



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

India – Gir National Park Poachers Kill Three Rare Asiatic Lions

Forest guards have recovered the carcasses of two rare Asiatic lions and a cub believed to have been killed by poachers on the outskirts of their only natural habitat in western India. Nine of the endangered lions have been killed in the past two months, raising fears for the future of the rare cats. The three carcasses were found about 10 kilometers (6 miles) from the sanctuary in Babaria, 300 kilometers (185 miles) south of Ahmadabad, the main city in western Gujarat state. "It seems to be yet another case of poaching. We have registered a case with police and a manhunt has been launched in the area," said a wildlife officer. "Another four lions have died of natural causes since February 3." Park rangers found the mutilated bodies of two lionesses and a cub deep inside the park. The poachers took away their claws, bones and skulls, which are highly prized in traditional Chinese medicine. The claws are also sometimes used for amulets in India, according to the Wildlife Protection Society of India. Asiatic lions can be differentiated from African lions by a characteristic skin fold on their bellies. Males also have thinner manes. Asiatic lions once roamed much of Asia from Turkey to India, but only about 350 still exist, all of them in Gir National Park. The lions often cross the sanctuary's fences and go out looking for food and water. Poachers then track and kill them. Some lions that took cattle have also been killed in the past by angry villagers. The state's chief forest officer said that the government has been asked to step up security along India's borders to prevent body parts of lions from being smuggled out of the country. In 1972, the government declared Gir National Park a protected sanctuary for Asiatic lions. The government has been trying without success to relocate at least 4,000 people who live in the 1,150-square kilometer (460-square mile) forest reserve, which is crisscrossed by five roads and a railway track. The Indian Government has set up a second sanctuary for the lions in the central state of Madhya Pradesh, but the state government in Gujarat has refused to send any of the lions there, saying they are a symbol of Gujarat. [Source: *The Hindu*, India]

South Africa – Kruger National Park Poachers Target Elephants And Rhinos

Rhinos and elephants in Southern Africa are coming under increased pressure from poachers and organized criminal gangs, who supply the lucrative international ivory and rhino-horn markets. At least 70 rhinos have been killed by poachers in Kruger National Park over the past six years, including 17 in 2006 and four by mid-February this year. The report, published by Animal Rights Africa (ARA), a Johannesburg-based animals rights group, says that Free State authorities have prosecuted nine people for the illegal possession of 44 rhino horns in the past two years and there have been other serious incidents in Limpopo and KwaZulu-Natal. Arrests have also been made in the Western Cape. The report, *Consuming Wildlife: The Illegal Exploitation Of Wildlife In South Africa, Zimbabwe And Zambia*, also details increased elephant poaching in Zimbabwe and Zambia and quotes extensively from a document compiled by the governments of Kenya and Mali, which claims that more than 40 tons of ivory have been confiscated worldwide during the past two years. More than 13 tons of the ivory is believed to have come from Zimbabwe and Zambia. Raymond Travers, the park's spokesperson, said that rhino poaching was a "big concern", but park authorities were countering the problem and working closely with the SAPS and the Mozambican authorities. "I can't deny that rhino poaching is a problem, but we are fighting the fight," Travers said. "There has been a slow and steady increase during the years." The park has about 6 000 white rhinos and 1 000 black rhinos. [Source: *The Sunday Independent*, South Africa]

United States – Mount Rainier National Park Two Hikers Die After Fall In Creek

Two backpackers hiking in Mount Rainier National Park were killed on March 19 after falling off a makeshift log bridge while trying to cross a creek that was rerouted by winter floods. In any other year, a National Park Service bridge would have carried the hikers easily across the waterway, Ipsut Creek, that claimed their lives. But the bridge – like many in the 368-square-mile park – was made useless during the floods that battered the park last fall. The sole survivor of the hiking party contacted park personnel at 10 a.m. Monday, saying that her two hiking partners – a married couple – had been swept away by Ipsut Creek, said Lee Taylor, a park spokeswoman. One of the hikers fell from the log into the creek, Taylor said. The second hiker jumped into the water to attempt a rescue. Searchers in a helicopter spotted both bodies downstream from the Ipsut Creek Campground, a primitive backcountry site where the hiking party spent Sunday night, Taylor said. Twelve members of the Pierce County Sheriff's Department's swift-water rescue team recovered one body from the near-freezing water Monday afternoon, she said. Taylor said the hikers were Washington residents in their 40s. The accident occurred in an area that was devastated by the torrential rains that tore through the park in November, Taylor said. In the flooding that followed, both Ipsut Creek and the nearby Carbon River changed courses. "It's a new stretch of river," Taylor said. "And the area where they were is exactly where the road used to be." The Park Service has estimated that at least \$36 million in damage was done to the park. Washed-out roads and downed bridges account for much of that damage. The Carbon River Road, a gravel route in the park's northwest corner, has been consumed by the Carbon River, said Elizabeth Lunney, executive director of the Washington Trails Association. Now, she said, the area where the hikers died Monday is accessible only by a debris-covered footpath. Taylor said stream crossings will be the biggest safety concern as the hiking season approaches. Bridges are out at several popular hiking destinations in the park, including Comet Creek and Grove of the Patriarchs. [Source: *The Seattle Post-Intelligencer*, United States]

Tanzania – Tanzanian National Parks Anti-Poaching Operation Update

[Note: Tim Snow of GRAA has past on this update on enforcement operations in Tanzanian parks from Keith Roberts, the conservation and anti-poaching manager for the Friedkin Conservation Fund in that country. It is printed in its entirety with some minor editorial revisions.]

“I thought I would send an update from Tanzania. I was planning to have one in by January but time flies on past and I ended up in the states for 5 weeks fund raising. The trip was successful and I managed to get some good equipment sponsorships lined up.

“The 2006 year ended on a high note with Mohammed Mruma, the driver/ranger that had been shot (25th August), being discharged from hospital in time to spend Christmas with his family. He will be off work for at least another 6 months and is currently having physio 3 days a week.

“The month of November saw two very successful arrests, both on elephant poachers and both in Ugalla GR(Western Tanzania). Ugalla has always been a hotspot for elephant poachers and in 2006 17 elephant were poached that we are aware of. In early November, following fresh poachers’ tracks from the Ugalla River (they had poached a hippo) up into the Miombo, a poachers camp was sighted and a late night ambush planned. The ambush resulted in the arrest of 2 poachers, one a well known elephant poacher from the area. They had 2 rifles with them. On further investigation a pair of tusks, an elephant ear and tail were discovered in the camp. The same team in mid November again cut tracks of poachers, this time in the far SW corner of the Ugalla GR, which resulted in the arrest of another 2 poachers, both notorious elephant poachers with 5 tusks, 5 tails an AK with 4 magazines and 280 rounds. These guys meant serious business. On both occasions the poachers were linked to a large UN run refugee camp in the vicinity of the reserve. This has been a problem that we have been concerned about for some time but over which we have no say or control. A very sensitive issue up here.

“The end of 2006 saw the arrest and conviction of 2174 poachers and the confiscation of 125 firearms through joint FCF and Wildlife Division patrols.

“November right through to the end of February saw the short rains arrive and overstay the expected period. And now the long rains have started and reports of floods, washed away road etc are again daily news over the HF radio. All the reserves that we work in across the country have experienced flooding and limited access by vehicle, (with) the only efficient form of patrol being by foot, bicycle or canoe. All forms of poaching are rife (hardwood, fishing, bushmeat and elephant) as the teams battle to cover the vast distances. Fortunately, in the Moyowosi GR (far Western Tanzania), we have a microlight permanently based – a new project that we have been working on with the idea of having a microlight in the 5 main areas we cover. The microlight has really proven its worth in this vast, extremely remote area and a number of arrests have resulted. It is also an excellent tool for management and we are able to record some valuable information for the Wildlife Division officials. It was through the use of the microlight that 7 poached elephant were located in the first week of February in the Uvinza area which borders onto the western boundary of the Moyowosi GR. In a follow-up to the sightings, two arrests have been made and a G3 confiscated. The area were the poached elephant were located was surrounded by flood waters and without the microlight it would have been weeks before a patrol may have discovered them. As it was it took the two teams assigned to the operation 2 days to wade and paddle to the area.

“Even though the rain has posed many logistical headaches it has been most welcome, raising the levels of the swamps in particular the Moyowosi swamp. The Moyowosi swamp is a Ramsar site and is home to very healthy populations of Sitatunga, Buffalo and Shoebill Stork.

“Timber poaching continues, even with a total ban in place on Mninga (African Teak) . Every week sees the arrest of timber poachers and the freshly sawn planks confiscated. In the last 24 hours 2 major busts have been made, one involving 436 planks and another involving 680 planks. On both occasions, the planks had been carried out of the protected areas by bicycle and then stockpiled close to the road ready to be collected by truck.

“The illegal harvesting of hardwoods is devastating, with most of the valuable species only being found in the protected areas now. These populations are now under threat. We are looking at other ways of tackling the problem and are in the process of setting up 2 large tree nurseries as well as employing community field officers to work more closely with the villages. We are putting a lot of focus on community uplift schemes, where the villagers can have an alternative to poaching as a form of earning a living. We however have 140 villages surrounding the areas in which we work so one step at a time. We are trying to partner with other organizations and it seems like we may have some success with this.”

United States – Badlands National Park Paleontological Theft Investigation

On the morning of March 18, ranger Bryan Adams checked a vehicle that was parked near a dry streambed along Highway 240 just west of the Saddle Pass trailhead. Adams looked inside it and saw a fossil book that is commonly sold at the park visitor center. Knowing that the riverbed is a frequent target of fossil collectors, Adams began hiking up the bed, searching for the vehicle’s occupants, later identified as Evan Gulstine and Michael Bylsma, both 19. Adams soon came upon the two men, who were working the streambed with a rock hammer. They would periodically stop their work and use the hammer to break open rocks collected from the area, then toss the pieces down. After watching them for several minutes, Adams approached the men. When they saw him coming, the man with the hammer attempted to hide it. Adams searched their persons and backpacks and recovered 30 to 40 fossil fragments and a GPS unit that Bylsma and Gulstine were using to plot their collection points. Additional fossils were found in the vehicle, including two large blocks of sedimentary rock containing numerous fossil fragments. It had been on the rear passenger floor, covered by a jacket. Another 10 to 15 fossil specimens were found in the vehicle’s center console. All the fossils and tools were seized as evidence. Rangers have been working with park resource management specialists to determine a cost value for the seized fossils and to recover the data collection points from the GPS unit. Criminal charges have been filed. [Source: *National Park Service Morning Report*, United States]

SPECIES MANAGEMENT

Democratic Republic of Congo – Virunga National Park Rare Gorilla Birth Recorded

Conservationists have announced the birth of a rare mountain gorilla in eastern Congo, where rebels have been accused of killing and eating the endangered animals. The tiny gorilla, named Ndeze, was born in February in Congo's Virunga National Park, home to some of the world's last 700 mountain gorillas, said Samantha Newport of the conservation support group WildlifeDirect "It's incredibly positive. These gorillas have managed to survive a 10-year civil war," she said, adding that it was "an absolute miracle and testament to the work of the rangers, who worked throughout the war without receiving a salary, and to conservationists from all over the world." Local park ranger Paulin Ngobobo met with rebel officials in late January and brokered a verbal agreement to stop the killings, Newport said. Ndeze is the 12th member of a gorilla family living in a sector of the park called Mikeno that is home to about 80 gorillas, though a precise census has been impossible to carry out because of ongoing insecurity. It was not known whether Ndeze was male or female, as it would be difficult to visually determine the baby's sex for several months, Newport said. About 380 mountain gorillas live in Virunga Volcanoes Conservation Area, which is shared by Congo and neighboring Rwanda and Uganda. The other 320 of the gorillas live in Uganda's Bwindi Impenetrable Forest. Despite the constant threat of poaching and war, the population in Mikeno is estimated to have risen by about 14 percent, Newport said. Some 97 rangers working in Virunga park alone have been killed over the last decade by armed groups and poachers. 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 last year, mostly for food. Only 900 hippos are left, a huge drop from the 22,000 reported there in 1998. [Source: *Associated Press*, via Roger Cole, CMA]

Sumatra – Bukit Barisan National Park Elusive Endangered Rabbit Photographed

A very rare rabbit has been captured on film by a camera trap in the rain forests of Indonesia, according to researchers from the Wildlife Conservation Society. The Sumatran striped rabbit – a little over a foot in length with brown stripes – is so rare that recent photos taken in Bukit Barisan National Park are only the third ever recorded. The first photo dates back to 1998 in Kerinci Seblat National Park, and the second was taken in Bukit Barisan National Park in 2000. Before that, the last confirmed sighting by scientists was in 1972. The animal is currently listed as ‘critically endangered’ by the World Conservation Union (IUCN). “This rabbit is so poorly known that any proof of its continued existence at all is great news and confirms the conservation importance of Sumatra’s forests,” said Colin Poole, Director of the Wildlife Conservation Society’s Asia Program. The rabbit is only known to exist from forests along the mountainous spine of Sumatra, and was thought to be the only representative of its genus. In 1999, however, researchers discovered another striped rabbit in the Annamite Mountains that straddle Lao PDR and Vietnam. Although both species seem similar in appearance, genetic samples revealed that the Sumatran and Annamite striped rabbits are closely related but separate species from one another. According to the findings, both species have been diverging for approximately 8 million years. Researchers also report that no colored eggs or baskets were found at the study site. [Source: *Live Science* web site]

PARKS AND PROTECTED AREAS

Tanzania – Ruaha National Park Ruaha NP To Be Largest Park In Africa

The Tanzanian cabinet has endorsed a proposal to extend Ruaha National Park from the current 10,300 square kilometers to 20,500 square kilometers to make it the largest national park in Africa. The Minister for Natural Resources and Tourism, Professor Jumanne Maghembe, revealed the endorsement in Dar es Salaam last week when he met French Senators on the France-Indian Ocean Friendship Group. The senators visited the ministry to among other things know the efforts being undertaken by the ministry to promote tourism in the country. “The cabinet endorsed the proposal for the expansion of Ruaha National Park last week and we are now waiting to take it to the next parliamentary session for approval”, he confirmed. The minister said that the next step after approval by the parliament would be to relocate people living in the areas where the national park will be extended. He did not mention villages that would be affected with the exercise and when the relocation would take place. Professor Maghembe said that the park has 2000 kilometers of wetland and that the government was planning to modernize infrastructure in the whole park. However, he did not mention the cost as he said that it would be covered in the next budget. The new facility would cover Ruaha itself, Ihefu wetland and Usangu forestry. The park is located in Iringa and Mbeya regions. [Source: *Tanzania Standard News*, Tanzania]

Iceland – Vatnajökull National Park New Park Will Be Largest In Europe

Before the parliament in Iceland ended its session in March, members agreed to found a national park at Vatnajökull glacier, which will be the largest national park in Europe. All political parties agreed on founding the park, which will be called Vatnajökulsthjóðgardur, or Vatnajökull National Park, and is scheduled to open next summer. The park will cover an eighth of Iceland’s surface and include the current Skaftafell National Park and Jökulsárgljúfur National Park. [Source: *Iceland Review*, Iceland]

EDUCATION AND INTERPRETATION

United States – Golden Gate National Recreation Area New Game Teaches Students About Purpose Of National Park Service

At Golden Gate National Recreation Area in California, park rangers Roxi Farwell and Trini Jackson Kvale have developed a “mission quilt” game that teachers employ to teach students about the mission of the U.S. National Park Service. Variations of the game can be used with park partners to compare missions of each organization and find shared goals. An on-line version of the “mission quilt” can be found at: <http://www.nps.gov/goga/forteachers/onlinegames.htm> . The quilt focuses on the resources of Golden Gate National Recreation Area, but the user doesn't have to know the park in order to play the game. Colored arrows on the quilt pieces and the “clues” box help players build the quilt. Further on in the game, players learn more about each quilt piece and the related park resources. The quilt pieces provide an interesting mix of information on natural resources, cultural history, safety, and volunteers. [Source: Deanne Adams, Vice-President, IRF]

NEWS ABOUT RANGERS

United States – Padre Island National Seashore Biological Technician Killed In Accident

Marina Giggleman, a biological technician with the Division of Sea Turtle Science and Recovery, died in an all-terrain vehicle accident in the park on the afternoon of April 3. Marina was beginning her second season with the Kemp's Ridley turtle recovery project. Marina was a vibrant and committed employee. She loved Padre Island National Seashore, the ocean, and the work that she performed for the park's sea turtle recovery program. Marina patrolled North Padre Island each day, searching for nesting Kemp's Ridley sea turtles, protecting them, their eggs, and hatchlings from threats. Marina was a remarkable and brilliant woman who loved being part of the sea turtle science and recovery team. The staff will miss her very much. Messages of condolences can be sent to the family at the following address: Mr. Craig Giggleman, 8309 Dawson Court, Corpus Christi, Texas, 78414, USA. The funeral will be held on April 7. A memorial service will be held at Padre Island National Seashore at 10 a.m. on Wednesday, April 18. [Source: *National Park Service Morning Report*, United States]

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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 or Bill_Halainen@nps.gov .

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