

GUARDAPARQUE

February 16, 2007

Volume 1

Number 4

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

Uganda – Queen Elizabeth National Park Park Warden Denies Killings

The chief warden of Queen Elizabeth National Park, John Bosco Nuwe, has refuted reports that 20 poachers were killed in his area before Christmas. "I am the chief park warden but I haven't heard that," Nuwe told The New Vision in early January. Earlier reports said the poachers had been killed while hunting for game meat to celebrate Christmas. "If any poacher were killed over the Christmas week, it was not my group (Game Rangers) responsible," Nuwe said. A senior army officer based in Kasese told The New Vision on December 28th that he had got information that 20 poachers had been killed in the park. "I have been made to understand that 20 people were killed in the park on December 22dn. But do not quote me," the officer said. Reports said most of the poachers were from Kisinga, Nyakiyumbu and Munkunyu sub-counties. [Source: The New Vision, submitted by Daniel Paz, Asociación de Guardaparques Argentinos]

Australia – Noosa National Park Cliff Jumper Charged After Dramatic Rescue

A man who sparked a massive search after jumping from a rock ledge into the ocean at a Sunshine Coast national park has been charged with being a public nuisance. Justus Ansell, 21, spent the night of Saturday, February 10th, sheltering in a cave with a dislocated shoulder in Noosa National Park after disappearing while swimming with friends that afternoon. Authorities feared he had drowned after he jumped off the highest point of Oyster Rock and failed to resurface. He was found 14 hours later clinging to rocks near the water. He was treated for exposure, fatigue, dehydration and his shoulder injury, caused when he hit the water. Police have charged Ansell with public nuisance offences and issued him with a notice to appear in court. Surf lifesavers condemned Ansell's actions as "stupid and irresponsible." George Hill, a lifesaving services manager, said lifesavers had risked their lives in dangerous ocean swells searching for the man. [Source: News.com, Australia]

England – Little Wormwood Scrubs Park Park Keeper Finds Bomb Hidden In Bushes

A park keeper has told a court of the moment he discovered an alleged home-made bomb hidden in shrubbery. Jackie Whitcomb, park keeper in Little Wormwood Scrubs Park, west London, was clearing up litter two days after the July, 2005, attacks on the London public transport system when the white top of a container caught his eye. "It stuck out quite a lot," he told Woolwich Crown Court. "I didn't realize what it was. It's my job to take litter away from the park." Whitcomb said he wasn't able to pick up the container with his litter picker, so he bent down and picked it up. "Then I saw the nuts and bolts on it and slowly put it down and briskly walked away." He told his two colleagues about the discovery and they closed off the park to the general public. The jury was read a statement by Russell Oakley, a fellow groundsman for the London Borough of Hammersmith and Fulham. "To me this device really did look like a real bomb," he said. "The reason we left this device and went to different areas of the park was because we did think it was real and could have exploded at any time." The police later confirmed that the five kilogram container was indeed "a viable device." The case against the six alleged bombers continues. [Source: London Daily Mail, submitted by Roger Cole, Countryside Management Association]

Angola – Bicular National Park Forty-Six Poachers Arrested

Forty six poachers have been arrested at Bicular National park in the south Huila province by security officers. Officers also seized 86 firearms. Efforts will be made to train the individuals who have been arrested and turn them into reserve guards, giving them a satisfactory salary to protect the national park and the animals. Many poachers are still in the game reserve because of the insufficiency of guards to cover the area, which is over 7,500 kilometers square. There are 26 guards from the Forestry Development Institute (IDF) and of the Civil Defense working at Bicular National Park. [Source: Angola Press Agency]

United States – Pictured Rocks National Lakeshore Husband Of Woman Killed In Fall Charged With Murder

On June 22, 2006, 43-year-old Juanita Richardson of McBain, Michigan, fell to her death from a cliff above Lake Superior about a half mile southwest of Miners Castle in Pictured Rocks National Lakeshore. She was picnicking along the cliffs with her husband, 43-year-old Tom Richardson, when the incident occurred. Following the incident, a joint investigation into the cause of the accident was undertaken by the Alger County Sheriff's Department, FBI, Michigan State Police, and the National Park Service. On Tuesday, February 6th, Tom Richardson was arrested in Cadillac, Michigan, and arraigned in court on two charges – murder, which carries a life in prison sentence, and manslaughter, which carries a 15-year sentence. Richardson's preliminary exam has been set for February 28th. The judge did not set a bail amount due to the serious nature of the charges. [Source: U.S. National Park Service "Morning Report"]

SPECIES MANAGEMENT

Democratic Republic of Congo – Virunga National Park Rebels Say They Will Stop Killing Mountain Gorillas, Allow Ranger Patrols

Rebels in restive eastern Congo have agreed to stop the killing of mountain gorillas and allow government rangers to restart patrols, conservationists said in late January. Earlier in the month, rebels allegedly killed and ate two silverback mountain gorillas, according to field reports collected by London-based Africa Conservation Fund. There are only about 700 mountain gorillas left in the world, 380 of them spread across a volcanic mountain range in Central Africa that crosses the borders of Congo, Rwanda and Uganda. Silverbacks are the older adult males of the species. A rebel leader, Colonel Makenga, agreed to stop the killings and to allow patrols after a meeting on Tuesday with park wardens, conservationists, U.N. officials and Congo army representatives, the group said.

"We weren't expecting to succeed given the overwhelming odds against," Paulin Ngobobo, a senior park warden, said in a statement. "However, this is just another small step. We must keep up international pressure, to ensure that this does not happen again next week, next month, or next year." Congo's Virunga National Park – where the gorilla corpses were found – has been hit by poachers and loggers for more than a decade. The area has long been occupied by various militia groups, including forces loyal to warlord Laurent Nkunda, who reportedly recently agreed to stop fighting the government in exchange for a promise that he will not be pursued for war crimes. But the region remains volatile. Congo is working to re-establish democratic rule after a 1998-2002 war that pulled in armies of more than six African nations. The country held its first democratic elections in more than four decades last year, but the government has struggled to keep control in the east, which has long been the lawless domain of gangs and thugs. Rangers assigned to protect Congo's national parks regularly risk confrontation and death. Some 97 Virunga National Park rangers have died on duty since 1996, according to Africa Conservation Fund. [Source: Financial Times, submitted by Daniel Paz, Asociación de Guardaparques Argentinos]

England – Forestry Commission Wildlife Dying Out In Neglected British Forests

British woodlands have been allowed to decay to such an extent that entire species of plants and animals are vanishing, a parliamentary report says. Dormice, woodpeckers and bats are on the verge of dying out due to the neglect of ancient forests. More than half the forests in England are now derelict, experts claim. Four-hundred-year-old woods have been poorly managed and broken up into isolated fragments so small that they can no longer support rich wildlife. Jonathan Wentworth, an environment adviser, said: "Half of forests in England are effectively derelict and unmanaged. They are losing the very wildlife that people use to define British woodland." Ancient woods now cover less than two per cent of the country. The report states that, although much woodland is protected by laws, its ability to support wildlife has declined. A survey of woodland plant life by the Forestry Commission revealed that 56 out of 72 key plant species have become "significantly less common" over the past 30 years. David Bellamy, the botanist and TV presenter, attributed the decline in the quality of woodland to the reduction in the number of forest rangers and gamekeepers on country estates. "As we have lost them, we have lost the knowledge needed to keep our woodland healthy," he said. "There needs to be a task force of foresters and gamekeepers who can help prioritize and rescue our ancient woodlands." [Source: Sunday Telegraph, submitted by Roger Cole, Countryside Management Association]

United States – Glacier National Park DNA Tests Show At Least 545 Grizzly Bears In Area Around Park

Scientists who completed DNA tests on nearly 34,000 hair samples collected in 2004 have determined that at least 545 individual grizzly bears roam the Northern Continental Divide Ecosystem. The 9,600-square-mile ecosystem is one of the last strongholds of the grizzly bear in the lower 48 states. It includes Glacier National Park, parts of the Flathead and Blackfoot Indian reservations, parts of five national forests (Flathead, Helena, Kootenai, Lewis & Clark, and Lolo), five wilderness areas (Bob Marshall, Mission Mountain, Great Bear, Rattlesnake, and Scapegoat), and Bureau of Land Management, state, corporate and privately-owned lands. Managers and biologists have been working to identify population size, trend, survival and the corridors that link separate populations ever since the grizzly bear was listed as threatened under the Endangered Species Act in 1975. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service developed a Grizzly Bear Recovery Plan in 1982 (updated in 1993) that identified the Northern Continental Divide Ecosystem as having the best prospect of long-term survival for the bears. It is the third largest of six recovery zones in the United States, and is the only zone contiguous to a strong Canadian population, according to the plan. For four two-week sessions starting in late June 2004, 207 workers collected 33,741 hair samples, mostly from black bears and grizzly bears, from baited hair-snag stations and small wires that were placed on unbaited rub trees. The stations and trees were dispersed over the eight-million-acre area. The DNA tests recorded 307 female and 238 male grizzly bears or 545 total bears, of which 46 percent were counted in Glacier National Park. The 1993 estimate was a minimum of 300 bears in the ecosystem. [Source: Newspaper, Montana, United States]

PARKS AND PROTECTED AREAS

Canada (Quebec) – Kuururjuaq Park Plans For New Park In Nunavik Move Forward

Nunavik's next proposed provincial park, Kuururjuaq, is one of only a few places in the world where you may see black bears and polar bears, in the wild, on the same day (Nunavik is an area of northern Quebec largely occupied by native Inuits). The area won't become Nunavik's second provincial park for several years yet, but plans for Kuururjuaq's development are moving ahead, with public hearings scheduled for March. Kuururjuaq's boundaries touch the limits of the future Torngat National Park in northern Labrador and are framed by the Ungava Bay coast, encompassing 4,273 square kilometers. This park includes the majestic Koroc (Kuururjuaq) River, which flows for 160-kilometers through a U-shaped valley, long used as a pathway for Inuit between northern Quebec and Labrador. Within the proposed park boundaries also lie the Torngat mountains, including Mount d'Iberville and the slightly smaller Nuuvugilaa, a natural, 1,466-meter tower of rock. The region, whose beauty has been compared to the Rocky Mountains, covers a range of ecosystems from alpine to boreal and coastal. Its terrain is home to a surprising diversity of plant life, birds of prey and mammals. Many plants and animals are at the extent of their ranges here at the 58th parallel. Quebec's northernmost white birch stand is found near the Koroc River.

Botanists believe these trees are remnants from a time when birch grew elsewhere in the region. The task of the hearings in March is to consider the park's provisional development plan and zoning proposals. These are important because the park's future boundaries and guidelines won't affect Inuit hunting and fishing rights under the James Bay and Northern Quebec Agreement, but they will impact on the future of any mining development. Diamond, gold and uranium prospecting companies have all found promising deposits near, and within, the proposed park boundaries. However, Quebec policy on provincial parks says conservation takes priority over development. That means no mining development within park boundaries, or close enough to potentially damage the park's environment. Pingualuit Park, near Kangiqsujuaq, Nunavik's first provincial park, or, as it's called in French le parc national de Pingualuit, is expected to officially open in next September.

[Source: Nunatsiaq News, Canada]

EDUCATION AND INTERPRETATION

United States – Yosemite National Park Japanese And U.S. Rangers Meet For Interpretation Seminar

Yosemite National Park hosted the twelfth annual Japan-US Interpreter Training Seminar between January 28th and February 2nd. First held at Grand Canyon National Park in 1995, the seminar is a joint training workshop conducted by the National Park Service and Japan's Association for Interpretation. Funding for the Seminar has always been provided by the Japanese organizers. The theme of this year's seminar was "Integrating Research with Interpretation in National Parks." Seventeen Japanese naturalist/interpreters from government, academic, and private organizations attended the seminar and were joined throughout the week by the interpretation and resource management staff of Yosemite National Park. Japanese and American interpretive rangers shared lessons learned from their experiences working within their countries' national park systems and learned about current techniques employed in their colleagues' parks. The Japanese participants also worked on projects addressing critical issues of integrating research with interpretation. Japan's national park system is highly decentralized, with most public services provided by contracted staff from non-governmental organizations and academic institutions. Only 200+ rangers from Japan's Ministry of Environment are employed in interpretation and resource protection at the country's national parks. An unique feature of Japanese park interpretation is that interpretive rangers also conduct their own research, given the limited financial resources available to Japanese protected area management. Japanese participants learned about the many ways that American national parks interpret resources for park visitors. In a seminar evaluation questionnaire, they agreed that they will be adapting much of what they learned from their American colleagues at their parks within the next three to six months. [Source: U.S. National Park Service, "InsideNPS"]

NEWS ABOUT RANGERS

No entries this issue.

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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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