

though there was one section of ca 50-degrees. A planned attempt on nearby Trisul was abandoned due to bad weather.

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*Nanda Devi Sanctuary, investigative expedition.* The president of the Indian Mountaineering Foundation, N Vohra, organized an expedition in June-July 2001 to investigate whether the Sanctuary should be opened to climbers, trekkers, and scientific research (the Sanctuary has been closed since 1983 and even local villagers have been banned entry to their traditional grazing rights). The team was given clearance by the Ministry of Environment and Forest, and the Government of Uttaranchal, a legal requirement as the area has been designated a National Park under an act of Parliament. The IMF expedition studied the area and submitted a 100-page report, which recommended controlled opening of the Sanctuary. This is also the wish of the Uttaranchal State. No decision has yet been taken by the Government, though from a press report it appears that limited access to scientific expeditions may possibly be granted. During their stay in the area three members of the expedition reached the Sunderdhunga Col (5550m) on the southern rim of the Sanctuary, east of Maiktoli (6803m). The only other recorded visit to this col was made by Shipton and Tilman 67 years earlier.

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*Nanda Devi, ascent and environmental clean up.* In September a 40-member team from the Garhwal Rifles Regiment successfully climbed the 7816m peak via the Normal Route. This is the third ascent of Nanda Devi since the Inner Sanctuary was officially closed in 1983. All three ascents have come from the Indian Military (Army in 1993, ITBP in 2000, and Army again in 2001). The expedition also collected non-biodegradable garbage left behind by previous expeditions in this 2000-square km bio-reserve. This act was a very significant step in terms of removing environmental pollution from a reserve known for its unique diversity and rich flora and fauna. A total of 83 species of animals and 114 species of plants are found in this biosphere; 14 of the animals on are a list of near extinct species.

Soon after the first forays into the area, a large succession of expeditions left piles of junk and garbage on the mountain slopes. From 1964 onward Nanda Devi experienced the indignity of several hush-hush expeditions attempting to place a nuclear spying device on her summit. Ten years later, the sanctuary was thrown open to mountaineers. The resulting stampede of young Western climbers eager to make their marks on the mountaineering record books led to an environmental disaster. Owing to a short season, forests were hacked to build bridges and provide fodder for animals. Fragile juniper slopes above the tree line were deliberately burnt to provide charcoal for porters accompanying expeditions. Sources are quoted as saying, "In a few decades, the sanctuary, at its worst, resembled a combination of a garbage dump and a badly-maintained public toilet, the animal life reduced to intruding man, the juniper and undergrowth mercilessly destroyed to provide firewood. Ultimately, the sanctuary was declared a national park."

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