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## Director's Cut: Can greens go hunting..?

In our previous editorial, I spoke of the need for a pro-active, political, Ecotourism 2.0. As they say, charity begins at home: since then, we launched a new online Ecotourism sub-forum for the greek green party, intervened in the case of Zakynthos National Marine Park and the possible abuse of the protected Caretta turtle (read on page 15), asked and got a statement on Ecotourism from the European Environment Commissioner (p.17), and initiated a process for the formation of local ecoclub groups among our members around the world. This editorial is about an equally important process, that of public discussion of important ecotourism issues and democratic, free speech. We wish to use our online forum to launch public debates and polls about issues that, in my view, are at the heart of Ecotourism.

The idea for the debate was sparked by a news report that an ecotourism colleague, an International Ecotourism Society (TIES) spokesperson had refused to rule out Hunting Tourism as it would ‘provoke a backlash’. My instant reaction, was why would it create a backlash, and why would a backlash would matter on a matter of principle. Is it better to lead, even if only half will follow, or to follow / hide in the crowd? There was only one, rather daring, way to find out: to hold a debate & poll among our own Members, over the ‘merits’ of Hunting Tourism, if any, and if it can be ever be considered part of Ecotourism.

Proving that in a poll, as in a referendum, it is the particular question that matters, as of today (29 November 2007) there were a surprising number of Members (48.7%) who thought that “Hunting Tourism can SOMETIMES be part of Ecotourism”, against an equal percentage who think it can NEVER be a part, and one voter who (we are watching you ☺) voted that it is “always” a part...I will not summarise here the main for and against arguments, because any general arguments (a series of words in a reasonable order) make some sense, whereas the devil is in the details. You can therefore find the details (and the devil) at: <http://www.ecoclub.com/c/index.php?showtopic=6457> and please add your own related news and views!

Personally, I have always considered Ecotourism as Ecological Tourism, and as part of the ecological, green movement, rather than as a technocratic approach, a business as usual approach, or as a hollow synonym for Nature Tourism. Thus, and according to the International Greens Charter, I can accept Hunting only as part of an indigenous subsistence lifestyle, only if carried out with traditional means, and with minimal suffering to the animals; I can not accept it for recreational purposes, such as tours and I can certainly not recognise it as part of Ecotourism. Call me a cynic (it's a sort of a compliment - read about Diogenes the Cynic on p. 19) but I simply do not buy the argument that recreational hunters prime motive is to control excessive populations any more than the argument that a carbon offsetters prime motive is to reduce carbon emissions.

I recognise that some of you may think otherwise, however, as I believe in progress and the ability of people to change, I think that in the 21<sup>st</sup> century we have (to try at least) to do away with violence to animals (and indeed to humans) including the mass production of cattle in slaughterhouses - on environmental, ethical and health grounds - discourage the gun culture, go non-violent and vegetarian. Talking about going vegetarian, this is my next, personal, bet for 2008, (I say so publically so that I have to live up to it!). Another ‘inconvenient truth’, is that a vegetarian driving a SUV is more eco in terms of enviro impact than a meet-eater driving a bicycle! Finally, on page 14, you will read about two true ecotourism practitioners and ECOCLUB partners, Isel & Ricard. As long as people like that are alive, well and with ECOCLUB I fear nothing!

**Antonis B. Petropoulos**

► [More Director's Cut](#)



## THE ECOCLUB INTERVIEW

### RACHEL DODDS

**"I have always only focused on projects I believed in – even if the big unsustainable ones were offering to pay more"**



Dr. Rachel Dodds has 17 years of experience in the tourism industry specialising in sustainable tourism. Rachel is currently the Director of Sustaining Tourism, a consultancy firm, as well as an Assistant Professor in the Ted Rogers School of Hospitality and Tourism Management at Ryerson University in Toronto. She has worked in all facets of the tourism industry including tour operators, hotels, governments, NGO's and small businesses. Her experience includes working with the World Bank/IFC, the Caribbean Tourism Organization/European Union, the Prince of Wales International Business Leaders Forum's International Tourism Partnership, WWF, Toronto's Green Tourism Association, as well as many hotels, tour operators and small businesses. At her website, <http://www.sustainabletourism.net> the reader may find case studies, definitions and potential solutions for sustainable tourism. The site also offers consulting services including planning, marketing and implementation tools for sustainable tourism/ecotourism management.

Rachel holds a PhD in sustainable tourism from the UK and a Master of Tourism Management from Australia. She has authored multiple articles about sustainable tourism, corporate social responsibility and ecotourism and is currently undertaking research in climate change and sustainability issues. She has furthered her tourism knowledge through her travels and has visited 6 continents and over 55 countries.

*The Interview follows:*

**ECOCLUB.com:** You are young, but already a highly-accomplished sustainable tourism consultant and academic. Academics are famed for their doubts, consultants for their certainty. Is it easy to wear both hats? What would you advise other young people wishing to enter your line of work?

**Rachel Dodds:** Being both I am certain that I have doubts! Seriously though, I believe, consultants tend to be more focused on the practical element than academics but academics tend to focus more on rigor and methodology. That being said, I feel I have an edge by being both as I try to be real-world focused to teach my students what is needed in the workplace but also my consulting projects benefit from my in-depth analysis I learned through my academic research studies. It is also nice to sometimes be able to bring real-life experience into the classroom which gives a practical element to the students.


In terms of advice for young people – the most important thing I have learned is to network. Volunteer to get experience, ensure you say thank you when people help you out along the way – and stay in touch with people. Tourism is a diverse industry so I would suggest getting experience in all areas – I have worked in restaurants, attractions, tour operators, hotels, government bodies and NGO's – having that knowledge of how they all work gives me a great insight for my work.

**ECOCLUB.com:** Should green / sustainable tourism certification be trusted by tourists at its current state? Should it ever be trusted?

**Rachel Dodds:** As to whether certification should or ever be trusted – well, a company which is moving in this direction is better than one who isn't – so that is a good start! I believe that companies that have been certified have had to improve their overall operational efficiencies and have therefore realised that being environmentally and socially focused makes good business sense. It is confusing to the consumer that there are so many standards and often quality is not ranked along side environmental indicators but it is slowly moving in this direction. I believe the biggest issue with certification is marketing – most people don't even know certified companies exist and there is currently no one-stop-shop where all certified companies are accessible to the consumer. I am hoping that large on-line booking companies will see the value in offering certified or companies with a strong CSR or environmental focus to be offered to the consumer beside other mainstream ones – that then would be an easy choice for the consumer to choose green or not green in just one click!

**ECOCLUB.com:** How about carbon-offsets by tourists, are you convinced that they really lead to a decrease of carbon emissions, are they a useful pretext to raise some funds for other green issues, or just a scam?

**Rachel Dodds:** Sustainability is first about reducing and reusing, and carbon offsetting is about offsetting whatever is left. At the moment it is what consumers are offered as a mitigation strategy but I believe general education on how we, the tourist, can reduce our overall footprint is important and will have a great benefit. Carbon offsetting can help by funnelling money to renewable technologies and to mitigate our effects on the climate but it should not be a replacement or tick box to alleviate guilt! It is not always clear where monies are going for project and I also have concerns about the nature of how offsetting projects are set up – for example Tourism Concern highlighted how a community in Uganda was displaced to make way for a reforestation project! I have just finished some research in this area and there is a lot of confusion in the marketplace and there is a need for regulation – for example a flight to London, UK from Toronto has a multitude of different prices for offsetting depending on which offset company you choose.

 **ECOCLUB.com: Have you found it more practical, as a sustainable tourism consultant, to work with communities, or with small businesses? Are sustainable tourism consultants adequately remunerated, or are they frequently tricked by aid agencies, governments and businesses?**


**Rachel Dodds:** As a consultant I work with all types – small and big business and government and Ngo's - so regarding practicality, I really think it depends on the project. For example, sometimes a large government or aid agency project can have more influence if it is disseminated out to a lot of people as it may bring issues to the agenda in the right political and business circles where decisions are being made. At the same time, working with communities and small business, it is easier to see results and initiatives can be implemented much faster. In terms of remuneration, many small organizations cannot afford to pay but often large organizations and aid agencies take forever to pay or don't in some sad instances. For a long time, people have not been willing to pay for expertise on sustainability issues as they didn't see the negative effects or they were more focused on the economic side of business. Sometimes, for me, it has been hard to make ends meet although I have always only focused on projects I believed in – even if the big unsustainable ones were offering to pay more – it is all about personal ethics in that regard. Recently, however, sustainability has become a sexy topic – perhaps due to the fact that tourism depends on the very product it sells – the environment and the culture and people are starting to realize that this needs management for its protection - hopefully remuneration will change to reflect this. If it comes true I will let you know!

 **ECOCLUB.com: If you were to choose one of your many projects as a best case, which one would it be and why?**


**Rachel Dodds:** Fortunately, I cannot just choose one as there are a few good ones. I do profile a lot of good practices, and not just my cases, on my website. Perhaps projects which have influenced the wider community are the best example – e.g. helping a company audit their sustainability practices and then seeing this company start new labour, procurement and environmental practices which have a direct positive benefit on others is rewarding.

 **ECOCLUB.com: In what way is sustainable tourism significantly different than green tourism, ecological tourism or responsible tourism? Do labels really matter?**


**Rachel Dodds:** We all need to move the industry toward more sustainable tourism if it will survive – new labels will always be developed to describe tourism which is confusing and sometimes inhibiting for groups to work together as they can be egotistical and proprietary about their labels. Sustaining a tourism venture is about being responsible so I believe they are similar labels while sometimes ecological or green tourism omits the social aspects which can be dangerous. In my view, as long as we are all moving towards sustainability – call it whatever you like. For example, I am working on a project about climate change and tourism – it is essentially dealing with sustainable tourism issues – climate being one of them, but if government wishes to call it this because it is sexier that is fine with me.

 **ECOCLUB.com: How satisfied are you with the content, level and quality of tourism education, in English-speaking countries where you have first-hand experience? Some businesses complain that tourism graduates lack even a basic grasp of how the tourism sector really works. Are there any grains of truth in this argument? Is there a practical/theoretical tourism education divide?**


**Rachel Dodds:** Personally I still think there is a gap between industry and academia. I would love to see more industry at academic conferences/workshops and vice versa but perhaps theory and practicality are not always matched. At Ryerson, we are currently in the process of revamping the tourism course to be more inclusive and practically focused about issues and concepts. Tourism is diverse and fragmented but also the world's largest industry so it is difficult to teach it all. I believe that hospitality and food service courses often take priority as a subject matter even though the wider understanding of tourism as an entity is needed. At the same time, the operational and managerial side of the industry needs to be included in addition to concepts of sustainability and development so that students can enter the workforce with realistic and hands-on skills.

 **ECOCLUB.com: Your work takes you to tourism academic conferences around the world. What is your general evaluation: Is it a case, for most participants, of parallel monologues, and "going through the moves to get the grants", or do these conferences really advance tourism thought at an academic level, in a way that other offline and online forums can not?**

**Rachel Dodds:** I believe on-line and off-line forums are just as beneficial if not more beneficial than academic conferences as often industry is present and current issues are being discussed. Academic conferences do however, expose you to new areas of research and theory and are useful in terms of keeping up to date as well as networking and establishing relationships with experts in other fields as well as geographical locations.

 **ECOCLUB.com:** In your very informative website, [www.sustainabletourism.net](http://www.sustainabletourism.net), the average reader, used to tourism platitudes & niceties, suddenly comes across a passage about "a land where an invader has demolished a country in order to try and flatten the spirit of the people". We would argue that this daring description would fit nearly all countries around the world at some point in their history! But do you believe that sustainable tourism consultants & academics are increasingly more daring in expressing their personal opinions on political & religious matters, and risk losing 'business', as opposed to the old adage - 'leave only footprints'?

**Rachel Dodds:** For me, I believe in quality, not quantity and perhaps I am not a very good consultant because I tell the truth even to the extent when clients don't always want to hear it! Tourism historically has looked only at economics but sustainability must look at all elements of the triple bottom line. If a feasibility study, for example, is negative I believe that by outlining truthfully the consequences, it will save a company far more money long term which is then good value. Additionally, my line of work is sustainability therefore I try to practice what I preach. I believe that all news is not necessarily good news but at the same time, my recommendations must be based on the research I do – not my personal opinions or ideas.

 **ECOCLUB.com:** As a sustainable tourism webmaster, what is your assessment of role the Internet as a communication tool for sustainable tourism? If you could fix one thing, what would it be?

**Rachel Dodds:** If I could fix one thing – it would be to have someone help me with my website! But seriously – I think that blogs and podcasts are becoming key forms of media these days and on-line forums and chat rooms for sustainable tourism should be nurtured. I think ECOCLUB.com is a great source of information and your chatroom is great. Planeta.com also does a good job of this and a recent organization Stepuptravel.org also has started to focus on advocacy.

 **ECOCLUB.com:** Thank you very much!

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## THE ECOCLUB INTERVIEW

### GOPINATH PARAYIL

**"Small-scale tourism projects in consultation with local communities should be the mainstay in development"**



**Gopinath Parayil** is the founder of award-winning The Blue Yonder, a 'responsible travel' company based in Bangalore, India. Before setting up The Blue Yonder, Gopinath worked with software companies, NGOs and consulted in Disaster Management. After leaving his job as a professional fundraiser for a Children's NGO in the UK, he pursued his passion for a dying river in Kerala leading to the formation of Nila Foundation. Seeing the potential of positive changes that Tourism can bring in the lives of people along the banks of River Nila, Gopinath kick-started the movement of Responsible Tourism in India.

The recipient of First Choice Responsible Tourism Award for Poverty reduction at the World Travel Market 2006 in London, The Blue Yonder (Web: [www.theblueyonder.com](http://www.theblueyonder.com)) was set up in 2003 to support the work of Nila Foundation. The Nila Foundation had been set up to revive and regenerate a dying river, Bharatapuzha (River Nila) in Kerala. Initially started as a project in North Kerala, surrounding River Nila, The Blue Yonder (TBY) organises tours that give in-depth understanding of the river culture and which provide alternative and supplementary sources of income for various communities. The TBY model is now being implemented in six other Indian states: Rajasthan, Karnataka, Sikkim, Orissa, Himachal Pradesh and Uttaranchal.

*The Interview follows:*

**ECOCLUB.com: What was it that first attracted you to Ecotourism and Responsible Tourism?**

**Gopinath Parayil:** When we set up Nila Foundation to do research on river conservation, we were definite that we would not depend on funding agencies to sustain the functions of the organisation. We didn't want our dreams to be dictated by some insensitive funding agency. So it was while looking for a sustainable funding support for the Nila Foundation activities, that we started exploring the options of using tourism as a tool for generating income for the foundation. This was also an opportunity for us to tell the world about a dying river that was once the life line of Kerala with its contribution to a unique river valley civilization. Since the central theme of our holidays were initially surrounding the sadly depleted river, it only made sense for us to introduce a travel culture that was sensitive to the local surroundings; including our people and the environment in which they lived.

**ECOCLUB.com: Your company was set up with the concept of Corporate Social Responsibility from scratch. How would you define CSR in theory, and what does it mean for your company in practice?**

**Gopinath Parayil:** CSR is one of the many abused terms similar to the green washing that has happened in the travel industry in the name of eco tourism. For us, CSR is not about PR exercise. Nor is it about just sharing a bit of profit that you make out of your business to make one look 'balanced' or 'just'. As I mentioned earlier, the work we are doing came out of our 'responsibility' to our surroundings. Tourism was only one of the several elements that came into the broader frame work of our CSR. It was out of our 'responsibility' that we decided to set up Nila Foundation to do our bit to preserve and revive a dying river and its cultural ethos. While the initial objective of The Blue Yonder was to be of a financial engine to support activities of Nila Foundation, later it evolved into an organisation that created alternative and supplementary jobs in villages that were never part of conventional tourism circuits in Kerala.

Since accommodation providers and property owners were an integral part of our programs, we set up an associate network called 'The Blue Yonder Associates' which is a platform for property owners who run their business responsibly. Seeing the scope and potential of being able to influence and engage the industry and the Governments, we went ahead with the plans for setting up the International Centre for Responsible Tourism in India. (ICRT India). The centre has organised National and state level symposiums in Bangalore and Kerala respectively. We are also organizing the 2nd International conference on RT in March 2008 along with the Kerala Tourism department and ICRT UK.


**ECOCLUB.com: What share of tourists actually choose your tours because of your socially responsible record, and which countries do they mostly come from?**




**Gopinath Parayil:** Except for the 15% of domestic enquiries we get through telephone at our Bangalore office, the rest of our B2C business comes through our website [www.theblueyonder.com](http://www.theblueyonder.com). Web stats records link these enquiries to key words defining 'environment-friendly' and 'socially responsible holidays'. Individual traveller's are becoming more and more sensitive to the way they want to holiday and from our experiences, the trend is increasing beyond any doubts in originating markets like the UK, USA, Germany, France and Netherlands. Though small in numbers, we are seeing a change amongst travellers from Scandinavian countries who are looking for responsible holidays since last year.

 **ECOCLUB.com: Your company received the coveted First Choice Responsible Tourism Award 2006 in London, last year. Has the award been of practical use to you in terms of business, or is it more or less mainly a moral reward?**

**Gopinath Parayil:** I don't think any of our guests decided to travel with us ONLY because we received a prestigious award. But, I do believe that awards and recognitions, especially when the awards come through nomination from travellers, do influence the decision of a traveller when she decides to book the holiday. It is true that RT award has increased the TBV - brand value within the global travel industry. On a long term perspective, I think prestigious awards do make a difference. As a small organisation, the award was morally uplifting for us. To receive an award out of some 1200 nominees under 13 different categories reiterated our commitment to the work we were involved in and prompted us to explore various other possibilities of Responsible Tourism to different parts of the country. The 2007 Conde Nast Award World Savers Award came to us in the same year when India has been voted as the favourite country to travel by Conde Nast Traveller UK and this has brought in fair amount of attention on us.

 **ECOCLUB.com: Some fear that with the growing fashion of CSR, otherwise ordinary tourism companies will also set up foundations as a side-dish / publicity stunt to attract praise and customers, or for tax purposes, rather than to engage in real social & environmental work. What is your view and experience?**

**Gopinath Parayil:** When certain business models make 'certain business sense' to some people, they will definitely pursue short cuts without much sweat. We have seen much greenwashing of pseudo projects in the name of eco tourism over the last decade and I don't see any reason why this should not happen in the name of CSR or even Responsible Tourism. This is already happening in originating markets including the UK where some companies promoting destinations like Kerala and rest of India are positioning themselves as Responsible Tour operators when we cannot differentiate between them and the run-of-the-mill operators. At the same time, even after all these tall claims, none of the benefits from RT is percolating to the lower strata of the society. Probably this is the time; responsible travellers should become the whistle blowers and report back on their experiences with these 'Irresponsible Tourism Operators'.

 **ECOCLUB.com: Overall, do you feel that Indian hotels and tour operators increasingly respect or ignore the environment? Are you optimistic that environmental responsibility ideals go deep enough in the Indian tourism sector so that voluntary action is sufficient, or do state governments need to make drastic interventions?**

**Gopinath Parayil:** The trend is by and large to ignore the environment, barring a few properties and tour operators in the length and breadth of India. Irrespective of short term interventions by state Governments, what is lacking in India is a national policy on Responsible tourism. Until and unless this is incorporated into the National Planning commission's agenda, I personally believe that no significant change will happen. Also, unless Responsible tourism becomes a market driven initiative, I don't see much happening from the Government level. Hence, other small initiatives by the tourism industry will remain only in the periphery levels.

 **ECOCLUB.com: As someone who has studied Disaster Management, do you feel that there is an adequate system in place to protect communities and tourism from natural disasters, as well as the associated hysteria. How has the Chikungunya fever outbreak in parts of Kerala in Autumn 2006 and again in June 2007 affected tourism?**

**Gopinath Parayil:** Though India has gained tremendous knowledge and capacity in intervention on the onset of a disaster and post disaster management, the story on disaster preparedness and planning is more or less the same as it was a decade before. Albeit quite late, it's good to see that a disaster management authority is being set up in Kerala. As long as the command control is not defined, disaster management would end up becoming disastrous management as it happened twice during the floods in Mumbai recently. According to the industry feedback, Chikungunya did not affect the tourism industry in 2006 at all. Initially though there were fears of cancellations. The statistics available on the Tourism department website actually shows an increase in the inflow of travellers. Since the statistics are not available at present, it is not possible to comment based on any speculation. However, our interaction with stakeholders in the industry reveals a different picture in contrast to the official statements.

 **ECOCLUB.com: You have studied computers and are also an avid blogger. Where do you see the Internet going, in terms of its relevance to tourism practitioners and with reference to India?**

**Gopinath Parayil:** Like it is happening in many other parts of the world, travel agents will have lesser role to play in B2C transactions as internet provides customers the opportunity to research and purchase holidays online. With travel agents

commission being slashed on airline tickets and plethora of products and services available to the customers, brick and mortar concepts of business will not be the same in the coming years. The Internet has already revolutionized the way people plan their holiday within India. Disposable income combined with access to internet has prompted millions of Indians to purchase their holiday online by-passing middlemen. Even in such a scenario, the relevance of tour operators seems to be only increasing as the focus on 'experiential' travelling is on demand. With the new generation tourism entrepreneurs coming out of the 'user friendly technology boom' more and more work from large travel companies will pursue out sourcing so as to add values based on their core competencies.

 **ECOCLUB.com: As India rapidly develops, the impression around the world is that inequality grows with many people being left behind. What is the situation in India's travel sector, and can small-scale tourism bridge the various gaps, or do you really need mass investments and resorts?**

**Gopinath Parayil:** India is going through the initial stage of its economic development phase at the moment and at present it is being visible mostly in the urban areas. Growth in the tourism sector is also reflecting similar trends and the developments are confined to only certain areas. There is a need for mass investment, but this should not be restricted to resorts or hotels. Mass investment is needed in allied industries and public infrastructure that will increase the quality of life of a commoner. On a long term, only if the host community has better living conditions, would travellers continue to visit a destination. It is also important that the investment has to be spread out with discretion between main gateways and rural India. Small scale tourism projects in consultation with local communities should be the mainstay in development. Even though the potential of small scale tourism is enormous, this development itself will not bridge the gap. When we started operating in areas which were not part of the popular circuits, we faced problems with accommodations like hotels and resorts. What was looked upon as a limitation was later turned into an add-on-value, as home stays and small properties provided alternative source of income for many families!

 **ECOCLUB.com: Do you see India experiencing a mass influx of tourists in the near future? Should India try to avoid it or prepare for it?**

**Gopinath Parayil:** Incredible India campaign at the ITB Berlin, along with various visual media promotions in different parts of the world has created a lot of interest about India as a destination. All this will certainly bring in a flow of tourists to India in the near future. I don't see any reason why India should arrest this growth. A trillion dollar economy and the pace in which the economy is growing will certainly influence the way tourism will develop in the country including the volume and carrying capacity of destinations. Rather than avoiding the increase in the number of tourists, India should prepare for this, as tourism as an industry along with its subsidiary industries and associated infrastructure can make positive changes in the lives of common people. Nevertheless this needs a lot of consultations and planning with various stakeholders.

 **ECOCLUB.com: What sets Kerala apart from other Indian states and has produced its tourism success? Environment, culture or politics?**

**Gopinath Parayil:** I would say a combination of all. Even the landscape has played its role in making Kerala as one of the world's top destination. The narrow strip of land provides the traveller a combination of rivers, backwaters, beaches, mountains and stunning wildlife in its forest regions and all these are accessible within short distances. Cultural richness, entrepreneurial nature of local people (more than 70% of hospitality business are run by people from the state), and sustained marketing efforts of the successive Governments that came to power irrespective of their political belief has also been influential in making it a success story.

 **ECOCLUB.com: You are still in your mid-30s, yet you have accomplished quite a bit for responsible tourism in India. What are your future plans?**

**Gopinath Parayil:** Tourism projects that are run responsibly can make so many positive changes in a society. The potential of tourism in providing jobs, alternative livelihoods, and conservation of environment and preservation of many art forms that would otherwise go into oblivion are mind boggling and as an organisation, we have only scratched the surface in Kerala. Seeing the potential of the concept and the success of revenue model we are working on, there is a lot of interest being generated in the country. We are building networks in Rajasthan, Karnataka, Uttaranchal, Himachal Pradesh, West Bengal and North East of India, where the ground work has already started through our local partners. The idea is to build up local partnerships where they can design, own, operate and manage the projects in the tourism sector that are sustainable. Our role should remain only as the facilitator and in another five years I would like to see The Blue Yonder working with communities around the world.

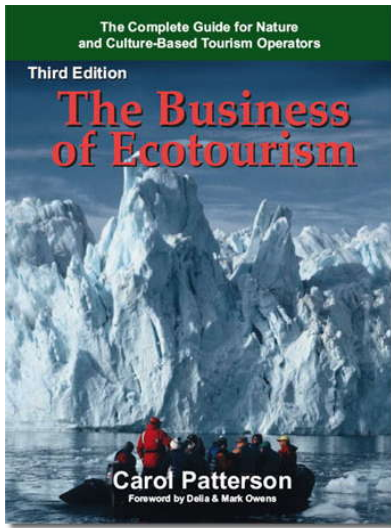
 **ECOCLUB: Thank you very much.**

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## BOOK REVIEW

### The Business of Ecotourism, 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition

By Carol Patterson; Foreword by Delia & Mark Owens,  
219 pages, Trafford Publishing, Victoria BC, 2007



Calgary-based ecotourism consultant, and ECOCLUB Member, Carol Paterson, decided to revise this already useful book, first published in 1997, to expand on management challenges and chronic staff shortages, with two new sections aimed at people who want to make a career in Ecotourism, as a result of feedback that the author received. The 'Business of Ecotourism' provides sensible business advice for any small Ecotourism practitioner. It includes basic accounting and marketing templates, (the author being an experienced accountant before entering Ecotourism) particularly relevant in English-speaking countries and remembers to hint that Ecotourism is much more than a business, or business as usual. One of the most under-researched topics is the issue of risk in Ecotourism ventures, thus the chapter in Managing Business Risk (excerpt below) is very useful, as lack of adequate insurance cover and safety procedures is a gaping hole in many small tour operators as continuous accidents around the world show. We hope that this chapter can be expanded in future editions, as should the interesting but short chapter on industry standards and associations, that omits international networks such as ours. A number of successful practitioners have publically said that they have read previous editions of this book. Obviously a book can not by itself guarantee that an aspiring ecotourism entrepreneur will succeed, however we recommend that ambitious ecotourism students for one, before venturing out to do 'their own thing', purchase this

clever and pleasant to read book so that they open their over-optimistic eyes to the main, potential dangers, not to be scared away but to be aware. This is a great manual, but it would be made even better with a chapter on the extra costs of being green and how to manage them. We would also love to see an 'advanced' version also aimed at researchers, investors and journalists with case studies naming names, possibly localised for specific destinations, and accompanied by a CD with multimedia examples, interactive exercises and case studies. That said, there is nothing rarer and more useful than plain talking and common sense, and this book is full of both. A lot of effort and attention has been invested for an appropriate text size and layout, with useful paragraph summaries and room for notes. Current, not so successful, ecotourism practitioners may also be able to (finally) detect what they are doing wrong – ranging from not "getting the right people for the job", to not marketing their 'product' or forgetting to "build partnerships for success", while they would have the added benefit of finding an excuse to contact the savvy author, one of the world's leading ecotourism consultants, for more input!

► **More Details:** The book is available online through the publishers, Trafford Publishing at <http://www.trafford.com/07-0096> ECOCLUB recommends that you buy it directly from the publishers whose print shop runs on green energy, but if you would (perversely) like to support major corporations, the usual major online outlets also stock it - *Antonis B. Petropoulos*

*(Excerpt follows:)*

#### IS ECOTOURISM DANGEROUS?

Ecotourism contains elements of nature, adventure, and cultural travel. It takes place in foreign lands and out-of-the-way places in your own country. Severe weather conditions, unexpected route changes, and encounters with animals bigger than you, are all potential parts of the experience. This does not mean that ecotourism is dangerous; however, there is an element of risk in eco-travel. In fact, there is risk in all travel and in most activities we undertake, including the drive to the airport to start our eco-trip.

#### WHERE DOES RISK ORIGINATE?

People perceive the industry as being riskier than it actually is. This can result in difficulties in obtaining insurance at affordable rates. The small but real threat of legal action requires a good understanding of where an ecotourism business is exposed to risk and actively working to minimize your exposure. Your ecotourism organization can face losses in the following areas.

**PROPERTY DAMAGE** - damage or loss to the physical assets of your business, such as a boat, building, or vehicle from theft, accident, fire, or vandalism.

**BUSINESS INTERRUPTION** - loss of earnings arising from a temporary stop in your business activity. If your operation was temporarily closed by fire, earnings would be interrupted and you might not be able to meet your financial obligations while you rebuild. Ecotourism businesses could also suffer losses if operating permits are cancelled or if severe or unusual weather conditions arise.

**DISABILITY** - Although many of us can claim good health today, there is a high possibility that we will be disabled at some point in our working lives. Most often the disability is short-term, a sprained ankle or pneumonia just before a trip, but in other



cases, the disability is long-term or permanent. In both cases, employment income, and sometimes business income, is interrupted.

**LOSS OF KEY INDIVIDUALS** - Many companies rely on one or two special people in critical positions. It may be the owner of the company who is still the most popular guide for upper end clientele. The loss of key individuals could jeopardize the operation until a replacement is found.

**MEDICAL** - If a customer were to be injured or become ill in a remote location, the evacuation or treatment of that person could become your responsibility.

**PUBLIC LIABILITY** - This is the area often associated with insurance claims and of particular interest to ecotourism providers. If someone is injured during a rafting trip or comes down with food poisoning on a day hike, you could be held responsible for the losses and stress suffered by that person, or in worst case scenarios, by that person's surviving family. You could also be held liable for the actions of contractors or suppliers you use to deliver part or all of your ecotourism product. Losses in these areas could severely affect your business operations. To prevent this from occurring, you can take action in several areas. You can undertake a program of safety management to minimize the potential of accidents occurring in the first place. In conjunction with this, you can assess those areas where you have the greatest risk and obtain insurance to absorb the financial cost of an illness, accident, or property loss. You may also be able to reduce your risk by contracting out some services. If you contract with a canoe outfitter to provide canoes for your trips, the insurance for the canoes should be covered by the outfitter, resulting in lower insurance costs for you. Where you do use contractors, you need to clarify what risk they are assuming and obtain proof of insurance.

### **LEGAL LIABILITY**

Of prime concern is the threat of legal action arising from the operation of your business. The areas most relevant to ecotourism providers are:

- Tort claims
- Doctrine of respondeat superior
- Contract law
- Product liability

**TORT CLAIMS** - include liability for negligence or gross negligence. If an operator is found to have not acted carefully in a circumstance (negligence), or even when facing danger acted with some degree of recklessness (gross negligence), he may be liable to the customer. While the use of waivers may prevent losses in the case of negligence, they may not be effective where gross negligence is proven. Another possible tort claim can arise in the area of strict liability. If an activity is found to be "inherently dangerous" by a jury, the operator could be liable.

**DOCTRINE OF RESPONDEAT SUPERIOR** - An employer is responsible for the actions of employees as they execute their job duties. It extends responsibility for negligence from the individual employee to the employer.

**CONTRACT LAW** - Involves the many agreements signed between operators and their suppliers and clients. Suppliers who fail to deliver services as set out in the agreement would be liable under contract law for losses incurred. If you advertise specific experiences or accommodation quality, you could be held liable if you do not deliver as advertised.

**PRODUCT LIABILITY** - A concern for operators who provide equipment for their tours. If a product fails and injury results, the customer could take legal action. For this reason, it best to deal with equipment manufacturers who sell high-quality equipment and stand behind their product, i.e. they carry insurance for this situation.

### **INSURING AGAINST THE ODDS**

To mitigate the consequences of legal action or to soften the loss of property or income, insurance is desirable. In some cases, it may be mandatory. Before you are able to obtain licenses or permits in many national parks, you are required to have proof of public-liability insurance.

Justified or not, **many insurance companies perceive ecotourism and adventure travel as high risk and charge higher premiums, or in many cases, choose not to offer insurance at all.** Make sure insurance cost is factored into the cost of your product. Where a trip requires higher insurance premiums, there should be a higher price.

Finding a good carrier may take some work. Ask other ecotourism operators in your area what insurance companies they use and make inquiries through them. Compare rates to ensure you are receiving the best rate. Be prepared to spend several hundred dollars annually on public-liability insurance for "low risk" activities such as guided nature hikes. White-water rafting, kayaking, or roped climbing may cost thousands of dollars, if you are even able to obtain insurance...

Unfortunately some operators are unable to obtain insurance for an activity or cannot afford the premiums. They may elect to operate in areas where insurance is not required and hope that no accidents occur. Often they have few assets or have structured

their company so that their personal liability is minimized. This harms the industry as a whole as consumers are not properly protected. Operators playing by the rules are at a disadvantage when pricing their product against someone who is not carrying the same level of insurance.

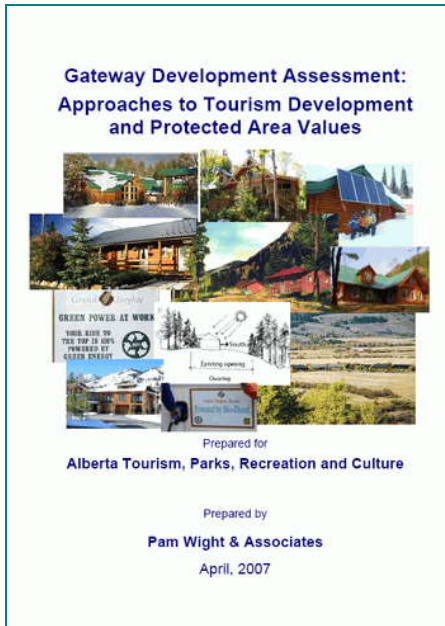
### **STEPS FOR A SAFE ECOTOURISM OPERATION**

Some things you can incorporate into the safety management program of your ecotourism company are:

- **Planning** - Select alternate trip routes and activities that can be used in inclement weather or if the energy level of the group is waning.
  - **Policies** - Set policies on how many guides will accompany a trip. (In some sports and states, minimum guide numbers may be already set by governing agencies.) Develop safety policies that provide direction for bad weather, approaching wildlife, communicating with the base location, and other items that are relevant to your operation.
  - **Hiring** - Look for personal attributes like judgment, leadership, and communication skills, as well as appropriate certification when hiring guides. Check references from previous employers to assess the guide's performance under difficult conditions.
  - **Training** - Provide training in leadership skills so that guides can maintain control over a group under stress. If bad weather is encountered and disagreements arise over the best way to continue the trip, your guide must be able to prevent part of a group from trying to find their own way back to the trail head.
  - **Qualifying clients** - Ensure that all clients have completed a questionnaire and in cases where physical condition is critical or a person has had medical problems, insist on a doctor's examination before the trip departs. Match the customer's abilities and interests to activities and tour itineraries. Help the customer select a tour that is a good choice for them. Resist the temptation to add them to a trip that is beyond their capabilities because you need the extra people in order to run the trip.
  - **Equipment** - Mechanical failure from equipment can significantly increase the potential of accidents. Make it a priority to examine all equipment and restore it to good working order. Where equipment is nearing the end of its life, budget funds to replace it.
  - **Practice** - Give your staff the chance to practice their safety skills, especially those that are used only in times of crisis, such as first aid or rescue drills.
  - **Waivers** - Prepare waivers for customers to sign advising them of the risks of the activity they are about to undertake and absolve you of responsibility in the event of an accident, injury or illness. While waivers may not prevent lawsuits, they can reduce the likelihood that someone would win a claim against your business as you will have made them aware of the potential risks and dangers beforehand.
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**ECOPAEDIA**

**Gateway Development Assessment: Approaches to Tourism Development and Protected Area Values - by Pam Wight & Associates\***



This study commissioned by Alberta Tourism, Parks, Recreation and Culture, aimed to research good practices in areas adjacent to parks around the world and identify where public lands outside parks have integrated land management principles and enabled tourism development with care for parks values. In particular to:

- Provide descriptions as they relate to building design, scale, form and character
- Identify any decision criteria or guidelines related to site, nature, and type of development
- Describe any guidelines related to design, construction and operations
- Identify environmental and social considerations
- Identify operational considerations
- Describe specific sustainable development considerations related to site and public land uses
- Describe any monitoring and evaluation measures and criteria on publicly managed lands adjacent to parks and Protected Areas (PAs).

As the author notes: “there are libraries full of materials on PAs, virtually nothing on adjacent areas. A major question was how do best practice jurisdictions enable sustainable tourism development /adjacent /to parks (ie with regulations and guidelines or any other integrated planning principles) and uphold PA values. It was very tricky to find this out, as it involved considerable research and materials

evaluation, only to find cases didn't merit being included.”

The cases were carefully selected and presented in detail, each providing a different geographic emphasis as well as topic perspective, and thus the study is of great interest to tourism policy makers, protected area managers and academics, but also to ecotourism practitioners operating within and near protected areas.

► **More details:** [Free Download – 4.5 MB](#)

**Excerpts follow:**

**ONTARIO’S RESOURCE-BASED TOURISM: A CASE OF LAND USE PLANNING AND GUIDELINES FOR PROTECTION OF TOURISM VALUES**

The Province of Ontario was proactive in their determination to lessen resource use conflicts, and recognise that tourism has particular claims to natural resources as well as economic and diversification contributions. There was also a good understanding that a land use planning process was needed first, to give overall direction to both the forest and tourism industries, as well as a number of beneficial agreements which were outcomes of the process. In Ontario, the Minister of Natural Resources (MNR) is responsible for land use planning on all Crown lands, which gives it good perspective.

However, the MNR is also responsible for forest industries, not tourism, so it has been difficult for the Ministry of Tourism and the tourism industry to effectively represent tourism values. While Resource Stewardship Agreements (RSAs) were successfully negotiated between some tourism and forestry operators, the MNR is not obliged to accept the RSAs (for inclusion in the Forest Management Plan (FMP) ).

Also, MNR’s has not recognised that tourism values in the forest are often area-based, rather than point specific. This meant that while a tourism operator’s values may not be included in the tourism values maps, they can be expressed in the Tourism Business Interest Maps. However, the MNR does not have to incorporate these designations in their maps. Although the province has begun recognition of tourism values, through land use mapping and tourism values mapping, not all tourism operators, and parks officials interviewed are satisfied with what happens ‘on the ground’ (operators may be concerned about the many months or more it takes for negotiations; or the fact that it’s not their lodge which has tourism value, it’s the area around the lodge, whereas they are not allowed to map areas of information, only points; or the fact that even when an RSA is agreed between the forestry industry and tourism operator, the MNR may not approve it; or the fact that no approvals are usually given to those interested on developing tourism establishments when the land is ‘contentious’ for logging; or the fact that previously protected trails may now be logged even though the trail may be a well-used tourism resource. Park planners may be concerned about the increase in roads to more remote areas, which are encouraging non-commercial users to call for forestry roads to remain open despite the existence of an RSA which agrees to close road access after forestry use; or the fact that remote fly-in camps established outside parks may day-use the parks for free. Forest Companies (FCs) may be sensitive to already having “given up” considerable lands for parks and conservation reserves, and are calling for “no net loss of forests”).

The described policies apply to all public forested land, whether adjacent to parks, or not. There are no further special measures or conditions for tourism operations adjacent to parks.

#### KOOTENAY REGION, BC: A CASE OF STRATEGIC ZONING FOR RECREATION, and POLICIES & GUIDELINES

Much of BC encompasses landscapes which are not only varied, but stunningly beautiful. The interior valleys in particular, have become increasingly attractive to recreationists and to visitors, despite the fact that industrial uses of the same landscapes occurs. As demands have increased, the need to balance competing interests and uses became imperative. BC has been mapping the province, for commercial recreation and access, for both land and water. In addition, these recreation access maps acknowledge potential seasonal differences, via summer and winter maps, as well as aerial maps. The process has involved community, experts and public input.

This consensus-based process is admirable, but it was not enabled to deal with all land uses, in a truly integrated land management approach – industrial use of land was not discussed. However, the information is used by the forest industry to modify their approach, based on the designated recreation activities and access. Additionally, the allocation of lands appropriate for, say ‘high development’ or ‘structures’, is particularly helpful to the private sector who might wish to develop tourism facilities or accommodation on them. It provides a ‘first cut’ of information for the operator, and for government decision makers.

Accommodation for <100 bed-units outside parks and on public lands is governed principally by the Commercial Recreation Policy. Such operations must submit Management Plans, which are a principal instrument by which agencies bind the operator by conditions of development (rather than issuing their own guidelines and criteria, which may change from site to site). One aspect which must be incorporated into the management plan when dealing with commercial recreation is the Wildlife Guidelines. These manage for desired future conditions, and also incorporate acceptable limits around the conditions. Management plans usually incorporate many components of relevance to this study.

Accommodation of >100 bed-units are classified as resorts. Different policies apply, and they are even more rigorous, with environmental and other requirements. However, they, too, have to develop Management Plans. The Jumbo Glacier Resort provides a great deal of public information on its development via its website. It also provides many examples of how it addressing the very topics of this study, in its Management Plan, and the various other documentation provided. The government, by determining the topics to be addressed in the management plan, can determine the contents of a contractual instrument. And if certain topics are not sufficiently addressed in the management plan, they may add additional specific guidelines and conditions beyond the Master Development Agreement, as was done for Jumbo Glacier Resort.

#### NORTH WEST CAPE, WESTERN AUSTRALIA: A CASE OF LONG TERM INTEGRATED LAND USE PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT GUIDELINES

The NW Cape of Australia has become increasingly attractive to visitors. In recognition of the need to rationalise development of the entire State, as well as this region, Western Australia engaged in a series of land use planning exercises, for the State, tourism development regions, and the NW coast in particular. Because the state has a peak land use planning body, the WAPC, responsible for coordinating across all sectors, these complex exercises have been conducted rationally. Further, the strategies and plans have been conducted with appropriate powers to implement the plans. All of the WAPC’s activities are governed by key guiding principals.

Tourism planning has been profiled, so that apart from many other types of plans, Destination Development Strategies have been developed for each of the 5 regions in the State. The public has been very much involved in these exercises, and given scenarios and choices and opportunities for input.

The Ningaloo Coastal Tourism Strategy is a refinement of the regional strategy. It takes a regional approach, creating development ‘gateways’ to this destination, as well as a detailed approach, creating ASPs for the 3 key communities and including tourism development zones within the communities.

At the regional level, the strategy identifies tourism accommodation nodes, tourism investigation envelopes (land broadly suitable for tourism facilities), and tourism focus areas (the most appropriate building areas). In addition to identification, the strategy places strong emphasis on the process for final determination of specific use, and specifies many decision criteria for selecting future developments.

The strategy also places emphasis on the governance related to tourism developments, giving strength to the strategy via legal powers and development controls. Western Australia has held environmental and related guidelines to be very important for some time. Well before the development of the strategies, the state had detailed planning and environmental guidelines for (all) tourism developments. These are updated and embedded within the coastal strategy, and are required for all proposed tourism developments and facilities, in recognition that not only protected areas, but all lands require care in design and development.

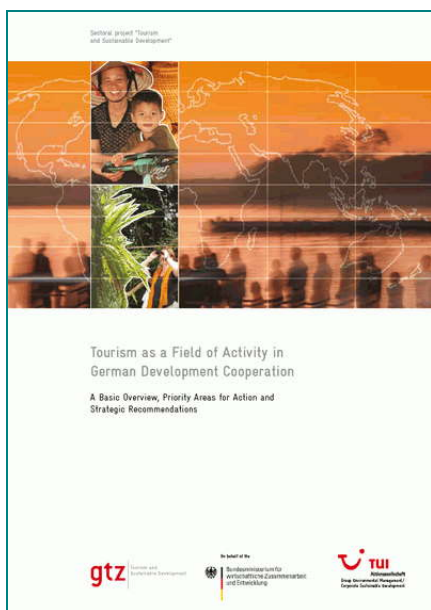
The full report can be downloaded at:



*\*About the Author: Ms. Pamela A. Wight, is a Principal, Pam Wight & Associates, and an Honorary ECOCLUB Member. Ms. Wight has played a leading role in the organisation and management of the United Nations International Year of Ecotourism and was also responsible for drafting the Quebec Declaration on Ecotourism as a Rapporteur. Ms Wight is a consultant who works in the broad realm of sustainable tourism, but with particular experience in the area of ecotourism.*

## Shaping a Fair Globalisation in Tourism

*Excerpt from a new study entitled “Tourism as a field of Activity in German Development Cooperation\*” authored by Matthias Beyer, Nicole Häusler and Wolfgang Strasdas, all of Fachhochschule Eberwalde, University of Applied Sciences. Published by Deutsche Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit (GTZ) on behalf of the German Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development. (excerpt published by permission – complete study can be [freely downloaded](#) 2.5 MB)*



There is a growing interest in fair trade in tourism. Certainly, however, a plausible Fair Trade label and fair-traded travel also pose great challenges. While other industries may receive quality certification for relatively complex products such as footballs and textiles, tourism, due to its nature as a service industry, can only earn the Fair Trade label for such individual components as accommodations, catering, travel guidance and souvenirs. Fair Trade promotion and awareness campaigns would allow the development cooperation to make a significant contribution to fair trade in tourism as well.

An important point in this connection is Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), which means that enterprises take responsibility for society and the environment as a basis of sustainable corporate governance. CSR and tourism might even become a future core issue for development cooperation, since the spectrum of CSR includes many areas relevant to development policy which also affect tourism:

- Compliance with human rights
- Establishment of social standards
- HIV/AIDS prevention
- Supplier certification
- Occupational safety

- Consumer protection
- Climate protection
- Environmental sustainability
- Sustainable use of natural resources.

### Shaping a Fair Globalization:

According to the German Ministry for Economic Cooperation & Development (BMZ), shaping globalisation means improving the social, political and economic framework at all levels. The aim is to let developing countries participate in the benefits of globalisation, rather than making them the victims of this process.

Today it is possible to fly from one end of the world to the other in a short time. In the last decades, it was usually only people in the Western world who were able to afford business or leisure travel. There has been a dramatic turn in recent years, as the Asian upper and middle classes, in particular, have begun to travel as well, demonstrating a growing popularity for trips to Western countries.

Tourism is thus one of the central elements of globalisation, offering through its “tourism lens” an interesting and unique view on key issues of globalisation, including identity, cultural heritage, authenticity, ownership and gender, as well as social, environmental and economic sustainability.

It does not require deeper political insight to realise that we are not so much at the dawn of the age of sustainable development as in the midst of an age of globalisation characterised by neoliberal policies that is far from reaching its zenith. While in view of its dynamics it seems that no one is able to predict its long-term impact on humanity, the growing influence of globalisation on people’s lives can already be felt around the world.

As a result, we are dealing with two concurrent discourses today – the globalisation discourse and the sustainability discourse – yet without so much as a clue as to how the sustainability discourse intends to achieve its objectives in a world that is increasingly dominated by the process of globalisation. Due to relatively weak lobbying and authority, the sustainability discourse is also at risk of being appropriated or even exploited by the globalisation discourse, which might take on the objectives of the sustainability discourse to give its primarily growth-oriented strategies the air of social and environmental responsibility and thus of moral soundness.

One of the other major challenges, especially for tourism, is to prevent this from happening and to point out the limits of the economic, environmental, and social carrying capacity of the globalisation discourse. After all, this is the very industry which, considering its expansive development during the last decades, could almost be seen as having paved the way for globalisation in the first place.

There is a close correlation between the potentials and opportunities and the economic, social and environmental risks of tourism development. However, since tourism, unlike any other economic sector, depends largely on an environment that is ecologically, socially and economically intact, it is also the most likely sector to offer opportunities and ways to make the sustainability objectives compatible with the process of globalisation. This is an opportunity to be seized – especially by development cooperation.

## ECOCLUB PEOPLE



**ISEL & RICARD** - Proprietors of ECOCLUB Ecolodge Mas LLuerna, Spain  
( <http://www.ecoclub.com/lluerna> )

*Isel and Ricard were profiled on the cover of the weekly edition of XL Semanal, the weekly magazine of a mass circulation Spanish newspaper! Brief, translated excerpt:*

“OIL? - No thanks!: Climate change seems irreversible. However many citizens have are determined to move on to action: only consume organic food, live in bioclimatic homes, abandon the car and even invest their money in sustainable projects. They are living proof that a world without petroleum is possible. “For us, *OIL* is the alternative energy” say Ricard Guiu and Isel Careers, a couple that for 15 years has expelled fossil fuel from their everyday life. “Only five percent of the energy that we consume at home stems from oil ” confirms Isel. In Mas Lluerna, their three hectare farm , 40 kilometers off Lérida, no energy from the electric network is consumed. During ten months and half every year, the sun provides them electricity for heating and hot water. The remaining time, a hydraulic mini-turbine takes over. The story does not stop here: they have ecotuned their car for 1,600 Euros and only consume vegetable oil; when the weather is good, they cook with solar reflectors; in their ecological orchard, they have exiled pesticides and other toxic petroleum by-products achieving

food self-sufficiency! Their bio-constructed dwelling incorporating bioclimatic features is built only with straw bales, wood and glass. “15 years ago we bought three hectares of land. We felt a duty that our actions should contribute to a solution: if successful, to provide an example that it is possible to live without petroleum or with much less. **The Sun, the water and the land give us what we need, from soaps to hot water and food. We live modestly, we earn little money, but neither do we have debts.**”



**KAMAL** – Manager at ECOCLUB Ecolodge Tree Tops Jungle Lodge, Sri Lanka  
( <http://www.ecoclub.com/treetopsfarm> & <http://www.treetopjunglelodge.com> )  
by Lars Sorensen, Proprietor, Tree Tops Jungle Lodge\*

“Kamal began 5 1/2 years ago, only a month after his 16 years birthday. No English at all. Like other locals in my area. In the beginning sweeping and living at the place as a permanent person. That's necessary. That time always with another boy so they were 2. He had left the school the last year before o-level exam. He had best marks in all subjects. But left school without exam because the family had no money, no food. He had to 'find money' as he has explained. His mother died of a cobra bite when he was 5 years old. A few years ago there was no substitute in my absence. Now Kamal is able to handle the whole operation, only 21 years old. Learned good English and is now a skilled naturalist guide. I can trust him - which actually is a rare feature, when dealing with the reality of community based tourism!

He fully understands my ideas and concept and can speak for me in any context. That's particularly important in the present situation where we are lobbying for the best future for elephants in our area. Decisions are made and will shape our and the elephants' future. That is a positive story from the ground level of ecotourism. And therefore this little explanation to the feedback from Mrs Ruth because she is specifically mentioning Kamal. We had people cancelling when they got to know I wouldn't be there! Actually my whole staff concept is depending on Kamal. Locals only. I never really found other locals with an interest in education. And an understanding of future instead of day-to-day traditional thinking. Locals only is the most difficult staff concept in ecotourism... But I've been stubborn with this idea because we change the atmosphere and feeling as soon as I introduce people from 'outside'.

**ECOCLUB MONITOR**

**Zakynthos, Greece: Is the protected Caretta sea-turtle threatened by mass nature Tourism?**

In October 2007, following a complaint by MEDASSET (Web: [www.medasset.org](http://www.medasset.org) ), an environmental NGO, against adverse tourism impact on sea turtles from tourist boats within the Zakynthos island National Marine Park (ZNMP, Web: <http://www.nmp-zak.org> ), and allegation that boat captains force turtles to emerge from the bottom so that they can be observed by tourists, ECOCLUB intervened and contacted the ZNMP authorities.



MEDASSET Photo – Summer 2007:  
 “Sea Turtle Spotting Boats Crowding around a solitary sea turtle”

A rare, written indirect dialogue ensued during October 2007, between the two sides, headed by two equally dynamic women, not yet common in Greece, and both of who have our highest respect. ECOCLUB recommended to both sides that they sit down together – perhaps in a form of a conference – brush aside any misunderstandings and accept that the other side is also well-meaning and keen on progress, to unite so as to face off third parties blocking progress on the ground, while at the same time be generous with at least some local demands, as parks without local support are paper parks. The Greek government itself had for 5 years been under investigation from the European Court of Justice about the Zakynthos Marine Park, and had to provide annual reports of progress made. As a well-off European Union nation, and a leading tourism destination, Greece no longer needs any excuses. The EU decided to close the 2002 European Court of Justice Case (C-103/00, ECR 2002:1147) in June 2007,

however the park is still far from a sea-turtle paradise. The truth is that it never was in living memory: most of the area of Laganas bay, was an area developed for tourism long before this overambitious park was declared, and it is hard, and expensive, to contain property developers; indeed when an area is protected, property values rise!

Possibly indicative of the chaotic administrative situation in Zakynthos, is that 100,000 Euros sent to the Municipality from the Ministry of Interior and earmarked for the park, went ‘missing’ two weeks before the general election in September. This is progress over 2005 when a just installed director of the ZNMP, a local, had to resign when it became known that his family owned an ‘illegally-built’ house inside the protected area. His replacement, a dynamic Athens University professor of Biology, a (rare) inspired decision by the Minister of Environment and Public works to clear the mess, has since been following a real politik, and progress has been evident over the past couple of years. However in real politik you also have to give something, in this case to local interests, who in 2006 went on to destroy ZNMP guard posts and signage, in protest at excessive protection and after heavy fines on local landowners.

The most serious allegations by MEDASSET, as understood by us, are that there are:

1. Too many boats are harassing turtles, while too many beach tourists are endangering nests.
2. A rubbish deposit area near Sekania, the highest protection beach, attracts seagulls who then attack hatchlings, while when it rains, the rubbish overflows to the sea.
3. There are rooms for rent at Euros 120 / night, illegally operating, as well as new illegally built houses inside the protected areas.
4. The park authorities operate in total secrecy, without consulting NGOs or other stakeholders
5. The NMPZ policy is towards low-key tourism development, not absolute conservation, and thus infrastructure is expanding, including a huge parking.
6. Protection and monitoring is inadequate

The NMZP reply, again as understood by ECOCLUB, is:

1. Tourist Boats are problem, and a particular banned captain keeps causing problems. A code of conduct exists and there were fines of around 700 Euros this summer on boat captains. No more than a total of 15 Boats ply the waters, while there is an Archelon (NGO) representative on many tourism boat trips, monitoring that rules are met. Measures were in place during August, the peak tourist month in Zakynthos, to confine the sometimes excessive numbers of beach tourists close to the sea shore, and away from the nesting belt.

2. The rubbish dump, over the location of which the park is powerless, is not a big problem, as preliminary results from a study by WWF on seagulls on the Sekania beach has shown. A guard is employed in that beach to chase away seagulls, however only from 6 am to 2 pm. In addition, the rubbish dump acts as a ‘natural’ buffer against property developers.

3. NMZP authority applies close to the shore line, illegal buildings are outside their mandate, but they do force lights and music to stop by dusk. The 'illegal' houses are all old constructions, and neither the Ministry or any lesser authority can assume the political cost of demolishing local people's houses, enough to destroy a politician's career in Greece.

4. NMZP has rebuilt bridges with local people, and is cooperating rather well with Archelon and WWF, but not with MEDASSET, who they find non-constructive and attention-seeking.

5. Tourism infrastructure is necessary so as to limit tourism impact. The parking was necessary so that tourists and locals stop parking on the beach, and learn to walk. A nesting museum has also been constructed, hosting schools and events. Local tourism businesses have been convinced to retreat far back from the shore line in the past two years, providing ample space for nests, that have shown a marked increase.

6. NMZP had its hands tied due to public sector hiring regulations that lead to the hiring of employees from Zakynthos island, 62 guards, half of whom have already quit. At the same time, not all NGO volunteers are serious enough, with the park authorities having to expel some of them for holding night parties in protected beaches...

Our Assessment: Due to conflicting local interests, there is a half-deliberate confusion of responsibilities leading to impasse, with various local and public bodies being co-responsible for the protected area. There are therefore legal short-comings tying the hands of the NMZP. At the same time, there are chronically unrealistic protection plans in the face of local hostility. A (continuation of a) stick and carrot policy, combined with use of intelligent technology (sensors, cameras and web-cams for transparency), pricing mechanisms, taxes, and revenue-sharing with the local community, accompanied by increased monitoring and constant education of tourist operators and tourists, may work. Tour boat crews must be re-licensed and re-trained, with temporary and permanent bans for those unwilling to learn new ways. In terms of infrastructure, this must be reversible and low-impact, and also include a creation of a fire protection corridor especially as the rubbish dump is near. Greater use of properly trained and carefully selected volunteers should be made, along with a plan to win the hearts and minds of the new generation on the island. A face to face meeting and tour on location, during the next high tourism season, where all sides would be invited to participate, would go a long way to dispel misperceptions and miscommunications, and also provide a reality check to all sides. All this requires MORE funding, and our lethargic Ministry of Environment & Public Works should realise it is far more efficient to pay these in the first place – directly to the NZMP lest they get lost again – rather than to the EU in the form of fines. At the same time, tourists must also contribute to nature protection, through the introduction of park fees, the greater part of which must be directly offered to the local community, so that they can see for themselves that conservation pays!

What is hopefully becoming clearer to all concerned is that thanks to globalization and the power of the Internet, the environment is no longer an externality that no one cares for, or which can be sacrificed for narrow & ill-conceived local interests without this going unnoticed or unpunished. Ecotourists have a duty to speak up when they observe a violation of environmental legislation, human or animal rights, in the conduct of tourism business!

*We will continue to monitor the situation in Zakynthos and report as required. In the mean time, do you have a tourism & environment story you would like ECOCLUB to monitor? Email [editor@ecoclub.com](mailto:editor@ecoclub.com)*

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**ECOCLUB HEADLINES** - News from ECOCLUB and our Members around the world**World:****Report recognises ECOCLUB as leading alternative internet promoter**

A new Mintel International Report entitled "Eco-accommodation, Travel & Tourism Analyst No.20" showcases ECOCLUB S.A. as one of just two "internet-based marketing agencies of niche alternative tourism worldwide" that "build constituencies" and as "self-sustaining businesses based on the marketing of goods and services as well as drivers for the building of a sustainable model of tourism". An interview with the ECOCLUB Director Antonis B. Petropoulos, also appears in this special report. Three ECOCLUB Ecolodge Partners, Black Sheep Inn (Ecuador), The Pimenta (India) and Amazonat (Brazil) are also showcased in the report.

>> Related: [Eco-Accommodation Report by Mintel International](#)

**E.U. Environment Commissioner: "Ecotourism can certainly play a positive role"**

Replying to a question posed to him by ECOCLUB on 15 October, in the context of a "live chat" on the occasion of the International Blog Action Day for the Environment, European Union Environment Commissioner Stavros Dimas expressed his appreciation of the positive role of Ecotourism in protecting nature and providing much needed employment, however did not provide any further details on specific policies.

The question was: "Does your directorate have any plans to favour Ecotourism (Ecological Tourism), and low-key responsible tourism in E.U. Protected Areas (National Parks & Natura) so as to protect these areas from further resort-style development?"

Mr Dimas replied as follows:

" In response to: Ecoclub Ecotourism can certainly play a positive role in both helping Europeans to enjoy areas protected for nature while at the same time promoting the small scale businesses which can provide much needed employment in rural areas. The Commission positively encourages this kind of development which is more compatible with protecting the environment of sensitive natural areas. Stavros"

>>Details: <http://blogs.ec.europa.eu/dimas/international-blog-action-day-2/>

**New Director at TIES**

The International Ecotourism Society (TIES) announced the sudden departure of its Executive Director, David Sollitt, and his replacement by long-serving Board Member and Chair, Dr Kelly Bricker. The official announcement at the organisation's website is laconic about this development. It reads: "One of the important aspects of the organizational change and development is transition of the Executive Director's position. With the departure of the former Executive Director David Sollitt, Dr. Kelly Bricker, who has served for the past three years as TIES Board Chair, and for over seven years as a member of the Board, has assumed the position of acting Executive Director of TIES." David Sollitt had been appointed Executive

Director in February 2007, taking over from Martha Honey, and during his tenure TIES successfully co-organised the World Ecotourism Conference in Oslo, in May 2007 and the North American Ecotourism Conference in Madison, Wisconsin in September 2007.

>>Details: <http://www.ecotourism.org>

**Americas****Belize: Punta Gorda marks Responsible Tourism Day**  
PUNTA GORDA, BELIZE (9 November 2007)

The first Toledo Tourism Expo (TOLTEX) took place in Punta Gorda on Saturday, 10 November from 10:00-17:00. Timed to coincide with World Responsible Tourism Day being held in at the World Travel Mart in London, TOLTEX brought together all the various strands of nature, culture and adventure which make Toledo a must see destination for the responsible tourist.

>>Details: <http://www.ecoclub.com/bigfalls>

**Belize: World Heritage Site may be sold to developer,**

In a letter to the Prime Minister of Belize, the Belize Tourism Industry Association (BTIA), expresses its 'extreme concern' about recent media reports that the Government intends to remove protection from 2,700 acres (1,092 hectares) of the Bacalar Chico National Park to be sold to a private developer. The Association points out that the park is part of the Belize Barrier Reef a UNESCO World Heritage Site, and exhibits one of Belize's most lush coastal mangrove forests. Meanwhile, according to the Belize Audubon Society, one of the areas also up for de-reservation is the Crooked Tree Wildlife Sanctuary. The Association of Protected Areas Management Organizations and the Belize Tourism Industry Association were also planning a public event to voice their opposition, while international bodies such as the World Bank and the UN Foundations are also expected to press the Belize government.

**Belize: New Eco-Museum opens**

A new living museum of tropical treasures was inaugurated on August 1, 2007 and is now waiting environment & culture enthusiasts: The Belize Eco-Museum. Visitors will observe that natural and recycled resources were used in the museum's construction and decoration, intended to present the harmonious coexistence of local nature and traditional Belizean culture through exhibits such as "Belize Tropical Treasures", "Belize Nature Artistries", "Butterfly Corridor", "Belize Stone Collection Painting", "Expression of Orchid Garden", "Eco-Village", "Native Belize Orchids & Bromeliads". The Belize Eco-Museum is open from 8:30am to 4:30pm, 7 Days a week. The entrance fee is \$2.5 US per person with a complimentary Hibiscus tea or coffee. The museum is located at 14.5 Mile, Western Highway, conveniently located near Belize city and the International airport and is a perfect, educational stop for tour groups.

>> Details: <http://trybelize.com>

**Ecuador: New tour at Reserva Ecologica Pachijal**

Reserva Ecologica Pachijal is glad to announce the availability of a new all-inclusive tour named "A Collage of Andean and Tropical Ecuador". The tour which is 12

days long, allows the visitor to experience a variety of ecosystems: Paramo on Andes, the Cloud Forest at Pachijal and surroundings, the Pacific Ocean at Rio Verde with its large and deserted beaches, the Santiago river and the Rainforest at Playa de Oro, and the Andes and the magic of Laguna de Cuicocha. The visitor will also sample the cultural heritage and vibrant cultures of Ecuador: from Mindo where Los Yumbos lived to Playa de Oro and its afro-ecuatorian culture, then on to Cuicocha and Otavalo and the Andean Culture, and finally the Colonial Center in Quito, a World Heritage Site. About Pachijal Reserve: Income from visits goes directly to the community and protects the 10,000 ha cloud forest of Mindo.

>> Details: Contact Renato Gregorini at Reserva Ecologica Pachijal (Web: [www.pachijalreserve.com](http://www.pachijalreserve.com))

### **Costa Rica: Award-winning Ecotour Operator attacks Carbon Offsets**

In an article on Planeta.com entitled "Carbon Offsets: Paying off Unsustainable Life Styles or Investing in Sustainability" Michael Kaye, founder of award-winning ecotour operator Costa Rica Expeditions, disputes both the mechanism and the ethics of the carbon offset industry when it comes to Travel. According to Kaye "It is a brilliantly seductive strategy: with a small manageable financial sacrifice we "offset" our life styles. Any scheme that allows sustainability gurus to guiltlessly fly around in private jets and contaminate the atmosphere much more than the ordinary citizen has got to be worthy of our respect." Paying for carbon offsets was "like taking aspirin for cancer that has very possibly metastasized".

>>Details:

<http://www.planeta.com/planeta/07/0709offsets.html>

### **United States: North American Ecotourism Conference 'a success**

The North American Ecotourism Conference (NAEC 2007) opened on Wednesday, September 26 with a special welcome ceremony by representatives of the Native American tribes in Wisconsin, and keynote speeches by Barbara Lawton, Wisconsin's Lt. Governor; Stefanos Fotiou, Coordinator of the United Nations Environment Programme's tourism programme; and Kelly Bricker, Chair of The International Ecotourism Society (TIES) Board of Directors. A traditional Native American grand entry ceremony was performed under the tribal flags representing Wisconsin's eleven tribal nations, officially opening the conference and welcoming the attendees. The HoChunk and other Native American tribes are "key stewards of Wisconsin's natural treasures, working to promote economic development and diversification while practicing sustainability," according to the Wisconsin Department of Tourism, the local sponsor of the conference. Held at the beautiful Monona Terrace in Madison, WI, one of the first buildings in the country to receive LEED-EB (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design for Existing

Buildings) certification, the conference emphasized that "going green is profitable," as Lt. Governor Barbara Lawton explained in her opening speech. Through best practice examples and case studies from across the region, the conference sessions explored various topics in ecotourism and sustainable development, including climate change and carbon management, sustainable design and green technologies.

>> Details: <http://www.ecotourismconference.org>

## **Europe**

### **Greece: New Minister plays up Ecotourism**

Two months after the great fires that devastated over 12% of the country's forests, Greece's new Minister of Tourism Aris Spiliotopoulos, speaking at the 23rd 'Philoxenia' Tourism Fair, hinted at a new direction for tourism development, a 'new ethic' which would prioritise environmental protection, Ecotourism and green tourism, starting with a pilot project in Lake Kaiafa, in Ilia Prefecture, which was one of the worst hit areas. The Minister spoke about the possible creation of "eco-campings and eco-marinas" in the popular Halkidiki peninsula (which he unfortunately described as a new 'golf destination) mountain-hiking and walking tours in Epirus' Zagori villages, the diffusion of alternative energy sources in Tourism, and the operation of new Train Routes for tourists. In a press conference he also criticised lodge owners that keep serving mass-produced rather than locally-made products for breakfast and announced a major overhaul in the state-owned Agrotouristiki S.A. company, which has tried to spearhead & control agrotourism development in the last 3 years, due to unspecified 'problems'. For Minister Spiliotopoulos Agrotourism was 'not a business' but a 'calling' and a lifestyle 'choice'. On the negative side and responding to a journalist, the Minister said that inappropriate waste management in tourism destinations was beyond his ministry's brief.

### **Greece: Rhodes Natura Networking & LIFE-Nature Conference, TILOS, GREECE (17 October 2007)**

The Tilos Park Association held their first ever conference entitled "Natura 2000: For the People, By the People", featuring leading Greek environment experts, local representatives and public administrators, along the spirit of the European Union Natura Networking Program. The Association is confident that this event will contribute to public awareness & education, as well as the exchange of views between protected area management professionals, and a review of the successful techniques implemented on Tilos island. Rhodes, the administrative centre of the Dodecanese region, was chosen as the conference venue due to accessibility problems in Tilos in low season. The meeting took place at the "Aktaion", a listed 19th century building owned by the City of Rhodes Municipality.

>>Details: <http://www.tilos-park.org>

## ECO PHILOSOPHY

### Cynicism and its relation to Ecology and Internationalism

*"I am Diogenes the Dog. I nuzzle the kind, bark at the greedy and bite scoundrels."*



Have you ever been called a cynic? Cynic actually means dog-like, kyon being the ancient greek for dog. Worry not, because you are in good company, in fact you could feel proud in a way...How? Let us go way back to 5<sup>th</sup> century BCE to ancient Athens and Corinth, two of the places that had the dubious honour of hosting the legendary philosopher Diogenes of Sinope, the Cynic (423 – 323 BCE) .

None of Diogenes' 14 treatises survive, however his students spread his ideas and greatly influenced the Stoic philosophy. Our knowledge of him, as of many other philosophers, mainly comes from Diog. Laertius (3<sup>rd</sup> century CE) 'Lives and Opinions of Eminent Philosophers', in the form of a series of anecdotes about annoying but humorous things Diogenes said to other people, a legend somewhat reminiscent (accidentally?) of the Nasreddin Hotza also born near Sinop some 1,500 years later.

Diogenes was born in the early 4<sup>th</sup> century BCE, the son of Ikesios, a banker in Sinope, a Greek port-city / colony in the Black Sea, important in the Europe-Caucasus - India trade (present-day Sinop, Turkey). He may have had to leave his hometown because he had created fake coins, possibly one of his first acts of disobedience. He found refuge in Athens where penniless, he became a student of and was influenced by the austere & ascetic philosopher Antisthenes (himself a pupil of Socrates) who made him endure various hardships before accepting Diogenes as a full student.' Plato, also a

student of Socrates, was to call Diogenes a 'Socrates gone mad' while Diogenes would in turn call Socrates a 'madman' and would never stop making fun of Plato. Soon Diogenes surpassed his teacher in terms of contempt for 'civilisation', deciding to own nothing, living in a clay tub, being independent, scorning wedding and family (favouring promiscuity) and puritan ethics, political organisation, property rights and fame, the total antithesis to Plato. Among his few possessions was a lantern, with which he used to make rounds in the Agora (forum) in plain daylight, 'looking for an honest man'.

Somehow, he found himself in rich and rather decadent Corinth (a rather incredible story is that he was captured by pirates and sold as a slave to a rich Corinthian who asked him to teach his children) where he continued to make cynical remarks about the rich, the wasteful and the powerful, but he also lectured to great audiences at the Isthmia games (one of the 4 important athletic events of ancient Greece). In Corinth, the legend goes, he allegedly met with his contemporary Alexander the Great (a pupil of Aristotle, who was a pupil of Plato), who after subjugating the city, was curious to meet the great cynic. Alexander asked him if there was any favour he could do for him: Diogenes simply replied, "Yes, I would have you stand from between me and the sun." (a double pun as the sun was also the emblem of the Macedonians). A dumbfound Alexander could only mutter "If I were not Alexander, then I would wish to be Diogenes." (To lend credibility, the scene has also been found in roman mosaics.)

Diogenes is also attributed as the first person to have used the word 'cosmopolitan' (kosmopolitis – citizen of the world) as a reply to the question 'what type of citizen he was'. The word cosmopolitan was later used by Stoic philosophers, in the syncretic Hellenistic era during which east and west fused, to describe a universal appreciation of humankind as one, beyond nations. There is also a possible direct connection between Cynics and Indian Jains and early Buddhists (Epicureanism also having similarities with early Buddhism) of that era, through the mutual cultural exchanges of the Hellenistic era, but also older commercial and cultural ties.

Some interesting Diogenes quotes still provoking laughter surviving 2,000 years, and translation include the following: "When asked why people give to beggars and not to philosophers, Diogenes said, "Because they think it possible that they themselves may become lame and blind, but they do not expect ever to turn out philosophers." Some men were sacrificing to the Gods to prevail on them to send them sons, and he said, "And do you not sacrifice to procure sons of a particular character?" On another occasion, someone said to him, "The people of Sinope condemned you to exile," he replied, "And I condemned them to remain where they were." When he went to the city of Myndus, he saw some incredibly large gates for such a small city and so he said "Oh men of Myndus, shut your gates, lest your city should steal out." Plato once said to Diogenes "If you had paid your respects to Dionysus (a tyrant), you would not be washing lettuces now," to which, with calmness Diogenes replied, "If you had washed lettuces, Plato, you would not have had to pay your respects to Dionysus." Diogenes was particularly upset by extravagant, luxurious interior decorations (non-eco), and at one rich man's house, on finding himself surrounded by expensive carpets and fluffy cushions, Diogenes spat in the owner's face, and then wiped it with his rough cloak and then apologised, saying it was "the only dirty place in the room he could find to spit"...

Ever shameless and outspoken, Diogenes died in Corinth at 90 years old in 323 BCE, around the same time with his admirer Alexander the Great in Babylon. It is said that this was after deliberately holding his breath, or by eating raw octopus, or from a dog bite. His friends after long arguments, ignored his last request to simply throw him over the wall to be eaten by wild animals (dogs?) and instead buried him near the city gate leading to the Isthmus, placing on top of his grave a marble statue of a dog.

*Sources & Further Reading:*

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