



Interview: Elliot Helman
"I don't think that any of the (San Francisco) hotels are using environmental programs as window dressing. The majority do not even make their environmental programs public."
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EDITORIAL: Planned Recycling: Still a Revolutionary Concept, Unfortunately.

Have you ever thought of what happened to your first bike? Your first laptop? All the toiletries and expired or obsolete items you use and discard every day? Chances are they are in the nearest landfill. And chances are that this landfill is next to the underprivileged or slum area of your city. In some developing countries, slum dwellers even live – and die – from scavenging among the useful throwaways. In some “developed” countries, members of ethnic minorities such as the gypsies, or newly arrived immigrants survive, on the margins of society, by recycling, usually in a haphazard and dangerous manner, with their antique, rusty pickup trucks, or worse, on their backs. And now think of the lucky one tenth of society: think of leafy boulevards, super luxury hotels and their superfluous excesses in the course of impressing their snobbish patrons, bright lights, high-tech, expensive toiletries and all the items that can fill up empty hearts, rather than empty stomachs; where waste is a power statement. And then read our Interview with Elliot Helman, who found out how to make sense out of all this in San Francisco, proving to the cynic inside all of us, that one swallow does herald the spring.

Antonis B. Petropoulos, Editor

ECOCLUB, Year 6, Issue 74, September 2005: ECOCLUB is published each month at <http://ecoclub.com/news> in HTML and PDF form.

Submissions: We welcome reader's articles, guidelines can be found at: <http://ecoclub.com/news/information.html>

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*Published by ECOCLUB SA, PO BOX 65232, Psihico, Athens, 154 10 – GREECE, www.ecoclub.com
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CLUB NEWS

ECOCLUB.com Ecolodge Awards 2005 - Winning Projects Progress Update

Rainforest Retreat of Karnataka, India, the 1st Winners report:

"The Galibeedu Organic Association has been formed. The rice planting was undertaken in July and is expected to be ready by the end of December. Other crops are tea (ready for picking and processing), coffee and vegetables. We have made a demonstration to prepare EM (effective microorganisms) and use it to make compost and directly treat the plants for more robust health. Other methods such as the use of cow urine and botanical pest repellants have been discussed and will be implemented. We will now collectively purchase and distribute the raw materials required for preparation of various composts and crop protection agents.



T R Vasudeva's Rice field



Making organic compost



Ganapathy's Tea field

Below is a list of Association Members and details of their organic produce so far:

Ganapathy, age 45 yrs, small holding near Galibeedu village.

He has approx ½ acre of mature tea he has not put any chemical fertilizers for the past 2 yrs. We will introduce organic manures and initiate foliar sprays with EM (effective microorganisms) based solutions. The next crop of tea that is harvested (within the next 2 weeks) will be processed into green tea with our guidance and we will also help to package (we propose to print labels in the name of the association and sell directly to the tourists visiting this area.

T R Vasudeva, age 40 yrs, small 3 acre rice holding in Galibeedu village.

He has prepared his field with organic manure and planted paddy in July. There was a lot of erosion during this monsoon and some had to be replanted in August. The field is looking ok and we will advise him to prepare some organic manure and also some EM based sprays as well as a spray with plant extracts that have insect repellent properties. His rice will be purchased by golden mist plantation and possibly exported. Some will be purchased by the Rainforest Retreat to serve to guests.

Shivanna, age 36 yrs, small joint family holding near Rainforest Retreat.

He has not used any chemical fertilizers or pesticides for the past 3 yrs and has 1 acre of paddy and 6 acres of coffee and pepper. The rice is for home consumption and we will apply the same techniques as with Vasudeva to help ensure a good and healthy harvest. The coffee and pepper (harvest Jan / Feb) can be sold for a premium as organic thru some of our contacts.

C K Ponnappa (Muthanna) age 46, large unmaintained ancestral holding

of which a small part is actively cultivated. He will grow vegetables and fruit in about 2 acres, most of which will be purchased by the Rainforest Retreat and some will be available for sale to clients. Vegetable cultivation will begin by Sept 15 as it is still raining and some areas are flooded.

P Muthupande, age 32 yrs, supervisor for Mojo Plantations (Rainforest Retreat)

has been given ½ acre land to cultivate vegetables that will be purchased by the rainforest retreat. He is knowledgeable with our methods so he will also be responsible for demonstration of the various methods of organic cultivation developed here and supervise and check the work on the other plantations.

3 Rivers Dominica, the 2nd Winners Report:

The ram pump workshop is officially scheduled for the end of October, but we are hoping this will move forward. SLIC, the sustainable living initiative, has some new blood. We now have a volunteer helping out with the project, and she is going to visit the villages more frequently than we were able to do, and try and get people really enthusiastic, and trained up at the same time. Her first test project is going to be working on the ram pump."

● <http://ecoclub.com/award.html>

🌱 **New ECOCLUB Ecolodges in The Gambia and the United States (Wisconsin)**

Bintang Bolong



Twenty huts built on stilts amongst the mangroves, on the banks of the Bintang Bolong river, the largest tributary of the mighty Gambia river of West Africa. comprise our new Ecolodge Member, Bintang Bolong Lodge.

Thanks to its location in the middle of the mangrove forest, you can enjoy the exceptional wildlife and vegetation of brackish wetlands. In the evening apes and vultures inhabit the overwhelming Baobab trees, and after dusk great colonies of fruit bats can be seen swarming into the night.

Previously fallen into disuse, Bintang Bolong was revived thanks to the passion of 3 brothers and sisters from Germany, with the support and participation of its former employees and the local community.

● Find out more at <http://ecoclub.com/bolong>

Inn Serendipity



Set in the rolling countryside along a ridge in southwestern Wisconsin, Inn Serendipity is an organic, solar-powered farmstead which offers gardens to wander, barns to explore, chickens to chase and a labyrinth to walk. About seven miles away is Monroe, the "Swiss Cheese Capital of the USA", as the Swiss settled there in the 1840s, today home to famous cheese factories and the award-winning Joseph Huber Brewing Company, the second oldest in the United States.

Inn Serendipity is the creation of John Ivanko and Lisa Kivirist

Lisa Kivirist is a social and business entrepreneur, and a leader in the growing rural renaissance and sustainable living movement, and the author of "Kiss Off Corporate America: A Young Professional's Guide to Independence (Andrews McMeel, 1998). John Ivanko is an award-winning photographer, writer, author, entrepreneur and globetrotter.

More details at <http://ecoclub.com/innserendipity>

ECOCLUB.com Live Event: The San Francisco Green Hotel & Hospitality Initiative (SFGHHI)

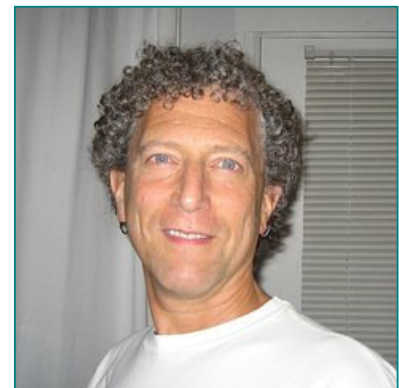
ECOCLUB.com celebrated World Tourism Day 2005 (Sept. 27) with a live online event: Mr. Elliot Helman, the first person to join ECOCLUB.com in February 2000, made a presentation, followed by a lively discussion session, on the San Francisco Green Hotel & Hospitality Initiative, which he is administering. A summary will be published in our Members Forum. We hope other Members will take the initiative to hold similar ecotourism-related presentations, so that this can become a regular feature. If you are interested, please contact us at <http://ecoclub.com/services.html>

<http://ecoclub.com/chat>

The ECOCLUB Interview

**Elliot Helman:
Greening San Francisco's Tourism**

Elliot's interest in tourism, conservation, and sustainable development grew out of his volunteer work in Africa in 1990- 1993. He has since completed a Masters Degree in Ecotourism from San Francisco State University (graduating with honors in 2004) and is currently involved in promoting urban ecotourism in his hometown- San Francisco, California through the San Francisco Green Hotel & Hospitality Initiative. Elliot was also the first person to join ECOCLUB, in early 2000. You can chat to Elliot Helman LIVE on Tuesday 27 September 2005, at 15:00 GMT, at the [ECOCLUB.com Live Chat Centre](#).



Whose initiative was SF Green Hotel & Hospitality Initiative (SFGHHI), what prompted its creation and in what ways is it innovative?

In a way, the creation of the San Francisco Green Hotel & Hospitality Initiative (SFGHHI) was a result of the events of 9/11. I was working as the Environmental Specialist at the Fairmont Hotel, San Francisco. Fairmont Hotels & Resorts has an exemplary environmental program for all of its properties. I was in the position of driving the program for the flagship property in SF. As a result of the post-9/11 economic down turn, my position was dissolved.

With the situation in the hospitality industry what it was, I decided to focus on finishing my graduate degree at San Francisco State University with a special major in Ecotourism. With a group of partners, I own a plot of land on Lake Malawi (Africa). For my graduate project I was working on a 'triple bottom line' business plan for the development of an ecolodge on the property. As I immersed myself in my studies, writing a business plan, and part time work, I remained involved with a number of local organizations focusing on environmental issues in the hospitality industry, which is SF's largest business community.

I heard about a commercial recycling grant program sponsored by the city's Department of the Environment, which was designated to assist the commercial sector in increasing recycling. I submitted a grant proposal, which was

similar to the work I had been doing at the Fairmont. This grant, however, was designed to offer support and services in the area of recycling to all hotels in the City of SF and was specifically intended to mesh the policies of the city with the business needs of the hotels.

The grant was accepted, but involved almost 3 years of red tape with the City. I began my position as director of the San Francisco Green Hotel and Hospitality Initiative in January of this year. The grant is funded by the city and administered by my Alma Mater, SF State University. The grant is innovative in that it leverages a number of existing no-cost programs available to hotels which both reduce negative environmental impacts while reducing waste removal costs to the hotels. The key component is that the grant funds a position (mine) for a coordinator, mediator, negotiator, and general support person. I am able to coordinate between the hotel environment and the regulatory and support programs of the City. While there are free services available, such as recycling, energy audits, and water and energy saving rebates; as well as low-cost/reduced-costs services (food waste composting) many hotels were not taking advantage of these programs. Given the nature of the hospitality industry, staff are busy with ongoing duties and dealing with the unexpected events which arise given the nature of the business. Even in properties where there is a genuine interest in environmental matters, it is no one's job to be looking at these issues. What was needed for the hotels to take advantage of the programs is exactly what the SFGHHI

provides: a person who could coordinate between existing programs and hotel staff, to bundle together the best recycling options for the properties. In essence, having one knowledgeable person, dedicated to working as a liaison, educator, and facilitator is what has been most successful and useful to the hotels.

🌱What is your personal role within the SFGHHI?

The grant under which SFGHHI is administered has only one staff person - me! However, I have been able to utilize the services of student interns, which allows me to increase the effectiveness and impact of the work. The student interns are another innovative aspect of this program. It is a concrete way to get the 'next generation' of hotel managers to be aware of these issues and what can be done to mediate them.

🌱You are also involved with the SF Hotel Non-Profit Collaborative (HNPC) - kindly explain its achievements and in what way it complements SFGHHI?

The HNPC is an informal association of hotels and non-profit organizations in the City. It provides an avenue for hotels to identify possible ways of diverting usable discards that are typically part of a hotel's waste stream. This would include food overages, beds, bedding, furniture, bathroom amenities, convention items, etc. Instead of ending up as landfill wastes, these items become assets within the community through donations to non-profit organizations that serve the homeless and poor populations of the City. As the hotels take advantage of recycling these items it also cuts back on their waste removal fees (which, in San Francisco are among the highest in the nation).

The HNPC was established about 8 years ago by Jo Licata, Community Projects Manager at the SF Hilton & Towers, one of the largest hotels in the city. The hotel sits at the crossroad between the City's cultural center- Union Square; with galleries, theatres, and restaurants; and the City's notorious Tenderloin area where homelessness, prostitution, and drug use are prominently seen. The Hilton literally has its front doors in the Union Square district and its back doors in the Tenderloin.

The General Manager of the hotel, at the time of Jo's position being established wanted to do something about the graffiti and other problems that were literally at the hotel's back door. He established the Community Projects Manager position in order to, as Mr Gantz eloquently puts it, "be a good neighbour." Ms Licata began by establishing a relationship with the personnel running the non-profit social service agencies working within the community at the back door. Jo started by asking them what they needed and how the hotel might help.

The hotel began to make donations-in-kind of the many items that hotels typically throw away but still have a useable life. Jo began communicating her work to other hotel people and over time, more hotels have joined and become involved.

Since I have begun work on the SFGHHI, I have made involvement in the HNPC part of the bundle of services I offer to the hotels I work with. The way I see it, reducing costs and environmental impacts through donation is just one of the many tools at the disposal of an urban hotel. I have

been able to almost double the active involvement of hotels and other hospitality organizations in the Collaborative. We are now averaging upwards of 10,000 pounds of donated materials per month (we were at 13,741 pounds for August), which represents a cost savings to the hotels of \$80- \$250 per month (depending on the volume of donations and type of garbage service they have).

We currently have the active involvement of approximately 20 hotels (with perhaps another 20 sporadically involved) and around 30 non-profits.

🌱What in your view are currently the major ongoing problems of the San Francisco Hotel and Hospitality Sector, within and beyond the environment?

A major problem right now is the ongoing labor dispute. While the lock out of workers that we saw at the beginning of the year has ended, there has been no resolution and no contract. And there doesn't seem to be any movement towards resolution.

A specific discussion of all of the issues is beyond the scope of this interview, and frankly, beyond my full understanding. I can say however, that union issues are an ongoing problem in the work that I do. Any change in work procedures at a hotel (such as a change from throwing everything in the trash to sorting items for recycling and/or donation) is seen as a potential violation of the union agreement. For example, if a hotel wants to begin collecting bathroom amenities (soaps, shampoos, lotions, etc.) that now go into the garbage for donation to a homeless shelter, the housekeeping staff typically sees this as a union issue requiring a renegotiation- a lengthy and costly process for the hotel. Consequently, most of the environmental programs at the hotels that involve staff are 'voluntary.' If they require employees to make sorting for recycling (or donating) part of their job, they will be in violation of the union agreement. In order to change their environmental performance, hotels must change the ways in which they operate. If every change requires a renegotiation, there will be very little impetus to change.

The current labour dispute has cost hotels (and the City) million of dollars in lost sales. Hotels are less likely to make any changes or do anything that involves union issues in the current environment. It is also worth noting that during the lock out period, virtually all recycling ended at the affected hotels, as the remaining staff struggled to simply keep the doors opened.

Another problem I see is the lack of market demand for a 'green' hotel product. Businesses respond to consumer demand. When consumers demand responsibility from businesses, it pushes business toward responsibility. I have not seen, or been able to uncover, any significant demand (or even interest) on the part of consumers for hotels to act more responsibly (environmentally and/or socially). Part of the problem may be information/education. Most people don't even think about these issues, particularly in urban environments, particularly in the 'developed' world.

A good case in point was the recent World Environment Day (which was actually a week) activities here in SF. The hotels that were chosen by WED for housing the UN delegates and their entourages were not any of the ones who have been

most actively involved in either the HNPC or the SFGHHI (that is, those most actively involved in dealing with issues of sustainability). Instead, they chose hotels that were not affected by the labour dispute, which meant non-union hotels. While the majority of the large hotels we work with are union, there are non-union hotels that are part of our programs as well. However, it seems that environmental performance or commitment were simply not a part of the criteria that WED had for selecting accommodations. A huge opportunity was lost to both highlight and reward the hotels that supported the ideals of WED and to allow them to profit from their efforts. Moreover, I fail to see how patronizing non-union hotels (those that refuse to allow the union in) furthers the cause of striking hotel workers.

☼How do you measure SFGHHI 's performance? For example, how do you monitor where the recycled material ends up? And where does it end up?

I compile monthly reports that I submit to the Department of the Environment and to the administrator of the grant at the university. The report includes the following information:
 Amount of hours spent at each hotel
 Activities engaged in
 Amount of material recycled at each hotel
 Amount of food waste composted at each hotel
 Amount of material donated from each hotel

I also keep detailed records of materials donated through the HNPC. These include:
 Items donated and dates of pick ups
 Names of donating hotels
 Names of receiving non profits
 Weight of material donated
 Disposal cost savings for each donating hotel

As I said, we average over 10,000 pounds of donated material through the HNPC. On the recycling and food waste composting side, I have been averaging between 70,000 - 100,000+ pounds of recyclables and food waste diverted per month.

All of the recycling and composting is done by our municipal trash company (Golden Gate Disposal and Recycling). The food waste is brought to a facility about 60 miles outside of the City where it goes through the several-month process of breaking down into compost. Golden Gate has received organic certification for its compost, so is able to sell it at a premium. The majority goes to farmers, particularly to vineyards in Northern California's rapidly expanding wine country.

The recyclables (waste paper, bottles, and cans) are sold on the commodities market. I am not really involved at that end - although the company is tightly regulated by the City and other governmental bodies and I feel confident that they deal with recyclables in an environmentally - and socially-responsible manner.

☼Does your initiative have (or is exploring), any inner city poverty amelioration and health improvement parameters, through or beyond recycling?

The donation aspect goes directly to programs working in these areas.

☼Last year, a major hotel strike and lockout affected San Francisco for almost a month, in a dispute over health

benefit reductions and increased workloads. Could a hotel be using the environment (as window-dressing) and at the same time be oblivious to the needs of their employees? Does your initiative, or yourself, have any position on San Francisco hotel labour issues - or you feel that it is a taboo / divisive subject?

I don't think that any of the hotels are using environmental programs as window dressing. The fact is that for the most part, the majority of hotels do not even make their environmental programs public. They just don't see it as anything the public might be interested in. I have offered to assist hotels in making information available to guests through tent cards or brochures; I have yet to have any success in getting a hotel to publicize their environmental initiatives. From a management standpoint it seems to be a matter of employee incentive (a 'feel-good program) or a cost-saving measure; but nothing worthy of publicizing. This is unfortunate because it could be an opportunity for industry to drive the market for green hotels by educating their guests.

Discussing the labour dispute is not taboo, but it certainly has been very divisive.

☼What has been the role of the state so far in assisting your non-governmental initiative? Would you welcome more government assistance, or would it compromise your identity?

I'm not sure here if you mean state (California) government, Federal (US) government, or any government at all. I have already explained the role of City government- they are funding my work for this year. I would welcome another year of funding, however, the City has elected not to fund the SFGHHI beyond this year. The HNPC has never had any other funding sources which is part of the beauty- diverting tons of material from landfills and providing support for the non-profit groups has not cost a single penny to taxpayers.

The State of California has initiated a Green Lodging Certification program. Under this program, hotels that gain Green Certification become 'preferred vendors' for state employees when travelling on state business. Marketing is a key element that seems to be missing from the state program; that is, there is not much marketing provided by the state to promote hotels that become certified. Moreover, state-sponsored hotel rates are well below the average cost per room in San Francisco, so I don't think this program will have much effect in our local market.

☼What is your evaluation of the laws governing tourism development in the San Francisco area in terms of their efficiency in protecting the environment?

There are of course many environmental laws that apply to all businesses, but I am not aware of any laws specific to tourism that aim at protecting the environment. It is an area completely under the radar screen

So is Urban Ecotourism slowly taking hold in San Francisco, or are we just witnessing a light green reform in the local representatives of multinational hotel chains?

With the exception of one locally-based, national hospitality company, Kimpton Hotels & Restaurants, I don't see any

greening of hotels at the corporate level. I would like to see Urban Ecotourism take hold (along with a wider understanding and acceptance of the term). I think that San Francisco is in a unique position- we have a very environmentally (and socially) proactive and progressive City; this applies to citizens as well as local government. We have a fairly comprehensive set of municipally-available trash/ recycling/ composting services available to all businesses and residents, and a large number of non profit agencies doing excellent work. It seems to me that most of the progress I have described is a result of being in the right place at the right time- this community is ready for this and because so many of the pieces are in place, it is a fairly easy place to get this kind of work done.

🌀Do you feel your initiative should be imitated in other metropolises around the world? And what should be avoided, in that case?

Absolutely. It is one of those things that seem to be so obvious one wonders why it doesn't happen more. But as far as I know, this is the only program of its kind; at least in this country (I would love to be proven wrong, though).

I can't think of anything specific that has happened that can serve as a warning to others. A few cautionary points that I can see (that we have not yet had to deal with) are making sure that the non-profit organizations are dependable and reputable.

I know that recycling can be a very complex issue; in other areas hotels can actually generate revenue by selling recyclables to collectors. This is not the case in SF. There are a number of liability and union issues that must be ironed out. Again, in SF we are lucky that a local ordinance waives any liability in food donations when they are made in 'good faith.' Without this protection, many hotels/restaurants may understandably be hesitant to donate food.

One thing I would warn any city or municipality thinking about starting a similar program is to be careful about thinking that 'if I build it they will come.' There have been attempts on the part of recycling and waste management entities in other areas in our region to replicate the HNPC. They typically end up with plenty of 'takers' on the non-profit side, but without involvement and buy in from the hospitality industry up front; they do not do well in recruiting 'suppliers' on the hospitality side.

🌀Is there anything else you would like to say to our readers, perhaps about your current needs or future plans?

As I hinted earlier, I would love to have more funding to continue a second year. While it appears that the City will not be providing funds, I am looking at other funding sources. I am also planning a project in Lake Malawi with a local partner, we already have a master plan, architectural drawings, a business and sustainability plan; just about everything we need to get started - except capital.

🌀Thank you very much. I am sure readers will be interested in your current and future projects. There will also be an opportunity for them to chat to you live on Tuesday 27 September at the ECOCLUB.com Live Chat Centre.

🌀**Elliot Helman** can be reached at either sfgreenhotels@sbcglobal.com or muzungu_X@yahoo.com

ECO FOCUS

🌀Ecotourism in Kazakhstan: *Unlikely a big business, probably a good thing* by Helen Lunn*

The idea of ecotourism and community based tourism in Kazakhstan is new, an effort to address the problems associated with emerging from decades of living within a Soviet system. Kazakhstan is not a poor country, quite the opposite, with massive oil reserves and other natural resources. Unfortunately, the money earned is staying in the hands of the few, and not being spread throughout the country. So, the poor

villages stay poor.

At least in Soviet times there was a system of social welfare and employment for all. Now people in the remote rural areas are trying to eke out a living and are living a hand to mouth existence. Seen at a distance there is something attractive about this simple life, but all societies need some financial exchange, and people are usually happier if they have some control over earning it.

For this reason, Community Based Ecotourism in Kazakhstan is being developed. It is seen as a regeneration tool, offering a means to sustainable livelihoods. It is not going to be easy, but those involved



are beginning to see the benefits and think that it is worth the effort.

Before I go any further, perhaps I should say where Kazakhstan is. This little heard about landlocked republic, the ninth largest country in the world, is bordered by Russia, China, Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan. A member of the CIS after gaining independence from the Soviet Union in 1991, it stands in the heart of Central Asia and is building a future based largely on oil. The government sees tourism playing a part in development too, and those concerned with the environment, the revival of communities, and keeping the culture intact want to be involved, recognizing the great growth worldwide in ecotourism.

It will never be easy to market ecotourism, or any type of tourism, here. The vast size of the country is a barrier. While trundling across the steppe in an ancient train may sound romantic, it can be frustratingly slow. Obtaining tickets can be problematic, and can not be done before registration. The powers that be do not make travel easy, with visas, not available at land borders, being needed by nearly everyone, and registration also a requirement. Compared with other Central Asian countries prices are quite high. In efforts to try and “Package” Central Asia, while avoiding the damage that badly managed tourism has brought to communities in many parts of the world, including Kazakhstan is difficult. Neighbouring Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan are cheaper and have more obviously marketable attractions.

For all the difficulties, the effort is worth it, particularly taking time to get to the villages where a network of homestays is slowly being built up. The hospitality of the people is justly renowned, and here can be found the real experience that so many look for when travelling. The dhombra and dancing shows are for the traveller’s benefit, but they feel part of life too, not a special performance. People will sing and dance together when there isn’t a tourist paying them. The food gives a taste of Kazakh life. It will almost certainly be grown by the host, or a neighbour.

Kazakhs are renowned horsemen, with children riding almost as soon as they can walk. People are far more likely to own a horse and cart than a car. This means that the possibility of trying out riding skills, and getting off the beaten track, is high. You will just need to learn sign language, but then communication is far more than language.

There is a great range of fauna and flora to be enjoyed- the elusive snow leopard, ibex, bears, and wolves. Unfortunately hunting remains a popular sport, though efforts are being made to limit it. Poaching too is a major problem, but the management of the national parks, a major draw for eco tourists, is becoming more efficient as international involvement and interest grows. In Spring time the steppe that looks so barren in the dry summer is abundant with flowers. “Flower watching” is popular among local people and visitors alike.

On a recent training course in Southern Kazakhstan I was able to witness a little of the positive effect that community based tourism is having. There were tangible financial gains, and improvements being made to the village infrastructure. The homestay providers spoke happily of how much they had enjoyed welcoming people from different nationalities into their homes and sharing information and ideas about each others cultures. Economic factors came first- they would rather their children went to school than toiled on the land at a far too early age, but they happily embraced the opportunity of finding out about other cultures. This, I think, is when ecotourism is most enjoyable and effective. To be involved in the challenge of making it happen in Kazakhstan, a country of great beauty and interest, but lacking in well known or immediately obvious tourist attractions, is an opportunity I will always be grateful for.

Problems are likely to remain- the lure of the cities for young people, who want results immediately, is one difficulty that small communities, however appealing to the visitor, will always be faced with. It will be some time before they will be able to understand the benefits, and indeed may not welcome the influx of noisy foreigners into their home.

Rushing ahead with enthusiasm and without planning is also a danger, but the foundations are being firmly established here, and changes are happening slowly. This is one of the advantages of being a fairly late arrival in the world of tourism- Kazakhstan can learn from the mistakes of others.

It is unlikely that ecotourism in Kazakhstan will ever become big business, but that is probably a good thing. What is needed is enough development to improve the lifestyles of the rural poor, but not so much that the way of life is too much changed.

Ideas from people who have been in the business for far longer than we have would be very welcome.

●Ms Helen Lunn is on a Voluntary Service Overseas (Development agency) assignment, working for the Ecotourism Resource Information Centre of Kazakhstan in Almaty Web: www.ecotourism.kz Email: ecotourism.kz@mail.kz

✿ **Thenmala Ecotourism Project: A planned ecotourism destination in India**

by **Santhosh. P. Thampi** *

The state of Kerala, 'God's own country', forming part of the Western Ghats in India contains a protected area of 2,324 square kilometres in two National parks and 12 wildlife Sanctuaries. The Western Ghats of Kerala with its tropical forest ecosystem provides a natural advantage for development of Ecotourism. The Tourism Department of Government of Kerala has taken steps to give focused attention to ecotourism in the State. A separate ecotourism wing has been created to give policy support for the development of the ecotourism destinations in the State. An ecotourism project (*Thenmala Ecotourism*) has been formulated in and around Shenduruneey Wildlife Sanctuary with the co-operation of departments such as Forest, Irrigation and Tourism. This Wildlife Sanctuary is of about 100 square kilometres and has large varieties of flora and fauna. Thenmala, located at about 72 kilometres from Thiruvananthapuram, the State Capital of Kerala, is a small village at the foothills of Western Ghats and predominantly a forest area. *Thenmala* means 'honey hills'. The honey collected from Thenmala forest region is of good quality and of high medicinal value because of the unique floristic composition of the forests. The village is the focal point of small community-led ecotourism developments within a radius of 50 kilo meters.



"Thenmala Ecotourism" has been conceived as a *first planned ecotourism destination in India* and the initial stages of implementation is completed. The degraded forest area, in the outskirts of the Sanctuary is maintained as a familiarization zone. Eco-friendly General Tourism is planned in the periphery of the sanctuary so that pressure of tourism will not affect the sanctuary. The real ecotourism is to take place in sanctuary and only ecotourists are encouraged for that. Others can experience the eco-friendly products such as small nature trails, elevated walkway through canopies, mountain biking etc.

Facilities such as boating in the Sanctuary reservoir, boardwalk, sculpture garden, amphitheatre, Musical Dancing Fountain, etc. are also provided at Thenmala for soft ecotourists. An Environmental education and interpretation centre is also being set up at Thenmala.

In order to give flexibility in management for the development of this destination, a separate Society, the Thenmala Ecotourism Promotion Society (TEPS) has been constituted. Thenmala Ecotourism Promotion Society has adopted a strategy to co-ordinate with Forest Department, the Irrigation Department and Tourism Department and implement various activities in association with each Department. The products such as trekking, bird watching trails etc. are being developed and implemented through the institution of Eco-development Committees, thereby ensuring benefits to local people. From the very beginning, efforts have been taken to adopt the internationally accepted principles of ecotourism in the planning process as well as in the implementation. A conscious management strategy has been evolved to create a familiarization zone to limit the visitor impacts on the sensitive ecosystems to the minimum. With an investment to the tune of 1.6 million US Dollars, development took place over a period of three years.

The project was opened to the public in 1999 and is not yet fully commissioned. The Thenmala ecotourism project has recorded a growth rate of 81.95 per cent in tourist arrivals, in 2003-2004 and the resulting income during the same period has recorded an increase of 123.91 per cent. This shows the success of the project. Now the Government has started four more projects at various sanctuaries in the state and many projects are in the pipeline. *Thenmala ecotourism* is undoubtedly a learning experience for the development of other destinations in the state.

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✿ **Zakynthos National Marine Park (ZNMP), Greece: Menacing Multi Million Euro Fine Works Wonders!**

by **MEDASSET***

Backed into a corner, the Greek government has been forced to clean up its act before the European Commission's October deadline, or face the European Court of Justice (ECJ) and the imposition of a multi-million Euro fine for neglecting its commitments to the turtle nesting beaches of Laganas Bay (Zakynthos).

With less than two months to go before the deadline, as the bulk of tourists left the island having disrupted yet another crucial nesting season for the endangered Loggerhead sea turtles, Mrs Amalia Karagounis, the recently government-appointed President of the ZNMP, started to show her mettle.



With unprecedented government support for her position and just enough money to pay part of the wages owing to guards and ZNMP staff since 2003, she used her considerable skill to enforce almost all of the ECJ ruling's demands throughout the Bay (excluding the 'strictly protected' Daphne beach): daytime guards were posted on a number of beaches; information signs, kiosks and barriers preventing vehicle access were restored; illegal businesses were closed down; a port police post was established with regular patrols of the Bay, and a boat was brought in to patrol the sea; buoys delineating restricted areas were replaced; and on some beaches excess furniture was removed, although much mysteriously found its way back!



Zakynthos August 2005: Every Day hundreds of tourists dig out the clay from the rock face of the cliff (to use for 'spa' treatments), above the 'protected' nesting beach of Gerakas. As a consequence, the cliff face has collapsed three times with rocks the size of cars ending up on the beach.

The President has now turned her attention to the illegal buildings and tourist infrastructure on Daphne beach. Since the beginning of September, a bitter debate has raged between Mrs Karagounis and the Head of the Local Zakynthos Administration (Prefect). Eleven years after the Greek government ordered the buildings pulled down, and despite having signed the demolition order himself, the Prefect claims that it is not his job to do so, that the responsibility lies with the Government. His role is "not one of destruction", he said,

but to protect the local inhabitants and foster the development and promotion of Zakynthos. He has suggested that to solve the problem the State should compensate those affected by conservation measures. "We are here to protect interests of local people in Daphne and those of the Greek State", he said, apparently forgetting that it was the laws of the Greek State that he was being asked to enforce! The President of the Park responded, saying: "Compensation to landowners should not be confused with demolition." Meanwhile, at the Greek Constitutional Court (07-09-05), Daphne landowners lost an appeal to remove restrictions (imposed by the Presidential Decree establishing the ZNMP) on private property development within the boundaries of the Park.

The ZNMP President is optimistic of receiving the 60,000 Euro, which has been owed to the Park since 2003 by the Mayor of Laganas and the Prefect of Zakynthos, for their share of a LIFE/ Nature EC project. She also hopes to take funds, as of next summer, for beach furniture rental tenders, and with this money run a self-financing Park. But is this possible? In January 2005 300,000 Euro was needed to cover the Park's debts (a figure which will have increased considerably since then). Since March 2004 funds have been promised repeatedly by the Ministry of Environment, in the Press and in Parliament, but until now only 190,000 Euro has been paid, barely covering back taxes and wage bills.

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NEW PUBLICATIONS

A selection of publications newly added to the ECOCLUB.com Ecotourism Library & Bibliography. ECOCLUB.com Members can request small abstracts, or in case of free publications, the whole publication, by email.

Ministry of Tourism and Transport, 2005
Seychelles Eco-Tourism Strategy for the 21st Century
 (SETS-21)
 ELE.TOU.MIN.2005

United States Environmental Protection Agency 2005
Community-Based Watershed Management - Lessons from the National Estuary Program
 ELE.TOU.EPA.2005

Kakouros, P.; Tsiaoussi, V.; Hadjicharalambous, H., 2004
Guidelines for the Preparation of Management Plans for Protected Areas
 GR.ELE.ENV.KAK.2004

Diamantis, D.; Johnson, C. 2003
Ecotourism Management in Europe: Lessons from the Biosphere Reserves in Central and Eastern Europe
 ELE.TOU.DIA.2003

World Tourism Organization, 2003
Sustainable Development of Ecotourism - Case Studies
 ELE.TOU.WOR.2003

World Business Council for Sustainable Development (WBCSD), 2005
ITC-Welcome Hotels - A Green Model for Eco-Tourism - Case Study
 ELE.TOU.WBC.2005

Scottish Enterprise, 2004
Perspectives on International Best Practice Green Tourism
 ELE.TOU.SCO.2004

ECO EVENTS – OCTOBER 2005

Plan ahead by checking the full listings at <http://www.ecoclub.com/events>

IIPT SUMMIT – THAILAND – 2-5 October 2005**3rd Global Summit on Peace through Tourism**

In Pattaya . Organised by the International Peace through Tourism with the support of the Thailand Convention & Exhibition Bureau (TCEB) and the World Tourism Organisation (WTO). The Summit's Theme is "One Earth One Family: Travel and Tourism - Serving a Higher Purpose" and the Aim is to develop a 21st Century Agenda for Peace through Tourism. The Summit will provide a forum for leading government, industry, donor agency, and NGO decision makers, as well as leading educators, researchers, professionals and practitioners, to debate and reach consensus on the contribution of the world's largest industry to the global issues of our time, including a coordinated and sustained travel industry response to redevelopment and revitalization of tsunami affected countries Poverty reduction; Healing the wounds of conflict & preventing conflict ; Ecological Enhancement and Preservation of Biodiversity In addition to Plenary Sessions featuring world leaders and travel industry statesmen, Concurrent Sessions will include case studies of Success Stories and Models of Best Practice.

● <http://www.iipt.org/3rdglobalsummit>

GREENING THE HOSPITALITY INDUSTRY CONFERENCE – USA – 5-7 October 2005

at The Inn & Conference Center, University of Maryland University College, in Metro Washington DC. The recent events in the Gulf area due to Hurricane Katrina remind us of how interdependent we are and how delicate the web of balance is. In the hospitality industry, we rely on many resources whose availability depends upon maintaining that balance. Things such as oil for transportation of people and goods and food production, natural gas for heating space and water, trees for paper products, crops and clean water for meals, are all vital to the success of our events. Yet their supply is also greatly affected by natural disasters, geopolitical events, climate change and resource depletion. We have an extraordinary opportunity at this conference to discuss what we can do as an industry to minimize our impact and dependence on these resources and to widely implement and make those changes evident. By being proactive, we not only help mitigate future resource problems, but also set an example and help lead other industries to do the same.

● <http://www.greenmeetings.info>

5th SOUTH PACIFIC TOURISM CONFERENCE - PAPUA NEW GUINEA – 18-21 October 2005

Port Moresby."Tourism: Investment In Our Future". The SPTO conference is a most significant and prestigious biennial Tourism Conference, which involves the 13 SPTO member countries, Tourism Ministers, Head of Tourism Organisations, and Industry member of the South Pacific. The conference brings together key participants and industry members who are vital in assisting the promotion and enhancement of tourism in the region.

● <http://www.spto.org/conference.shtml>

TOURISM CARES FOR TOMORROW SUMMIT MEETING - SCOTLAND – UK - 19-20 October 2005

The Balmoral Hotel, Edinburgh. Tourism Cares for Tomorrow is a non-profit organisation formed from the merger of USTOA's Travellers Conservation Foundation and NTA's National Tourism Foundation. USTOA's membership represents 125 brand names of which over 80% currently operate in the UK at some level, and the NTA have over 600 tour operator members with just under 100 active with UK products. In addition, VisitScotland has invited SITE members along to the event and are targeting 20 incentive operators to attend this event. VisitScotland is hosting the TCFT summit meeting, bringing to Scotland around 80 major tour operators and incentive buyers from the US for a workshop, golf tournament and gala dinner.

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The First International Marine Protected Areas Congress-AUSTRALIA - 23-28 October 2005

This global conference will address the World Commission on Protected Areas' Marine goal and primary themes, and will progress discussion on their widespread adoption and implementation consistent with resolutions relevant to marine protected areas arising from the Durban World Parks Congress. The World Commission on Protected Areas, Parks Victoria, The Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority

● <http://www.impacongress.org>

2ND ANNUAL SUMMIT OF THE WORLD TOURISM FORUM FOR PEACE AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT - BRAZIL –24 -26 October 2005

RIO DE JANEIRO. the event will bring together business leaders, government authorities, academics, researchers and NGO members in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. The gathering is considered the largest tourism event in Latin America, and is expected to draw about 20 thousand industry and related professionals and entrepreneurs.

● <http://www.desti-nations.net>

INTEGRATED RURAL DEVELOPMENT IN THE MOUNTAIN AREAS OF CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPE AND THE BALKANS CONFERENCE - SLOVAKIA – 24-26 October 2005

This conference aims to bring new perspectives by concentrating on integrated development of all sectors - especially the role played by the nature protected areas - and diversification of the livelihoods in these areas. The wide partnership working on this event wants to bring the mountain predicaments, constraints and challenges onto the political agenda in Central and Eastern Europe.

● <http://www.euromontana.org>