

Silk Tidings

Greetings from Salt Spring Island

It turned out to be a great year in the garden after all. It started cold for such a long time. Then just as things got going we had a couple of heat waves. So all those heat loving veggies like eggplants, pepper, melons, peaches and tomatoes that don't normally do so well here are thriving. The harvest is on and the freezer and canning jars are getting filled. Putting food away is one of the indescribable feelings.

The Orion constellation is again visible in the wee hours of the

morning, the birds are less vocal and crickets and grasshoppers chirp and click in abundance. These are all signs of the waning summer. I welcome fall quietly. I will miss the warmth, sun, outside parties and the garden. But I get another kind of excitement about cozy hours spent in the studio.



Great year for the garden

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Silkster's Gallery

We have a new gallery of varied and amazing work to bring a smile to your face and prompt you into your studio. Enjoy your fellow artists' creativity at www.treenwaysilks.com/gallery.html. We are always grateful to those who take the time to share their art.

Carole Davidson of Victoria, British Columbia, makes lovely tasseled scissor fobs.

Carol James from St. Boniface, Manitoba, delighted us in person with her sprang sashes.

Kathleen Morris of Toronto, Ontario, makes exquisite woven shibori shawls.

Joanie Paterson from Salt Spring Island, British Columbia, spun multi-dyed corriedale roving and knit a very yummy blanket.

Marilyn Rand from Canning, Nova Scotia, uses silk fusion in a very painterly fashion in her piece Fundy Shore.

Dorothy Solbrig of Harvard, Massachusetts, wove a beautiful jacket for her daughter.

Margaret Terry from Brandon, Florida, has involved herself in her local as well as global community by making "stuffed" for disadvantaged children.



by Margaret Terry

Deb Turner of Alberta uses exotic yarns to make elegant scarves.

Call for Entries

Our next Silkster's Gallery will be in our February 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

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. See our website www.treenwaysilks.com.

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Greetings from Salt Spring Island



Proud grandpa with daughter and grandson

I am weaving a baby blanket for our new grandson, Rowan. That is very exciting. I am also challenging myself to make special projects from each of our Creative Play Packs.

We have some fun new items and specials for you to snuggle in with as the weather turns us indoors. We wish you creative, cozy hours ahead as winter approaches.



Colouring the walls with an ochre aliz

Clay/Straw House

What a summer it has been for moving forward with all the pretty things that turn a house into a home. The pine tongue and groove on the ceiling is in the great room (kitchen, living room, dining room). This made the whole area feel smaller and cozier.

In June Cindy came to help us plaster all the inside clay and straw walls. For six days Terry mixed clay, sand and straw mud while Cindy and I applied. She made it look very easy. After two days I finally felt the knack and she did not have to "tidy" behind me. On the seventh day we made aliz. This protective mixture of clay, mica, flour paste and earth pigment, colours our walls. The powdered colorants from the earth are warm and natural by nature. The inclusion of ground mica in the mix gives the colour depth and subtle sparkle in different lights. Our house walls breathe and this beautiful protective aliz breathes along with the walls. The cost per gallon is about \$3.00.



Cindy and Karen applying the final coat of plaster on the inside walls

We laid the middle layer of the earthen floor with great relief. It was very level and faster than anticipated.

Many little jobs got done in preparation for the laying of the final floor layer. Tiles in the front and back entry were laid so we could meet and transition the floors. Many experiments with clay/sand and colorant ratio were conducted. More experiments with finishes to harden and seal the floor were done. It is a big job of precise mixing, leveling and consistent troweling. Mike was master mixer and delivery man. Terry and Silas were on their knees troweling and praying to the mud gods for three days



Preparing the layer below for more mud

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Greetings from Salt Spring Island

asking for a smooth floor free of cracks. The gods were good. The floor is extremely level with minimal cracks to fill. Now we are waiting until the floor is thoroughly dry before we begin the many applications of linseed oil finish.

There is still much to do, but we accomplished the big jobs that required summer weather for drying and air flow.



Mikey, Silas and Terry hamming it up with trowelling the final coat on the floor

News

International Year of Natural Fibres

Don't forget to get involved!

It has been fun to work in our community spreading the awareness of International Year of Natural Fibres (IYNF) and the importance of natural fibres to the health of our planet, world economy and our bodies.

We contacted The Driftwood, our local newspaper, to inform them of this special year. We let them know about all the fascinating fibres that are being "grown" right here on our own island. We have lots of sheep, as Salt Spring is world famous for its lamb. The Queen of England has Salt Spring lamb when she visits Canada! We also have alpaca and llama producers, Pat Davidson raises flax and processes it into linen and we raise silkworms every year just to share the wonder of it all. IYNF and some of our "stories" made the front page of the weekend section of our paper.

Treenway and members of the Salt Spring Island Weavers and Spinners guild made a day of it at our Saturday market. We had Terri Biby's Saori loom set up and other members brought their spinning wheels. We invited market goers to sit and weave a spell. The children, in particular, were very eager. We definitely brought awareness about the role of natural fibres in our lives and hopefully brought other fiber enthusiasts into the fold. We had a donation box set up and our proceeds from the day will go to the Keep the Fleece program put on by Wild Fibers magazine: www.keepthefleece.org.

It is not too late to help spread the word in your communities. The fall is a perfect time to bring



awareness to the facts about what we put on our bodies, is just as important as what we put into our bodies. See the February 2009 issue of our newsletter and IYNF website, www.naturalfibres2009.org, for additional information.



Karen at the Saturday Market demonstration

Dye Charges Increased

Our dyers are experiencing price increases like the rest of us. Their dyes, additives, electricity and gas have all gone up in price. The price for dyeing your skeins of silk will go up \$1 per skein. The new fee schedule is:

1 or 2 skeins – \$15/colour

3 or more skeins per colour – \$7/skein

Skeins of 200g or more – \$14/skein

Kongthong's Visit

Our dear friend from Laos, Kongthong, arrived in June. It was her first visit to Canada and we wanted to introduce her and the work of her weaving business, Phaeng Mai Gallery, to as many people as we could. Kongthong is a beloved ambassador for her country and the art of Laotian weaving.

As children, Kongthong and her sister, Viengkam, learned to weave from their mother. When Kongthong and her two brothers were very young and her mom was pregnant with Viengkam, their father was killed in the Vietnam War. The family lived in the northern part of the country without much opportunity for a widow to raise her soon to be four children. She moved south to Vientiane, the capital, and began working at the only marketable skill she knew, weaving. Not only did she raise the four children by weaving, she put them all through university in other countries.

Weaving is not only important to Kongthong's family, but all of Laos. Each woman is proud of her weaving technique, dye colours and style. Today as in the past, women raise their own silk and cotton and pass their textile secrets on to their daughters or nieces. Men take notice of and seek out the most skillful weavers. During the war families buried the most precious of their woven cloth in glass jars to protect them from marauders.

Kongthong and Viengkam always appreciated how important weaving was to the culture, economy and lifestyle of Laotian women. After their university education they started Phaeng Mai Gallery with their mother to encourage and promote traditional Lao weaving and natural dyeing.



Some of the fabulous silk weavings

Phaeng Mai Gallery takes in orphaned children, gives them a dormitory style home, puts them through school and trains them in techniques of weaving. As the children grow up, Phaeng Mai sponsors their weddings and other important events. In addition to educating these disadvantaged children, women throughout northern Laos come for training in better weaving and dyeing techniques. When their level of expertise meets the high standard of Phaeng Mai Gallery, weavers return home with silk threads and designs. Phaeng Mai Gallery buys their work, deducting the cost of the threads and markets the exquisite cloth worldwide.

In order to support the gallery and the good work they do, we all try to promote and educate about the making of handwoven cloth. Not only is this silk cloth from Laos beautiful, it is an agricultural, renewable resource that provides income to men and women in a poorer country.

Kongthong brought many gorgeous textiles with her on this trip. We had three exhibitions and sales with a slide talk held in Victoria and on Salt Spring Island and a collaborative evening in Vancouver with Maiwa Handprints. Everyone was awed by the variety and quality of textiles, felt honoured to meet Kongthong and enjoyed purchasing a special treasure for themselves or dear friend.

Kongthong and I enjoyed some valued quiet time here on Salt Spring. We gathered fruit and veggies from the garden and cooked together. This was a dream come true for both of us. We often talked about cooking together but our time in Laos is always too busy. We are determined to cook in Kongthong's kitchen in Laos next year.

We have many of the Phaeng Mai textiles at Treenway Silk so all of you can have the unique opportunity to admire and purchase these beautiful pieces for yourselves and as gifts. You can feel proud that your thoughtful purchases will support sustainable agriculture, fair trade, traditional lifestyle and Lao culture. Please visit www.treenwaysilks.com/scarves.html on our website to see the beautiful selection of Phaeng Mail Gallery textiles.



Karen, Kongthong and Charlotte Kwan of Maiwa

New Products

Sari Silk Series

We have a variety of brilliant recycled sari silks from a women's cooperative in India.

India is a land of little waste and master of recycling. Things of all manner are used and given a renewed life in another form after it is worn out from its first use or by-products are creatively made into other useful products.

The women's group that prepares these products hails from eastern India. The yarn is made from scrap silk produced as a by-product of sari manufacturing. The yarns are handspun by drop spindle, charka

or wheel. The spinning is often an outdoor village occupation, so there may be the odd bit of leaf or straw caught up in the yarn which is easily removed while you are working. Making these products enables the women to earn much needed income from their cottage industry.

There is a kaleidoscope of colours within each package. Blues and greens and yellows and oranges are gaily mixed together. They do



not come in specific colourways. The colourful fabrics and yarns will give all your fibre work a lush, exotic edge, whether it is weaving, quilting, silk fusion, jewelry or surface design. The four different sari silks are available individually.

Introductory Special

10% off when you get one of each
Regular Price: \$19.80 (approx \$17.95 US)
Special Price: \$17.80 (approx \$16.45 US)

The recycled silk yarn, recycled sari yarn and silk ribbon are available in full skeins for larger projects. Please inquire.

Sari Strips – 2-3 yards

Each package has approx 2-3 yards of 2 or 3 strips of beautiful silk sari fabric. The strips can be ironed or left wild and fluff y. The width of the strips varies from 2.5" to 9". Our first experiments have been inclusion in silk fusion and exotic tassels. We look forward to seeing what you do with this exciting new acquisition.

\$4.95/pkg
(approx \$4.60 US)



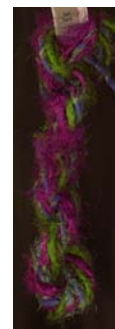
Sari Ribbon – 5 yards

Strips of silk sari approx 1/2" – 1" wide have been sewn together to make one continuous kaleidoscope of woven silk ribbon. Each 5 yd skein has multiple colours. We are in the process of using the ribbon as weft for a woven silk bedside rug. We can't wait to put our feet on it. What a great gift to yourself or someone special. **\$4.95/pkg** (approx \$4.60 US)



Recycled Sari Yarn – 5 yards

Strips of multicoloured sari fabric has been spun with silk fibre to make a firm and vivid yarn. Our experiments are with jewelry right now. **\$4.95/pkg** (approx \$4.60 US)



Recycled Silk Yarn – 10 yards

Recycled silk fibres are handspun into a vibrant and textured yarn. Because there are no dye lots, no two skeins are exactly alike. We have used this yarn to make cord, hang tassels and fused into silk fusion to provide texture. **\$4.95/pkg** (approx \$4.60 US)



Natural by Nature – 8 Shaft Scarf Kit

Our new scarf kit utilises the different natural colours, textures and sheen of the wild silks, muga and tussah, as well as reeled, spun and noil yarns of the domesticated white Bombyx mori silk.

The kit contains a pre-wound warp long enough to weave two scarves approx 6 1/2" wide by 72" long at a sett of 30 EPI. The weft yarn along with complete warping and weaving instructions are included in the gift box. **\$86.00**



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Please see the May/June 2009 issue of Handwoven magazine for more detailed information on the Natural by Nature silk scarf kit.

Specials

Salt Spring Island Series

Treenway and our dyers (Cheryl, Mary and Charlene) have added two new and delicious colourways to our much enjoyed hand painted tussah silk sliver.

Harbourside Hula and Fernwood Foxtrot will widen the spectrum for your spinning, silk fusion, needle felting and all fibre arts. You can view these color combinations at www.treenwaysilks.com/ssi_series.html.

It is packaged in two sizes: 25g (approx 0.9 oz) and 50g (approx 1.8 oz).

The price for 25g is \$9.70 each (approx \$9.00 US) or \$9.20 each (\$8.50 US) for three or more.

The 50g packages are \$18 each (approx \$16.65US)

Fernwood Foxtrot



Harbourside Hula



Silk Fusion

Hand-knit

Hand-spun

NOTE on SPECIALS

1. Prices do not include shipping.
2. Specials end December 31st, 2009.
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: \$1.08 Cdn = \$1 US

Web Specials

In addition to our newsletter specials, we have specials on our web site. We notify everyone on our email list each time we post new specials. You can also check our web site periodically. See the Specials button in the drop-down menu or go to 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. Please add us to your address book to ensure you receive our emails.

Warp – Silk / Cotton 5.5 yards

We discontinued our Evening Sky scarf kit a couple of years ago but while doing our yearly inventory we found a box of these pre-wound warps.

The warps are made of our soft and lofty 55% silk / 45% cotton yarn in colour #2 Blueberry Haze (on our sample card).

The warp is 5.5 yd long with 224 threads. We had it planned for approximately 7" wide at 32 epi and 72" woven length each plus fringe. This yarn mixes beautifully with these Treenway yarns:

30/2 spun silk	30/2 silk/angora	60/4 silk/bamboo
30/2 silk/camel	60/4 silk/ramie	28/2 cashmere/silk
60/4 silk/wool	32/2 silk/yak	

There is enough yardage in one skein of any of these yarns for the weft for two scarves.

This is a great opportunity to experiment with a new yarn already made up into a warp plus you can try another exotic yarn in the weft direction. The natural colour of any of those yarns will look great.

Special Offer: \$25 per warp (while supplies last)



Silk / Cotton Warp



Evening Sky Scarf

Treetops Colour Harmonies Silk Fibre

25g packages

We have an overabundance of two of the tussah silk Treetops Colour Harmonies. Chili and Pepper and Indian Ink are on special while supplies lasts.

Regular Price: \$10.15 / 25g package

Sale Price: \$9.50 / 25g (approx \$8.80 US/0.9oz)



Chili and Pepper



Indian Ink

Gift Ideas

We enjoy giving our creative friends fibres as gifts to stimulate their creative spirits. We have a great selection of fun products you can treat your friends and yourself!

Creative Silk Packs

Coastal Waters, Eat Your Greens, Freshly Ploughed Fields, Summer Sunrise, Wild Berries, Winter Night Sky

Fibre artists of all kinds love these packages jammed full of creative spunk. Each pack contains enough **silk rods, cocoons, hankies** and **throwsters silk** to make a fun project. We challenged ourselves to use the silk fusion technique to create something lively and unique with the treasures contained in each of the six colourways. Starting with the hankies we fused fibres and yarn into it as the mood hit us. We used the cocoons, other fibres and silk threads and ribbons (Canadiana and Gulf Island Series) to further embellish each project. We are excited to share our challenge results with you as we complete them. More photos at www.treenwaysilks.com/dyed_fibres.html. \$19.95 each.

Wild Berries Jewellery Bag

The **silk rods** and **throwster's silk** along with recycled sari yarn were fused into the **hankie** to create the design. The four corners of the hankie were folded to meet in the centre. This design was inspired by dowry bags from India. Stitching, beads and buttons add the "bling" factor that is characteristic of Indian bags.

The weight of the beaded **cocoons** on all four corners and bottom of the bag are necessary for the bag to hang properly. Springhill Threads from the Canadiana Series was used to stitch the bag together and make the cord which is placed through the cocoon so it can slide up and down to open or close the bag.



When making this bag, we suggest you use a paper pattern and draw your design ideas onto the paper first. Fold the four corners together and see what happens to your design elements. You may be surprised where they end up on the bag.

Winter Night Sky Clutch

Silk rods and **throwster's silk** were fused into the **hankie** to set out the design. **Cocoons** were cut open to make flowers on the flap. The hankie was folded to create a "clutch" bag. The size of the bag can be adjusted to fit an ipod, knitting needles, jewellery, pencils or anything else.

Spirit River Threads from the Canadiana Series along with beads and buttons were used to finish the bag.



Working with Cocoons

The cocoons have a hard shell. We use a box knife to cut into the cocoon. Then we can use a scissors with a sharp point to cut them open using a variety of shapes. It is easy to sew the beads onto the cocoons, but a thimble is recommended because you have to push with a little effort.

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Winter Night Sky

Wild Berries

Summer Sunrise

Eat Your Greens

Coastal Waters

Freshly Ploughed Fields

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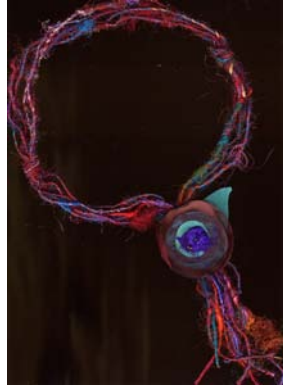
Gifts

Sari Silk Series

This brilliant series is described in the New Products section of the newsletter. This colourful set will delight your fibre friends and you know the purchase of your gift is going to help provide a living for other fibre women in India.

Recycled Sari Silks are \$4.95 each.

Introductory Offer! 10% off when you buy one of each (to 31 December 2009).



Phaeng Mai Gallery Scarves & Shawls

The elegant scarves and shawls described in the Kongthong's Visit section of the newsletter will suit most anyone you want to give a special gift. This gift will help support Lao weavers maintain their traditional lifestyle and bring money into their households.

See them at www.treenwaysilks.com/scarves.html.



The Pulse of Treenway Silks

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 and efficient manner. In this issue we would like to introduce you to:

Teri Shaw (Xpresso)

We all have a nickname around here. Xpresso comes by hers so honestly. After four years we are still in awe of the expressions she comes up with, many of which could not be printed here. She tells us they are things she learned from her mother. Her edgy sense of humour and quick wit keep us on our toes and in stitches.

She came to us via others who do or have worked here. That is the best way. Our island is small, so she had heard about us and became very interested when she started getting more involved in fibre arts.

Xpresso says she hates the computer but actually is a genius with the thing. She uses it to organise us, keep us on track and put the numbers into nice tidy rows. She also talks with you on the phone when you place an order, as well as packages it for mailing. Initiating new procedures and great ideas, organising anything and everything and dragging us into the 21st century with style are some of her best qualities.

Before moving to Salt Spring Island, Expresso was



part of the corporate world. I do believe most if not all of her suits are long gone. She fits this lifestyle so well, one would never guess her background. She has her own business, Dermalove, and we sell some of her products on our website. Her Silk Spinner Hand Scrub is a must for your hands before starting to spin, weave or make silk fusion. Dermalove develops and makes, soaps, lotions and arthritis cream with all natural ingredients.

In addition to all this, Xpresso gardens, knits, felts, spins, sews, golfs, reads and delights in her new little toy poodle, Emily, in her "spare" time.

She semi-retired from Treenway last fall. However, she still helps us with our books, packing for conferences and fills in when someone is on vacation or recovering from an illness. We so appreciate that she has not left us completely; we would go through Xpresso withdrawal.

Xpresso says, "I was born at an early age. As time has gone on I have gotten progressively older." When asked to describe herself in 25 words or less she says, "concise."

Asian Journal

Tropical Tussah (tasar), *Antheraea mylitta* Orissa and Chhattisgarh, India

We continue learning about the lifecycle of the tasar caterpillar.



Preventing Disease

The CSB has been examining the mother moths to ensure their eggs do not carry disease. The disease free eggs (DFLs) are provided by the scientists of the CSB and have made a significant difference to the farmers because silkworm disease usually plagues a crop just a day or two before they are ready to spin their cocoon.



Cocoons hanging in a tree waiting for harvest



Tasar caterpillars hatching in leaf cups

By this time the farmers have already invested 28-30 days of intense care for their crop. We visited a village a number of years ago the day after disease had taken the whole crop of silkworms in the forest. The villagers told us there had been too many foggy days. We all walked out of the forest in silence with heavy hearts.

Increasingly rearers are buying the DFLs. It has taken some time as the old traditions around raising tasar have been slow to change. We have seen eggs hatching on a previous journey where raising tasar silkworms has been part of the community as long as anyone can remember. Baby caterpillars began to hatch from their eggs the night before we arrived. Handling the larvae at this stage can kill them. The people of the village showed us woven bamboo trays, filled with curious containers made from large leaves that had been

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Winding up the sling



Genetic anomaly: blue tasar caterpillar

layered, folded and secured with toothpick-sized pieces of wood. These containers held eggs and hairy black caterpillars. The villagers use the leaf cups to transport the larvae to their food trees and use hooked poles to hang the leaf baskets in the trees. One DFL provides about 200-220 eggs. In a standard crop only 60 cocoons will be harvested from those eggs.

Protecting the Silkworms

While eating out in the forest or plantation, the silkworms are vulnerable to the wind, rain, hail and scores of predators including birds, wasps, snakes, lizards and even bears. The rearers daily job is to patrol with sling shot, bow, sling, bamboo with sticky resin or make noise with drums and bamboo clappers. During our recent visit, the tasar caterpillar was at the end of its cycle and very long and plump. The sky and trees were full of opportunist crows. We watched in awe as one man's arm whirled like a windmill before he let the stone fly out of the sling and picked off a crow about 150' away. The rearers protect the luscious green caterpillars as best they can out in the wild. In addition to the risk of weather and predators is the nutrition of the food leaves. This of course is dependent on the soil condition and amount of rainfall. All of these factors add up to a 60-70% mortality rate, despite intense vigilance.

The caterpillars grow from 3/8 inch (9.5mm) to 4-1/2 inches (11.5cm) during their life span. The tasar silkworm consumes 80% of its food in the last instar (approximately one week) during which it grows relatively little, but fills reservoirs from which it will form its cocoon. In other words, it turns 80% of its food into silk. A tasar caterpillar will eat approximately 300g (10.75 oz) of leaves in its life. The CSB has hybridized the plantation trees so they are shorter, therefore making it easier to harvest cocoons, prune the trees and move



Beginning the formation of the tasar cocoon with peduncle attached

the caterpillars. Silk is just one of the crops raised by the indigenous people. They most likely also raise rice and vegetables. With the help of the CSB, they are beginning to take in their highest income from silk.

Forming the Cocoon

When ready to spin its cocoon, a caterpillar spends up to an hour and a half searching for the perfect spot to form a cape of leaves. The next process is unique to the tropical tasar caterpillar. 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 in a figure eight. A cocoon consists of a single strand between 750 to 1,520 yards (685 -1398 m) long.

Tropical tasar cocoons look like brown plums hanging from peduncles in the food trees. They are harvested five or six days after spinning begins.

Mating and Starting the Cycle Again

To produce the next generation, the best cocoons are used for seed and tied on long ropes and stored in a cool, dark place. The government grainages, have either a wooden or concrete building with all the windows blocked out and the villages provide windowless mud huts about 7 feet long and 5 feet wide and high. We entered a hut quietly and slowly, waited for our eyes to adjust to the darkness and then saw columns of cocoon-studded ropes covered with emerging moths. The female has about 200 eggs in her body. She hangs from her cocoon and the male comes to her. He fertilizes the eggs while they couple.

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Selling the Cocoons

In the past cocoon merchants rarely gave isolated tribal rearers a fair price for their product. The state and federal governments along with CSB has set up a system to help the farmers with pricing and marketing their cocoons. Serified is the umbrella under which 64 Primary Tasar Rearers Co-op Societies currently exist throughout Orissa with about 100 rearers in each. They have a governing body elected by themselves. Serified fixes the cocoon price. When there is a bumper crop, the Serified purchases all the cocoons, when it is a poor year, they also purchase the cocoons. The farmer never loses.

The next newsletter will continue with reeling and weaving of tasar silk in India.



Happy farmers with bumper crop