



THE THIN GREEN LINE

NEWSLETTER OF THE INTERNATIONAL RANGER FEDERATION

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OFFICERS REPORTS

Acting President's Report

Dear IRF Friends:

Thanks to your regional representatives, you will read in this issue of **The Thin Green Line** about ranger gatherings, such as the ranger conference planned for June in Slovakia, the Second European Ranger Seminar to be held in Hungary, and Costa Rica's recent association meeting. IRF continues to be a great catalyst for rangers getting together to share experiences and learn from each other.

Sixth World Ranger Congress

I know many of you are wondering about the next Congress, which has been planned for Bolivia in 2009. We had difficulties with communication when the organiser, Ana Carola Vaca Salazar, moved to a park with no access to personal email and limited phone access. Carola's contract for that job ended in January, so we are in communication again. As you may have read in the news, Bolivia has been hit hard by flooding in the past month and the country is not ready for tourists. The Bolivian national park agency, SERNAP, is working on an assessment of the capacity of the agency and the association to host the Congress. The agency and association both strongly support a Congress and they have done a fair amount of work to date, they have a bilingual web site in development and a contractor ready to start as the congress organiser. We very much want to support Bolivia in hosting a successful Congress, but obviously are concerned about the time that is left for planning and implementing. Once we have received the agency/association assessment, the IEC will make a decision on whether we continue with Bolivia or if we ask for other proposals. We will then let all member associations know the next steps and other information regarding the Sixth World Ranger Congress.

The Ranger Dependants Fund

IRF and the Thin Green Line Foundation (TGLF) are in the final stages of completing a memorandum of understanding (MOU) and protocol for distribution of funds to the families of rangers killed in the line of duty. Once the IRF International Executive Council and the TGLF directors have reviewed and approved these documents, we will forward them to the IUCN for their review with the goal of signing this historic three-party MOU at the Fourth IUCN Congress in Barcelona in October.

Sean Willmore will be in the USA at the end of March, hoping to meet with California Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger and making a presentation at the annual meeting of the California State Park Rangers Association, an IRF member association. He will continue on to Spain, where he was invited to speak at a social/environmental film festival. He will be making payments on behalf of TGLF, IRF and IUCN to families

in Uganda and meeting with officials in the Congo to organize alternative payments, such as building a school for villages that have lost a number of rangers.

We ask all member associations to keep IRF informed when you have a ranger death. Send your report to TGL editor Bill Halainen.

IRF Web Site

The IRF web site had a number of technical challenges in the second half of last year; the host of our web site changed the server and inadvertently lost our access. It took a number of months of emails and experimenting before we had access again. I know a number of you have been frustrated because of these difficulties, but you can still send articles, images, news and events to [David Burns](#) and they will be put up on the website. We are looking to upgrade and revitalise the website in the not too distant future. I hope to report progress by the next issue of the TGL.

World Ranger Day – July 31

Do you have plans for celebrating the second World Ranger Day this year? Please share your plans. Send me an email (irfdeanne@aol.com) or send one to your regional representative.

International Executive Council

As you know from reading **The Thin Green Line**, most of the regional representatives report to you in each issue, so you have an idea of member association events and work around the globe. Those representatives and the officers also have a role as the governing body of IRF. We communicate primarily by email, but find that is limiting and not as effective as a real conversation. We are now experimenting with using the free computer phone service called “Skype” and have several members who are able to use Skype from their home computers. It has been a challenge to find a time and a day when more than two people are available for a call over all the many different time zones the IRF is spread, so we have not yet had the pleasure of a real conversation.

You will see in these reports, that, although IRF has no source of revenue, we do great work with our associations and our networks. We are all volunteers in sharing this work of rangers across the globe and we need to read more about the work of associations. We miss hearing from many associations so please send in your report for the next issue of **The Thin Green Line** so we are truly connected.

With best wishes,

Deanne Adams
Acting President
IRFdeanne@aol.com

Informe Del Presidente En Ejercicio

Queridos amigos de la IRF:

Gracias a sus representantes regionales, en esta entrega de la Delgada Línea Verde (DLV) podrán leer sobre diferentes encuentros de guardaparques, tales como la Conferencia de Guardaparques planeada para junio en Eslovaquia, el Segundo Seminario Europeo de Guardaparques que tendrá lugar en Hungría y la reciente reunión de la Asociación Costarricense.

La IRF continua siendo un importante catalizador de encuentros de guardaparques, para compartir sus experiencias y aprender unos de otros.

Sexto Congreso Mundial de Guardaparques

Sé que muchos se preguntan sobre el nuevo Congreso, el cual ha sido designado en Bolivia en al 2009. Hemos tenido dificultades de comunicación ya que la organizadora, Carola Vaca Salazar, se había trasladado

a un parque sin acceso de correo electrónico y pocas posibilidades de comunicación telefónica. Su contrato ha terminado en enero por lo que nuevamente tenemos comunicación.

Como tal vez han visto en noticiarios, Bolivia ha sufrido en el último mes grandes inundaciones y el país no se encuentra actualmente apto para el turismo.

La agencia de Parques Nacionales de Bolivia, SERNAP, se encuentra trabajando en un informe evaluativo al respecto de la capacidad de dicha agencia y de la asociación de guardaparques para realizar el congreso. Tanto la agencia como la asociación apoyan fuertemente el evento y han realizado un aceptable trabajo hasta el momento: están desarrollando un sitio web bilingüe y han contratado a un especialista quien se encuentra listo para iniciar su tarea en la organización del congreso.

Queremos apoyar a Bolivia como organizador de un congreso exitoso, pero obviamente estamos preocupados por el tiempo que resta para su planeamiento e implementación. Una vez que hayamos recibido al evaluación de la Agencia/Asociación, el Consejo Ejecutivo Internacional tomará la decisión de si mantiene a Bolivia como organizador o si recibe nuevas propuestas.

Luego informaremos a todas las asociaciones miembros los nuevos pasos a seguir en relación al Sexto Congreso Mundial de Guardaparques.

El Fondo de Apoyo a Familiares

En el último número de la Fina Línea Verde, anuncié el establecimiento de la Fundación de la Fina Línea Verde, dedicada a la contribución de los fondos recaudados del video producido por Sean Wilmore a las familias de los guardaparques matados durante el cumplimiento de sus deberes. Ahora estamos finalizando el acuerdo de entendimiento.

La Federación y la Fundación están en las últimas etapas de la modificación del acuerdo y el protocolo para la distribución de los fondos. Una vez que el Consejo Ejecutivo Internacional haya revisado y aprobado estos documentos, los enviaremos a la Unión Internacional de Conservación para que los revise y apruebe este acuerdo histórico trilateral durante el 4th Congreso de la UICN en Barcelona en octubre

Sean Willmore estará en USA a fines de marzo; y espera reunirse con el gobernador de California Arnold Schwarzenegger y estará presente en la reunión annual de la asociación de guardaparques del estado de California, una asociación miembro de la IRF. Él seguirá viaje hacia España donde fue invitado a disertar en un festival filmico socioambiental. Luego hará entrega de fondos a nombre de la TGLF, la IRF y la UICN a familias en Uganda y se reunirá con funcionarios en El Congo para organizar pagos alternativos, como la construcción de escuelas en villas que han perdido a varios guardaparques.

Pedimos a todas las asociaciones miembros que informen cuando un guardaparque fallece en actividades laborales. Envíen su informe al editor de la DLV, Bill Halainen. Si lo prefieren, pueden enviar sus informes directamente al presidente de la Federación o a la Fundación. La Fundación mantendrá el banco de datos.

Sitio Web de la IRF

El sitio web de la FIC tuvo una serie de dificultades técnicas en el segundo semestre del año pasado, la acogida de nuestro sitio web y el servidor cambiado inadvertidamente perdido nuestro acceso. Se tardó varios meses de experimentación y de los mensajes de correo electrónico antes de que tuviéramos acceso de nuevo. Sé que algunos de ustedes se han visto frustrados a causa de estas dificultades, pero aún se puede enviar artículos, imágenes, noticias y eventos a [David Burns](mailto:David.Burns) y serán presentados en la web. Se busca mejorar y revitalizar el sitio en un futuro no muy lejano. Espero que informe los avances de la próxima edición de la DLV.

31 de julio, Día Mundial del Guardaparque

¿Tienen planes para celebrar el segundo día mundial del guardaparque este año?. Por favor compartan sus ideas. Envíenme un email (irfdeanne@aol.com) o envíenlo a su representante regional.

Consejo Ejecutivo Internacional

Como es sabido a partir de la lectura de la DLV, la mayoría de los representantes regionales se reportan en cada edición. Es así como tenemos una idea de los eventos y trabajos de las asociaciones miembros a través del mundo.

Estos representantes y funcionarios también cumplen roles dentro de la conducción de la IRF. Nos comunicamos por correo electrónico, pero encontramos esto limitante y no tan efectivo como las conversaciones reales. Estamos experimentando con el uso del servicio telefónico gratuito por internet Skype, y hay varios miembros que se encuentran en condiciones de usarlo desde sus computadores personales. Ha sido un desafío hallar un día en que más de dos personas se encuentren disponibles para hablar debido a las zonas horarias diversas; por ello no hemos tenido aún el placer de una conversación real y efectiva.

Podrán ver en estos reportes que aunque la IRF no posee fuentes de ingresos económicos hacemos un gran trabajo con nuestras asociaciones miembros. Queremos compartir información con guardaparques alrededor del mundo y necesitamos saber más del trabajo de nuestras asociaciones. Echamos de menos no tener información de tantas asociaciones, por favor envíen sus informes para el próximo número de la DLV para poder estar realmente conectados.

Los mejores deseos,

Deanne Adams

(Traducción al Español realizada por el Guardaparque Germán Solveira, de la Asociación de Guardaparques Argentinos.)

Editor's Report

Friends and Colleagues:

I have now been editor of this publication for 15 years and more than 40 issues, ever since writing and disseminating the first edition (by mail) back in July, 1994. I have also been with IRF since the very beginning, when Gordon Miller and Bob Reid and Arne Bondo-Anderson and I worked out the particulars over a beer or two at a hotel on the south end of Loch Lomond one spring day. Over the course of those years, I've not seen as much apathy about IRF, or at least, about contributing to this newsletter, as has been shown over the past year.

Deadlines come and go with few or no responses, so they get extended again and again. Finally, as was the case with this edition, enough material comes in to make for an issue that's got some substance, and is not so meagre as to embarrass us before the world conservation community. There are a number of you who've made a real and successful effort to submit contributions, and that's very much appreciated. But there are all too many of you who are heard from very rarely, and some who've not been heard from in years, or ever. I could easily list a score of countries that have not been heard from in a long, long time. If you don't contribute to **The Thin Green Line** and don't help fund the organization and don't participate on projects, then in what sense are you a member of IRF?

Yes, we're all very busy and most everyone is in the field a lot doing ranger work (which is certainly the way it should be). But how long does it take to write three or four paragraphs about your ranger association or about whatever IRF activity you're working on? It's really not the time that's the issue, it's a matter of paying attention and making the effort. If we're going to have a world community of rangers, then everyone has to play.

We're now able to keep in touch via the internet, which has been a major, major stride forward since the early years, when we had to communicate through telefax and expensive mail and now and then through equally expensive phone calls. That gives us the ability to keep in touch with everyone and with regularity. Using this system and email, we can now get the word out quickly.

Quarterly issues of **The Thin Green Line**, augmented on a bi-weekly basis (more or less) by **Guardaparque**, provide us with the vehicles to let everyone know what everyone else is doing. Those issues are read not only by members, but by our friends at IUCN, WWF and any number of other organizations. Some of them look to us for word on what's going on in the field. So we have the tools and we have the audience, all we lack is participation.

Yes, language is a big, big problem. Yes, it's unfair to communicate mainly in English. But it's a reality we must live with, as we don't have the money to pay for translation services and nobody has stepped forward to offer to do the work for free. Moreover, none of the member organizations have taken the initiative to go out and find translators who'll be available when and where needed. So we must continue to write in English, augmented at times (as in this issue) by translations into Spanish by past president Rick Smith.

My friends, we are in difficult times. Global priorities are changing, and it's evident that protection of parks is sliding down the list, smaller staffs, less funding, diminished political support. Many of our sisters and brothers are putting their lives on the line on a daily basis to do their jobs, particularly in some of the African nations. Climate change is wreaking havoc on the parks and changing ecosystems so fast that it's hard to figure out where and how to hold the line....and on and on.

Now is the time when we all must work harder to communicate, cooperate and advance the cause of parks and protected areas and the flora and fauna and cultural assets contained within them. Now is the time to start making an effort to keep in touch with your colleagues worldwide on a regular basis. Let's hear from you NOW.

Bill Halainen
Editor

Youth Development Officer

Cassie Wright has been serving as the IRF's youth development officer since 2003 and would like to step down from that appointed position. She has suggested to David Zeller and me that she could continue to work with the World Commission on Protected Areas for the Youth Conservationist Award. We think that would be very helpful and have asked her to continue in that role until the next World Ranger Congress. She has developed a position description for the rest of the duties of the youth development officer, as they have evolved over the past four years, and is now recruiting for that position. Here's the job description, if you're interested please contact [Cassie Wright](#) or [Deanne Adams](#):

The IRF youth development officer position was created in 2003 following the World Parks Congress in Durban, South Africa. The purpose of the position is to provide more opportunities for young rangers. Until now, the position has had two components; working on youth development issues within and for the IRF and working on youth development with the World Commission on Protected Areas (WCPA). This is now to be split into two separate positions, and we are seeking someone to fill the role of working on youth development issues within and for the IRF.

As the leader of the youth portfolio, the duties required are:

- Developing a group or groups of young rangers to work with the youth development officer
- Working with these rangers, leading the development of new initiatives for young rangers
- Encouraging ranger associations to provide more opportunities for young rangers
- Developing, maintaining and communicating with a network of interested young rangers
- Liaising with the IRF International Executive Committee (IEC)
- Reporting to **The Thin Green Line** quarterly
- Working with the WCPA youth representatives, in particular to ensure the WCPA/IRF youth award is run, as well as developing new initiatives
- Attending relevant meetings or congresses, where possible

The time required varies depending upon what is coming up at the time, but, on average, about three hours a week would be a good start.

Skills required:

- a high degree of personal drive and motivation
- excellent communication skills
- leadership and networking abilities
- computer use (and regular access to the internet would be very helpful)
- good organization and project management skills would be an advantage

For more information, contact [Cassie Wright](#). If you're interested, please submit a brief letter (two page maximum) explaining why you are interested in the position, your relevant skills and experience. Send them to Cassie at the above email address.

Past President's Report

En abril, por invitación de la ONG, Paso Pacifico www.pasopacifico.org, viajaré a Nicaragua para comenzar un programa de orientación y capacitación con los guardaparques del área protegida La Flor y algunos comunitarios que van a hacerse guardaparques no-gubernamentales y guías durante la época de la reproducción de la tortuga marina en las playas dentro de la reserva y en ellas fuera del área. Tradicionalmente, los nidos de las tortugas han sido invadidos y los huevos sacados. El gobierno, por su agencia ambiental MARENA, y algunos sectores de las comunidades adyacentes han lanzado un programa de protección de los nidos. Una parte innovador de este programa es la de proveer a los guardaparques comunitarios incentivos económicos para asegurar que los nidos produzcan tortuguitas. Van a ser recompensados por cada nido exitoso. Lo que voy a hacer con mis colegas de la reserva y las comunidades establecer un programa de protección y educación y diseñar un sistema de monitoreo efectivo. Con los guardaparques, voy a hablar sobre lo que es el guardaparque moderno—honesto, transparente, comunicador con la gente local, educador, y una persona importantísima en el monitoreo de los recursos naturales sujetos a depredación.

In April, at the invitation of the NGO, Paso Pacifico, www.pasopacifico.org, I will travel to Nicaragua to begin a program of orientation and training for rangers from the La Flor protected area and with some local people who will become tourist guides and non-governmental rangers during the sea turtle nesting season on the beaches inside and outside the reserve. Traditionally, the turtle nests have been dug up and the eggs removed either for consumption or sale. The Nicaraguan government, through its environmental agency, MARENA, and some sectors of the local communities, has launched a program to protect the nests. An innovative part of this program is to provide to the community-based rangers an economic incentive to assure that the nests produce young turtles. They will be compensated for each successful nest. What I will be doing with my colleagues from the reserve and the local communities is to establish a protection and education program and design an effective monitoring program. With the rangers, I am going to discuss what it means to be a "modern" ranger; honest, transparent, a communicator and educator for local people and a very important person in the monitoring of natural resources subject to predation.

Rick Smith
Past President

Central American Regional Representative Report

Dear Friends:

First of all, we want to apologize for not sending out news regarding our region or at least our association. Back on January 31st, our board of directors met for the first time in 2008. In that meeting many goals were set for 2008 and 2009. At times, it proves hard to meet these goals as planned because our rangers have to travel a long way to attend the meetings, but we all are making our best effort to meet every last Thursday of each month.

Lately, in this country and abroad, especially Panama, there has been a good deal of news about our natural patrimony, which in fact is tied together to our natural protected areas. Most of the following articles are in Spanish, so if you're interested in getting more information about these articles, just send an email to me at mauricioazcrr@yahoo.com

Our first article concerns an interview by one of colleagues from Panama. She is a park ranger, and in the, which appeared in an online magazine (www.ellasvirtual.com), she explains why she decided to become a park ranger and why she loves the profession. It is fair to mention that on January 18th, National Park Ranger Day was celebrated in Panama. Our president, Ronald Mora, attended the event in Panama. At the same time, he took advantage of the given chance to promote our association and the whole IRF philosophy in order to incorporate our colleagues from Panama in the months to come. If you want to read more about our friends from Panama, visit www.ellasvirtual.com/history//2005/01/14/columna/rostros.htm. I know this is kind of an old issue (January 14, 2005), but I thought it was interesting to show you how women here are part of that worldwide effort. Just to make clear one point, I am not a macho man! I know exactly what equality is all about.

Our second article talks about an executive decree issued by President Oscar Arias of Costa Rica, creating one of the first sanctuaries for whales and dolphins in Latin America. This means that all and any activities which involve the hunting, catching, injuring or in any other way harassing or trading of cetaceans are banned in all territorial waters, including those in the Pacific Ocean and the Caribbean Sea. In addition to being part of the migration routes of whales, Costa Rican waters, scientists have confirmed, harbor several areas where whales mate and give birth. The species confirmed include humpback whales, which are endangered, official sources said. Costa Rica was ratified as the headquarters for the West Pacific Conservation Marine Corridor, which includes the Galapagos Islands (Ecuador), Cocos Island (Costa Rica), Coiba Island (Panama) and the Colombian islands of Malpelo and Gorgona. Costa Rican Ricardo Meneses was confirmed at the top executive of the organization during the 16th Forum of Latin American and Caribbean Environment Ministers, held in the Dominican Republic. For more, see an article published by *La Nación* (a daily newspaper) on January 19th, found at www.nacion.com/aldea1390243.html

Our third article is related directly to national parks. The admission fees to all our national parks have been raised approximately 67%. According to the Ministry of Environment and Energy (MINAE), this measure will provide the National System of Conservation Areas (SINAC) with the revenue to cover the accumulated inflation since 2004, when admission fees were last raised. The funds will also help to allocate more financial resources to hire more park rangers and improve their living conditions in the national parks. The tourism sector has not made comments about the increase, but in time they will understand and get along with them. For more information visit: www.nacion.com/aldea1379845.htm

Finally, our last article talks about our beloved Cocos Island National Park. A fishing boat was recently caught in the act of taking tuna fish near the restricted area, as defined by the Costa Rican government. The detention was filmed and shown in the local news. In the whole operation, our park rangers played a key role, because they were the ones to enforce the law and to send these guys to court. Now everybody is talking about this, because this natural icon represents a lot the Costa Rican people. For example, there is now an international online contest to name the new seven wonders around the world. Cocos Island started way back in the list, but currently ranks third, just below a couple of natural places in Bangladesh. For more information about the contest visit: www.new7wonders.com/nature/en/liveranking/ . For more about the detention of the fishing boat, visit www.nacion.com/pais1404145.html

Okay, friends around the world, this is all I have to share at this time. See you back online and keep up the good work for nature!

Best wishes,

Mauricio Arias Zumbado
Volcán Poás National Park
Costa Rican Park Ranger Association
IRF Central America.

European Regional Representative Report

Below are reports on recent developments in a number of European ranger associations.

Slovakia

On December 15, 2007, the Institute of High Mountain Biology in Tatranska Javorina (University of Zilina) held a matriculation ceremony for rangers finishing a three year bachelor's degree study program. Marian Janiga, the institute's director, noted that the course represented a unique opportunity for rangers to obtain adequate education, the first in Europe. There was also a presentation of the film *The Thin Green Line* and greetings from ranger associations from around the world. More information about the institute and its courses can be found at www.vuvb.utc.sk

Hungary

The final program for this year's European Ranger Seminar will be ready soon. A home page for the seminar will be established, but the dates are now available, September 14th to September 20th. Here's the draft program:

Day 1

1:00 p.m. – 2:30 p.m.	Arrival at at Pongrácz-major, Kerekegyháza or
1:00 p.m. – 2:30 p.m.	Arrival and registration at the Visitor Centre (House of Nature) of the Kiskunság National Park, Kecskemét
3:00 p.m. – 6:00 p.m.	Seminar opening, welcoming and keynote speeches (House of Nature, Kecskemét)
6:00 p.m. – 7:00 p.m.	Travel to Pongrácz-major, Kerekegyháza
7:00 p.m.	Dinner

Day 2 – Day 5

7:00 a.m.	Breakfast
8:00 a.m.	Departure of four groups by bus to four different sites in the Kiskunság and Danube-Dráva National Parks – <u>see details below</u>
6:00 p.m.	Arrival back at Pongrácz-major (Kerekegyháza), followed by dinner and one to one-and-a-half hour presentations introducing the Ranger Services of different protected areas or countries. On one of the evenings, there will be a “European table” where national food, drinks and customs of different countries will be introduced by the participants.

Day 6

9:00 a.m. – 10:00 a.m.	Assessment and feedback session, country by country (House of Nature, Kecskemét)
10:00 a.m. – Noon	Evaluation of the seminar, closing lectures
12:30 p.m. – 3:00 p.m.	Lunch
3:00 p.m.	Departure

Denmark

The first Nordic – Baltic Nature Interpretation Seminar will be held in Denmark from October 8th through October 10th. Here's the text of the invitation that has been extended to all who are interested:

The IRF has the pleasure to invite you to the first Nordic-Baltic Nature Interpretation Seminar, which will be held in Denmark from October 8 to October 10, 2008. The aim of the seminar is to promote nature interpretation as an important part of rangers work. There will be two key elements at the seminar: intensive training in nature interpretation methods and the founding of an IRF Nordic-Baltic forum for nature interpretation.

It is the aim of IRF to organise a Nordic-Baltic seminar every year in a different country to promote the exchange of experiences and “best practices” within the field of interpretation. Denmark, which has a long tradition of nature interpretation, has offered to host the first seminar at Sealand in October this year. The

fee for the seminar will be around €265. The program for the seminar will be finished this April. If you're interested, please send an email to Arne Bondo-Andersen at arne1864@lic-mail.dk. He is developing a mailing list of all interested persons and organisations and will keep you informed. Questions can be directed to Arne or to Rigmor Solem at Rigmor.Solem@DIRNAT.no.

A draft convention for the Nordic-Baltic Seminar for Nature Interpretation has been prepared. Here is the text:

The "IRF-Nordic-Baltic Forum for Nature Interpretation" is set up and organised by the IRF member organizations in the Nordic-Baltic countries. Each member organization will nominate a responsible contact person. The aims of the forum are:

- To follow up and implement within the Nordic-Baltic countries the "*11 Shared Principles: Heritage Interpreters Promoting Sustainable Development*," adopted at the IVth IRF World Ranger Congress in Australia in 2004.
- Organise exchange of experiences and "best practice" within the field of interpretation.
- Organise Nordic-Baltic education and training courses and seminars, at least one seminar every second year, managed by a different country each time.
- Organise a Nordic-Baltic electronic interpretation network
- Organise study tours and job swaps.

Rigmor Solem
Rigmor.Solem@DIRNAT.NO

Australia/Oceania Regional Representative Report

Well, here we are in 2008 and already it is time for the first edition of **The Thin Green Line**. Some items of interest have been received so I will pass them on for others to read.

Congratulations to the inaugural committee of the Protected Area Workers Association of New South Wales (PAWA). It's great to have NSW onboard with its own identity. The officers are Chair: David Burns; Vice Chair: Duncan Scott-Lawson; Treasurer: Steve Woodhall; Secretary: Tegan Burton. For membership details, contact [Tegan Burton](#). Regional updates follow:

New South Wales – Tegan Burton

The Protected Area Workers Association of NSW (PAWA) held its inaugural annual general meeting last September, getting through some paperwork and also establishing projects in support of rangers. PAWA's work on a program of support for the APITIKATXI indigenous rangers in the Brazilian Amazon is progressing well, with donations of equipment or funds to purchase equipment currently being sought.

The NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service celebrated its 40th anniversary on the 1st October 2007. In 1967, the organisation was managing 860,000 ha, or 1% of NSW; now, in 2007, it manages 6.65 million ha or 8% of the state. The organisation includes professional rangers, firefighters, pest managers, biodiversity researchers, educators and asset managers.

NPWS head Dr. Tony Fleming said: "With each generation, we see growing community awareness of the importance of our environment and the role the reserve system plays in it. A recent survey found 98% of people agree it is important to have national parks. I'm sure that over the next 40 years and beyond, we'll see increasing community support as we encourage enjoyment of our reserves and appreciation of their benefits for people's health and we remind people of their importance for conservation."

Recycling at the recent Homebake rock concert in the Domain was a huge success thanks to the efforts of the Botanic Gardens Trust and concert patrons. The annual event has included recycling strategies for the past 10 years, but never with more than a 47% recycling rate. This year a new recycling system was introduced whereby patrons were charged a \$1 deposit for the container when purchasing a drink. Once finished, the

container (can or PET bottle) could be returned to a recycling center at the concert in exchange for a \$1 drink voucher. Net result, exceptionally clean event site with over 110,000 drink containers captured for recycling.

Plans to rebuild historic huts burnt down in the Kosciusko National Park are now on the table. Nineteen historic huts were destroyed or severely damaged during the 2003 bushfires and recent changes to international conventions regarding the management of historic heritage have opened the way for some to be rebuilt. The new view of historic heritage is that the social and cultural significance of a hut does not disappear just because the fabric is gone; stories, histories and social connections can still remain. The rebuilding will be a joint project between the NSW National Parks & Wildlife Service and the Kosciusko Huts Association.

Queensland – Paul Lawless-Pyne

New Years Day 2007 was the 100th birthday of the groundbreaking legislation (the State Forests and National Parks Act of 1906) that provided a legal capacity to declare national parks in Queensland. The act was passed by Parliament on December 14, 1906, but did not commence until January 1, 1907. As far as we can determine, it was the first legislation of its kind in Australia with statewide application.

On March 28, 1908, our very first national park was declared, Witches Falls National Park. This historic 131 hectares was the start of something big and important, and was followed by Bunya Mountains National Park (August 1) and Fairy Bower National Park (September 26). Many celebrations are planned for Queensland Parks during 2008 to commemorate this important milestone.

As part of the celebrations of 100 years of national parks in Queensland, the Queensland Rangers Association's 2008 conference will be held in the beautiful Tamborine Mountains in the Southern Region of Queensland on April 23rd and 24th.

The conference will be open to all members of the QRA and rangers from overseas or interstate visiting at this time are welcome and will be treated to a great time and experience. For international and interstate rangers who are planning on attending, could you please [contact me by email](#) so I can pass the information on to the appropriate persons, for your registration? The conference will also be used for the historic signing of the Council of Australian Rangers Association Agreement. This is the new direction of the Australian Rangers Federation and it is proposed that the heads of each association will be present for the signing of the agreement.

Central Queensland have recently been inundated with major flooding, causing large losses to crops, livestock (mainly cattle), infrastructure, mainly fences, roads and cultivation, but also damage to houses, rail lines and machinery. National parks were subject to infrastructure damage, mainly boundary fences, roads, walking tracks and firebreaks, with the possibility of some visitor facilities sustaining minor damage. Concerns were held for the northern hairy-nosed wombat, Queensland's most endangered mammal, restricted to a single population of approximately 100 animals. The concern was that the entire colony was vulnerable to flood water inundation of their burrows. Aerial inspection indicated that although the entire park was surrounded by flood waters from the Belyando River to the west and Fox Creek to the east, the area where the wombat lives was mainly above the flood level. This type of incident highlights the need to establish a second population at another location. Plans are in place to establish a second colony by translocating some of the wombats from Epping Forest to a site in the St. George area, about 600 kilometres south of their present location. The new site is in an area where the wombat previously existed.

New Zealand – Kit Howden

New Zealand does not as yet have an independent ranger association, although there are many rangers. However, I note in the minutes of the NZ Recreation Association's 2007 annual meeting that this organisation has "applied to become a member of International Ranger Federation." The NZRA represents all types of park professionals in NZ and has tried in the past to facilitate the formation of an independent ranger association.

One of the reason for no ranger association is that the great majority of rangers are employed in the central government Department of Conservation, where the term ranger is not used very often, usually the words "DOC staff" are used instead. This organisation is very successful and popular in NZ, although it comes under political criticism due to its large size and power, an issue to watch out for, as this is an election year in NZ. Another possible reason for no ranger association in NZ is that we have many active conservation

organizations, like the Royal Forest and Bird Protection Society, and thousands of small conservation groups at the local level that work with rangers. On the international front I believe NZ could do more, although I note there are active ranger exchanges between agencies.

As tourism grows so ranger services become more important. There are more accidents happening in NZ parks [see below]. There has been discussion on the radio about the growth of adventure activities as a result of tourism marketing. There now appear to be more overseas visitors getting into trouble. The conditions in NZ can be very different to those overseas and those heading to the "hills and beaches" need to know these conditions. This is putting pressure on rangers and frontline staff. They can not stop access [NZ fortunately has free access to its parks], but its important to seek and follow advice from rangers and locals.

Here's an example of the problem from a local paper: A 23 year old climber was flown to Timaru Hospital by helicopter after emergency services were alerted by cell phone. He was to undergo surgery. He and two other Italians were climbing the Footstool's eastern face near the Sefton bivouac, an area not normally climbed at this time of the year. The Department of Conservation's acting Mount Cook area manager said the three Italians had ignored advice and failed to fill in the intentions book. "Two of our mountaineering staff met them and had a chat with them and, when they found out what they planned, told them it was not a good idea because the route was not in condition," he said. "It's a good climb, but it needs more snow and ice on it. "It's mainly rock at the moment, and poor-quality rock. Climbers refer to it as Weet-Bix. The Footstool gets climbed in winter and spring. It's very unusual for someone to climb now." The injured man was lifted out by two DOC rescue staff on a 30 metre strop attached to the helicopter, which later returned to pick up his companions and left them at the Sefton bivouac. The search and rescue coordinator for this incident said that advice was given for good reason by DOC staff. "It's extremely frustrating," he said. "They've failed to sign into the park and they've undertaken a climb considered not advisable at this time of the year because of the risk of falling debris, and that's exactly what has happened."

Paul Lawless-Pyne
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North American Regional Representative Report

The California State Park Rangers Association will be holding its California Parks Conference from March 30th through April 3rd in South Shore Lake Tahoe. Jeff Olf, who has attended many IRF World Congresses (and has a passion for collecting park uniforms from around the world), is the new representative from CSPRA to the IRF. The U.S. Association of National Park Rangers has a new president, Scot McElveen. ANPR's board is working hard to implement recommendations suggested by a survey of NPS employees that it completed last year. A major goal is to increase membership and attract young members to the association. The next annual Ranger Rendezvous is scheduled for December in beautiful Santa Fe, New Mexico. Activities for the next season include developing plans to mark the second annual World Ranger Day celebration this coming summer.

Meg Weesner
Meg_Weesner@nps.gov

Asian Regional Representative Report

There has unfortunately been no time to prepare a report for this issue, as I am currently working on the emergency response task force for the Hebei Spirit Oil Spill Incident. This was a tragic oil spill that occurred at Taean Seashore National Park. Rangers from other national parks have been transferred to Taean and have been working to assess the environmental impact of oil spill.

Gyu-Sung Lee
fmn2000@hanmail.net

Africa Regional Representative Report

GRAA PROTECTED AREA MANAGEMENT SYSTEM (PAMS) and PAS CERTIFICATION in South Africa

CapeNature showed considerable interest in us helping them with the De Hoop tourism concession project immediately after the 2007 Game Rangers Association of Africa (GRAA) Annual General Meeting (AGM). However, communication from their officer responsible for this project at their head office dried up inexplicably since then.

The presentation made by Mrs Jan Phelan at the IUCN SA committee meeting in February 2007 was very well received, as was the one to Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife's Biodiversity Conservation Operations Management Meeting shortly thereafter. Jan Phelan was awarded a short term contract to develop PAMS for the function for which I was responsible in Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife (the invasive alien species programme). This will provide us with the opportunity to demonstrate the usefulness of PAMS and promote its adoption elsewhere. Andre Spies of SANParks will be invited to return to KZN to see PAMS now that it is in place.

It will cost a fair amount of money to attend meetings etc. in order to gain more necessary support and momentum and create the opportunities needed to make these ideas a reality until they can pay for themselves. Jan Phelan set aside 5% of her earnings from the Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife contract for this task, towards travel cost for promoting the GRAA's work in the field of protected area management effectiveness.

PAMS has been adopted for use in one aspect of the Selous-Niassa Wildlife Protection Corridor Project, which is linking the Selous Game Reserve in Tanzania with the Niassa Game Reserve in Mocambique. It is hoped to grow the scope of its use in Tanzania from there. A good few additional 'interested party' leads remain to be followed up on during 2008.

AFRICAN REPRESENTATION ISSUES

We need to apply our minds properly with regard to how to promote the GRAA and on what support and guidance we can give to reps in outlier regions/countries outside South Africa, especially so bearing in mind that even where we have held an AGM (Botswana and Namibia) there is not a lot happening! Ideas from anyone regarding how this issue may be taken forward would be much appreciated.

SAWC PARTNERSHIP and TRAINING

The construction of the tented training facility was completed early in 2007 and several groups of students were accommodated since then. The GRAA/SAWC (Southern Africa Wildlife College) Agreement was finalised and the signing thereof took place on Freedom Day, 27 April 2007 at the SAWC. This occasion was attended by representatives from the SAWC, the GRAA Africa Committee and some local media. En suite bathrooms are in the process of being built as funds become available. Four have been completed and the construction of another three was approved by the AC meeting in November. Construction will continue during 2008.

Apart from occasional private bookings, 11 groups occupied the tents during 2007. This brought in a profit after expenses, including the construction of two en suite bathrooms, of R23,211.61 to the GRAA. Thus far for 2008 there are 4 groups expected to utilise the tents.

FUNDRAISING

The 2007 Golf Day was a great success. Over R65 000 profit was made, which is approximately R21 000 better than the previous year. Thank you to Richard Sowry, the Lowveld team and everybody else who assisted. In KwaZulu-Natal, George Zaloumis continued to spearhead fundraising efforts in his usual determined and committed way, primarily through the annual hunt raffle. Further fundraising efforts included three birding weekends. Thanks to George Zaloumis, Drummond Densham, Andre Botha and everyone else who helped with these fundraisers.

MEMBERSHIP

There were 26 new members admitted during 2007. The most recent membership number issued was 816. It is exciting to see the membership spreading through Africa. These countries include Rwanda, DRC, Tanzania, Namibia and now even 1 member in Russia. We have 673 members in 29 countries (the vast majority still in South Africa) and if they all paid their fees this would amount to R114, 410.00 whereas less than one third are paying. A lot of time is spent by Don Yunnie on maintaining and updating the database and the members email information.

Don Yunnie (GRAA Secretary) continued to provide another year of excellent service regarding the administration for the AC meetings, minutes of AC and KZN meetings, filing and AGM arrangements, and dealing with email and mail correspondence.

COMMUNICATIONS & MEDIA

There were 24 issues of the Cleft Stick sent out to some 450 members and associates on the mailing list during 2007. A fair amount of responses and favourable comment are received from members. Two editions of The Game Ranger magazine were produced during 2007. Thank you to Paul Phelan who took over my editorial role for the second edition. Once again Ron Physick has done sterling work with regard to updating and tweaking the website where necessary. The items the GRAA trades can be seen and purchased. The site is quick to load, an archive of the C-S is available here for members to look up items of interest, and there are also the GRAA statements, position papers and a copy of our manifesto.

IUCN & CONSERVATION ISSUES

Tim Snow represents the GRAA on the IUCN SA Committee. Bryan Havemann, our KZN Chairman and the National Director of Conservation for WESSA, also participates on that committee and was elected as Vice Chairman thereof some months back. Congratulations Bryan!

The GRAA Statement on the allowing of fishing in the Tsitsikamma National Park (South Africa) was well received, particularly as it supported those by other NGOs, notably the EWT and WWF. The GRAA also gave support to the environmental consortium group opposed to the proposed mining at Lake Natron in Tanzania and Kenya. There has been a lot of the attention, public meetings and media coverage of this battle in the media in East Africa and some significant ground has been won by the consortium.

CONCLUSION and WAY FORWARD

I was away working in Tanzania from 4 November till 9 February, as international team leader for the Selous-Niassa Wildlife Protection Corridor Project. Andre Botha was thus Acting GRAA Chairman until I arrived in the project area and established reliable/regular email communications there. I will be returning to Tanzania from 9 March on a potentially renewable contract ending November 2009, so I vacated the position of GRAA Chairman at the AGM which was held in the Natal Drakensberg of South Africa between 18 and 21 February 2008. Andre Botha was elected as the new Chairman, Richard Sowry (Kruger National Park) was elected as Vice Chairman: Southern Africa and I was elected as Vice Chairman: East Africa.

We were very pleased to have the President of the IRF with us at the 2008 AGM. David and Handa Zeller were in South Africa on leave from his current post in West Africa.

I would like to express a sincere thank you to Don and Muriel Yunnie, Martin Schofield (chair of the AGM Local Organising Committee), George Zaloumis, all the members of the Africa Committee, Regional Committees, and everyone else (including our families and spouses for their support and tolerance) who served the GRAA during 2007 in too many ways to mention!

I remain firmly of the opinion that the key to the long term success of the GRAA lies in our ability to identify, promote and implement meaningful projects that can attract or generate ongoing funding whilst adding value to our conservation vision at the same time. The GRAA could assist conservation organizations with conducting objective management effectiveness evaluations of protected areas and in compiling integrated management plans for protected areas. The proposal to become an active service provider in areas related to our mission and objectives should be actively explored and pursued. Comments and collaborators willing to help work towards this end will be welcomed.

The SAWC Agreement, and the PAMS and related initiatives concerning the assurance of management effectiveness, are early positive steps in this direction.

“To keep doing only the same things and expecting different results is insane.” If we want to achieve more it is time to try some new approaches.

It has been an honour to serve as Chairman of the GRAA over the past year. Thank you to everyone for your support and best wishes to the new committee and Chairman for the years ahead!

Wayne Derek Lotter
wlotter@gauff.com

NEWS FROM NATIONAL ASSOCIATIONS

Portugal

Associação Portuguesa de Guardas e Vigilantes da Natureza (Portuguese Ranger Association)

Como consecuencia de los contactos mantenidos a lo largo de los últimos diez años entre la Asociación Portuguesa de Guardas y Vigilantes de la Naturaleza y la Asociación Española de Agentes Forestales y Medioambientales, consideramos que ha llegado el momento de realizar el I Congreso Ibérico. Se pretende con la Organización de este evento el nacimiento de un marco de relaciones entre las Asociaciones Ibéricas de Profesionales de la defensa del Medio Ambiente. Esta cooperación ibérica constituirá un espacio singular y privilegiado para la colaboración donde se identificarán las dificultades y propuestas de solución en materia de auxilio mutuo. Desde la gestión y organización de iniciativas de formación profesional, actuaciones conjuntas en trabajo y elaboración de proyectos en equipo. Es una oportunidad para la afirmación de estos profesionales ante la Sociedad. Identificar objetivos comunes, definir estrategias en conjunto para la cooperación en un horizonte cercano es un desafío que se presenta. Nos enfrentamos a un desafío ambicioso que pretende la colaboración de las asociaciones ibéricas, que no dispensa antes exige la participación de todos. Estamos trabajando por y para los actores de nuestro territorio. Utilizar las regiones transfronterizas como rampa de lanzamiento, valorizar los factores dinámicos de Cooperación entre los profesionales de estas regiones constituye la idea base de este trabajo en común.

Objetivos

Este I Congreso ibérico tiene como objetivo la construcción de bases que permitan difundir y promover el trabajo de los profesionales del Medio Ambiente:

- Promocionar el debate entre los profesionales de la Conservación de la Naturaleza de Portugal y España, para analizar los temas que afectan a los recursos naturales y los ecosistemas en la Península Ibérica e Islas y trabajar en una estrategia para la preservación de la Naturaleza y la Biodiversidad.
- Tiene la intención, de contribuir al intercambio de conocimientos y experiencias.
- Proponer a los Gobiernos de Portugal y España que acuerden una legislación que permita la ejecución de tareas, trabajos y estudios conjuntos entre los profesionales del Medio Ambiente.
- Debatir la propuesta de Creación de un Equipo de Intervención Rápida, que tenga como objetivo intervenir en situaciones de catástrofe ambiental (derrame de petróleo en mar, contaminación de aguas interiores, incendios forestales, fauna envenenada etc).
- Aproximación ambiental y cultural de zonas transfronterizas, creación de un espacio ambiental y cultural común y un aumento de la cooperación ámbito de la protección del Medio Ambiente.
- Aumento de la cooperación en espacios transfronterizos con la finalidad de potenciar y mejorar la calidad del Medio Ambiente.
- Promover la proliferación de estudios de investigación que tengan por objeto profundizar en el conocimiento de los recursos ambientales de los espacios transfronterizos.
- Solicitar a los Gobiernos de ambos países que pongan en práctica el acuerdo celebrado entre los Ministros de Medio Ambiente que tiene como meta la aprobación de legislación que contemple una figura que permita una gestión coordinada de los parques y otras áreas protegidas en zonas transfronterizas.

Líneas Temáticas del Congreso

- Intercambio de conocimientos y experiencias
- Análisis de los problemas que afectan a los recursos naturales
- Estrategias para la preservación de la Naturaleza y la Biodiversidad
- Definición de los problemas para activar la colaboración
- Cooperación en el ámbito de la protección del Medio Ambiente
- Legislación que permita la ejecución de tareas, trabajos y estudios.

As a consequence of the contacts maintained over the last ten years between the Portuguese and Spanish Ranger Associations, we believe that the time has come to hold the first Iberian Ranger Congress. The congress, called "Nature Without Borders," will be held from May 1st to May 4th in Idanha-a-Nova, Portugal.

We hope that this event will signal the birth of a relationship between the associations of professionals who defend the environment of the Iberian Peninsula. This kind of cooperation will constitute a opening for a collaboration which will identify problems and solutions through mutual assistance, including:

- 1) the organization and management of joint initiatives of professional training, cooperative activities, and field work;
 - 2) an opportunity for professionals to affirm the importance of their work to society; and
 - 3) the identification of common objectives and strategies for cooperation in resolving the challenges we face.
- This collaboration is an ambitious challenge for the Iberian associations and it will not be resolved without the participation of everyone. We are working by and for the people of our territory. We will use the transboundary regions as a launching ramp. The idea behind all this is to show the value of cooperation between the environmental professionals of the two countries.

Objectives

This first Iberian Congress has the objective of constructing mechanisms that promote and publicize the work of environmental professionals:

- Stimulate the debate between the environmental professionals of Spain and Portugal and the analysis of the issues that affect the natural resources and ecosystems of the Iberian Peninsula and its islands and work on a strategy for the preservation of nature and biodiversity.
- Propose to the governments of Portugal and Spain that they agree to legislation that would permit the execution of joint studies, projects and programs between their environmental professionals.
- Promote the exchange of knowledge and experiences.
- Discuss the proposal to create a “Rapid Intervention Team” which would have as its objective to act in times of environmental catastrophes (oil spills in the sea, water contamination on land, wildfires, poisoned wildlife, etc.)
- Enhance the cultural and environmental ties in transboundary zones by the creation of a common environmental and cultural space and increase the cooperative environment for the protection of nature.
- Increase the cooperation in transboundary zones with the goal of improving the quality of the environment.
- Promote scientific research with the goal of increasing our knowledge of the environmental resources of transboundary areas.
- Ask the governments of both countries to put in practice the agreement between the respective ministries of the environment that would permit coordinated management in the parks and protected areas of the transboundary zones.

Topics of the Congress

- Exchange of knowledge and experiences
- Analysis of problems that affect natural resources
- Strategies for the preservation of nature and biodiversity
- Definition of problems that allow the beginning of collaboration
- Cooperation in the environmental protection sector
- Legislation to permit joint studies, programs and projects.

Francisco Correia
Portuguese Ranger Association

Czech Republic Czech Ranger Association

The EUROPARC Federation has been conducting a pilot Junior Ranger Project since 2002, including one in Krkonose National Park in the Czech Republic. The project methodology was developed and tested there. The project in Krkonose has had several leaders and has educated a generation of junior rangers. Several of them have changed their chosen jobs and one became a volunteer ranger and helped to attract others.

The last group of junior rangers was established in 2006 and has held together since that time without personnel changes. The beginning ceremony, a two-week-long summer camp, the closing ceremony, and two one-day follow-up sessions were managed during the first year. Seven follow-up programs and a week-long summer camp were held last year. Two junior rangers and an instructor were invited by the EUROPARC Federation to the Sixth International Junior Ranger Camp in Illmitz, Austria (for more information, go to www.europarc.org/juniorranger). Two junior rangers and an instructor participated in a EUROPARC program entitled "Shaping the Future of the Junior Ranger Movement" in Cesky Krumlov in September, 2007 (see www.europarc.org/international). At that meeting, five junior ranger teams, one each from Krkonose NP, Jizerske hory PLA, Sumava NP, Gesäuse NP and Bayerischer Wald NP, met together and discussed the program's future

The Junior Ranger Project was led by a professional ranger and student from Charles University in Prague, Kveta Cernohlavkova. Kveta joined the project at its commencement in 2006 and helped organize some activities with children, based on her extensive experience with special programs for children and education.

Kveta collaborated with the Ranger Service at Krkonose NP in developing project follow-ups, based on her experiences as a field ranger with ability and experience in communications, negotiations, interpretation, nature, legislation, etc. The follow-up programs therefore were based on real ranger work. One program focused on parents of junior rangers, offering them activities from Junior Ranger Project follow-up programs for children. Kveta graduated with a diploma thesis on JRP in protected areas. Junior Ranger Project studies in Europe are supported by Alfred Toepfer Nature Heritage scholarships from the EUROPARC Federation. Kveta was also responsible for managing JRP activities at the EUROPARC Federation conference in Cesky Krumlov, and participated in a junior ranger training program in Laufen, Germany, in November, 2007. She manages the JRP web site for the entire Czech Republic (www.volny.cz/junior.ranger) and is currently collecting information about JRP in Europe via questionnaires. If you have information about JRP and haven't filled out a questionnaire, please contact her at junior.ranger@volny.cz.

JRP is also running a program in Jizerske hory Protected Landscape Area, where it is managed by an NGO, the Czech Union of Nature Conservators. JRP meetings are held twice a month; several excursions and duties with volunteer rangers are held regularly. The Junior Ranger Project in Sumava NP has a long time tradition. Two JRP groups were established in that park due to its large area and there's one person who serves as a special JRP instructor. She collaborates with professional rangers on JRP programs.

Michal Skalka
Czech Ranger Association
skalka.michal@seznam.cz

Australia Victorian Rangers Association

Executive member and well-known ranger Sean Willmore was featured on a TV documentary about his filming of *The Thin Green Line*. And, to top this, he also appeared on another episode of the same series that featured a story on the *Sea Shepherd's* anti-whaling protest incident in the southern ocean this summer. Sean was on board the ship as a crew member and protest supporter when two crew members boarded a Japanese whale chaser vessel.

There was more action in providing an association viewpoint on controversial environmental projects. The state of Victoria has seen significant debate on a large port/channel-deepening project and the construction of a desalinated water plant, both of which have projected impacts on marine protected areas and species. Members had the opportunity to participate in a field workshop that looked at members' work areas on a coastal peninsula in the south of the state. The two-day workshop included visitation to wetland management zones, historic forts, new parkland in old military training zones, and coastal marine protected areas. A highlight was an association-sponsored snorkeling trip, where rangers swam with Australian fur seals and other marine life. No dolphins this trip, but the water was crystal and dinner at the pub overlooking the bay was terrific.

[Andy Nixon](#)
VRA Vice-President

Slovak Republic
Slovak Rangers Association



The Slovak Ranger Association is inviting one and all to a ceremonial conference of rangers on the occasion of the 10th anniversary of its establishment. The main goal of conference will be to evaluate SRA's 10 years and discuss actual problems of ranger work in Slovakia and other countries. SRA is voluntary association of state nature conservancy professionals and nature guard volunteers and cooperates with partnership organizations working in the field of practical nature and landscape protection. The association was established in 1996 and it is based in Spišská Nová Ves. It has its own regulations, logo, authorities (the board and auditor commission) and functionaries. The association goals are to connect the field employees of the nature conservancy, enable their meeting and the exchange of information and knowledge, improve the work of the members within the occupation and systematically contribute to their professional growth, improve ecological awareness of Slovaks by educational and enlightenment activities, and realize projects related to nature protection.

The conference will be held at the Protected Landscape Area and Biosphere Reserve Poľana in Slovakia. This area is situated in the very heart of Slovakia and is typical for its dense forest and wonderful alpine meadows. Because of its assets, this PLA has been included among the World Biosphere Reserves. The best conserved tertiary volcano in Slovakia, Poľana Mountain, has been protected since 1981 as part of the PLA Poľana. In 1990, the protected territory, which has an area of 20,360 hectares, was included in the world network of the UNESCO Biosphere Reserves for its extra high natural and landscape value. The environmental program MaB (Man and Biosphere) is carried on there. The PLA is administered from Zvolen. On its northern edge stands the mountain Hrb, the geographical centre of the country. The area includes numerous rock formations, such as the Veporské skalky, Melichova skala, Kalamárka or Jánošíkova skala. In the valley Bystré, a 15 metre tall waterfall flows down a rock step. Forests prevail, but the landscape opens in many places into alpine meadows, called poľany, which gave name to the mountain range. These meadows offer wonderful and far-reaching views.

The conference will be held from June 7th to June 10th. Accommodations will be at Mountain Hotel Poľana, 962 05 Hriňová, Slovakia (tel.: +421-45-5497204, 5497304, fax: +421-45-5497667, email: reception@polana.sk, website: <http://www.polana.sk>).

The draft program is as follows:

Wednesday, May 4

Noon – 5:00 p.m.
6:00 p.m.

Registration and accommodations
Dinner

Thursday, May 5

8:00 a.m. – 9:00 a.m.
10:00 a.m. – 11:00 a.m.
11:00 a.m. – 6:00 p.m.

Breakfast
Official opening and welcome
Conference (presentations of rangers' work in Slovakia and in other countries)

1:00 p.m. – 2:00 p.m.
8:00 p.m. – 9:30 p.m.

Lunch
Dinner and ranger party

Friday, May 6

8:00 a.m. – 9:00 a.m.
9:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m.
6:00 p.m. – 7:00 p.m.
8:30 p.m.

Breakfast
Conference field trips (three options, packed lunches)
Dinner
Closing of the conference

Saturday, May 7

7:00 a.m.

Breakfast, followed by departure of start of post-conference tours

We recommend minimal hiking equipment (hiking boots, backpack, waterproof jacket and sunglasses). For the conference, your official uniform is required. The costs of the conference, including accommodation, meals and transportation during the conference, will be covered by registration fee, €90.00

Juraj Svajda - <http://www.vuvb.utc.sk>

Scotland

Scottish Countryside Rangers Association

The new Scottish government, led by the Scottish Nationalist Party, came to power last summer. This is the first time they have been in power and they have made several changes to the status quo right across government. One of the changes will directly affect how rangers are funded in Scotland and may result in a decrease in the number of rangers in the country.

Until now, most ranger services in Scotland were funded by Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH), an organization set up to administer the governments' environmental policies but separate from the government itself. SNH provides funding to ranger employers across Scotland as long as they agree to deliver a nationally agreed work program, use the national ranger badge, and have their work monitored by SNH. Over the past year, SCRA has been involved in discussions about how this system should be implemented over the next few years, as part of its regular review.

Most Scottish rangers are employed by local governments, but there are several services employed by NGOs and private land owners. If they are funded by SNH, they all have to follow the national guidelines. The new government has announced that, as of April 2009, SNH will no longer fund those services employed by local governments. They will instead receive their allocation directly from national government along with the rest of each council's core grant. This may not sound like a big change, indeed, it may seem more efficient, in that it cuts out SNH as the middle man, thus saving a 'handling fee', but there are several problems with this new system.

First, when the money is received by the local council, it does not have to spend it on the project it was allocated for. The councils are extremely jealous of local democracy and see it as their right to decide what their central grant is spent on, depending on local priorities. In the past this has led to money allocated for environmental or access projects being used to fund schools, roads or other work. The money currently received by ranger services could therefore be spent elsewhere. In the current situation, SNH insists that you don't get the money if you don't spend it on rangers. We have already seen one council announce that its ranger service will be disbanded this year, will more follow?

The second effect of this change will be to remove SNH as the monitor of how ranger services deliver their work and how they are recognized nationally. At present, all SNH funded services have to deliver a set agenda, determined by the government's policies relating to access, biodiversity and environmental education. They are also required to display the same ranger badge nationally, so that the public can see a national service. How will this be monitored in the future? SNH has had to be strict with several councils in the past who employed staff as rangers but then deployed them in menial jobs, such as litter pickers or toilet cleaners with no environmental output at all. The good employers will still utilize their rangers the way they were intended, managing protected sites, educating the public about the natural world, etc. But will there be a coherent approach at the national level?

There is still a year to go before this new policy is implemented and the specifics of how it will be administered are under discussion. SCRA is working with SNH and several other agencies to ensure that there are safeguards to protect what we do and how many rangers are deployed in Scotland. More interesting times lie ahead!

This April will see the departure of Alison Wilson from rangers and from the SCRA council. Many of you will know her as the person who was the first point of contact with SCRA, especially during the 5th World Congress in Scotland. She has decided to move on to a new career out with the ranger world and will be sadly missed. I would like to take this opportunity to thank her for all she has done over the years.

Tony Wilson
nefrs@craigtoun.freeserve.co.uk

**United States
Association of National Park Rangers**

In December, 47 of the 100 U.S. senators signed a letter to the Secretary of the Interior, who oversees national parks, requesting a regulatory change to allow all people entering national parks to be able to carry firearms with them. Consistent with this request, United States Senator Tom Coburn (Oklahoma) then introduced a piece of legislation in the United States Senate entitled “To Protect Innocent Americans from Violent Crime in National Parks.”

Despite its misleading title, the specific purpose of the legislation is not to protect people against violent crime (which is rare in U.S. national parks), but rather is a political statement regarding the second amendment to the U.S. Constitution, which says that ‘A well regulated Militia, being necessary to the security of a free State, the right of the people to keep and bear Arms, shall not be infringed.’

While this is only a footnote in the long and dreary controversial debate in this country about the personal possession of firearms, it could have dramatic negative impacts on both visitor and ranger safety, and on wildlife protection in parks.

ANPR is opposed to the request and to the legislation, and has posted its position and objections on its website (www.anpr.org/guns_in_parks.htm). ANPR will be monitoring this situation closely, and is making sure that the Secretary and the U.S. Congress are informed of the negative consequences if such regulatory changes are made. I will keep TGL readers informed of the outcome of this effort.

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CALENDAR OF COMING EVENTS

2008

March 30 – April 3	California Parks Conference, California State Park Rangers Association, South Shore Lake Tahoe, CA. www.cspra.com/
April 18 – April 19	“Interpreting the Cultural Heritage,” Annual General Meeting, Scottish Countryside Rangers Association, Holyrood Park, Edinburgh, Scotland. For more info, go to www.scra-online.co.uk
April 23 – April 24	Annual Conference, Queensland Rangers Association, Tamborine Mountain. www.ranger.org.au/QRA/qra.htm
May 1 – May 4	“Nature Without Borders,” First Congress of Vigilantes of Nature (Portuguese Rangers) and Forestry and Environmental Agents (Spanish Rangers), Idanha-a-Nova, Portugal
June 7 – June 10	Conference, Slovak Ranger Association, Poľana PLA and Biosphere Reserve, Slovakia.
July 31	World Ranger Day.
September 14 – September 02	2008 European Ranger Seminar, Kiskunság National Park, Hungary. Details to appear later.
October 8 – October 10	Nordic-Baltic Nature Interpretation Seminar, Sealand, Denmark.
December 10 – December 15	31st Annual Ranger Rendezvous, U.S. Association of National Park Rangers, La Fonda Hotel, Santa Fe, New Mexico. www.anpr.org/anprrr.htm

MEMBER DIRECTORY

The following is for quick reference only and does not include the names of individual ranger associations. Where more than one name is listed for a given nation, it is because there's more than one ranger association in that country. For a complete list, please contact Elaine Thomas, IRF secretary, at the address below. If you find any error, please contact Bill_Halainen@nps.gov.

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Footnotes

*	IUCN World Commission on Protected Areas	**	The World Conservation Union
#	Fauna and Flora International	##	Int. Center for Protected Landscapes
+	Royal Society for the Preservation of Birds	++	Great Apes Survival Project (UNEP)