



## **GUARDAPARQUE**

**March 2, 2007**

Volume 1

Number 5

---

**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](mailto:TGLedit@ptd.net).

### **EMERGENCY SERVICES AND LAW ENFORCEMENT**

#### **Nepal – Bardiya National Park Army Detains Eight Armed Maoists In Park**

Bardiya National Park was reported to be tense last Saturday following the entry of armed Maoists into the park. Nepal Army personnel apprehended eight Maoists with several rifles at a vehicle checkpoint. They were driving an unregistered microbus when apprehended by officers of the Ranasher Battalion at Rammapur security post on the east-west Mahendra Highway. Although the Maoists defended their illegal possession of the weapons as on “orders from above,” army personnel tried to detain them. The Maoists then forcibly continued onwards, only to get arrested once again at the Chisapani security outpost, located about 30 kilometers west of Rammapur. According to the army, the Maoists resisted the security check, but later yielded due to Nepal Army personnel insisting on fulfilling their duties. The news of the army's refusal to allow the armed Maoists to pass quickly resulted in a large group of Maoists from Kailali gathering at the site where the Maoists were being detained and chanting slogans against the army. Park administrators said that the incident had raised a question regarding the rationale of the Nepal Army's deployment for park security, adding that the incident could be an attempt to lower the morale of the Nepal Army. [Source: Kantipur Online, Nepal]

#### **Italy – Marturanum Regional Park Rangers Arrest Tomb Raiders, Rescue Boy Scouts**

Rangers at Marturanum Regional Park caught two tomb raiders inside the park in an operation conducted with local police – the Barbarano Carabinieri – and recovered many pieces of stolen Etruscan pottery. The same rangers found three boy scouts (two children with an adult) who'd gotten lost at night in the forest in a wild area along the Biedano River. [Source: Guido Baldi, Presidente, AIGAP]

### **United States – Yellowstone National Park Sentencing On Elk Poaching Conviction**

On January 30th, two men were sentenced in federal court in Yellowstone after entering guilty pleas to charges of illegally taking an elk in the park last year. On November 11, 2006, Vincent Ripoli and Travis Johnson were arrested by rangers and special agents for shooting a bull elk in the Stephens Creek area of the park. The two men pled guilty to possessing illegally taken wildlife, possessing a weapon in a park, and illegally killing the elk. Ripoli also pled guilty to possession of marijuana. Ripoli was sentenced to 30 days in jail (with credit for five days already served), placed on supervised probation for a year and unsupervised probation for three more years, and assessed a total of \$8,560 in restitution, fines and special assessments. Johnson was sentenced to five days in jail (with credit for five days served), placed on unsupervised probation for three years, and assessed a total of \$8,035 in restitution, fines and special assessments. Both men were also banned from entering Yellowstone for the next four years, banned from hunting anywhere for four years, and ordered to forfeit the firearms and ammunition which were used during the commission of the crime. [Source: National Park Service “Morning Report,” USA]

### **United States – Grand Teton National Park Rescue Of Seriously Injured Skier**

On the afternoon of February 25th, rangers and Jackson Hole Mountain Resort ski patrollers rescued a seriously injured backcountry skier who'd been caught in an avalanche while skiing in Granite Canyon. Andy Smith, 32, of Jackson, Wyoming, sustained multiple life-threatening injuries when he was swept approximately 2,000 feet downhill by an avalanche that he apparently triggered. The region's interagency dispatch center received an emergency call from another backcountry skier who was in the area. Rangers and ski patrollers immediately began a rescue operation. Ski patrollers skied from the slopes of Jackson Hole Mountain Resort to the accident site in the park's back country. After reaching Smith, they assessed his condition, provided emergency medical care, and prepared him for transport out of the backcountry. Patrollers and other back country skiers in the area also packed down a landing zone to receive a rescue helicopter in the event that weather conditions permitted a flight. Two park rangers boarded a helicopter for an aerial rescue, while another two rangers drove to the Granite Canyon trail to begin packing down a snowmobile trail into the canyon in case the helicopter was unable to fly. Weather permitted the pilot to fly, though, and the helicopter arrived at the accident site by 4:30 p.m. Smith was loaded into the helicopter, flown back to a landing area, then transferred to a park ambulance for transport to St. John's Medical Center in Jackson for treatment of his injuries. Avalanche danger for the Teton area was rated as moderate at the time, with a caution that the avalanche danger would rise from new snow accumulations and that surface slabs could be human triggered in wind loaded starting zones. [Source: National Park Service “Morning Report,” USA]

## **SPECIES MANAGEMENT**

### **India – Kaziranga National Park/Manas National Park Conservation History Made By Relocation Of Six Elephant Calves**

On Saturday, February 24th, six elephant calves, rescued from different parts of Assam and raised in an animal farm in the Kaziranga National Park, were relocated to a wildlife sanctuary in the first such conservation exercise undertaken by India. The six elephants, aged two-and-a-half to six years, were brought by trucks to the Doimari range of Manas National Park in western Assam from the Centre for Wildlife Rehabilitation and Conservation located in Kaziranga. They were moved under the supervision of experts from the Wildlife Trust of India (WTI) and the International Fund for Animal Welfare (IFAW). The elephants will be integrated into a wild herd after they have become familiar with the area. All six elephants are wearing radio collars so that they can be monitored. Assam has India's largest population of Asiatic elephants, estimated at around 5,300 according to a wildlife census in 2002. Human-elephant conflict in Assam has caused major wildlife concerns, with the animals killing 239 people in the past five years. During the same period, 265 elephants died – many victims of retaliation by angry humans. [Source: India eNews, India]

## **Africa – African National Parks Increased Demand For Ivory Threatens Elephant Survival**

An international effort to halt the illegal killing of elephants for their ivory tusks has all but collapsed in most of Africa, leaving officials and advocates alarmed about the survival of the species. A study released last week estimates that as many as 23,000 of the animals were slaughtered last year alone. A team of wildlife and law enforcement experts concluded that a widely hailed 1989 ban on international sales of ivory has been overwhelmed by exploding demand for ivory in Japan and China and declining support for anti-poaching programs.

"Right now, things are really much worse than before the ban," said Samuel Wasser of the University of Washington, lead author of the study, funded jointly by the U.S. government and several nonprofit groups. "Almost half of Africa's elephants had been slaughtered in the eight years before the ban, but now the situation is even more extreme because the number of animals is so much lower to begin with. And unlike in the late '80s, the public has forgotten about this issue."

Wasser said that poaching poses a renewed threat to the survival of regional herds in many countries and to the entire subspecies of forest elephants, which he said is being "annihilated" in central Africa.

Wasser said that reports of a rebound in elephant numbers had produced a distorted view of the situation. Of the roughly 400,000 elephants in the African wild, he said, about 130,000 are in Botswana, where they are well protected to the point that they have overbred. Of the elephants elsewhere in Africa, more than 23,000, 1 in 12, were killed last year, the researchers estimated. The estimate is based on the 54,000 pounds of ivory confiscated in 12 international seizures in the year that ended August 2006, and an assumption by customs officials that they seize only 10 percent of smuggled contraband. Ivory is in demand for jewelry and for "hankos," used to stamp personal seals and signatures in parts of East Asia.

The report said that the ban on international ivory sales was effective at first, largely because wealthy nations provided money to police game parks and go after poachers. Elephant populations rebounded substantially, especially in southern Africa, but as more exceptions to the ban were allowed and funding was cut back, illegal killings resumed. Compounding the problem, ivory smuggling has become increasingly the province of organized crime, with narcotics and other contraband often being shipped with the tusks. Ivory prices have skyrocketed, Wasser said, and the incentives for killing elephants for their tusks have never been greater.

Wasser and the other authors, who include an Interpol employee and African conservation officials, said that an aggressive, well-funded anti-poaching program could be highly effective now because DNA testing can pinpoint where the animals are being killed. The report also said that an education program in East Asia is essential to curb the demand for ivory.

"I don't think people in China and Japan fully understand the crisis that their ivory purchases have caused," Wasser said. He proposed something like a current Chinese campaign against shark-fin soup, in which a popular basketball player asks, "What's wrong with us that we kill the sharks for the fin?"

While the 1989 ban forbids all unapproved sales of ivory between nations, illegal material that slips through can become legal once it turns up in a different country. Before the 1989 ban, most smuggled ivory was shipped to Europe, the United States and Japan. Now, the report found, most of it is going to China and Japan, although authorities say that some is turning up again in the United States.

[Source: The Washington Post, United States]

## **PARKS AND PROTECTED AREAS**

### **India – Keoladeo Ghana National Park Drought-Ridden Park Could Lose World Heritage Status**

For years, tourists have come to India's Keoladeo Ghana National Park to gaze at shimmering, bird-flocked wetlands stretching to the horizon. But where there were once vast lakes, visitors now find puddles nursed by a network of pumps which suck up groundwater from deep beneath the parched earth.

Years of poor monsoon rains have left most of this World Heritage site near Bharatpur in the desert state of Rajasthan dry and cracked, while local farmers insist on getting most of what little rain water is dammed to irrigate their fields. This has forced most of the thousands of migratory birds that would once spectacularly descend on Keoladeo every year for the winter to make alternative arrangements elsewhere.

"Before, the skies were so full of birds it was a wonder they didn't collide into each other," recalled Mahendra Vyas, a lawyer who advises India's Supreme Court on conservation issues. "Now there is nothing there."

Although the park has not yet been added to the United Nation's danger list, the World Heritage committee warned in 2005 that if the park continues to dry up then it risks losing its status as a World Heritage site.

"The situation is not good and the prognosis for the future also doesn't appear to be very encouraging," Kishore Rao, the deputy director of the United Nation's World Heritage Center, told a Reuters news service reporter by telephone from his Paris office. "Delisting has not happened before but that doesn't mean it won't happen in the future."

When India succeeded in getting Keoladeo listed as a World Heritage site in 1985, it promised to look after the unique wetlands for the benefit of humanity. But word is spreading, especially on travel websites, that India is failing in that undertaking. As a result, visitors are showing up in ever smaller numbers, locals say. February should be a busy month at the height of the tourist season; but most of the men dozing on their cycle-rickshaws at the park gates are lucky these days to get hired.

"No water, no birds, no tourists," complained Rampal Singh, who says he and his fellow rickshaw drivers are struggling on their reduced earnings. Hoteliers also say bookings are down.

Rajasthan's forestry department thinks the best solution is to top up the park with water piped in from the Chambal river, about 80 km (50 miles) away, or from the Goverdhan floodwater drain, about 20 km (12 miles) away. But that might not help much as an entire wetland ecosystem would have to be created -- with fish, turtles and other aquatic life vital to wetland ecology -- to establish a habitat for wintering cranes, storks and ibises who migrate to the region from as far as China and Siberia.

"Money is one of the other constraints," said Mehrotra, Rajasthan's chief wildlife warden. Neither pipeline has yet been approved.

[Source: Reuters]

## **EDUCATION AND INTERPRETATION**

Nothing this issue.

## **NEWS ABOUT RANGERS**

### **United States – Federal/State Lands Many Wildland Firefighters Say They May Not Serve This Summer**

*[Editor's note: The following story concerns wildland firefighting in the United States, which is conducted nationally as a cooperative effort by many federal and state organizations under the administration of the National Interagency Fire Center in Idaho. Included are rangers from the National Park Service, U.S. Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Bureau of Indian Affairs and most of the 50 state park systems. Fires are generally managed by teams under an incident commander. Six years ago, four firefighters died on the Thirtymile Fire in the state of Washington and the incident commander is being prosecuted – the first time such a thing has happened. It is a big issue in the U.S. This article tells about a recent survey of firefighters about the impact of this action]*

In a survey released on Tuesday, February 20th, 60 percent of the full-time wildland firefighters responding said they would retire or otherwise cut back their fire management roles for the upcoming fire season. The two largest groups said they would either make themselves less available for fire assignments (36 percent) or decline to serve as incident commanders (23 percent.)

The Internet-based poll was one of the first concrete signs of the fallout from federal prosecutors' unprecedented decision last year to criminally charge a U.S. Forest Service incident commander for his role in the deaths of four Central Washington firefighters in 2001 at the Thirtymile forest fire. But nearly 40 percent of the full-time respondents said the prosecution would have no effect on their willingness to oversee fires.

"There's a lot of dedicated people out there who would say that fire is their life. They feel a certain amount of loyalty to their employer. We honor them for that," said executive director Bill Gabbert of the International Association of Wildland Fire, one of the nation's leading firefighting lobby groups.

More than 3,300 firefighters responded to the survey. Gabbert described that as a significant number "which tends to indicate how important these issues are to the wildland firefighters out there in the field."

Forest Service officials previously said they had heard only anecdotal reports that incident commanders, the primary supervisors in charge of managing a fire, were leaning toward backing out of the job, seen as more of a risk since the criminal charges. Classes for new incident commanders are still filling up, officials said. Whether the survey numbers hold true will likely be seen this spring when the Forest Service and other federal fire agencies print their annual round of "red cards," which list each firefighter's qualifications.

Poll coordinators did not predict a margin of error, but said they had no indication that anybody had tried to manipulate the results. The survey was designed to take results only once from responding computers.

The Forest Service, the largest of the five federal agencies which manage the country's wildland fires, estimates that it has 10,000 employees dedicated to firefighting and another 15,000 with part-time fire duties. In an interview last week, a top Forest Service official said the agency is working with its lawyers to try to offer employees guidance on the potential for criminal liability. The discussion has been hampered by the lack of case law on the topic, said Marc Rounsaville, the deputy director for fire and aviation management.

In a related move, Forest Service officials hope to issue new guidelines on incident management, perhaps as early as this summer. Under development for the last couple of years, the guidelines focus more attention on making sure that decisions are guided by general safety principles rather than bogging down supervisors in a specific checklist of rules.

But Rounsaville said the Forest Service was not pushing to eliminate criminal charges for decisions made on the fireline. Contrary to comments by some firefighters, Rounsaville said it would have been inappropriate for the Forest Service to lobby against the federal prosecutors' decision to charge Ellreese Daniels, who faces trial on four charges of involuntary manslaughter and seven counts of lying to investigators in connection with the Thirty-mile deaths.

"We don't expect immunity, nor does that make much sense when you think about it in a pragmatic fashion. That avenue for criminal investigation and prosecution always needs to be available," Rounsaville said.

The year after Thirtymile, Congress passed a law requiring an independent investigation of all firefighter fatalities caused when crews are overtaken by flames. The laws under which Daniels was charged existed well before that, but the inspector general's new wildland fire unit played a key role in compiling the information used against him.

Gabbert, the IAWF executive director, said the association doesn't object to wildland deaths being investigated. But Gabbert said the inspector general lacks the specialized fire expertise needed to conduct a credible investigation. The Forest Service and other agencies have built up that experience over several decades, he said.

A separate firefighter lobbying organization, the Federal Wildland Fire Service Association, has said it is trying to find lawmakers who are willing to clarify the intent of the law. An update on those efforts was not available Tuesday.

The Forest Service is looking into developing a system that would separate criminal investigations from safety reviews in order to allow employees to freely pass on lessons learned, Rounsaville said.

[Source: Yakima Herald Republic, USA]

\* \* \* \* \*

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](mailto:TGLedit@ptd.net) or [Bill\\_Halainen@nps.gov](mailto:Bill_Halainen@nps.gov) .

--- ### ---