model of double subduction involving a northern and a southern plate. They calculated how the plates would move as



Belts of earthquakes (yellow) surround the Indo-Australian plate. Mike Sandiford

each subducted, or sank into the Earth's mantle. As plates sink, they squeeze material out between their edges. The more material that can be squeezed out, the faster a plate can migrate. The team calculated that plates that are relatively narrow and far apart can squeeze more material out, resulting in faster drift.

“Imagine it's easier to squeeze honey through a wide tube, versus a very narrow tube,” Royden says. “It's exactly the same phenomenon.”

Royden and Jagoutz's measurements from the Himalaya showed that the northern oceanic plate remained extremely wide, spanning nearly one-

third of the Earth's circumference. However, the southern plate carrying India underwent a radical change: About 80 million years ago, a collision with Africa cut that plate down to 3,000 kilometres—right around the time India started to speed up.

The team believes the diminished plate allowed more material to escape between the two plates. Based on the dimensions of the plates, the researchers calculated that India would have sped up from 50 to 150 millimetres per year. While others have calculated similar rates for India's drift, this is the first evidence that double subduction acted as the continent's driving force.

“It's a lucky coincidence of events,” says Jagoutz, who sees the results as a starting point for a new set of questions. “There were a lot of changes going on in that time period, including climate that may be explained by this phenomenon. So we have a few ideas we want to look at in the future.”

More information: Anomalously fast convergence between India and Eurasia caused by double subduction, DOI: 10.1038/ngeo2418

Provided by Massachusetts Institute of Technology

“Researchers explain mystery of India's rapid move toward Eurasia 80 million years ago” May 4, 2015 <http://phys.org/news/2015-05-mystery-india-rapid-eurasia-million.html> by Jennifer Chu

Covering most of north India, the 17 x 17 feet Trekking Map

When Depi Chaudhry is not busy exploring a remote region in the Himalaya or cycling on desert trails in Rajasthan, he attempts to make maps. The adventurer-cyclist-trekker

unveiled what he believes is the 'largest trekking map on the Indian Himalaya in the world.' The 17 x 17 feet map covers the Himalayan region of India – Uttarakhand, Himachal, and the entire Jammu & Kashmir region.

"It isn't easy trying to put up something like this, I have been working on it for the past four years," Depi explained to a gathering. "I found the existing guidebooks were not good enough, the maps were lacking. If someone had a Survey of India map, I would go running to that person, scan bits of it, and try to stitch it together. It used to be a struggle, each time you tried planning a trek. There were limitations, because we didn't have enough GPS data. So if we looked at going from 3000m to 4000m, it would be a straight line."

The map has a resolution of 1:130,000, and has been overlaid manually with GPS data collected over time. Detailed Survey of India maps for the Himalayan region are not available in the market.

"Maps by Leoman have a resolution of 1:20000 and those by Olizane are 1:150000, but they are only available for Zaskar and Ladakh," he explained.

"I tried doing different things. I was putting things together, taking photographs but it was not good enough. I came across a software called Open Cycle Map. I wrote to Andy Allan, the creator of this wonderful layering software, and he was kind enough to allow me to use it giving him credit for it. He probably did not realise that a madman was going to try to stitch together 30,000 images, all of which is available on Google and other places on the net, putting in manually with GPS data with each and every line and data on it."

IMF president Col. HS Chauhan told the audience, "This map will hopefully lead people to seek remote treks. Treks and expeditions like Stok Kangri, Valley of Flowers, and Everest are so popular, that everyone wants to do just them. We hope that people become curious enough to explore lesser-known areas."

The maps will soon be available in a downloadable PDF format on himalayamaps.com. Tata Consultancy Services (TCS) is partnering with Depi to develop an application which aims to be a crowdsourcing platform for trekkers to put in data as and when they find it.

From the Outdoor Journal

Top 12 Highest Motorable Passes or Roads in the World – The Myths & the Realities

In the race for the highest or the longest or the tallest, here is an interesting take on highest motorable roads in the Himalaya. Wonder when the highway to South Col will be built?

<http://devilonwheels.com/top-12-highest-motorable-passes-roads-world/>

Awards

Robert Pettigrew awarded Member of the Order of the British Empire

Robert Pettigrew, former UIAA Access Commission president is now Member of the Order of the British Empire.

Robert Pettigrew has been awarded the Member of the Order of the British Empire for outstanding service to the community and local “hands-on service” which stands out as an example to other people.

Renowned mountaineer Doug Scott who is a member of the UIAA Traditional Values Working Group (TVWG), and has known Robert Pettigrew since 1956 as an aspiring young mountaineer teaching rock climbers to beginners was one of those who wrote letters of support for Pettigrew.

Back then Pettigrew coached the Nottingham Moderns RUFC of which Scott was a member. He did this for a number of years in a voluntary capacity. Scott noted that Pettigrew volunteered his services to climbing in many significant ways.

Pettigrew has been Chairman of the Mount Everest Foundation 1980-1996, the UK Honorary Secretary of the Himalayan Club 1986-2012, Chairman of the CCPR 1997-1999 and President of the British Mountaineering Council 1974-1977.

During his Presidency, Pettigrew managed the move of the BMC headquarters from London to Manchester and with the help of Lord Hunt assured a successful conclusion to the dispute about mountain training that threatened to engulf the BMC and British Mountaineering at the time.

Pettigrew was also President of the Access Commission of the UIAA – International Climbing and Mountaineering Federation (2000-2010) – the International, global umbrella organisation for mountaineering. Internationally, he was involved in the former Inter-Sports Group of the European Parliament, a useful means of protecting mountaineering freedoms from threats at European level.

“What identifies Pettigrew above all is his concern that high standards should be maintained by all others volunteering their services in public life. He was most effective in re-establishing good governance in the CCPR at the behest of HRH Prince Philip,” said Scott.

“Pettigrew greatly assisted those of us on the Management Committee of the UIAA with his considerable expertise on governance, to reform the Executive Board to the extent that the UIAA now has a new President and Board that have already put the UIAA back on a sound financial footing and with greater transparency,” said Scott.

“The UIAA is now executing a sound strategic plan, to the benefit of climbers’ worldwide thanks to the tireless efforts of Robert Pettigrew, working behind the scenes and without any expectation of recognition or reward.”

Bob Pettigrew was a long standing Hon. Local secretary of the Himalayan Club in UK. He is also an honorary member of the Himalayan Club. We congratulate him on this occasion.

2015 Piolets d'Or Recipients Announced

A first ascent from September 29-30, 2014 on the 1350-meter north face of Hagshu (6657m) in the Kisthwar region of India by the Slovenians Ales Cesen, Luka Lindic and Mark Prezelj. Their 1350-meter climb was graded ED, with ice at 90 degrees. On their first day on the wall, the climbers pushed through until 2 a.m. before stopping to bivvy.

In addition, the UK mountaineer Sir Chris Bonington will be receiving the Piolets d'Or Lifetime Achievement Award, only the seventh recipient in its history. Bonington, climbing since 1951, has many significant climbs to his name including the epic first ascent of Baintha Brakk ("The Ogre") with Doug Scott. He also led the legendary expeditions that made the first ascents of Annapurna's South Face and the Southwest Face of Everest. Last year, at age 80 and with Leo Houlding, Bonington re-climbed the Old Man of Hoy, the demanding 450-foot Scottish sea stack he'd made the first ascent of with Rusty Baillie and Tom Patey in 1966.

The Himalayan Club congratulates Sir Chris Bonington for the award. Sir Bonington is an honorary member of the Himalayan Club.

Obituaries

Lavkumar Khachar

It was not my privilege to be a great friend or confidant of K.S. Lavkumar, though I spent several evenings with him discussing nature (or the desecration thereof) in general and birds in particular. And where his years of experience shone through



Lavkumar Khachar doing what he did best – inspiring a new generation

his measured speech. It was with his passing away on the 2 March, in Rajkot that I realized that it marked the end of an era. That a glorious chapter of Indian ornithology had come to an end. The greats had all gone.

Born into the illustrious family of nature lovers in the erstwhile princely state of Jasdan, he was educated first in Rajkumar College (where he later taught) in Rajkot and then St. Stephen's College, Delhi. In 1976 he joined the World Wide Fund for Nature with the specific job of conceptualizing and creating courses to enthuse the youth in matters of environment and conservation.

His pioneering work is still valid several decades later and form the basis of environmental education today. In 1984 he took charge as director of the Nature Discovery Centre of the Centre for Environment Education (CEE). He also collaborated with his peer R.S. Dharmakumarsinhji and produced the book "Sixty Indian Birds" in 1981.

He was a close associate of Salim Ali, Humayun Abdulali and Zafar Futehally and had a productive relationship with the Bombay Natural History Society, for which he held several camps for young naturalists. During the 1950s and 1960s, he was a keen member of the Delhi Bird Club co-founded, inter alia, by Indira Gandhi and whose members then included some illustrious names like Usha Ganguly, Peter Jackson, Malcolm McDonald and Horace Alexander.

Lavkumar spent most of his later years either in Rajkot or in his stunning house, Hinglaj Farm, on the river Beas in Himachal Pradesh. Till the end, he held camps there for novice birdwatchers.

He was awarded several prestigious awards, including The Salim Ali-Loke Wan Tho Lifetime Award for Excellence in Ornithology for his pioneering work in ornithology and on the Nanda Devi National Park. In 2004, he was awarded the Venu Menon Lifetime Achievement Award.

It was my great honour to give away the Delhi Bird Lifetime Achievement Award to him a few years back. That was the last time I met him though we kept in constant touch through letters, emails and phone calls. I wish I knew him better and had spent more time learning from his unique knowledge and experience.

By Bikram Grewal is an author, ornithologist and conservationist.

From Livemint September 14, 2015

Lavkumar Khachar was a long standing member of the Himalayan Club.

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This mountain is a paradox, both pure and fierce. Nanga Parbat still awaiting a winter ascent

Edited by
Dr. Ravi Mariwala

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