



## Coalition To Protect America's National Parks Weekly National Park System Report

Wednesday, August 15, 2018 (Delayed)

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### Editor's Notes

This issue is out a little late and is once again fairly brief due to time constraints. Hope to be back on track by next Wednesday.

### Incidents

#### **Denali National Park Five Killed In Flightseeing Plane Crash In Park**

Five people are believed to have died in the crash of a flightseeing plane near Denali on August 4th, the deadliest crash of an air taxi in the Alaska Range in decades.

A ranger found four bodies in the wreckage during a search on August 6th that had to be terminated after just minutes due to deteriorating weather. The fifth person aboard the K2 Aviation de Havilland Beaver was not found but is presumed dead.

The wreckage was located almost 11,000 feet up a remote mountain near North America's tallest peak and came to rest perched on a steep glacier.

The pilot was able to make two calls by satellite phone in the hour after the crash and reported injuries before communication with the plane ended. It wasn't immediately clear how many people survived the initial crash. The plane was equipped with an emergency survival kit, including sleeping bags, a stove and pot to boil water, food and a first-aid kit.

The plane crashed near the summit of what's known locally as Thunder Mountain, a feature roughly 14 miles southwest of the summit of Denali in extremely technical terrain on a hanging glacier.

The ranger who got to the plane Monday said it appeared highly unlikely people had moved around after the crash. He found that the plane had crashed in steep terrain in a crevasse on the side of a mountain. He found the bodies of four of the five people and detected no signs of life. It's possible that the fifth person was inside, but the ranger just couldn't see that person because the incoming weather limited his time in the nose of the aircraft.

No footprints or disturbances led away from the site and there were no other signs to indicate any of the occupants made it out of the plane.

Source: [Anchorage Daily News](#).

## **Yellowstone National Park Man Caught On Video Harassing Bison Charged On Multiple Counts**

A man who was caught on video while harassing a bison in Yellowstone National Park in early August was arrested days later in Glacier National Park.

Raymond Reinke, 55, of Pendleton, Oregon, actually “scored a trifecta,” reports the *Billings Gazette*, “managing to get cited in three national parks during the [same] week.”

Reinke was first arrested by rangers in Grand Teton National Park on July 28th for an alleged drunk and disorderly incident. After spending the night in the Teton County Jail, he was released on bond. Three days later, he was in Yellowstone National Park, where a vehicle in which he was a passenger was stopped for a traffic violation. According to park officials, Reinke appeared to be intoxicated and argumentative, and they cited him for not wearing his seat belt.

It was evidently after this traffic stop that Reinke encountered the bison as vehicles stopped to let it walk down the road. In a video that’s since gone viral ([here’s a version that appeared on a news show](#)) and sparked outrage internationally, a man who officials said is Reinke can be seen wearing blue shorts, a turquoise shirt, and white socks without shoes.

The man walked toward the bison, which at that point was ambling down the side of the road. He waved his arms like a matador, and the bison charged at him. The man ran in a circle while the bison stood in the road, and waved his arms again, prompting the bison to charge at him again. The bison eventually walks away.

Numerous visitors reported the wildlife harassment, and rangers found Reinke later that evening and issued a citation for a court appearance. At that point they hadn’t seen the video, but once they learned of his history and saw the “egregious nature of the wildlife violation,” his bond was revoked. Reinke had told rangers he was planning to travel to Glacier National Park, and rangers issued a “be on the lookout” alert for his vehicle. While they were searching, rangers also responded to a disturbance at the Many Glacier Hotel, where two guests were arguing in the dining room. It just so happened that one of them was Reinke.

Reinke was arrested on federal charges and taken to Mammoth Hot Springs, where he made an initial appearance in federal court. He faces five charges, including being under the influence of alcohol to a degree that endangers himself or others; interference/resisting; making unreasonable noise; storing an open container of an alcoholic beverage in a motor vehicle; and disturbing wildlife.

Source: [Billings Gazette](#).

## **Buffalo National River Ranger Involved In Fatal Shooting Will Not Be Prosecuted**

The U.S. attorney for the Western District of Arkansas has announced that he will not pursue federal charges against an NPS ranger who shot and killed a Missouri man in the park last year.

The decision is in line with a similar conclusion arrived at by a Searcy County prosecutor, who found that evidence supported the ranger's use of lethal force in the case. An investigation by the Searcy County Sheriff's Office, Arkansas State Police and the National Park Service also determined that the ranger followed policy.

The fatal shooting occurred last August 20th after 34-year-old Jonathan Bolger of Branson pointed what two park rangers believed was a semi-automatic weapon at them while they were patrolling a campground near Harrison in the early morning hours. One ranger shot the man three times after he made a "threatening move."

The investigation revealed that Bolger was actually armed with an Umarex XCP air pistol, which "appears identical" to a two-toned semi-automatic handgun.

Source: [Arkansas Democrat Gazette](#).

### **Blue Ridge Parkway Man Charged With Murder Of Fellow Concession Employee**

A woman working a summer job at the Pisgah Inn was out hiking on July 24th when a co-worker attacked her and left her lifeless body not far from the parkway.

Sara Ellis, a 29-year-old cook from Florida who began working at the inn in May, was found dead along a path near the inn's employee dorms. The man accused of killing her was Derek Pendergraft, 20, another concession employee at the inn. Pendergraft has been charged with second-degree murder, which carries a maximum penalty of life in prison.

Pendergraft was the one who reported Ellis missing. Rangers and other investigators found her partially nude body off an embankment close to a trail near the parkway. Pendergraft later confessed to killing her.

Source: [Fox News](#).

### **Rocky Mountain National Park Body Of Missing Hiker Found**

On July 28th, a ranger on patrol discovered a body in steep terrain northwest of the summit of Mount Meeker. It's believed to be that of Brian Perri, the 38-year-old Fort Collins man who disappeared after reaching the peak of the 13,911-foot mountain on June 30th.

Perri was last heard from that day when he texted a photo of himself atop Mount Meeker to a friend. He had been hiking alone and did not have any overnight camping gear with him.

He was reported missing on July 5th. That night, rangers found Perri's car in the parking lot at the Sandbeach Lake trailhead. They conducted a brief aerial search near the Mount Meeker summit that night, and full rescue teams began combing the area the following day.

Extensive search efforts continued for several days, involving ground teams, search dogs, helicopters and drones. They encompassed "significant sections" of the 22.5 square miles above tree line, as well as forested areas.

Organizations involved in the effort included the park's SAR team, Larimer County Search and Rescue, Rocky Mountain Rescue Group, Fort Collins police, Northern Colorado Helitack, Front Range Rescue Dogs, Flight For Life Air Ambulance and Colorado Search and Rescue.

Source: [Boulder Daily Camera](#).

### **Mount Rainier National Park Hiker Dies While Trying To Cross River**

Rangers have recovered the body of a 22-year-old woman who apparently drowned while trying to cross the West Fork of the White River on July 25th.

A group of hikers reported seeing the hiker get swept downstream as she tried to cross the river on the Northern Loop Trail. They tried to locate the woman, who was a university student from China, but were unsuccessful.

Ground searchers found her body tangled in trees about 150 yards below where the trail crosses the river.

Source: [KOMO News](#).

## National Fire Situation

### **National Interagency Fire Center Over 100 Fires Burning Actively Throughout The West**

#### **Synopsis**

NIFC remains at PL 5, the agency's highest preparedness level.

As of Wednesday, there were 101 large fires active nationwide; together, they had burned nearly 1.8 million acres. More than 27,000 firefighters and overhead personnel are committed nationally, including fireline management personnel from New Zealand and Australia, an Army engineering battalion and aircrews and aircraft from the National Guard and Air Force Reserve.

#### **National Park Service Fires**

Significant fires are currently burning in these national parks:

- *Glacier NP* – The Howe Ridge Fire was started by lightning on the evening of Saturday, August 11th. On Sunday, windy and dry conditions fueled the fire, causing it to rapidly expand. Evacuation orders were issued for North Lake McDonald Road, the Lake McDonald Lodge area, Sprague Creek and Avalanche Campgrounds and the Going-to-the-Sun Road from the foot of Lake McDonald to Logan Pass (32 miles). At the time of the report on Wednesday, the fire had burned 2,600 acres. It was being managed by an IMT (Jesse Best) and 78 firefighters and overhead. Additional details, including maps of the fire, can be found on the related [InciNet webpage](#) and in these news articles – “[Glacier Officials Confirm Structure Losses](#),” *Daily Inter Lake*; “[Glacier Park Fire Rages On As Park Officials Assess Damage to Historic Buildings](#),” *Flathead Beacon*; and “[Now Even Glacier National Park Is On Fire – And, Yes, Climate Change Is Making Things Worse](#),” *Salon*.
- *Yosemite NP* – The Ferguson Fire, which started on July 13th in the Sierra National Forest, burned into the park a week later, leading to a series of evacuations and closures and finally to the closure of the entire park. Yosemite Valley reopened to visitors on Tuesday, August 14th. The fire has burned 96,810 acres and is 87% contained. It's being managed by the South Central Sierra IMT (Mike Strawhun, IC); 833 firefighters and overhead personnel are currently committed. Visit the team's [InciNet webpage](#) for details. See also this Associated Press article: “[Yosemite Reopens To Visitors With Smoky Air, Limited Lodging](#).”
- *Whiskeytown NRA* – The Carr Fire has now burned 214,527 acres and is 71% contained. This hugely destructive fire has to date destroyed 1,077 residences, 22 commercial structures, and 500 outbuildings and damaged another 191 residences, 26 commercial structures, and 65 outbuildings. A Cal Fire Type 1 IMT is managing the fire; 3,831 firefighters and overhead personnel have been committed. This [Cal Fire webpage](#) has additional details on the fire. An article in the *Redding Record Searchlight* entitled “[Fire Damage At Whiskeytown Called Historic](#)” provides more information on the damage done to the park, which remains closed.
- *Mesa Verde NP* – The lightning-caused Moccasin Mesa Fire was fully contained by firefighters at 185 acres on August 6th. For more information, go to [this InciWeb site](#).
- *Grand Canyon NP* – The Obi Fire has burned more than 10,000 acres on the North Rim. Temporary road and trail closures remain in effect for Swamp Ridge Road, the North Bass Trail, Powell Plateau Trail, Fire Point, Nankoweap Trail, and the Point Imperial Trail. Cape Royal Road from the junction with the Point Imperial Road also remains closed. Included in this closure are Cape Final Trail, Cliff Spring Trail, the northern section of the Ken Patrick Trail from Point Imperial to Cape Royal Road, and the southern section of the Ken Patrick Trail from

Cape Royal Road to the old Bright Angel Trail. The IMT's [InciWeb site](#) provides additional information.

### Active Incident Resource Commitments

Category	July 24th	August 7th	August 16th
Area Command Teams	0	0	0
NIMO Teams	0	0	1
Type 1 Teams	3	13	14
Type 2 Teams	11	15	20
Crews	428	552	590
Engines	873	1,944	1,545
Helicopters	123	170	195
Total FF/Overhead	15,489	27,543	27,339

### Fires/Acreage

Category	2018 Total	2008-2017 Ave	2018 Variance
Year-to-Date Fires	40,729	43,492	- 2,763
Year-to-Date Acres	5,720,095	4,683,208	+ 1,036,887

Sources: [National Interagency Fire Center](#).

### News From Around Washington

Reports on official actions and activities from Capitol Hill, the White House, the Department of the Interior, the National Park Service and other related agencies and NGO's.

#### **Capitol Hill Weekly Legislative Roundup**

##### ***New Public Laws***

Nothing to report.

##### ***Senate***

Nothing to report. The Senate was in recess from August 6th to August 10th.

##### ***House***

Nothing to report. The House was in recess from August 6th to August 10th.

Source: Don Hellmann, former assistant director, legislative and congressional affairs for the National Park Service.

### Park People, Friends and Allies

#### **NPS Alumni Passing Of Bruce Kilgore**

Bruce Kilgore, a giant in the history of the National Park Service science and natural resource programs, passed away on June 10th at the age of 88. His contributions to the National Park Service were truly remarkable. They included:

- Significant contributions to both park and National Park Service fire programs, especially his pioneering work on giant sequoias in Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks;
- Assembling and supervising a highly respected science program in Western Region; and
- Working to institutionalize the use of science-driven decision-making to effectively protect and preserve park natural resources for current and future generations.

Testimonials by some of his colleagues reveal his importance to the NPS:

- Jay Goldsmith, chief of natural resources for Pacific West Region – “Bruce’s legacy of scientifically-credible research, carefully designed to answer key management questions, lives on. He accomplished this not through theatrics; but through hard work, attention to detail, and the frequent use of flip charts. He was always calm and collected, well-prepared and persuasive, passionate in his love of science, and nurturing of the incredible cadre of scientists and resource managers he assembled and inspired.”
- Jan Van Wagtenonk, research scientist emeritus at Yosemite National Park – “Bruce was a friend, a mentor and an inspiration.”
- David Parsons, retired research scientist at Sequoia and Kings Canyon and director of the Aldo Leopold Wilderness Research Institute at the University of Montana – “His pioneering work in fire ecology at Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks formed the basis for fire programs across the National Park System.”
- Tom Nichols, retired chief of fire and aviation management for the National Park Service – “Bruce was the critical connection between science and management for the fire program. He had people doing research, but it was Bruce himself who translated observations on the effects of fire and turned them into fire management practice and policy.”

A memorial service for Bruce will be held at 1:00 p.m. on August 25th at the Walnut Creek Methodist Church located at 1543 Sunnyvale Avenue in Walnut Creek, California. Bruce is survived by his wife and constant companion, Elaine, and his sons Dave and Steve. Elaine invites those who worked with Bruce to spread the word and to attend the service celebrating Bruce’s life.

Source: Member Duncan Morrow; written by Jay Goldsmith, chief of natural resources for Pacific West Region.

### **NPS Alumni Death Of Bill Burgen**

Bill Burgen, 89, a career ranger in the National Park Service, died on August 10th at his home in Luray, Virginia.

Bill was born on March 21, 1929, in Auburn, California, and grew up on the historic Applegate fruit ranch owned by his parents.

On January 18, 1953, he and the former Imogene Schlossin were married in Paradise, California. Bill graduated from Placer High School and Placer College and earned a bachelor of science degree from Humboldt State University in Arcata, California.

Bill was drafted into the U.S. Army in January 1951. He was sent to Korea with replacement troops, where he joined Battery A of the 57th Field Artillery Battalion, a 105-millimeter gun unit. He served 10 months with the famed Seventh Infantry Division as an artillery forward observer, directing artillery fire. He returned to the states and was discharged from active duty in October 1952.

Bill’s 30-year career with the National Park Service began at Lake Mead National Recreation Area in 1956, followed by assignments on the Blue Ridge Parkway, Yellowstone National Park and Death

Valley National Monument. He was chief ranger in Shenandoah National Park between 1966 and 1968. This was followed by four-year assignments at the Albright Training Center at Grand Canyon National Park and as superintendent of Coulee Dam National Recreation Area. His last assignment was an eight-year position as assistant superintendent at Yosemite National Park.

Bill and Imogene retired to Applegate, California, in 1985 where they lived until moving to Luray, Virginia, in 2010. For many years they enjoyed fishing and traveling in their motorhome.

Survivors, besides his wife of 65 years, are two daughters, Signe Burgen Vaughan (Jeffrey L.) of Luray, and Maren Burgen Lombardi (Eric V.) of Kingvale, California; two grandchildren, Alexandra Lombardi of Fernley, Nevada, and Patrick Lombardi (Brooke Lynn), and two young great-granddaughters, Delanie and Ashtyn, all of Auburn, California.

For his final days, Bill was under the excellent care of Blue Ridge Hospice and his loving family. His ashes will be interred in the Old Auburn Cemetery, Auburn, California.

Source: Member Larry Hakel.

## **News Reports and Releases**

A brief summary of recent news stories, web postings and agency press releases pertaining to the federal government, the administration, DOI, the National Park Service, public lands and the climate and environment.

### **National Park System**

Stories and articles pertaining to the parks, regions, technical and training centers, and WASO.

**Air Pollution In Parks As Bad As In Cities** – CNN ran a story last month on [a new study](#) that has found that ozone values in national parks between 1990 and 2014 were similar to those found in the country's 20 largest major cities. Example: According to the study, Sequoia National Park ozone exceedance days surpassed those of Los Angeles, the metropolitan area with the highest ozone concentration, in all but two years since 1996. Source: [CNN](#).

**Around The Parks** – Brief reports on parks, culled either from park press releases or from newspapers:

- *Olympic NP* – Trail shelters and a cabin in the park's backcountry will remain standing, the U.S. 9th Circuit Court of Appeals has ruled. The court rejected a legal challenge by Montana-based Wilderness Watch, which sued to force removal of four shelters and a cabin as incompatible with provisions of the Wilderness Act, which protects lands "untrammelled by man." Source: [Seattle Post-Intelligencer](#).
- *Chaco Culture NHP* – The federal government is proposing to lease land for oil and gas drilling outside the park later this year, just a few months after Secretary Zinke scrapped plans to lease other lands in the area amid opposition from tribes and environmentalists. At the time, Zinke said he would defer those leases until his administration could "do some cultural consultation." But conservationists say the government has not undertaken any additional study despite mounting calls for an outright moratorium on drilling in an area that is particularly significant to the history of New Mexico's indigenous people. Source: [Santa Fe New Mexican](#).
- *Fire Island NS* – According to a plan recently released by the park, the breach in the island opened by Superstorm Sandy will be filled in only if it causes harm. The park said it will only reconnect the barrier island "to prevent loss of life, flooding, and other severe economic and physical damage to the Great South Bay and surrounding areas." The breach connects the bay



and the Atlantic in the Otis Pike High Dune Wilderness, which lies east of the barrier island's communities. Source: [Newsday](#).

- *North Cascades NP* – A park report released in June confirms that grizzly bears long inhabited the North Cascades. The report's authors collected historic reports, sightings and archaeological grizzly data throughout the North Cascades ecosystem; they found 178 credible observations of grizzlies between 1859 and 2015. The park decided to examine the historical record in an effort to show that a "historical population" of grizzly bears once existed in the region. Source: [Spokesman-Review](#).
- *Timpanogos Cave NM* – Construction will begin on a new Timpanogos Cave visitor contact station after Labor Day and should be completed by next June. The new facility will replace the building that was installed as an emergency replacement immediately after an accidental electrical fire destroyed the park's visitor center and administrative offices in February of 1991. Source: [KUCW News](#).
- *Wright Brothers NM* – The park's visitor center will reopen on September 29th following nearly two years of renovations. The \$5.8 million project included work to preserve and restore significant architectural features of the 58-year-old building and renovate mechanical and electrical systems. Source: [Virginian-Pilot](#).

## **From The Archives**

This section contains incidents taken from *Morning Report* issues published during the corresponding week (approximately) 25 years ago in 1993. All entries appear in the original verb tense.

- *Padre Island NS* – Over the past 16 months, the park's resource management division has systematically developed information regarding illegal trash dumping in the Gulf of Mexico - a serious problem for Padre Island, which averages a ton of such debris per mile of beach each year. Based on this information, representatives from the park, Coast Guard, FBI, U.S. Attorney's Office and Texas General Land Office initiated a joint, week-long undercover and surveillance operation to determine the source of and further document illegal dumping. More than 30 people from the involved agencies worked in shifts to monitor shrimp boats offshore for a distance of nearly 100 miles up and down the coast. The team employed aircraft, highly sophisticated day and night infrared video equipment, and additional specialized night heat imagery equipment. According to the Coast Guard, the effort was the first of its kind, or, at least, the first such involving both the Coast Guard and FBI. As a result of the surveillance operation, four cases are being developed by the U.S. Attorney's Office for civil prosecution under MARPOL-V, an international treaty prohibiting the illegal dumping of plastics in the oceans. Corporate civil fines may reach \$500,000, and individual criminal penalties can reach \$125,000. Two of the cases may be tried under the Oil Pollution Act of 1990. Other investigations are continuing.
- *Olympic NP* – On Friday, August 6th, a young male cougar was killed by rangers near Kalaloch Lodge after the animal became an unacceptable public hazard. The cougar had frequented the area around the lodge and Kalaloch and South Beach campgrounds during the last week of July; it had hung around in full view of rangers and the public, chased lodge employees' pets, and showed little apparent fear (although no overt aggression) toward people. The animal was monitored very closely by rangers during this period in hopes that it would move on without a need for more active intervention, as other young cougars in the park have shown similar tendencies for brief periods before relocating. The cat then disappeared for a week and a half. At 6:30 a.m. on August 6th, it reappeared at Kalaloch Lodge and chased a cat, then attacked and attempted to carry off a young dog several hours later. Rangers also learned that certain lodge employees had been feeding the cougar meat. Attempts to drive the animal out of the area with rocks and firecrackers were unsuccessful, so local hunters were brought in. They found and killed the animal at 5:30 that afternoon. During the process, the cougar killed one of the hunters' chase dogs. A post mortem indicated that the cat was a healthy young male



between 18 months and three years old and that it weighed 91 pounds. Remains of a domestic house cat were found in its stomach and were identified as those of a missing cat which belonged to a lodge employee. The concentration of inadequately controlled pets owned by concessioners and employees at this location is considered to be the prime reason why the cat was attracted to the area and had to be destroyed. Translocation elsewhere was no longer a prudent option because of the cougar's attraction to pets and lack of fear of people. Appropriate actions are now being taken locally to correct the situation and prevent or lower the likelihood of such incidents in the future.

- *Sequoia-Kings Canyon NPs* – Just after 7:30 a.m. on the morning of August 7th, a giant sequoia twelve feet in diameter fell in front of the old lodge registration desk in Giant Forest. The tree's fall was witnessed by many visitors present in the area; fortunately, none of them were injured. The sequoia took down several large trees, damaged several others, and caused minor damage to a vehicle, the lodge entrance sign and the pavement at the entrance to the parking lot. Although the tree fell parallel to the Generals Highway, debris was scattered across the road, closing it to traffic in both directions. Traffic was detoured around the area via Puzzle Tree Road. Rangers, maintenance employees and the park tree crew responded. A hazard evaluation was completed and three severely damaged trees still standing in the area were removed. The area was cleared and the highway reopened by 11:30 a.m. The park's tree crew foreman estimated that the sequoia was between 1,100 and 1,200 years old.

## **Acknowledgements**

This newsletter comes to you through the efforts of a number of people:

- Production: Steve Pittleman
- Regular Correspondents: Don Hellmann, Dennis Burnett, and Duncan Morrow
- Issue Contributors: Larry Hakel, Ann Rasor, Bob Marriott, Mark Forbes, Larry Frederick

If you see something that might be of interest to Coalition members, send it to Bill Halainen at the Weekly National Park System Report: [BHalainen@gmail.com](mailto:BHalainen@gmail.com). Please don't submit them via his personal email address or Facebook page.

## **A Closing Observation**

"Medals weren't that big a deal to most [Army] Rangers [in Vietnam]...Mutual respect was a far more valued commodity. But there was one little bauble (as Napoleon so aptly labeled military medals) that made its way into Ranger folklore....It was a little Smoky Bear pin issued by the National Park Service in the 1960s. They were passed among Rangers as signs of respect. As medallions of honor. And they became more prized as measures of duty and selflessness than anything the Pentagon could throw our way. I still have mine. It's my most treasured possession from the Vietnam War. And to this day, I can't look at someone in a National Park Service uniform and separate them from ideals of patriotism and duty to their country. And that's the way it ought to be."

Letter to Director Roger Kennedy from anonymous Vietnam veteran, 1996

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The *Weekly National Park System Report* is a publication of The Coalition To Protect America's National Parks. It is prepared by Coalition member Bill Halainen, former editor of the *NPS Morning Report*, and produced and disseminated by Coalition member Steve Pittleman.

The Coalition is a non-profit organization of past and current NPS employees and their allies that "studies, educates, speaks, and acts for the preservation and protection of the National Park System and mission-related programs of the National Park Service."

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