

# Silk Tidings

## Greetings from Salt Spring Island

The crazy flicker that returns every year has hammered out the fact that it is spring. This lunatic bird tries to attract a mate by drilling into the metal cap of our hot tub chimney. His plea echoes through the property, bringing smiles to our faces over his antics. Our wood fired hot tub sits on the edge of the field giving us a big view of the moon and stars. This time of year, we can soak our aching gardening muscles

while listening to the frogs singing for a mate and the owls hooting and screeching. There are no chemicals in our large wine barrel type hot tub. So we empty the water into the garden when we need to clean and refill. That hot tub has been particularly welcome this spring, because it has been so cold and wet. We hope spring is showing up your way, too.

*Continued on page 2...*

## Silkster's Gallery

We have a new gallery showcasing such diverse things as a silk fusion helmet to a friendly wood troll. The pieces are very creative, beautiful and inspiring. One of the participants said, "I have found so much inspiration from the others who have been featured in the Silkster's Gallery." Check out the wonderful work on our website at [www.treenwaysilks.com/gallery.html](http://www.treenwaysilks.com/gallery.html) or look for Silkster's Gallery under Galleries in the menu.

Congratulations and thank you to all for sharing your art.

*Continued on page 2...*

## Treenway for Sale

Well, we have had an amazing response to the sale of Treenway and some very interested folks. However, nothing has been written on paper yet. So, we just wanted to keep the word out there. Below is a repeat of our sale notice that appeared in our February newsletter.



We reached retirement age this year and have decided to officially put Treenway Silks up for sale. Some very important facts:

- Treenway has **not been sold**; it is, however, up for sale
- We are **not going out of business**.

We will continue running the business as usual, and it will have no effect whatsoever on our customers. We are announcing it to all of you to avoid rumours and, more importantly, we have nearly 7,000 people receiving the newsletter and among those

7,000 fibre fanatics there could be one or two interested in buying the business.

### What is Happening?

We would like to retire and spend more time with our grandchildren, in the garden and studio.

We started the business 34 years ago and we are looking forward to the next phase of our lives.

The business has established a very good reputation over

*Continued on page 2...*

## Silkster's Gallery Call for Entries

Our next Silkster's Gallery will be in our September issue. We encourage all of you to send photos of your work using Treenway silks. It is fun and inspirational for all of us to see what unique work is being produced. We reward you for your time with silk product from Treenway.

See our web site for details of what we require from you to participate in this exciting gallery. We so look forward to your entries.

[www.treenwaysilks.com/gallery.html](http://www.treenwaysilks.com/gallery.html)

Treenway Silks is located at 501 Musgrave Road, Salt Spring Island, BC, Canada, V8K 1V5. You can reach us **toll free at 1.888.383.SILK (7455)** or at 250.653.2345 or by fax at 250.653.2347. Email us at [info@treenwaysilks.com](mailto:info@treenwaysilks.com). See our website [www.treenwaysilks.com](http://www.treenwaysilks.com).

continued...  
**Greetings from Salt Spring Island**

The peas have been reluctant to pop through the ground, but they showed the tops of their heads yesterday. The salad greens in the greenhouse have been much happier than those outside and we have been enjoying fresh salads for a few weeks now.



One of our gallery artists, Sheila, wrote a delightful note about her work. "Honestly, your silk products do crazy things to my imagination. Who knew I had it in me? The only artwork I've done is counted cross stitch so to create something, especially 3 dimensional, is stretching my brain in new directions. It all started when I stumbled upon your website and fell in love with the silks and the colours. I just had to have some, even though at the time I didn't know what I would do."

Isn't it the truth about inspiration? It's about passion, love at first sight, pushing our boundaries and craziness. Let's all take Sheila's lead and do something crazy with silk!

continued...  
**Silkster's Gallery**

**Marguerite Band** from Nanaimo, British Columbia, was inspired by the beautiful colours of the paua shell of New Zealand for her woven shawl.



*Detail from Barb Nichols' embroidery*

**Nancy Cole** of Summerside, Prince Edward Island, used cocoons as part of her challenge to produce a work of art from a poem.

**Sheila Ehmman** from Summerland, British Columbia, was inspired by silk fibres to break out of her cross stitch mold into producing three dimensional art.

**Susan Forsberg** of Powell River, British Columbia, used silk and her stitching talents as part of the healing process after brain surgery.

**Jean Korus** from Moscow, Idaho, who never thought she would add spinning to her repertoire, has spun and woven gorgeous scarves.

**Kay Lange** from Fontana, Wisconsin, loves hats and participated in a show called 'Hats – Wise Women Speak!'. Her hat was a motorcycle helmet!

**Jan Massie** of Oak Creek, Wisconsin, twists yarns and cocoons to make necklaces. One of them tells the lifecycle of the silkworm.

**Barbara (Frankie) Nichols** from Hudson's Hope, British Columbia, used Tussah and Bombyx silk spinning fibres to meet one of the criteria of spinning embroidery thread for the master spinners program, which she stitched into a chickadee.

**Nicole Norman** of Corner Brook, Newfoundland, created an elegant silk fusion butterfly corset.

**Suzanne Williams** from Clintonville, West Virginia, makes silk fusion cards and wall pieces for her weekend market.

continued... **Treenway for Sale**

the 34 years of operation. The name Treenway is synonymous with silk. It has provided a living for us and part time work for three other people who send out your products, keep the books and keep the website up to date along with all the other graphic work of ads, brochures and the like. We are proud that Treenway has also provided the opportunity for five hand-dyers and a packager (of all the kits) to work out of their homes as a cottage industry.

It has been a privilege to have worked with such a luxurious and amazing fibre as silk, which is natural, sustainable and supports many farmers and factory workers. The business is portable and can be located anywhere. It is a great opportunity for someone to

work at home and sell silk all over the world. Of course, our products come from Asia and that means periodic journeys to keep those very important relationships alive. Someone has to do it!

The most important assets for a potential buyer to have are good computer skills, good organizational skills, good people skills and, of course, some knowledge or interest in fibres, yarns and silk. Artistic ability would be a great asset, but not necessary. In any case, we would train the new owner(s). We are offering the business for \$75,000 plus the inventory. The inventory varies from \$80,000 to \$105,000. For more information email or phone us for a business package and chat.

# News

## Hankie & Cap Prices

Hankie and cap prices are going up, a lot. It is all about supply and demand. The highest quality hankies are made from dupionni cocoons. Dupionni means double. When looking for a place to spin their cocoons, two caterpillars share a space and work together to create one very large double cocoon. These cocoons are softened and stretched into a 10 inch square hankie.

In China they call hankies and caps *wadding*. Wadding is used to produce padding for jackets and bed covers. Asian people have always been aware of the therapeutic qualities of silk, especially for arthritis. North America and Europe are also aware of that now and we see silk duvets in many stores. Of course, more money is made from cocoons that are made into a finished product such as clothing or duvets. This means the price of the raw material is up too. In the case of hankies and caps it is about 30%–50%.

It is always interesting to understand and see what causes such a change in a product. We are currently out of hankies and the next batch will be arrive in June. We just received a new shipment of caps. New pricing is:

### Hankies

\$139.25 / 500g bundle  
\$10.50 / 25g package

### Kits

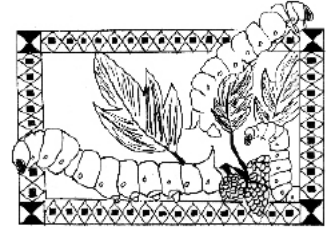
Fibre Fun Kit - \$37/each

### Caps

\$114.00 / 500g bell

## Dupionni Cocoons

Ordinary silk is made by a lonely little silkworm that spins a lonely little house around him and hides from the world.



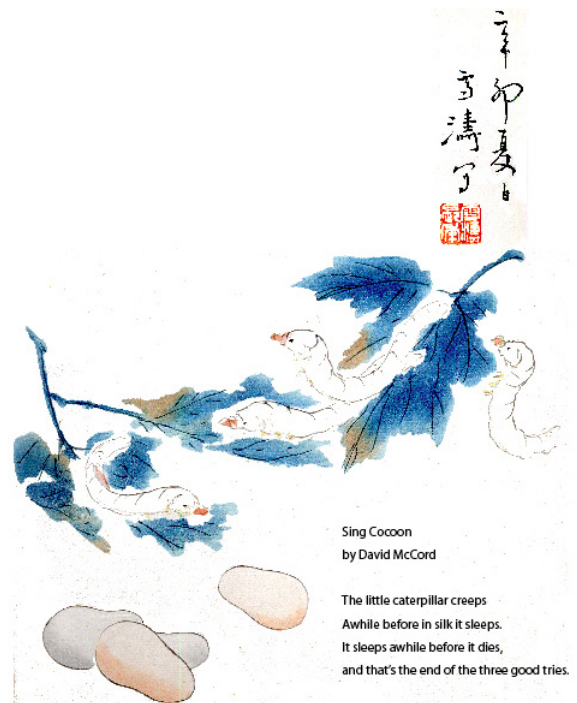
But there is also Dupy, a spunky little lad. He doesn't like the idea of being a hermit.

Oni, a young maid silkworm means to improve a silkworm's fate. She wants to spoon, in a cozy cocoon. Oni has everything it takes – all but a mate.

Feeding on a mulberry leaf, Dupy and Oni meet quite by chance. It's love at first bite. When people fall in love, they build a house. When two silkworms spin off, they build a duppioni cocoon.

The little slubs in a duppioni silk are love knots – reminders of a happy romance."

Poet unknown



Sing Cocoon  
by David McCord

The little caterpillar creeps  
Awhile before in silk it sleeps.  
It sleeps awhile before it dies,  
and that's the end of the three good tries.

# The Pulse of Treenway

*We are a busy little operation with many people doing a variety of things to enable us to offer the best products in a friendly, caring efficient manner. In this issue we would like to introduce you to the another person behind the friendly voice on the phone.*

## Carol Welhan

Carol has the lovely soothing voice you hear when you phone to make an order or ask a question. She does everything around here joyfully from taking, packing and invoicing orders, to keeping track of inventory, to packaging fibre and kits and keeping everything organized and tidy as well as initiating more efficient systems. She also keeps Annie (the beloved family dog) and Willow (our sweet cat) supplied with treats and brings a ray of sunshine even on those dull west coast days.

It was a serendipitous meeting through our good friend and neighbour Neil that brought Carol to Treenway. We liked her energy, and a few weeks later when we found ourselves looking for a new staff person, we decided to approach her. She took one step inside the shop and that was it. All those gorgeous colours and lustrous silky textures seduced her immediately. It has been a match made in heaven, as they say, and none of us have ever looked back.

Carol's interest in textiles goes back to an early age. She learned to sew and stitch at her "Baba's" knee. Her Ukrainian grandparents had a huge influence on her life and instilled so many lasting values. Growing up in the prairies, she often heard the stories of her grandmother (who did "piece work", specializing in coats) sewing the old buffalo hide great-coats that kept the Winnipeg policemen warm in the sub-zero winters. Her sense of fashion and style was inherited from both her mom and grandmother. As a Fine Arts student in the early 70s half her wardrobe was comprised of vintage clothes from the 40s or ones that she made herself from vintage patterns.

A secondary school art and drama educator for 30 years, Carol said she saw so many kids who 'didn't fit the system' find their niche and sense of self in her art room, or on the stage. Even when she was directing/producing high school productions (and sometimes acting in them), she insisted on being head of wardrobe. As a belly dancer (she's retired from that now too!) she made and beaded her own elaborate costumes, as well as



her daughter's many and varied dance outfits. And needless to say her kids always had the best Halloween costumes. Living in various



BC communities throughout the early 80s in a time when many women were weaving, she learned to weave and pursued it until her children were small.

She loves the way creative outlets allow people to truly be themselves, and sees the arts as fundamental to the education of 'whole' and healthy individuals. "The urge to express and create is inherent in human nature and it's vital that this is encouraged, not stifled at too early an age by rigid academia."

Not one to be satisfied by only one flavour, Carol has a broad palette of tastes. Besides being a theatre proponent and visual artist, she loves dance and creative movement, writing poetry, and would say the essence of her soul is music. She studied classical piano from childhood, sang from day one (her parents say that's why they named her Carol), in her youth went nowhere without her guitar and continues to express musically.

The natural world is where she feels truly at home, and she is ever spellbound by the endless beauty and majesty of Mother Earth. She has the heart of a gypsy and loves to hike, travel and camp. She has traveled to many sacred sites and places of power across the globe, working with the energy grids of Earth.

Carol's greatest passion and core of her life journey is her spiritual path. The wisdom of indigenous peoples and esoteric teaching from various spiritual traditions and ancient cultures has been a great influence. She calls herself a 'child of the wild Divine', and that very much sums up her intimate relationship with Spirit and Mother Earth.

As Carol continues to both simplify her lifestyle, and intensify her spiritual journey, she realizes that, once a weaver, always a weaver. "Though I once wove actual cloth, now the fabric of my creation has shifted to more subtle realms. Now my weaving is with threads of light and sound." She goes on to say, "Every culture has a similar creation myth, wherein the knowledge of weaving was a divine gift given to us from the Goddess. In this present time

when the energy of the Divine Feminine is returning to restore a much needed balance in the Hearts of humanity, let us all be conscious weavers in this Great Design!"



# Specials

After taking inventory on February 28th, our May newsletter specials are based on spring cleaning what we have in over stock. There are two yarns we special ordered for knitting. One is a very high quality reeled yarn and the other a spun yarn. Both of them knit and weave beautiful cloth. Below are some samples and ideas to take advantage of this great 50%- 60% off sale.

## #0 Reeled Silk Yarn

Reeled or filament silk is the highest quality yarn and is very white and shiny. The cocoons are inspected and sorted, as only those with a perfect shape can be used for the reeling procedure. Cocoons are soaked in warm water to soften the gummy sericin. The silken



strand from a single cocoon is too fine to use alone, so individual filaments of 6-20 cocoons are unraveled at the same time, traveling through a very small eye. The softened sericin dries, hardens and binds the strands together to become one thread the size of a human hair. It takes many cocoons to make a yarn as thick as the #0.

This is our heaviest filament yarn and it is extremely shiny, soft and 'scrunchy'. The weight of this yarn makes it perfect for knitting. Our projects have worked up nicely with 3.75mm (5US) needles with a gauge of 24 sts and 32 rows = 4 inches in a stocking stitch.

The woven cloth produced by combining this yarn with 20/10 spun silk or silk chenille makes a lovely weight for a shawl as well as a lap or baby blanket. Sett 12 – 16 epi.

The skeins weigh approx 90 – 100g (3.15 – 3.5 oz) and have approx 4,450 yd/lb.

Regular Price: \$276.50/kg (2.2lb)

**Discounted: 50%** when ordering less than 1 kg

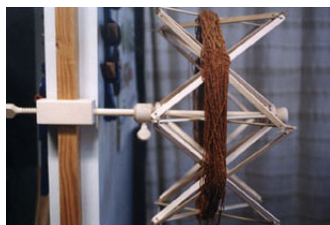
**Discounted: 60%** when ordering 1 kg or more

**Sale price (under 1 kg)      \$138.25/kg**

**Sale price (over 1 kg)        \$110.60/kg**

## Special Tip for Working with Reeled Silk Yarns

Reeled yarn is extremely slippery and requires some special handling to avoid frustration. A ball winder should NOT be used with reeled silks. The yarn will slip off, making a tangled mess. Wind the balls by hand, or better still, wind your warp and shuttle directly from the skein placed on



a yarn holder (swift). It is best to clamp the swift sideways rather than straight up. Investing in a couple of swifts and bypassing the ball stage saves time and tangle no matter what type of silk yarn you are working with.

*Continued on page 6...*

## 20/10 Spun Silk Yarn

We designed this yarn specifically for our knitters. It is creamy soft with an interesting "cord" look. We had our manufacturers take five strands of our most popular 20/2 yarn and ply them together. It knits beautifully and highlights textured stitches. Bev, our knitter, has knit an overall acorn pattern and cable design using 4.5mm (7US) needles with a gauge of 20 sts and 32 rows = 4 inches. Both the acorn pattern and cable have a wonderful hand. She used the same 4.5mm needles in a stocking stitch with a gauge of 25 sts and 28 rows = 4 inches.

This yarn is a good weight for a warm shawl. It is sett between 8 to 14 epi depending on whether it is woven in tabby or twill. It combines nicely with other exotic yarns like cashmere, merino and chenille for luscious woven throws, just right to snuggle under with a good book. This particular yarn does not have a tendency to pill because of all the plies.

The skeins weigh approx 55 – 70g ( 1.9 – 2.5oz) and have approx 950 yd/lb.

Regular Price: \$251.00/kg (2.2lb)

**Discounted: 50%** when ordering less than 1 kg

**Discounted: 60%** when ordering 1 kg or more

**Sale price (under 1 kg)      \$125.50/kg**

**Sale price (over 1 kg)        \$100.40/kg**



## Natural Carrier Rods

These irresistible slit tubes are a by-product of reeling silk from the cocoon. As the silk filament is unraveled from the cocoon into skein form, some of the filaments get wound around the machinery. This silk, with the sericin still in it, is then slit and removed from the machines.

The rods are 5-5 1/2" (13-15cm) long when whole and unscrunched. There may be some short pieces and partially wound cocoons in the mix.

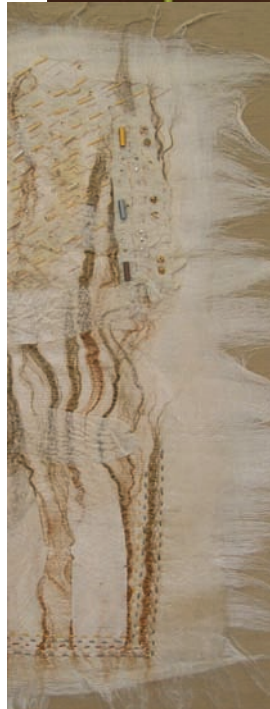
They are wonderfully textural for stitching, silk fusion, needle felting and any application needing depth and something unique. They can be pressed flat or pulled apart to reveal the interesting criss-cross of the fibres as they wound around the machinery. These rods have so much personality and attitude which you can use to great advantage in your work. Here is a great opportunity to try them.

Regular Price:  
\$3.50/25g (0.8oz) -or-  
\$88.25/kg (2.2lb)  
for bulk (over 200g)

Discounted 30%

**Sale Price:**  
**\$2.45/25g** (.0.8oz) -or-  
**\$61.80/kg** (2.2lb) bulk  
(over 200g (7oz))

*From top to bottom:  
Flower made with carrier rods  
Details from Rain using carrier rods  
Silk fusion work with carrier rod*



## Rigid Heddle Kit

A variety of natural colour silk yarns of different weights and qualities acquaint you with the different feel of each yarn. The weave is a balanced plain weave.

The weft is 20/6 spun Bombyx silk and the warp is a random threading of 5 different silk yarns.

Each scarf is approx. 5" wide, 83" long and used a 12.5 dpi reed.

The kit contains enough yarn for one scarf as well as complete warping and weaving instructions. This is a perfect project for someone who wants to have a good start working with exotic yarns on a Rigid Heddle loom.

Regular price: \$41.00

**Discounted 20%**

**Sale Price: \$33.00** – while supplies last



Continued on page 7...

## Specialty Fleeces

We only have 5 gorgeous Romney fleeces left. Romney fleece from New Zealand is extraordinary. It has a long staple length, lovely hand and the colours are exceptional with many shades melting together for a complex mix.

### Romney

This fleece is very popular because of the unique way it combines several traits. The fleece is lustrous, hangs in separate locks, with minimal cross fibres between the locks. Uniformity of crimp from the butt to the tip of lock is typical.

Romney wool has the finest fibre diameter of all the long wool breeds, with a spinning count from 40-48 which is 38-31 microns. It spins easily with a low grease content that makes it a very light shrinking fleece.

These qualities enable Romney to be used for many products, ranging from sweaters to outerwear to carpets. The Romney originates from the wet fens of south-east England.



Fleece #	Weight	Colour
#60	3.4 kg	mid-dark grey with caramel tips
#62	3.3 kg	mid brown, caramel tips, bulky
#63	3.2 kg	mid brown, grey caramel tips
#64	3.2 kg	mid – dark brown grey
#71	3.0 kg	mid grey, light tips

Regular price: \$27.50/kg (\$12.50/lb)

**Discounted 20%**

**Sale Price: \$22/kg (\$10/lb)**

Note:

1 kg = 2.2lb

### NOTE on SPECIALS

1. Prices do not include shipping.
2. Specials end August 31th, 2011.
3. Regular 10% Discount: Our normal Bulk Discount for orders of silk yarns and fibres over \$150.00 CDN does not apply to Specials items.

### Remember

All prices are in Canadian funds.  
Approximate exchange rate: \$1.00 Cdn = \$0.97 US

### Web Specials

In addition to our newsletter specials, we have specials posted on our website. We notify everyone on our email list each time we post new specials. You can also check our website periodically. See the Specials button in the drop-down menu or go to **[www.treenwaysilks.com/sale.html](http://www.treenwaysilks.com/sale.html)**.

If you would like to be added to this list, please send us your full name and email address to **[info@treenwaysilks.com](mailto:info@treenwaysilks.com)**. Please add us to your address book to ensure you receive our emails.

# New Products

## Muga Spinning Fibre

We have been trying for years to get muga spinning fibre. It is here, it is gorgeous and it is wondrous to spin and fuse. It is a bit darker than tussah fibre and more golden. The staple length of the sliver is similar to tussah, about 6".

Muga fibre comes from a wild caterpillar, *Antheraea assama*, who is a cousin of tussah. The golden colour of the muga silk is the pride of Assam in northeast India and coveted by the Assamese people. The caterpillar is more vulnerable than its tussah cousin. Its home is the extraordinary ecosystem of the Brahmaputra River valley where the temperature and humidity conditions are just right. Therefore, this area is the only place in the world where muga culture exists.

Muga culture is very complex and continues to be an important part of the lives of the indigenous people in this area. The silkworm is semi-domestic, lives outside and must be cared for in a very personal way. Each day the men are in their "gardens" or forests protecting their caterpillars from vermin with bows and arrows, slingshots and mud balls. The women do most of the reeling of the cocoons, utilising the pupa as high quality protein for their families or animals.

It is lovely to handspin, reacting about the same as tussah silk which is easier than *Bombyx* silk sliver to spin. It works beautifully to make silk fusion. The result is very shiny and golden. We are packaging this very rare sliver in 25g packages.

Price: \$8.75/25g (0.8oz)  
\$225/kg bulk



## Eri Spinning Fibre

Eri fibre from the *Philosamia ricini* caterpillar is the other wild silk fibre we have been dreaming about being able to supply for many years and here it is. It is a lustrous white with a 3 1/2 - 4" staple length.

The majority of eri silk is raised in the northeastern states of India. It is also known as "poor man's silk" because it is not of the same quality as the other three silks – tussah, muga and *Bombyx* (also called mulberry). This is because the eri caterpillar does not spin one continuous strand of silk when making its cocoon like all the other silkworms. It spins awhile and then stops, continuing this way until it is finished. This process results in a cocoon that has numerous starts and stops and one open end which means it cannot be reeled. The majority of eri silk is reared by village women and is spun on a drop spindle called a takli.

Eri culture is an essential role for women in rural daily life. It is like keeping chickens or ducks. The women carry out the associated tasks during their spare time, first to supply their own needs and then for extra income. The main food of the eri caterpillar is castor which grows readily in every yard and along the roadsides. A large part of a family's nutritional needs are met by extracting the protein rich pupa. The villagers consider it a delicacy for themselves as well as feed for their ducks, chickens and other domestic animals.

The shorter staple length means it is slightly more difficult to spin. The yarn has a wonderful hide and seek shine to flat finish. It made beautiful silk fusion with more of a matte finish than the other silks and a nice parchment look and feel to it. We are packaging this very special sliver in 25g packages.

Price: \$8.00/25g (0.8oz)  
\$216/kg bulk





## Tussah Peduncle Yarn

We are so excited to introduce you to this very unusual and special yarn. The tropical tussah (tasar in India) caterpillar has a cocoon spinning process unlike any of the other silk producing caterpillars including the temperate tussah silkworm. When ready to spin its cocoon, the caterpillar spends up to an hour and a half searching for the perfect spot to form a cape of leaves. The first silk is spun back and forth to form a stem, called a peduncle. This stem is circled around a branch and is then connected to the cape while the caterpillar spends the next three days spinning the cocoon. The peduncle is taken off each cocoon before it is reeled.

This peduncle stem is very hard with sericin, but it is still silk and nothing is left to waste in India. The yarn is spun using a Gandhi-style hand charka by the indigenous women of the tasar rearing areas. First the peduncles are boiled with alkaline to soften the sericin. Then the peduncles are beaten with a bamboo stick to loosen the fiber and then carded with hand carders before hand spinning on the charka.



*Cloth made from tasar peduncles*

We wanted a yarn produced that would be easy for handworkers in the western world to use. So after hand spinning the first ply, the yarn then went to a simple twisting machine to be plied for us. The colour is a deep grey/brown. The yarn is firm because the peduncle feels exactly like a stiff stem before processing. The ply has a heavy twist, so the yarn is lively with a little over twist. This could be used to advantage when making a collapse weave. One must be watchful when weaving to catch the yarn twisting back on itself... The yarn is uneven like hand spun.

*Continued on page 10...*

*Left: Women sorting Tussah cocoons  
Right: Women beating peduncles to release fibre from the sericin*



continued...  
New Products



Left: Village women involved in making the peduncle yarn  
Right: Hanging skeins to dry



The sample was woven with 30/2 spun muga warp and the new 20/2 tussah peduncle weft. It was sett and beat at 36 epi for a twill weave. The hand of the finished cloth is firm, but not stiff.

The skeins weigh about 100g (3.5oz) with a yardage of approximately 4,100 yd / lb.

Price \$280 / kg (2.2lb)

(\$28.00/100g skein (3.5oz))



Above left: Tussah cocoons with peduncles attached  
Above right: Woven sample  
Below: Tussah Peduncle yarn



# Asian Journal

## Muga, *Antheraea assama* – God's Gift to Assam Assam, India

We are concluding the story of the muga caterpillar in this issue. The CSB (Central Silk Board) consists of a team of scientists and humanitarians who are dedicated to promoting silk and improving the lives of the caretakers and producers of silk. They are directly involved with the silkworm rearer and accompanied us to the villages.

### Weaving

Muga was the cloth of the kings during the Ahom dynasty before the British arrived to terrace the hills and create tea plantations. The Assamese are very proud of their special muga heritage and say muga is god's gift to Assam. Even today muga cloth is a prized possession for both men and women.

Sualkuchi has been the main weaving and reeling centre for Muga since before 300 BC. The village contains about five thousand families and 92-95% of them are weavers. As we roamed the narrow streets of Sualkuchi, the clacking sounds of fly-shuttle looms resounded from every courtyard and doorway. Rooftops and pathways glistened with reels and warping drums full of yarn.

*Continued on page 12....*



From top to bottom:  
Spools of muga yarn ready to make a warp.  
Natural colour muga yarn and lac dyed muga yarn.  
Muga fabric on the loom.





From top to bottom:  
Muga fabric on the  
loom.  
Muga warp ready for  
weaving.  
A friend, proudly  
wearing her muga sari.



The weaving is decentralized, so most people weave in their homes. There are also weaving centres where women from different parts of the state come to weave and take the money home to their families. They are weaving sari and plain fabrics with 10-15% of the looms weaving muga.

The town has changed dramatically since we last visited in 2001. It is more



Weaving a muga warp and weft fabric

prosperous and cleaner. Middle men called Mahajans used to be the employers of the weavers in Sualkuchi. They were involved in all aspects of muga culture. As the major purchasers of the cocoons needed to feed the hungry looms, these middle men set the prices, which usually deprived the rearers, reelers and weavers of a fair wage. Now the CSB sets the price for the cocoons which follows through for the reeling and weaving. All the people involved in muga culture can see the pricing of the state agricultural program on television and no longer have to accept what the Mahajans offer.

### Wisdom from Sarat

Sarat is our long time friend from the CSB who travels with us during our visits. His concern is for the farmer, reeler and weaver of the wild silks of Assam. We asked Sarat about the future of wild sericulture in Assam. He thinks they have to work for more of

*continued on page 13...*

a cooperative sector in the post cocoon process to promote marketing. People receive better pay for the value added products. For example,

- 5000 cocoons gives 3,500 Rupies
- 5000 cocoons makes 1kg of yarn which gives 4,500 R
- 1kg of yarn made into fabric gives 10,000R

Sarat believes people are fed up with machine made items. In his conversations, people are ready to go back to organic and natural.

Upon our return to Hilltop Lodge each evening, we sat with beer and snacks and I asked dozens of questions that arose during the day. We talked "shop", and life.

Sarat says, "It is so simple to live. It is so simple to fall in love. It is so simple to forget. It is so difficult to be simple."



*Karen and Terry with Sarat*

### My Appreciation

Learning about all these wild creatures firsthand in the forests and jungles of India is very exciting. I feel privileged to have shared the celebrations, laughter, respect and pride of the people involved in this risky type of sericulture. I have been touched many times by their eager generosity and their reserved self-confidence.