

GUARDAPARQUE

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Guardaparque is a bi-weekly publication prepared and issued by the International Ranger Federation (IRF), an organization of about 40 non-governmental and governmental ranger organizations from around the world. **Guardaparque** carries reports on emergency service and law enforcement incidents, reports on protection of parks and the natural and cultural resources within them, reports on programs to educate visitors and communities on the values of parks and protected areas, and reports on the people who are responsible for all these activities.

Guardaparque contains information from rangers in the field on operations conducted in the field. From time to time, it also reports on political issues affecting those operations. It is supplemented by a quarterly newsletter, **The Thin Green Line**, which focuses on IRF activities. If you have a submission for **Guardaparque**, please send it to the editor, Bill Halainen, at TGLedit@ptd.net.

EMERGENCY SERVICES AND LAW ENFORCEMENT

Italy – Lake Vico Natural Reserve Poacher Caught After Crashing Into Ranger Truck

Rangers caught a poacher who shot (but did not kill) a wild boar on January 6. The poacher tried to escape in his car, but crashed into the rangers' pickup truck. Fortunately, the rangers were not hurt. [Guido Baldi, President, AIGAP]

United States – Grand Canyon National Park Man Rescued Following Jump From Canyon Rim

Rangers were checking the park for drunk drivers early on New Year's Day morning. They tried to stop a pickup truck, but the driver sped away. The rangers chased him for eight miles on Desert View Drive until the driver stopped, jumped out, ran toward the rim of the canyon, and disappeared from view. The rangers followed his tracks to the rim and discovered that he had gone over the edge. A rescue was begun. The 23-year-old man, who suffered only a minor injury, was found about three hours later approximately 600 feet below the rim in thick vegetation covered by ice and snow. Rangers descended to his position on ropes, then used a helicopter to lift him up to the canyon rim. He was taken by ambulance to a hospital, treated for an ankle sprain and released. He was then arrested. Nineteen park employees and a pilot took part in the rescue, which took more than 10 hours to complete. The man had stolen the vehicle. He went to the Grand Canyon to commit suicide. [*Morning Report*, U.S. National Park Service]

England – Thetford Forest "Rave" Organizers Banned From Forest Park

Five men have been banned from entering an East Anglian forest park for their part in organizing an illegal "rave" (an all-night dance party where loud music is played) which brought misery to people living nearby. The five, who admitted staging the rave near Bury St Edmunds, Suffolk, were also banned by a district judge from attending such events for the next year and ordered to pay hundreds of pounds in court costs. Forest ranger Dave Cooper said: "This is extreme thoughtlessness. It causes sheer misery to a large number of people who live in dread of just these sorts of events, which ruins their peace of mind and tranquil lives. People want to live quietly, that is why they live in these places." The men involved in organizing the event were all banned from the King's Forest following the rave at the isolated village of North Stow, near Elveden, which ended in violence after a raid by Suffolk police. [News report, *East Anglian Daily Times*, submitted by Roger Cole, Countryside Management Association, England]

Queensland/Australia – Burrum Coast National Park Wildfire Ravages Park

A fire has burned more than 23,000 hectares (about 57,000 acres) of Burrum Coast National Park near Bundaberg. The wildfire forced campers to leave the Kinkuna section of the park over last weekend as firefighters struggled to contain the blaze. Fire warden Marco Van Beelen said that they were alerted to the fire last Friday morning. "By the time we got to it we tried to stop it but it was too fierce, too dry," he said. "There was nothing we could do except control it at the outside containment lines, which we are still doing now." On Monday, January 15, the Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service reported that the fire had been contained within fire lines, but the national park was to remain closed to visitors through the week. The cause is being investigated. [News report, *Australian Broadcasting Company*]

United States – Point Reyes National Seashore Marijuana Plantation Cleanup

Rangers from Point Reyes, working with other local law enforcement agencies and supported by the California National Guard, removed trash from five marijuana cultivation sites in the park and ten other sites on surrounding lands this past December. Thousands and thousands of illegally-grown marijuana plants were removed from these locations earlier in the year, and the objective of this operation was to clean up the mess left by the growers. Over 70 cubic yards of garbage were removed, including more than 10 car batteries, six pesticide sprayers, 10 propane tanks, and over 150 pounds of fertilizer. The garbage was gathered in the sites, then removed by helicopter. All of the marijuana sites discovered in the park this year have been cleaned up and rehabilitated to minimize resource damage and deter future growing operations. [*Morning Report*, U.S. National Park Service]

SPECIES MANAGEMENT

Indonesia – Bukit Barisan Selatan National Park WWF Says Coffee Grown In Park Threatens Rhinos, Tigers

According to the World Wildlife Federation (WWF), coffee beans exported to the West are being illegally grown inside the park, threatening the habitat of endangered tigers, elephants and rhinos, the WWF. Around 19,600 tons of coffee from Bukit Barisan Selatan National Park on Sumatra Island are mixed with legally grown beans by local traders and exported each year, according to the global conservation organization.

"If this trend of clearing park land for coffee isn't halted, the rhinos and tigers will be locally extinct in less than a decade," said Nazir Foead of WWF. "We think even the world's most committed coffee drinkers will find this an unacceptable price to pay for their daily caffeine buzz."

WWF said several Western food and drink companies were buying the illegal beans. The group said it had told the companies of its findings. Some denied buying the tainted coffee, while others were discussing how to avoid buying it in the future, the group said. Bukit Barisan Selatan is one of the few protected areas where Sumatran tigers, Sumatran elephants and Sumatran rhinos coexist. It is one of the most important habitats left for the three, all endangered or critically endangered species, the WWF said. Indonesia is the world's second-largest exporter of robusta coffee, which is often used in instant coffee and packaged coffee sold in supermarkets. [News report, *International Herald Tribune*]

Congo – Virunga National Park Rebels Endanger Mountain Gorillas

Rebels in eastern Congo have killed and eaten two silverback mountain gorillas, conservationists said last Wednesday, sparking fears more of the endangered animals may have been slaughtered in the lawless region. Only about 700 mountain gorillas remain in the world, 380 of them spread across a range of volcanic mountains straddling the borders of Congo, Rwanda and Uganda in Central Africa. One dismembered gorilla corpse was found in a pit latrine in Congo's Virunga National Park, a few hundred meters (yards) from a park patrol post at Bikenge that was abandoned because of rebel attacks, according to the London-based Africa Conservation Fund.

Another silverback was killed in the same area on January 5, said the group, which based its report on conservationists in the field. The conservation group blamed rebels loyal to a local warlord, Laurent Nkunda, for the latest killing, and a local warden said rebels had also killed the other gorilla for its meat. Nkunda is a renegade army soldier who commands thousands of fighters in the vast country's east who have in recent years assaulted major cities and clashed sporadically with government forces.

Paulin Ngobobo, a senior warden at the park, described finding the animal's remains on an Internet blog. "We've learned a lot: the gorilla had in fact been eaten for meat. His name was Karema, another solitary silverback that had been born into a habituated group - meaning that he had grown to trust humans enough to let them come to within touching distance," Ngobobo wrote. "Above all, we learned that the remaining gorillas are extremely vulnerable - the rebels are after the meat, and it's not difficult for them to find and kill the few gorillas that remain." Ngobobo wrote on his blog that the first gorilla reported killed earlier in January had been shot by rebels and also eaten. "A local farmer was ordered to help the rebels collect the meat of the gorilla," Ngobobo said. "He told them that the meat was dangerous to eat, and immediately informed us of the incident."

Robert Muir of the Frankfurt Zoological Society, who accompanied Ngobobo, said: "We need to impress on Nkunda and his men that it is inexcusable to destroy national and world heritage of such critical importance ... now that we know that the slaughtered gorilla was eaten, the gorillas habituated for tourism are at extreme risk - and we are worried that more have been killed already."

The last remaining hippo populations in Congo are in Virunga and are also on the verge of being wiped out. Conservationists have blamed rebels and militias for slaughtering them, and say more than 400 were killed in 2006, mostly for food. Only 900 hippos are left, a huge drop from the 22 000 reported there in 1998.

Virunga park has been ravaged by poachers and deforestation for more than a decade. The 1994 Rwandan genocide saw millions of refugees spill across the border into Congo, marking the beginning of an era of unrest, lawlessness and clashes between militias and myriad rebel groups. Mineral-rich Congo, which held its first democratic elections in more than four decades in 2006, is struggling to recover from a broader 1998-2002 war that drew in the armies of more than half a dozen African nations.

The job of protecting the country's parks falls on local rangers, and the risks are high. In Virunga alone, some 97 rangers have died on duty since 1996, Africa Conservation Fund said. On his blog, Ngobobo also describes being shot at and flogged by the military, who he and other rangers were trying to convince to stop cutting down the forest.

Richard Leakey, a conservationist credited with helping end the slaughter of elephants in Kenya during the 1980s, said: "the survival of these last remaining mountain gorillas should be one of humanity's greatest priorities. Their future lies with a small number of very brave rangers risking their lives with very little support from the outside world." [News report from *Independent Online*, South Africa]

India – Bhitarkanika National Park Crocodile Population Increases In Park

At least 1,482 saltwater crocodiles have been counted in Bhitarkanika National Park of Orissa during the annual census of the species from January 5 to January 7. The head count operation was conducted under the supervision of wildlife personnel and crocodile researchers and experts. The enumerators, assisted by the trained local forest staff covered the Bhitarkanika river system besides innumerable creeks, water inlets and nullahs where the reptiles are found in abundance. According to forest officials, the salt water crocodiles being amphibious in nature can be counted directly both on land, while basking on the river bed and floating on water.

The forest officials said that they sighted at least 54 nests in the rivulets, water inlets, creeks and nullahs of the national park. They have collected 135 eggs from two nests to hatch it in the crocodile breeding and research centre. Out of the 1,482 saltwater crocodiles which were sighted during the census, 503 were hatchlings, 366 were yearlings, 257 were juveniles (three-years-old crocodile), 132 were sub-adult crocodiles and 224 were adults. The forest officials also sighted five giant crocodiles which were more than 20 feet long. It may be noted that the forest officials had also sighted a giant 23 feet long salt water crocodile in Bhitarkanika earlier. The number of salt water crocodiles is on the rise at Bhitarkanika. A total of 1,454 saltwater crocodiles were counted in the 2006 census and in 2005 the number was put at 1,449. As many as 1,358 crocodiles were counted in 2004 census, 1,308 were counted in 2003, 1,330 counted in 2002, 1,192 in 2001 and 914 were reported in the 2000 census. [News report, *Kalinga Times*, India]

PARKS AND PROTECTED AREAS

Uganda – Mt. Elgon National Park Fifty Families Encroach On Park

More than 50 families have encroached on Mt. Elgon National Park. The chief warden of Mt. Elgon conservation area, Johnson Masereka, said that they moved into the park after court issued a temporary injunction on November 23 restraining the Uganda Wildlife Authority from destroying property and crops of over 400 people. He said the areas affected were in Bumbo sub-county, where the park boundary was clearly marked. Masereka explained that his office and the Uganda Wildlife Authority were not served with a notice of intention to sue. He said that he would mobilize the park rangers to evict the encroachers until the case was disposed off. "Our work is to protect the national park from any form of encroachment," he said. He added the encroachers claim they are being forcefully evicted from their ancestral homes. "Some of the encroachers used the park to cultivate crops. We had stopped them from illegally cultivating in the national park," Masereka said. [News report, *New Vision*, Uganda]

England – Little Waltham Meadows/Newlands Grove Nature Reserves Cross-Valley Link Road Opposed

A link road designed to reduce traffic congestion would cut through the heart of two valuable nature reserves, a conservation group has warned. Three possible routes are being considered for a cross-valley link road in Chelmsford Essex, between Springfield and Broomfield to the north of the town. The Essex Wildlife Trust warned that all three of the council's proposed routes could cause "massive damage" to the landscape and important wildlife sites and nature reserves. "The cross-valley options are just not on," said the director of the trust. "Now is the time to make it absolutely clear to councillors that they cannot damage this fine section of the Essex countryside which is so important for a wide range of plants and animals and which so many local people value for a quiet relaxing walk along the river valley. We must not try to solve this traffic congestion problem by blasting a new road through the superb environment and nature reserves of the Chelmer Valley. We have to be smarter than this and plan in a more inclusive way." [News report, *East Anglian Daily Times*, submitted by Roger Cole, Countryside Management Association, England]

EDUCATION AND INTERPRETATION

No articles this issue.

NEWS ABOUT RANGERS

United States – National Park Service Gerald Ford: President And Park Ranger

Gerald R. Ford, the former President of the United States who died in December, holds a special place in the hearts of those in the U.S. National Park Service family. He will be remembered by the world for his many accomplishments as President of the United States and his compassion in healing the nation's wounds following the war in Vietnam. For those in the National Park Service, though, he's considered as one of our own – the only American President to have served as a park ranger in the National Park Service.

In the summer of 1936, Gerald Ford worked as a seasonal park ranger at Yellowstone National Park. Ford later recalled that time as “one of the greatest summers of my life.”

According to his supervisor at Yellowstone, Canyon District Ranger Frank Anderson, Ford was “a darned good ranger.”

While serving in Yellowstone, one of Ford's assignments was as an armed guard on the bear-feeding truck. The National Park Service no longer feeds the bears, but Ford always remembered that duty and often told his family stories about the bear-feeding truck.

During his summer at Yellowstone, Ford also worked in the Canyon Hotel and Lodge, meeting and greeting “VIP's” (important people visiting the park) – a job Ford told his supervisor was “undemocratic and un-American to give special attention to VIPs.”

According to Wayne Repogle, Ford's roommate that summer, one of the duties that Ford particularly enjoyed was the early morning check. From 5 a.m. to 7 a.m. every morning, each automobile in camp had to be checked for make, model, state and license number. Repogle said that the rangers had to run most of the time to get the 150 to 200 licenses listed in two hours. As a football player, Ford was very fit and saw this duty as an opportunity to stay in shape. Repogle said that Ford genuinely enjoyed “everything we rangers had to do.”

As President of the United States, Ford oversaw an era when the National Park Service, under the leadership of Director Gary Everhardt, tightened the criteria for national parklands. Previously, for an area to be recommended for inclusion in the National Park System, it had to be considered nationally significant and lend itself to administration, preservation, and public use. The new emphasis would also consider whether the area was assured of adequate protection outside the system and whether it would be available for public appreciation and use under such protection. During his time in office, President Ford added eighteen new areas to the National Park System.

[*Morning Report*, U.S. National Park Service]

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Prepared and published by the International Ranger Federation as a service to rangers around the world. Submissions should be sent to Bill Halainen at TGLedit@ptd.net .

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