



GUARDAPARQUE

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

India – Kaziranga National Park Poachers Kill Two Rhinos

The *Times of India* reports that poachers last week killed a female rhino and its calf when they strayed out of Kaziranga National Park. Park officials found the dead calf at the nearby Methoni tea estate on Saturday, January 19th; the mother, which had bullet injuries, died on Monday. The poachers had pulled out its horn. A three member team from environment ministry in New Delhi inspected the site on Monday. According to Kaziranga divisional forest officer Bankim Sarma, female rhinos with calves often move out of the park to escape attacks of tigers and in the process become the target of poachers. The *Assam Tribune* adds information on the government's response:

With mounting pressure from several quarters, including conservation groups and the media, the Assam Forest Department now plans to draw up an action plan to curb poaching in and around Kaziranga National Park. It was only on last Saturday that two animals were shot close to the park. While one animal died on the spot, its mother whose horn was hacked off died yesterday. Last year the death toll of rhinos killed by poachers was twenty, much higher than in recent past. A "high-powered" team has accordingly been established to study the situation. Their goals are to identify the reasons for the increase in poaching and determine measures for combating the threats to rhinos. A paper is due by January 30th.

One of the likely recommendations will be to increase "frontline staff" to deal with the poachers. According to the paper, though, this will be a problem because a large number of wardens are engaged in dealing with other problems, such as depredations against elephants. Consideration will be given to increasing the park's staff, since the area has doubled in size since its creation, but that will take a long time to accomplish.

The article concludes with this interesting paragraph: "It has also been stated that increasing availability of arms and ammunitions to criminal elements is contributing to rhinos being targeted in and around the park. Ammunitions recovered from fallen animals confirm that a wide variety of weapons is used by poachers, some of which could have been acquired from extremist outfits."

United States – Western National Parks Investigation Underway Into Major Resource Thefts

The following comes from the U.S. National Park Service's daily *Morning Report*, a summary of incidents occurring around the agency.

On January 25th, federal agents from the U.S. National Park Service, Internal Revenue Service, and Immigration and Customs Enforcement executed numerous search warrants and subpoenas at museums, galleries and residences in the Los Angeles, San Diego, San Francisco and Chicago areas.

These actions are in support of Operation Antiquity, a more than five-year-long investigation by those agencies and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service into looting, importation, sale and tax fraud violations related to historical and cultural items from the U.S. and other countries.

Nearly 500 law enforcement personnel participated in the warrant and subpoena service. The investigation concludes; we'll report on this very big operation in future issues.

Australia – Boonoo Boonoo National Park Marijuana Plants Seized From Plot Within Park

Here's a problem that's becoming common in parks all around the world, the growth of marijuana plants in remote wilderness areas. This report comes from a New South Wales Police Force press release...

Police have seized cannabis plants with an estimated potential street value of more than \$250,000 from Boonoo Boonoo National Park. The police learned of the plants through a tip from a park visitor. They located two crop sites containing 56 plants between 1 and 2.5 metres tall, with an extensive watering system installed. Officers from Glen Innes, Guyra, Uralla, and Tenterfield were involved in the operation. The plants and equipment were seized. The equipment is to be forensically examined.

Ecuador – Galapagos National Park More Than 50 Sea Lions Massacred In Park

A number of articles have appeared this week on this tragic incident, this one from Agence France-Presse.

Ecuadoran authorities are investigating the massacre of 53 sea lions that were found with crushed skulls in the Galapagos Islands, the endangered natural reserve's officials said on Monday. The dead animals were in an advanced stage of decomposition when they were discovered on the island of Pinta, scattered in a 1km (half-mile) radius, said Galapagos National Park official Victor Carrion.

"The sea lions, including 13 pups, died because of a strong blow from someone. It was a massacre whose motives the prosecutor's are yet to clarify," Carrion told AFP. The animals' remains did not appear to have been mutilated, and no cuts were found on their skins or limbs, he said. The authorities found no other killed animals, but they stepped up patrols of the islands.

The Galapagos Islands are 1,000 kilometres (620 miles) off the coast of Ecuador in the Pacific Ocean. UNESCO placed the islands on its list of endangered world heritage sites last year, saying they were threatened by invasive species, growing tourism and immigration.

Kenya – Masai Mara National Park Poaching Threatens Area Due To National Crisis

Thanks to Augusto Atturo from the Italian Ranger Association, who spotted this article and sent it along...

Increased poaching in the wake of the collapse of tourism following Kenya's post election crisis is threatening the Masai Mara, conservationists say. The wildlife reserve was recently voted the seventh wonder of the world and is home to numerous mammals including leopards, lions, buffalo, giraffe and elephants.

The riots following Kenya's recent elections have resulted in a 90 per cent reduction in visitor numbers to parks and reserves. The damage this has caused to the local economy has led to an increase in poaching wildlife for the bush meat trade, causing irreparable damage to the ecosystem, the organization claims.

Masai Mara is particularly vulnerable, last year nearly 500 wire snares were collected, 15 animals rescued and 46 animals were found either dead in snares or recently butchered.

The Masai Mara Triangle is managed by the Mara Conservancy Trust (MCT) and completely financed by the entrance fees of the 70,000 visitors it attracts each year. Commenting on the recent tourism loss, MCT chief executive Brian Heath said "Wildlife security is going to be hit hard. We expect a sharp increase in poaching. The Mara's wildlife not only attracts thousands of tourists but poachers too, primarily for bush meat."

The Wildlife Trust is calling for a consistent source of income to protect the reserve and has urged people to donate money to save African wildlife. "Africa's parks cannot survive on tourism revenues alone, especially during times of political instability," said Wildlife Direct chairman Dr Richard Leakey. "We have a responsibility to protect this extraordinary wilderness, not just for Kenyans, but on behalf of the entire world. If we do nothing, we are in danger of losing it forever."

SPECIES MANAGEMENT

Vietnam – Hoang Lien National Park Tree Species Migrating Up Mountain Due To Global Warming

This report comes from Vietnam Bridge, a web site with news and current affairs info from that nation.

Reacting to global warming, trees of the Hoang Lien Son mountain range within Hoang Lien National Park are moving higher to survive. According to a survey conducted from 2003 to 2007, some indigenous species of plants are moving higher and higher, including Van Sam Hoang Lien pine tree, which exists only on Hoang Lien Son and is named in the World Red Book. This kind of tree used to grow on an altitude of 2,200 – 2,400 metres, but now has moved up to 2,400 – 2,700 metres. Other prevalent trees of Hoang Lien Son like Thich Xi Pan and Thich Sa Pa that formerly grew at 1,700 meters are also moving higher.

Nguyen Huu Hanh, deputy director of the park, said that this phenomenon is clearly associated with shifting weather patterns and climate change, but that the park can't afford to research this matter in depth. Temperature increases force some species of trees which live in low temperatures to move higher. According to environmentalists, if the temperature increases too quickly, many trees and plants will be lost because they won't be able to adapt in time.

According to the Hydrometeorology Forecast Centre of Lao Cai Province, Vietnam's mountains are getting warmer. The patterns of cold and hot seasons are also changing, with the hot season getting longer. This is a critical point for the park, a valuable biosphere boasting nearly 2,850 floral species, many of which are threatened and close to extinction.

United States – Rocky Mountain National Park Park Begins Major Elk Study

The January 19th edition of *Rocky Mountain News*, a paper based in Denver, Colorado, has a good story about an on-going effort to manage an over abundance of elk at Rocky Mountain National Park, located just north of that city. The park has begun a major research project, where for the first time, wildlife veterinarians will test the effectiveness of a fertility control agent as well as the accuracy of a new live-animal test for chronic wasting disease (CWD) in elk with the study being watched by wildlife biologists around the country.

In all, researchers will target 120 elk in Rocky Mountain National Park. Early indications are that both the birth control drug, called GonaCon, and the live CWD test are working. But the testing so far has been on captive animals. Researchers won't be satisfied until they see the agents work in the wild. Rocky Mountain National Park, as it turned out, proved to be an ideal testing ground because, parallel to this research, park managers are embarking on a program to reduce its elk population.

The increased elk herd, due in part to hunting not being allowed inside the national park and the decline of predators has damaged the park's ecology. The elk are over browsing aspen and willow needed to support healthy stream systems and beaver habitat. The parks plan to trim the herd calls for sharpshooters, under National Park Service supervision, to cull as many as 200 elk per year for up to 20 years to bring the elk herd under control. Because the 120 elk in the birth control and CWD study will eventually be killed, the research fits into the park's broader plan to cut elk numbers.

PARKS AND PROTECTED AREAS

United States – Haleakala National Park Park Acquires One Of Largest Undeveloped Tracts On Island Of Maui

One of Maui's largest undeveloped tracts of land that has been under private ownership for more than a century, is now part of Haleakala National Park thanks to Hawaii's congressional delegation, the James Campbell Company and The Conservation Fund. The acquisition expands the park by more than 4,100 acres (1659 ha), extending from the rim of Haleakala crater at 6,000 feet (1,830 m) elevation to the south coast of Kaupo. The land, known as Nu'u Ranch, provides critical habitat for rare birds and animals and includes several significant Hawaiian cultural sites.

Hawaii's congressional delegation, led by Senator Dan Inouye, secured \$US 3.3 million in federal funds to acquire the property. The James Campbell Company's commitment to the transfer was made possible by bridge financing support from The Conservation Fund, a non-profit, environmental group dedicated to protecting America's land and water legacy for current and future generations. Since it's founding in 1985, the fund has helped its partners safeguard wildlife habitat, working landscapes, community greenspace, and historic sites totalling nearly 6 million acres (2.8 million ha).

Significant portions of the property contain remnants of the native koa forest ecosystem that once dominated the island, providing critical habitat for rare native bird species. Lower elevations have intact, dry wiliwili forests, habitat for the endangered Blackburn's sphinx moth and Hawaiian hoary bat. The newly protected lands also have cultural sites, including heiau or ancient Hawaiian temples.

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.