



GUARDAPARQUE

January 13, 2008

Volume 2

Number 1

Guardaparque is a bi-weekly publication prepared and issued by the International Ranger Federation (IRF), an organisation of non-governmental and governmental ranger organisations from around the world. **Guardaparque** carries reports on emergency service and law enforcement incidents, on protection of parks and the natural and cultural resources within them, on programs to educate visitors and communities on the values of parks and protected areas, and 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

EMERGENCY SERVICES AND LAW ENFORCEMENT

South Africa – Kruger National Park Rangers Conduct “Operation Sledgehammer”

Rangers and officers at Kruger National Park (KNP), where five visitors were killed in an accident late last year (see the last issue), conducted a major campaign to uphold park rules and regulations during the holiday season.

Operation Sledgehammer was conducted over the month of December by KNP Protection Services, KNP Ranger Corps and the South African Police Service (SAPS). Roadblocks were established at various strategic places in the park to check visitors and find those who were guilty of violations such as illegally driving under the influence of alcohol, driving around after gate hours, entering the park without paying, failure to have a driver's license, operation of vehicles in bad condition, possession of stolen vehicles, and similar offences. They were also focusing on enforcing speed limits, and, according to the SAN Park web site, would “show no mercy” to anyone driving too fast.

The SAN Park website also said that people caught littering and feeding animals would be “fined heavily” during the operation: “Littering is not only ugly but can injure or poison wild animals if they ingest foreign objects made of plastic, glass or tin. KNP officials have also noticed an increased tendency of feeding animals in camps, through camp fences and at picnic sites. Animals that are fed start to associate humans as a source of food and can become dangerous as a result of this.”

Noise was another concern. KNP law enforcement officers and camp officials paid particular attention to people making excessive noise, whether from their vehicles' sound systems or other sources.

Sri Lanka – Maduru Oya National Park Charges Against Honey Collectors Dropped

The following story, taken from Australia's *Scoop Independent News*, illustrates the challenges associated with moving indigenous people off of their lands to create parks:

Charges against four Wanniyala-Aetto men, arrested in Sri Lanka in August for collecting honey on their own land, have been dropped. The four men were collecting honey for presentation at the Tooth Temple in the town of Kandy during Sri Lanka's annual Esala Perahera, the country's major Buddhist festival. Presentation of honey is central to the Wanniyala-Aetto's participation in the festival, and they believe hunger, disease and other disasters will occur if they do not comply with this yearly ritual. The Wanniyala-Aetto people, also known as 'Veddah,' were moved from their last forest refuge in 1983 when the Sri Lankan government designated it as the Maduru Oya National Park. They were barred from the forest and banned from hunting and gathering. Crowded together on small plots of land outside the park, many find it difficult to feed their families. Sri Lanka's environment minister, Champika Ranawaka, is reported in the *Sri Lankan Sunday Times* as saying that the Wanniyala-Aetto have 'certain rights', as the Maduru Oya National Park 'had been their traditional homeland'.

New Zealand – Aoraki-Mt Cook National Park Two Climbers Die In Separate Mountain Accidents

The New Zealand Herald reported last week on the second of two recent fatal climbing accidents in Aoraki-Mt. Cook National Park. A climber was found dead in early January less than a week after experienced Wanaka mountain guide Anton Wopereis was killed near the top of the mountain.

The body of the man, aged about 60, was recovered from a steep ravine south of Aoraki-Mt Cook. A visitor to the park spotted the body in a ravine and then summoned assistance from the Rescue Coordination Centre. The recovery was assisted by Department of Conservation staff and police.

The dead climber was about a third of the way down a snow and rock face. An investigation was underway into the cause of the accident.

United States – Assateague Island National Seashore Technology Used To In Illegal Fishing Case

The following was taken from the U.S. National Park Service's daily Morning Report and is included in this edition because it shows an interesting new development in employing technology to make a case in a fishing violation.

Ranger Dave Rapp prepared for a fishing compliance patrol on December 10th by first checking the activity on a popular internet discussion board used by many anglers visiting the park. He noticed one entry in which the author wrote that she had caught 22-inch and 24-inch stripers (rockfish) on Assateague Island, a violation, as Maryland state law establishes a minimum length of 28 inches for this species. The author also wrote that she was "keeping this baby for dinner!" Included in the entry was a photograph showing her holding up the fish.

Rapp noted that the entry was only a few minutes old and that the photograph appeared to have been taken inside of the park. He located, recognised, and contacted the woman, who was still on the beach within the park. She produced a 21-inch striper, and reported that she'd utilized a Wi-Fi internet connection to post her entry from the park. A violation notice was issued for the undersized fish.

SPECIES MANAGEMENT

Uganda – Kabwoya Wildlife Reserve/ Murchison Falls National Park Hartebeests And Waterbucks Return To Park

The 10 December issue of *East African Business Week* (Kampala) reports on one of those wildlife restoration successes that heartens us all in the face of so much bad news in other corners of the natural world.

After 45 years since their disappearance, Hartebeests and Waterbucks will once again roam the savannah plains of Kabwoya Wildlife Reserve in Albertine Rift Valley escarpment in Western Uganda. This will be made possible by an ongoing conservation project supported by the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) in conjunction with Lake Albert Safaris and Uganda Wildlife Authority (UWA), who on 2 December began relocating 20 Jackson's Hartebeests and 20 Waterbucks from Murchison Falls National Park.

USAID, through its PRIME/West project, seeks to reduce threats to biodiversity in the endangered Albertine Rift eco-region. The effort will improve the management of 100,000 hectares of biological significance, implement various conservation-related policies and agreements, and train over 400 people in conservation.

The Kabwoya-Kaiso Wildlife Management Area is a significant protected zone within the disrupted ecosystems of western Uganda. It comprises a 200 square-kilometre shelf of land between the Albertine Rift escarpment and Lake Albert itself, and is the only ecologically intact area of savannah along the 200 kilometre stretch of Lake Albert shoreline between Tooro-Semliki Wildlife Reserve in the south and Murchison Falls National Park in the north. With its location in the Rift and its proximity to the large Bugoma Forest Reserve, the Kabwoya-Kaiso Wildlife Management Area is of great importance in maintaining corridors for genetic flow in the Albertine Rift.

Additional species will be reintroduced in the future, including the White Rhino, Giant Forest Hog, Zebra, Giraffe and Cheetah. Lake Albert Safaris is managing the reserve through tourism, for the purpose of restoring the wildlife populations, conserving vegetation resources and generating revenues for the benefit of local communities.

Due to expanding human population in western Uganda, these areas are increasingly becoming threatened. Forests are being destroyed and wildlife populations are being intensively hunted for bush meat, especially in the central part of the Albertine Rift along the escarpment areas adjacent to Lake Albert. Through recent and ongoing conservation efforts, a significant number of species have returned to the area, including Uganda Kob, Waterbuck, Oribi, Duiker, Warthog, Leopard, Buffalo, Lion, Black-and-white Colobus monkeys, Chimpanzees and the Olive Baboon.

Thailand – Mae Yom National Park Hundreds Of Golden Teak Trees Deliberately Poisoned

The *Bangkok Post* reports that hundreds of Golden Teak trees have died in Mae Yom National Park. Local villagers believe that they were poisoned to clear the way for a revival of the controversial Kaeng Sua Ten dam project. Forestry officials have retrieved empty cans of herbicide from under the dead trees.

Villagers say at least 700 trees have been poisoned by people wanting to destroy the forest so that the long-shelved dam project could finally go ahead. A large number of teak stumps were also found in the area. Villagers said the trees had been cut and loggers were preparing to haul the logs away. The dead trees were discovered during a recent survey headed by a village leader.

Seng Khwanyuen, village head of Sak Thong village, said he had told local officials several times about the tree poisoning, but no one believed him. He said that in the areas his team surveyed

more than 700 teak trees had died from herbicide poisoning, and that there could be more dead trees in other areas of the park.

A check of the area by the head of the country's National Parks, Wildlife and Plant Conservation Department chief confirmed that the trees were poisoned.

Support for the dam project, originally put forward in 1989, resurfaces every time severe floods and drought hit the central and northern provinces. Some believe the dam could help manage and prevent natural disasters in the area. But the proposal faces stiff resistance from villagers and environmentalists, who fear the dam would flood a large portion of the country's richest and largest remaining Golden Teak forest in the national park.

PARKS AND PROTECTED AREAS

Russia – Aniyuiskii National Park New National Park Created For Russian Tigers

According to the World Wildlife Fund (WWF), as reported by the *Science Daily* web page, endangered northern Amur Tigers have received a boost to their protection through the creation of a new national park in Khabarovsk province, located in the Russian Far East. The Russian Government signed a decree declaring the new Aniyuiskii National Park on December 15th, making it the third established in this region this year.

Tiger habitats in the Russian Far East face extreme pressures from uncontrolled logging, construction and wildfires. More than two-thirds of the new park will include tiger habitat. The park will also serve as an ecological corridor, connecting animals from the Anyui River basin with the rest of the tiger population. The park will become a link in the chain of what's called "the tiger econet," a network of protected areas being created by WWF.

The 429,000 hectare national park is located on the right bank of the Amur River in the Sikhotealin mountains.

United States – California State Parks State Proposes Closure Of 48 Parks For Budget Reasons

Jeff Ohlfs, U.S. National Park Service ranger and also IRF representative from the California State Park Rangers Association (CSPRA), has sent a news article about a proposal to closure a huge number of California state parks.

Last week, Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger proposed the closure of 48 state parks and beaches as part of a drastic budget-cutting plan to fill a \$14.5 billion deficit. Among the 43 out of 278 parks scheduled for closure are Del Norte Coast Redwoods State Park in the state's far northwest corner, Salton Sea State Recreation Area in the southeast, and Will Rogers State Historic Park, which was restored in 2006 at a cost of \$5 million. Popular destinations such as Topanga State Park, Sutter's Fort State Historic Park in Sacramento and Pio Pico State Historic Park in Whittier will also be closed.

The closures would mean the loss of about 6.5 million visitors this year. The park system had 79 million visitors in 2007.

Those slated for closure are the least used, produce the least revenue and are the easiest to secure, the *Los Angeles Times* reported. A two-thirds vote is required for the budget and the proposal is seen as a gambit for local governments and community groups to take over park operations.

NEWS ABOUT RANGERS AND PARK FRIENDS

Kenya – Kenyan National Parks National Honors Fallen Rangers

Augusto Atturo from the Italian Ranger Association has sent along this story from a Kenyan newspaper.

In December, the Kenya Wildlife Service honoured those who have lost their lives preserving wildlife. At a colourful ceremony attended by members of the service and their families, the names were unveiled on a monument as a remembrance of their tireless efforts to protect the wildlife of Kenya.

Every year Kenyans rangers die fighting wildlife crime. This year, three rangers died during an operation to track down poachers. Most of the rangers have lost their lives to bandits and poachers, while others have been attacked by wildlife or drowned while crossing rivers.

The widow of the late Samson Ole Sisina received the 2007 Clark R. Barvin award, which was awarded posthumously after he was killed whilst on duty at Roysambu Ranch.

New Zealand Passing Of Sir Edmund Hillary

As most of you probably already know, noted mountaineer, outdoorsman, philanthropist and humanitarian Sir Edmund Hillary died on January 11th. Tegan Burton, a ranger from Lower Hawkesbury Area in Australia, has forwarded a note from the chair and CEO of Parks Forum* regarding Sir Edmund's support of parks, here is the text of that note:

It is with great sadness that we write to you all to advise you of the passing of our patron, Sir Edmund Hillary.

As the patron of Parks Forum, Sir Edmund lent his outstanding reputation and his powerful voice to our mission as an organisation. His willingness to join us in the establishment of Parks Forum reminded us of the importance of not only what we do, but also the way we do it, with the character and integrity that was a hallmark of all his endeavours...

Sir Edmund's legacy will live on in many ways, including through our own organisation as we move forward with our own work.

* Parks Forum is an "association for park management agencies in Australia and New Zealand" that represents "agencies which have management and stewardship responsibility for the full range of parks across the parks spectrum, from smaller urban parklands and forests, through to larger national parks and protected areas".

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.

