



## **GUARDAPARQUE**

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**Guardaparque** is a bi-weekly publication prepared and issued by the International Ranger Federation (IRF), an organization of 60 non-governmental and governmental ranger organisations 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.

If you have a submission for **Guardaparque**, please send it to the editor, Bill Halainen, at [Bill\\_Halainen@nps.gov](mailto:Bill_Halainen@nps.gov).

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

#### **United States – Protected Areas In California Catastrophic Fires Burn Thousands Of Acres**

As most of you have heard, southern California was devastated last week by a number of major wildfires pushed by a very strong seasonal wind called the “Santa Ana.” The situation was made worse by the tremendous increase in construction of homes in and near forests and by drought and extremely dry conditions related to global warming (see the last article in this edition). The following information was taken from a number of news sources. Although these are just statistics, they give a good idea of the scope of the catastrophe:

- As of last Sunday morning, the several dozen fires had burned a total of 516,356 acres or 208,962 ha.
- According to the California Office of Emergency Services, the fires destroyed 2,767 structures. Of these, 2,013 were homes.
- More than 15,235 firefighters were engaged in suppression operations and 1,551 fire engines were utilized.
- More than a half million people were evacuated.

The full natural resource impacts have not yet been determined, but are believed to be extensive. Debates have already begun on how to change fire policies to assure fires such as these do not occur again.

## **Republic of South Africa – Tsitsikamma National Park Fisherman Invade Protected Area**

*The current issue of Cleft Stick, the newsletter of the Game Rangers' Association of Africa, contains this story:*

Seventy armed fishermen recently forced their way into the Tsitsikamma National Park and spent a day fishing illegally in the country's oldest marine protected area, SA National Parks has confirmed. The incursion – news of which has only now emerged – follows the environment department's proposal in April that the Tsitsikamma protected area be partly de-proclaimed to allow line fishing. An outcry from the marine science community followed because in a 2006 study by the World Wide Fund for Nature S.A. found that increased rather than reduced protection for marine protected areas would increase economic opportunities for impoverished local communities.

A group of four scientists from the Rhodes department of ichthyology and the S.A. Institute for Aquatic Biology in Grahamstown argued further that the widely accepted crisis facing the country's line fish stocks was another reason the plan should be rejected.

Environment Minister Marthinus van Schalkwyk has been considering the proposal. SANParks spokesman Wanda Mkutshulwa said the park management had been contacted by the Tsitsikamma Fishing Forum, who said they would be “staging a protest, in the park, because of the slowness of the access application process”. The forum was told the action would be illegal, she said, but their members arrived the next day carrying rods and knives and some firearms. For the safety of our staff and tourists, and the children in the (protestors') group we thought it was best to avoid a violent confrontation. The group was allowed to fish under the supervision of rangers. Asked why management had not sought police help to keep the group from getting into the park, Mkutshulwa said an “executive decision” had been taken, “in the spirit of cooperation”, against this. She said the decision to not try to prevent the group from fishing had been approved by SANParks' executive. The environment department had not been consulted as there had been no time, she said. Mkutshulwa said it had been made clear to the fishermen that their entry should not be viewed as a precedent for further entries. If this happened, they would be “dealt with the same as any other poachers”.

## **SPECIES MANAGEMENT**

### **Ecuador – Galapagos National Park Invasive Plants Found On Isabela Island**

*ScienceDaily*, a web publication that posts “the latest research news,” ran a story on October 19th on problems with invasive plants in the Galapagos:

Charles Darwin Foundation (CDF) botanists have published a list of all the introduced plants growing in Puerto Villamil, Isabela Island, the third largest town in Galapagos. They recorded 261 species, 39 of which were found growing wild. Despite 95% of the archipelago falling under Galapagos National Park, invasive plants spreading from the inhabited areas are having large impacts on the native flora and fauna. Five species were identified as potentially serious weeds that should be completely eradicated from the island, including the ‘lead tree’ (*Leucaena leucecephala*), regarded as one of the worst tropical weeds.

‘By identifying invaders before they become widespread, and investing in their eradication or control we can protect this World Heritage site from their impacts,’ said a CDF botanist. ‘Early detection must go hand in hand with preventing the arrival of more non-native plants into Galapagos.’ Staff at the Charles Darwin Research Station are working with the Galapagos National Park and SESA (Ecuadorian Agricultural Health Service) to prevent importation of plants from mainland Ecuador. This work was accomplished with the support of Project ‘Control of Invasive Species in the Galapagos Archipelago,’ a donation from the Global Environment Facility (GEF) to the Ecuadorian Government, represented by the Ministry of Environment.

### **Indonesia – Tanjung Puting National Park Orangutan Protection Improving**

England's *Telegraph* web site (<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/>) carried a report last Monday about protection of Orang-utans in Borneo, written by Ian Wood. Here are some excerpts:

Despite the pressures on Indonesian rain forests, there is still hope for the long-term survival of the Orang-utan in parts of Borneo. Tanjung Puting National Park in Kalimantan covers 416,000 hectares, which is roughly the size of Cornwall. As well as over 4000 Orang-utans, this bio-diversity hotspot is home to 30 other mammal species, 260 types of bird and 17 different reptiles. There is now no illegal logging taking place in the park and the network of guard posts continues to grow. Recently I visited a new one on the Buluh Besar, a remote river in the south of the park. 'This new guard post will protect a large area of the park that could otherwise be exposed to illegal activities,' said Ashley Leiman (OBE), director of the Orang-utan Foundation. Anyone heading up this river is stopped, to check if they have permission to be there. The guard posts work so well because Indonesians have a culture of non-confrontation and respect for each other. Would-be illegal loggers simply turn back, which is so much easier evicting them after they have set up in the forest. They are also cheap to run by western standards. Four guard posts funded by the Orang-utan Foundation cost £800 per month and provide 11 local jobs.

The author also visited an area of the park devastated by mining and a town where an "inspiring education project" teach children how to appreciate and protect nature. The full article can be read at <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/earth/main.jhtml?xml=/earth/2007/10/22/eaforest222.xml> .

### **United States – Yellowstone National Park Bison Population Rebounds In Park**

The *Associated Press* in the United States recently posted an article on the recovery of the bison herd within Yellowstone National Park:

The park's bison herd has bounced back to near-record levels following the slaughter of more than 1,000 animals two winters ago to guard against the spread of a contagious disease called brucellosis. An estimated 4,700 bison now roam the park, up from 3,600 last year. They make up the largest bison herd in the world.

During the winter of 2005-2006, after the population hit a record 4,900 animals, more than 1,000 bison migrated outside the park in search of food. They were captured and killed to prevent the spread of brucellosis, which can cause female bison and cattle to abort their calves and is considered endemic in the Yellowstone herd. Following a public outcry and congressional hearing over the slaughter, only two bison were killed last winter. Park administrators and the Montana Department of Livestock instead concentrated on moving migrant animals back into the park, to keep them from interacting with cattle. Whether the same dilemma will be faced with this year's larger population remains to be seen, as the brucellosis issue goes beyond population levels and is likely to hang over the Yellowstone herd until the disease can be eradicated. Other large animals, including elk, also carry brucellosis.

## **PARKS AND PROTECTED AREAS**

### **Canada – Ukkusiksalik National Park Land Exchange Needed To Complete New Park Now Underway**

The Canadian Broadcasting Company is reporting that significant headway is being made toward completion of this big new park. It is in Nunavut, the country's northernmost territory:

Nunavut's Ukkusiksalik National Park is one step closer to completion, as the federal government prepares to swap some land with the area's Inuit association. The proposed park, which was

officially designated in 2003 by then Prime Minister Jean Chrétien, is just south of Repulse Bay in the Wager Bay area, on some Inuit-owned land. As a result, the park cannot proceed unless there's a land exchange between the Kivalliq Inuit Association and the federal government.

But Michael Nadler, Nunavut's regional director general with the Indian and Northern Affairs Department, told CBC News that it's well on its way to swapping some land with the association. "Two parcels of land have been identified by the Kivalliq Inuit Association: one near the Kikavik deposit northwest of Baker Lake, and another north of Repulse Bay," Nadler said Wednesday.

The two parcels of land were largely selected for their mineral wealth and economic development potential, he said. The area to become a national park within the next two years, Nadler added. First identified as a park in 1978, the 22,000-square-kilometre Ukkusiksalik National Park represents the Central Tundra natural ecosystem. At the heart of the park will be Wager Bay, a 100-kilometre inland sea that extends west from Hudson Bay. The site is home to polar bears, caribou, foxes, wolves, and 125 bird species. Once it's completed, the park will be Nunavut's fourth national park, after Auyuittuq, Quttinirpaaq and Sirmilik national parks.

### **Sri Lanka – Yala National Park Rebels Overrun Park**

On October 15th, *Agence France-Presse*, the French news service, reported that Tamil Tiger rebels overran a military post inside "Sri Lanka's most popular wildlife sanctuary." Here's a summary:

The defence ministry said that the fighting – which took place both in the wildlife park in the southeast and in separate clashes in the island's north – had left 38 rebel fighters and government soldiers dead.

Military officials said Tiger guerrillas killed seven soldiers in an attack inside Yala National Park, an area known for its leopards, elephants and migratory birds. Six of the soldiers died in an overnight attack on an army outpost, and the seventh trooper was killed and three more wounded in a mine attack as additional troops poured into the area. According to the government, the rebels were chased away. The clashes came a day before the authorities were due to open the park for the high tourist season, which runs till mid-January. Western diplomats said they were worried about violence inside the sanctuary, particularly because many countries had just eased travel warnings for their nationals and suggested the island was a safe holiday destination. "We are closely monitoring the situation," a Western diplomat said, adding that there were no tourists inside the park, situated in the southeast and far away from defined frontlines.

The pro-rebel Tamilnet.com website said Tiger fighters overran what they described as an army 'mini-camp' and later torched its facilities. The guerrillas have carried out several attacks against security forces and wildlife employees, and three of the five zones of the 1,000-square-kilometre (386-square-mile) Yala National Park have remained shut for years due to Tiger attacks. The Tamil Tigers have been fighting since 1972 for autonomy in the island's north and east in a conflict that has killed tens of thousands.

## **GLOBAL CLIMATE CHANGE**

### **United States – Parks, Forests And Public Lands Warming Climate Fuels Mega-Fires**

On October 21st, the same day that the huge fires broke out in California, the U.S. TV show "60 Minutes" ran an episode entitled "Warming Climate Fuels Mega-Fires." Here are some excerpts; the link for the full text and the video appears at the end:

Every year you can count on forest fires in the West like hurricanes in the East, but recently there has been an enormous change in Western fires. In truth, we've never seen anything like them in

recorded history. It appears we're living in a new age of mega-fires -- forest infernos ten times bigger than the fires we're used to seeing.

According to firefighter Tom Boatner, 'a fire of this size and this intensity in this country would have been extremely rare 15 or 20 years ago, they're commonplace these days. Ten years ago, if you had a 100,000 acre fire, you were talking about a huge fire. And if we had one or two of those a year, that was probably unusual. Now we talk about 200,000 acre fires like it's just another day at the office. It's been a huge change...we got records going back to 1960 of the acres burned in America. So, that's 47 fire seasons. Seven of the 10 busiest fire seasons have been since 1999.

The reasons for this change include the warmest few decades in a thousand years, longer fire seasons (due to rapid and early melting of mountain snow), and drying of fuels that would normally have stayed moist for longer periods of time. According to researchers, "climate change – global warming – has increased temperatures in the West about one degree and that has caused four times more fires." For more information, go to, <http://www.cbsnews.com/stories/2007/10/18/60minutes/main3380176.shtml>.

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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 [Bill\\_Halainen@nps.gov](mailto:Bill_Halainen@nps.gov) .