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features

Mount Everest, the high-altitude rubbish dump

At least 600 people have scaled the world's highest peak so far this year alone



This picture taken on May 21, 2018 shows discarded climbing equipment and rubbish scattered around Camp 4 of Mount Everest

AFP | Tibet

Decades of commercial mountaineering have turned Mount Everest into the world's highest rubbish dump as an increasing number of big-spending climbers pay little attention to the ugly footprint they leave behind.

Fluorescent tents, discarded climbing equipment, empty gas canisters and even human excrement litter the well-trodden route to the summit of the 8,848-metre (29,029-foot) peak.

"It is disgusting, an eyesore," Pemba Dorje Sherpa, who has summited Everest 18 times, said. "The mountain is carrying tonnes of waste."

As the number of climbers on the mountain has soared -- at

least 600 people have scaled the world's highest peak so far this year alone -- the problem has worsened.

Meanwhile, melting glaciers caused by global warming are exposing trash that has accumulated on the mountain since Edmund Hillary and Tenzing Norgay made the first successful summit 65 years ago.

Efforts have been made. Five years ago Nepal implemented a \$4,000 rubbish deposit per team that would be refunded if each climber brought down at least eight kilogrammes (18 pounds) of waste.

On the Tibet side of the Himalayan mountain, they are required to bring down the same amount and are fined \$100 per kilogramme if they don't.

In 2017 climbers in Nepal brought down nearly 25 tonnes



Mount Everest was first named Peak 15 and measured at 29,002 feet in 1856

of trash and 15 tonnes of human waste -- the equivalent of three double-decker buses -- according to the Sagarmatha Pollution Control Committee (SPCC).

This season even more was carried down but this is just a fraction of the rubbish dumped each year, with only half of

climbers lugging down the required amounts, the SPCC says.

Instead many climbers opt to forfeit the deposit, a drop in the ocean compared to the \$20,000-\$100,000 they will have forked out for the experience.

Pemba shrugs that many just don't care. Compounding the problem, some officials accept small bribes to turn a blind eye, he said. "There is just not enough monitoring at the high camps to ensure the mountain stays clean," he said.

Inexperience

The Everest industry has boomed in the last two decades.

This has sparked concerns of overcrowding as well as fears that ever more inexperienced mountaineers are being drawn by low-cost expedition operators desperate for customers.

This inexperience is exacerbating the rubbish problem, warns Damian Benegas, who has been climbing Everest for over two decades with twin brother Willie.

Sherpas, high altitude guides and workers drawn from the indigenous local ethnic group, carry heavier items including tents, extra oxygen cylinders and ropes up the mountain -- and then down again.

Previously most climbers would take their own personal kit like extra clothes, food, a sleeping bag as well as supplemental oxygen. But now, many climbers can't manage, leaving the Sherpas to carry everything.

"They have to carry the client's gear so they are unable to carry down rubbish," Benegas said. He added that operators need to employ more high-altitude

workers to ensure all clients, their kit and rubbish get safely up and down the mountain.

Environmentalists are concerned that the pollution on Everest is also affecting water sources down in the valley.

At the moment the raw sewage from base camp is carried to the next village -- a one-hour walk -- and dumped into trenches.

This then "gets flushed downhill during the monsoon into the river", said Garry Porter, a US engineer who together with his team might have the answer. They are considering installing a biogas plant near Everest base camp that would turn climber poo into a useful fertiliser.

Another solution, believes Ang Tsering Sherpa, former president of the Nepal Mountaineering Association, would be a dedicated rubbish collection team.

Meet the animals 'predicting' winners of World Cup in Russia



Achilles the cat

Globalnews | Moscow

The 2018 FIFA World Cup is underway, and in addition to goals and excitement on the field, that also means a host of animals looking to carve out a reputation for themselves as accurate predictors of match results.

These creatures will be looking to follow in the tentacle-steps of Paul the octopus, who correctly chose the winners of every match he predicted during the 2010 World Cup in Germany.

Achilles the cat

The opening game of the World Cup between hosts Russia and Saudi Arabia was widely expect-

ed to be a tight affair, but Achilles knew better.

Resident of the Hermitage museum in Saint Petersburg, Achilles, who is hearing-impaired, correctly predicted a Russian victory, Euronews reported. The Russians went on to earn a thumping 5-0 victory.

The clairvoyant cat also predicted an Iranian victory over Morocco, according to Russian news agency TASS. That prediction also turned out to be legitimate, with a Moroccan defender scoring an own goal in the dying moments of the game to hand Iran a 1-0 victory on Friday.

Achilles' deafness may aid in his predictive abilities, according to his veterinarian Anna Kondratyeva.

The cat reportedly garnered a

100 per cent record in predicting the results of 2017 Confederations Cup soccer games in his hometown last year.

Cleopatra the tapir

The city of Nizhny Novgorod will also have its own resident clairvoyant in the form of Cleopatra, a Brazilian tapir who calls the Limpopo Zoo her home.

The pig-like herbivore has predicted that Sweden will defeat South Korea in Nizhny Novgorod's first game on Monday. Her most high-profile assignment will be a quarter-final match on July 6.

Nelly the elephant

Easily the largest creature involved in predicting World Cup results is Nelly, an eight-year-old



Paul the Octopus correctly chose the winners of every match he predicted in 2010 world cup

African elephant who lives in the Serengeti Park zoo in Hohenhausen, Germany.

The prophesying pachyderm was given a soccer ball and an opportunity to kick the ball into one of two nets, one marked Germany and another Mexico.