



GUARDAPARQUE

May, 2009

Volume 3

Number 5

Guardaparque is a publication prepared monthly 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 editor Bill Halainen (Bill_Halainen@nps.gov). Summaries in Spanish for each article were prepared by Rick Smith (rsmith0921@earthlink.net).

Emergency Services And Law Enforcement

India – Keibul Lamjao National Park Militants Kill Five, Probably More, Within Park

Summary: Militants have killed at least five people inside the park in an act of revenge against the government. It's likely that the number will be much higher.

Resumen: Algunos militantes han matado a por lo menos cinco personas dentro del parque en un acta de venganza en contra del gobierno. Es muy probable que el número de matados se aumente.

The May 12th edition of the Economic Times reports this tragic news:

In a gruesome attack, militants have killed five non-Manipuris inside the Keibul Lamjao National Park in the state's Bishenpur district, about 14 kilometres south of the state capital of Imphal. Police sources said that five bodies were recovered last Monday night, that a search operation was underway, and that the casualty was likely to mount up. These killings may be revenge killings by the militants to avenge the reverses suffered by them during the recent 'Operation Summer Storm' led by the army and police. Sources added that at least nine people may have fallen victim. According to authorities, "only one body out of the five bore bullet marks. The rest might have been hacked to death." Locals saw about a dozen people being blindfolded by the militants. At least four of the victims were from Uttar Pradesh and one from Silchar in Assam. Militants in Manipur, in the past one year have targeted non-Manipuris on several occasions.

Source: economictimes.indiatimes.com/News/PoliticsNation/

Democratic Republic of Congo – Virunga National Park Baby Gorilla Rescued From Suspected Animal Traffickers

Summary: Undercover officers in the Democratic Republic of Congo have rescued a baby gorilla from smugglers who were trying to get it out of the country. Game thieves can get up to US \$20,000 for gorillas in the black market.

Resumen: Agentes confidenciales en la República Democrática del Congo han rescatado a un gorila joven de los contrabandistas que lo trataban de llevar fuera del país. Los contrabandistas pueden ganar \$20.000 (US) por un gorila en el mercado negro.

CNN has reported on the rescue of a baby gorilla following an extended undercover operation:

Undercover officers rescued a baby gorilla from suspected animal traffickers in the Democratic Republic of Congo, a national park in the country announced this past Tuesday. The gorilla, thought to be about two years old, was hidden at the bottom of a bag and covered with clothes when Congolese Wildlife Authority officers arrested the suspected trafficker on Sunday, Virunga National Park said. The gorilla, a female, was overheated and dehydrated after six hours in transit. She also had a puncture wound on her right leg, among other injuries, and is malnourished, but is responding to treatment, the park said in a statement. It is not clear if the young gorilla's mother is alive or dead, park spokeswoman Samantha Newport said. "You can assume that a gorilla family was attacked in order for the traffickers to obtain a baby, but it is impossible to know if a whole family was wiped out, just a few individuals, or none at all...In most cases gorillas have to die to get a baby, but we cannot know specifically for this case." The suspect was getting off a plane from the interior of the country, near the gorillas' habitat, the park said.

One person has been charged under the country's law forbidding the destruction of flora and fauna, Newport told CNN. The park did not name the suspect. Gorillas can fetch up to \$20,000 on the black market, the head of Virunga National Park said.

Source: edition.cnn.com/2009/WORLD/africa/04/28/congo.gorilla.rescued/

United States – Glen Canyon National Recreation Area Four Drown And Two Rescued In Boating Accident

Summary: Six people went out onto a lake in a national park during a day when winds were blowing up to 55 mph (90kph) and waves were up to four feet high. Their boat sank. Two were saved, but four drowned.

Resumen: Seis personas salieron en un bote en esta área durante un día cuando soplaban los vientos a una velocidad de 90 kilómetros por hora y las olas llegaban a una altura de más de un metro. El bote se hundió. Dos personas fueron rescatadas pero las otras cuatro se ahogaron.

Seven people have drowned in two incidents in US national parks over the past few weeks. Here's the first of the two incidents:

A rental boat with six people on board swamped and sank in Lake Powell on Saturday, April 25th. Winds were gusting to 55 mph (90kph) at the time and waves on the lake were four-feet high. Nobody in the group was wearing a lifejacket. Two of the six made it to shore and the bodies of two others were found shortly thereafter. Search operations have continued ever since.

On April 27th, the body of the fifth person was recovered from the lake, but efforts to find the sixth and final victim have so far been unsuccessful. Side scan sonar has been employed and searchers have continued looking along the lake's shoreline. The park has been using a remotely operated underwater vehicle (ROV) in the continuing search effort.

Source: home.nps.gov/applications/morningreport/

United States – Grand Canyon National Park Three Men Drown In Colorado River

Summary: Three young men on a hike in the Grand Canyon decided to cool off by going swimming in the Colorado River, which has a strong current and was quite cold at the time. All immediately disappeared. Only one body has been found so far.

Resumen: Tres jóvenes en una caminata en el Gran Cañón se decidieron saltar al río Colorado para refrescarse. En este lugar es muy fuerte la corriente y el agua es muy frío. Los tres se desaparecieron inmediatamente. Los guardaparques han encontrado a solo un cadáver.

This is the second US national park drowning incident:

On May 1st, the park dispatch centre received a call from Phantom Ranch, a location on the Colorado River at the bottom of the canyon, reporting that three people had jumped into the river, then disappeared. Rangers began an aerial search of the river and positioned personnel along the river at two locations below the location. Water temperatures in the swift-flowing Colorado River ranged from approximately 49 to 52 degrees (10°C) at the time. The three young men, ages 16 to 22, were members of a hiking group and had evidently decided to cool off in the river. The body of one of them was found several days later, but the other two are still missing despite a major search effort.

Source: home.nps.gov/applications/morningreport/

United States – Grand Canyon National Park Visitor Injured When Concessioner Mule Falls On Her

Summary: Grand Canyon National Park is famous for its mule rides, which follow the trails down into the canyon and back up again. A mule lost its footing, fell over, and seriously injured the woman who was riding on its back.

Resumen: El parque nacional Gran Cañón es famoso por los descensos hasta el fondo del cañón por mula. En este caso, una de las mulas tropezó, se cayó y la visitante que estaba descendiendo por mula fue seriamente herida.

Mules at the Grand Canyon are legendary for their surefootedness, but very occasionally accidents occur, like this one earlier in May:

On the morning of Tuesday, May 5th, rangers responded to a mule accident on the Bright Angel Trail that involved a 66-year-old woman from California. Park dispatch received a radio call from a mule wrangler reporting that a mule had lost its footing, fallen, and then rolled over the woman. The accident occurred about two-and-a-half miles (4km) below the canyon's rim. The mule and its passenger were part of two concessioner mule strings that were en route to Phantom Ranch for an overnight stay.

Two park paramedics were flown to the accident scene and stabilized the woman before extricating her via helicopter. She was flown to the helicopter base on the South Rim, then to a local hospital. About a dozen people from the park were involved in the rescue operation. They were assisted by concessioner mule wranglers and visitors on the trail.

Source: home.nps.gov/applications/morningreport/

Species Management

Kenya – Nairobi National Park First Cheetah Born In Park In Many Years

Summary: The first cheetah birth in many years has occurred in the park. The reason is thought to be a change in habitat, which has provided much more food for cheetahs and improved their chances for survival.

Resumen: El primer nacimiento de un guepardo en muchos años se registró en el parque. Se opina que un cambio en el hábitat en el parque que ha mejorado la cantidad de comida para los guepardos y por eso incrementado su probabilidad de sobrevivir es el porqué del evento.

A website entitled “Wildlife Extra” is reporting the first cheetah birth in the park in many years. Here’s what they have to say about the reason for this happy event:

After many years of a wet cycle in the weather and in the absence of controlled burns, short grass plain habitat disappeared from the park, together with the gazelles & wildebeest which lived in such areas.

Since the end of 2007 and the beginning of controlled burning in the park, together with the ongoing extended dry cycle coupled with a high level of overgrazing, especially in the dispersal area outside the park, there has been an influx of cattle into the park to compete for grazing with the thousands of migratory herbivores which have also taken refuge there, so all excess grazing has been severely reduced. This complete change in circumstances has seen the last of the wildebeest in the ecosystem come back into the park (they calved in the park this year for the first time in living memory), together with hundreds of Grants and Thomsons gazelles, which are ideal food for cheetahs.

Source: wildlifeextra.com/go/news/nairobi-cheetah009.html#cr

Parks And Protected Areas

Uganda – Rwenzori Ramsar Site “Mountains of the Moon” To Receive International Wetlands Protection

Summary: An area of Uganda with some of the last glaciers in Africa, significant wetlands, and endangered species has been set aside as a internationally protected wetlands.

Resumen: Un área de Uganda con algunas de las últimas glaciarias de África, unos humedales significativos y algunas especies en vía de extinción ha sido establecida como un humedal protegido internacional.

Earlier this week, the World Wildlife Federation posted this announcement to its web page:

Part of the Rwenzori Mountains, home to some of the last glaciers in Africa and likely Ptolemy’s ‘Lunis Montae’, received international recognition on Wednesday, May 13, as a protected wetland site under the international Ramsar convention, a major conservation decision that will help protect the region’s vast ecological riches.

The Rwenzori Ramsar Site covers a 99,500 hectares area of the mountain region located in western Uganda and bordering the Democratic Republic of Congo. In the DRC, the mountains are part of Virunga National Park, which is also designated as a Ramsar Site and recognized as a World Heritage Site. The Rwenzori region received Ramsar Site designation primarily for three main reasons: it contains important wetland bogs that support plant and animal life, it contains dozens of endemic threatened and restricted range species, of which many are endangered such as the Rwenzori duiker (*Cephalophus rubidus*), elephants (*Loxodonta africana*), chimpanzees (*Pan troglodytes*), Rwenzori otter shrew (*Micropotamogale ruwenzorii*), and because many of those species play an integral role in maintaining the region’s biological diversity. The Rwenzori Mountains are one of the only three places in Africa with unique high altitude wetlands, including glaciers at the equator, the other two being Mount Kilimanjaro in Tanzania, and Mount Kenya in Kenya. Located in the western arm of the African Rift Valley, the Rwenzori Mountains act as a natural water tower for the Nile River basin.

In 300 AD, the Alexandrine geographer Claudius Ptolemy suggested that the Nile had its source from snow peaks on the Equator, the 'Lunis Montae' or 'Mountains of the Moon'. But the fascination and reverence for the Rwenzori Mountains has continued since Ptolemy's time. In 1888, H. M. Stanley while on expedition at the shores of L. George sighted the snow peaks of Rwenzori. Early mountaineers, most notably the Duke of Abruzzi in 1906, fighting upwards through dense forests of trees and bamboos, discovered a surreal landscape beautiful foliage, surrounded by spectacular lakes and equatorial glaciers flowed down from the snow capped peaks. Since 1906, the Rwenzori Mountains have become a paradise for botanists and mountaineers alike. Research has revealed a wealth of endemic species in the range within a series of remarkable concentric, altitudinal, vegetation zones.

Source: panda.org/wwf_news/?164182/Mountains-of-the-Moon-get-nod-for-international-wetlands-protection

Indonesia – Way Kambas National Park Park Dwellers Reject Eviction

Summary: Hundreds of families living in a park have refused to leave, saying that previous government promises that no park would be created there have not been kept. The government is determined to move them.

Resumen: Centenares de familias que viven dentro del parque han negado a salir, diciendo que el gobierno anterior ha prometido que ningún parque iba a ser creado y que el corriente gobierno no ha cumplido con esta promesa. El gobierno es resuelto en moverlos.

This news story appeared in the Jakarta Post Wednesday 13 May:

Hundreds of families living inside the Way Kambas National Park (TNWK) in East Lampung regency have refused orders from the park management to move, claiming the 6,000 hectare area they have inhabited since 1999 is their birthright. In a show of defiance, they marched in front of the TNWK office on Monday and Tuesday and blockaded the only road leading in and out of the park. "We did this because the government stole our property," protest coordinator Hermanto said Tuesday. "We're mad because our voices have fallen on deaf ears."

The protesters dispersed after hundreds of police officers were deployed to guard park office. The protesters came from Rajabasa Lama Induk village in Labuhan Ratu district and the villages of Rantau Jaya Udik and Sukadana in Sukadana district. Apart from building homes in the 125,000 hectare park, they have also cleared land to grow crops. Hermanto said the three villages had repeatedly urged the government to redraw the park limits.

The park's boundaries are outlined in a 1999 Forestry Ministry Decree. "But we have the map issued by the Dutch colonial administration in 1938 stating that our land is not part of the national park or the protected forest," Hermanto said. TNWK management head John Kenedi said his office would stick by the ministerial decree. He added he had reported the case to the Forestry Ministry's director general of forest protection and natural conservation, Darori, and had been assured the villagers were illegal dwellers. "We'll use it as legal basis to get these people out of the forest," Kenedi said. The planned eviction is backed by the East Lampung administration and Lampung provincial police. "We plan to have all these dwellers out of the TNWK forest by December," he said.

Source: thejakartapost.com/news/2009/05/13/park-dwellers-reject-eviction-cling-antiquated-zoning-map.html

News About Rangers

India – Kaziranga National Park Ranger Assaulted By Legislator

Summary: A ranger in a national park in India who attempted to stop of member of the legislature from illegally fishing there was threatened with an automatic weapon.

Resumen: Un guardaparque en un parque nacional de India que intentó a detener a un miembro de la asamblea que estaba pescando ilegalmente fue amenazado con un arma automática.

Past president Gordon Miller heard through the grapevine that IRF friend DD Boro had been attacked in his park in India, so wrote to him to find out what happened. What follows is his note: "It is true that I had been attacked by our local MLA [member of legislative assembly]. Two local MLA's entered Kaziranga National Park without permission and they started fishing illegally. When I obstructed them, they tried to shoot me with an AK-47, then I jumped on them and took their arms. They threatened me. Until now, they have not been arrested..."

Here's a news story from a local paper with more information:

Unfazed by the cases lodged against him for threatening to kill the chief range officer of the Kaziranga National Park, Independent MLA Jiten Gogoi today claimed he was a 'king' and would hunt animals as royalty has always done so. "I am known as the king of this area and I will behave like a king. Earlier, kings went hunting and I will also hunt animals," Gogoi told a local television channel. "Who are these forest people to complain against me? Are they bigger than me? We don't kill animals nowadays, but I think this time I will hunt inside the park to show them that I am a king," Gogoi told the channel.

Gogoi and another independent MLA, Kushal Deuri, had on Tuesday allegedly entered the park, a world heritage site and home to the endangered one-horned rhino, for fishing, which was prohibited there. When prevented, Gogoi had threatened to kill Chief Range Officer Dharanidhar Boro with his AK-47 and assaulted forest employees. The police claimed that the two MLAs, who earlier belonged to the ULFA, were absconding. Cases have been registered against them under various sections of the IPC, Arms Act and Wildlife Protection Act.

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@contractor/nps.gov.