

KILIMANJARO PORTER ASSISTANCE PROJECT

HEC porter assistance expanded to Africa and South America. On September 17, as the many climbers waited in their tents for a late season storm to pass, three porters on Mt. Kilimanjaro were not so lucky. These three porters, lacking proper clothing, were believed to have died of hypothermia. African porters on Mt. Kilimanjaro carry over 25 kilos (55 pounds) of their clients' food and gear to the high camps of the mountain, getting paid less than US\$6 per day. These porters can't afford to buy the top gear that a climber brings when they climb the mountain; the porter may be wearing only cotton pants and a light jacket. Last December the non-profit Himalayan Explorers Connection established the Kilimanjaro Porter Assistance Project, modeled after the Nepal Porter Assistance Project (*AAJ* 2002, pg. 400). The HEC collects donated clothing and gear from individuals and companies such as Nike ACG, REI, Mountain Hardware, Lowe Alpine, Montrail, Patagonia, The North Face, Mammoth Mountain Ski Resort, Outdoor Research, and Thorlos. This gear is sent to the HEC offices at the base of Mt. Kilimanjaro for a clothing-lending program for porters. The offices also provide education to porters in subjects such as English, first aid, and AIDS awareness.

Back in the United States, another project is underway to work with tourists and tour operators to develop Porter Treatment Guidelines; this was in response to a recent survey of the top U.S. tour operators. The survey revealed that 90% of tour operators do not have a policy for porter treatment. This innovative program lends clothing to porters, thus allowing them to be adequately equipped for their work on the world's highest mountains. By also educating visitors traveling to Kilimanjaro, it will make sure porters are properly cared for and outfitted. The KPAP office is located at the base of Mt. Kilimanjaro in Moshi, Tanzania. The office is open to porters, tour operators, and climbers to come in for clothing, classes, and tourist education about porter treatment.

Currently, there are Porter Assistance Project offices in Nepal, Kilimanjaro, and opening in 2003 with partners Porteadores Inka Ñan an office in Peru. For more information about volunteering, donating equipment, or to help delivering a bag to Kilimanjaro, please contact the Himalayan Explorers Connection at info@hec.org or visit the web site at www.hec.org.

KEN STOBER, *Director of International Operations, Himalayan Explorers Connection*

INTERNATIONAL YEAR OF MOUNTAINS

What did it mean? What did it do? To most of us who read this journal, every year is a year of mountains. So you could be forgiven for thinking that the United Nations' declaration of 2002 as International Year of Mountains was, at best, a yawn and, at worst, an excuse for government-sponsored junkets to alpine resorts. Not so.

International Year of Mountains (IYM) was intended to focus worldwide attention on the value and the vulnerability of the world's mountain regions. I believe it accomplished that goal. Thousands of IYM events around the globe reached literally millions of people with messages about the importance of preserving mountain ecosystems and the value of mountain cultures. In hundreds of mountain communities, people took action to address these issues.

Mountains as a theme first made it onto the worldwide environmental radar screen at

the 1992 Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro. The Earth Summit placed the degradation of mountain environments on an equal footing with climate change, tropical deforestation, and desertification as critical issues facing the world in the late 20th and the upcoming 21st centuries. In fact, mountain ecosystems support more biodiversity than any other region on earth. They are the source of most of the world's fresh water and they are home to 767 million people—many of whom face poverty, malnutrition, disease and armed conflict. It was the country of Kyrgyzstan, whose mountain regions are threatened by war and poverty, which nominated 2002 as International Year of Mountains.

The threat that war poses to another mountain region—the Karakoram—was the inspiration behind an IYM “climb for world peace” that took place in Switzerland in August 2002. The climb was sponsored by the World Conservation Union (IUCN) and the International Mountaineering and Climbing Federation (UIAA). From August 24 to 29, a team composed of Harish Kapadia and Mandip Singh Soin from India; Sher Khan and Nazir Sabir from Pakistan; Jamie Andrew from Scotland; and Julie-Ann Clyma and Roger Payne representing the UIAA, climbed several peaks in the Swiss Alps—notably the Monch (4,099m).

One of the aims of the climb was to promote the creation of the Siachen Glacier Peace Park on the India-Pakistan border. At 6,700 meters, the glacier is the scene of the longest-running military conflict in the world. In addition to the cost in human lives, spent munitions and waste from the conflict drain from the glacier into the Indus River, threatening water supplies for millions of people. The climb marked the first time that the flags of India and Pakistan had flown together on a mountain summit. “As we unfurled our Indian and Pakistan flags together,” said Mandip Singh Soin, “I felt a flutter in my heart as well. The camaraderie that existed came so strongly through the rope we were tied to that it was more like a rope of friendship, and as a climber I would have no hesitation to put my life in Sher Khan’s hands, as I am sure he would have. Somehow we need to transmit and feel the goodwill that is latent in every heart of Indians and Pakistanis, for we were one once.”

In Uttarakhand, India, IYM inspired the creation of the Mountain Children’s Forum, with the aim of providing children in Himalayan mountain towns and villages with the skills they need to address social and economic issues in their communities. Over 400 children attended camps organized by the Forum in 2002. The Forum’s Web site (www.mymountains.org) tells the story of one 15-year-old girl who, after attending a Forum camp, was inspired to successfully organize a preschool in her village and to lobby for the cleanup of the community water supply. Here in North America, education was also an IYM focus. The Mountain Institute, headquartered in Washington, D.C., launched a “Learning about Mountains” Web site (www.mountain.org/education) to provide resources for teachers and students wanting to learn about mountain environments, sports, culture, and folklore. Elizabeth Byers of the Institute says there is a real demand for these resources: “Consistently, we find that teachers have materials to introduce children to concepts of sustainability in the world’s rainforests and oceans, but nothing to help them teach about mountains.... Teachers and kids living in the mountains need to be able to see themselves in the context of the wider world—as mountain people with much to offer and much to be proud of.” In the first six weeks of operation, the site received over 76,000 visits.

From Scotland, Martin Price, Director of the Centre for Mountain Studies, reports, “Mountain issues were very visible during the year, in the media and through events of all sizes. Key lasting outcomes include the Land Reform Bill, which finally codifies rights of

access, and Scotland's first two national parks.

In October, the American Alpine Club presented an IYM symposium on how climbers and land managers can jointly address access and conservation issues at popular climbing areas in the United States. Organized by the AAC's Linda McMillan and Jim McCarthy, the symposium was presented in conjunction with the UIAA General Assembly in Flagstaff, Arizona. It included presentations by senior managers of the National Park Service (Denali, Grand Teton, and Yosemite), the Mohonk Preserve (Shawangunk area of New York), and the Bureau of Land Management (Eastern Sierra Nevada).

Each region reported a steady growth in user visits and the associated pressures on the environment. Perhaps the most dramatic of these occurred on Bishop, California, BLM lands which, following "The Invasion of the Boulderers" (as one park manager put it), went from practically zero visits in October 1998 to over 45,000 annual visits by March 2002. As with so many IYM initiatives, education and communication were cited as the most effective means of protecting the climbing environment. Linda McMillan put it simply: "Climbers are less a part of the problem and more a part of the solution."

For someone like me, whose entire professional and private life is committed to the mountains, IYM was good news indeed. At The Banff Centre we have been focusing on mountains for more than 25 years, through programs such as the Banff Mountain Film and Book Festivals, the Banff Mountain Summits, and the Mountain Communities Conferences. IYM, however, gave us the excuse we wanted, and the momentum we needed, to try some new ideas.

To celebrate IYM we focused on three initiatives. The first was a scientific conference—Ecological and Earth Sciences in Mountain Areas—in September 2002. One outcome of the conference was to focus attention on the impact of climate change on mountain areas. Dr. David Schindler, Killam Memorial Professor of Ecology at the University of Alberta, made a chilling observation at one of the conference plenary sessions: "All of the climate models are predicting pretty close to 2 degrees centigrade warming in the next 20 years. All you have to do is pick up any scientific journal and you find that the ice sheets at high elevation are taking a real pounding.... These glaciers are going fast. In Glacier National Park—the U.S. Glacier, not the B.C. Glacier—it's predicted there won't be any glaciers in 20 years." Dr. Schindler's comments on the threats to mountain environments received national media attention here in Canada.

Our second IYM initiative was to become the new North American home of Mountain Forum (www.mtnforum.org)—a Web-based network linking over 2,700 individuals and 170 organizations in more than 100 countries. The network enables individuals and organizations concerned with mountain communities and environments to share information and resources. Since the North American node moved to Banff, the number of discussion-list participants has jumped by 80 percent to close to 800 people. Using the Forum, residents in Rockies ski towns share wildlife-savvy recycling tips with planners in Appalachian communities, and transportation coordinators in Canadian mountain parks debate regional transit options with their counterparts in Telluride, Colorado.

Our flagship IYM event at The Banff Centre was Banff Mountain Summit 2002: Extreme Landscape. The Summit explored the issues and the inspiration of the world's extreme landscapes through three days of seminars, lectures, performances and exhibitions, attracting audiences of over 2,300. One of the tangible legacies of this event was increased support for the Patagonia Land Trust—a non-profit charitable foundation that raises funds to purchase, restore and preserve lands in South America's Patagonia region. This support was

inspired by presentations by Rick Ridgeway and Yvon Chouinard on how we as individuals can act to preserve the mountain environments we play in.

Another tangible result was the flurry of companies signing up to the 1% Club—Chouinard's invention—a way for individuals and companies to commit 1% of their income to environmental causes. Yet another legacy, this one artistic, was the world premiere of a stunning multimedia piece called *On Earth*, a combination of vertical dance and video images from the Bugaboos. Many of the Summit's presentations, including Rick's and Yvon's essays, are featured in the book *Extreme Landscape: The Lure of Mountain Spaces*, published by National Geographic (and reviewed in this Journal).

The range of Canada's IYM activities turned out to be truly astounding. Bob Sandford, chair of Canada's IYM celebrations, reports that approximately 7,000 IYM events were held in Canada, reaching approximately 4.8 million people. Sandford says that the focus of these events was to "encourage Canadians to understand human impacts on the mountains ... and to involve themselves in processes and personal actions that would lead to the minimization of these impacts." Canadian IYM events were, for the most part, community-based and grassroots—ranging from interpretive hikes about the retreat of the Illecillewaet Glacier, to centennial ascents of Mt. Columbia, to local recycling drives.

Around the world, mountain festivals expanded their offerings and audience reach during IYM. Mountain festivals in England, Italy, Canada, Austria, the U.S., Slovakia, and Scotland all featured special IYM events. Each of these festivals has become a gathering point for the global climbing community. For the most part, mountaineers pursue their passions in relative isolation, and these tribal mountain gatherings represent an invaluable opportunity for climbers to do what climbers love to do—to celebrate and to share stories and reconnect with their friends.

I believe that mountain people all over the world have many things in common: their respect for the landscape, their relationship to a dramatic and sometimes tough place in which to live, their concern about alpine environmental issues and economic problems, and their sense of being inspired and nurtured by the grandeur of mountains.

International Year of Mountains was an opportunity to reflect on the huge impact mountains have on our lives—economically, recreationally, environmentally, culturally and as inspirational landscapes that fuel our creative and physical dreams. IYM was also a call to action to preserve these fragile environments. Mountains mean different things to different people. However, I believe that, at the most basic level, people go to the mountains to find their souls, and in these days, a landscape that nurtures the soul is one worth celebrating and preserving.

BERNADETTE McDONALD, Vice President, *Mountain Culture, The Banff Centre*

THE MOUNTAIN INSTITUTE

Summary of 2002 activities. The Mountain Institute (www.mountain.org) is a non-profit organization whose mission is to conserve high priority mountain ecosystems, improve mountain livelihoods, and promote the well-being of mountain people through advocacy, education, and outreach. For 30 years TMI has served mountain people in the remotest regions in the world by helping to identify and respond to their conservation and development priorities. TMI has regional offices in the Andes (Peru, Ecuador, Bolivia), the Appalachians (West Virginia, Virginia), and Himalaya (Nepal, China, India). Other programs include Research and Educa-