



THE THIN GREEN LINE

NEWSLETTER OF THE INTERNATIONAL RANGER FEDERATION

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FEDERATION NEWS AND NOTES

President's Report

I hope all of you had a very happy holiday season and wish you the very best for the coming year. Let's make 2001 a great year for world conservation in general and for the International Ranger Federation in particular!

As most of you already know, in the time between this issue and our last newsletter, lobster fishermen in and around Galapagos Islands National Park in Ecuador protested the imposition of limits on the fishery, limits designed to help make the harvest sustainable. During the protest, park property, including ranger residences, was destroyed, as was the research station on the island belonging to the Charles Darwin Foundation. Ecuadorian military units had to rescue park employees from the mangroves to which they had fled during the protest.

The IRF sent a strong letter to President Noboa of Ecuador (see below), urging him to restore public order on the islands, to protect the rangers, their families, and their personal property, and to punish those responsible for the violence to the full extent of the law. While the situation has quieted down on the islands, tension still exists. The Executive Council will continue to monitor the situation and let the rangers on the Galapagos know that we support them. I do not believe that we can sit by quietly while rangers are intimidated or threatened or when their homes are burned and their families harassed.

I have received a brochure announcing a training session for park rangers in the state of Chiapas in Mexico. This is the southernmost state of Mexico and has been the scene of considerable activity by the Zapatista rebels, who are protesting the treatment of indigenous people in Mexico. According to the brochure, the last day of the three-week course will be devoted to creating a Mexican Ranger Association and to taking the preliminary steps to affiliate with the IRF. The course organizers have asked me to attend the last several days of the course and to speak to the participants about the IRF and its programs. I have accepted their invitation.

We have also received word from Bolivia that the rangers there have formed an association and are ready to affiliate with the IRF. They are awaiting confirmation of their legal status before completing the affiliation process.

We have forwarded to the organizers of the Fifth World Congress on National Parks and Protected Areas, now scheduled for 2003 in South Africa, the list of core competencies for rangers at the journeyman level that the delegates in Kruger developed and approved. This list, according to the principal organizer, will form part of the basis for deliberation by the attendees on the issue of capacity building for field personnel in protected areas. Thanks to Bill Wade and his Kruger team (Silvia Aguado, Argentina, Bob Reid, Scotland, Ephriam Alobwade, Cameroon, Elaine Thomas, Australia, and Eugene Moll, Southern African Wildlife College) for developing this list.

Incidentally, we have posted the core competency list and the Kruger Declaration on the website of the Association of National Park Rangers of the United States in both English and Spanish. You can access the site at www.anpr.org

Those of you who have attended the last several congresses will remember hearing from Declan Keiley of England regarding the establishment of something called the IRF Consultancy. The Consultancy will attempt to generate income for the IRF by marketing the expertise of our individual members. The Consultancy recently bid on a training contract in Albania and is the successful bidder! The contract is important as it is with the World Bank. The Bank has many environmental projects across the globe. Mike Marshall and Declan will provide the training services that begins in March of this year. This is just the first step in making the Consultancy an important part of our organization.

Mike Marshall and Heike Flemming from Germany will be attending a European Union meeting on TOPAS, the Training of Protected Area Staff. This may be another place where the IRF can play a major role in assisting ranger colleagues from other countries.

I have received word from Kristen Appel and Andy Nixon in Australia. The first planning session for our next congress in the state of Victoria will take place soon. Start saving your marks, pounds, and pesos for the Fourth World Congress. The intention of the organizers is to focus the activities of the congress on the core duties for which rangers throughout the world are responsible: interpretation, protection, and resources management. It should be an exciting week in a beautiful country just like the weeks in Poland, Costa Rica, and South Africa.

Mike Marshall has informed me that the proceedings from the Kruger Congress are almost ready for publication. This will set a new record for the IRF. I am ashamed to recall that it took almost a year and one half to publish the proceedings from the Costa Rica congress. Thanks to all of you who submitted your material in time and thanks to Mike and Merle Whyte for getting the information in final form so quickly.

Thanks to all of you who sent holiday greetings to my wife, Kathy, and me. We really felt the warmth of the international ranger community. Let's continue to work hard to make that community grow and become stronger.

Rick Smith
President, IRF
Association of National Park Rangers
United States

Text of IRF Letter to President of Ecuador

Dear Mr. President:

By this letter, the International Ranger Federation, an organization that represents national associations of park rangers on 5 continents, expresses to you, the supreme authority in Ecuador, its concern regarding the violent incidents that have recently taken place in Galapagos Islands National Park.

Park rangers undertake the noble, very necessary and difficult mission of protecting natural resources, implementing the protection strategies without which national parks would not exist.

Frequently, these activities generate conflicts between the authorities that execute the protection (park rangers) and those who use the resources of the park (in this case, the fishermen). Most of these conflicts, however, are resolved peacefully and with understanding. The violence against the installations of the Galapagos Islands National Park and against some of the rangers there and their possessions is absolutely unacceptable. Those responsible for these acts should be identified and punished so that such acts do not occur again.

Due to the complexity of this park, someone once said that world conservation strategies would be successful only in the measure that they were successful in the Galapagos Islands. It is therefore time to end the instability that exists in the Galapagos and to prevent further damage.

Because of the uniqueness of the park, its importance for the study of evolution, its tourism potential, and the example it provides to the world, it is absolutely necessary that the administration of the park regain its authority. The International Ranger Federation will be watching Ecuador's actions in this regard.

Thank you for your attention. The IRF stands ready to assist you in anyway we can.

Sincerely,

Richard B. Smith
President
International Ranger Federation

Vice President's Report

I was still in Africa when the last newsletter was published. I spent two months visiting and working in the national parks of South Africa and Mozambique. My experiences there were so strong and I felt so alive that I can only compare it to the days when I lived in the Amazon forest 20 years ago. Mozambique is beautiful, but also full of problems. It appears that Robert Zolho, manager of Gorongosa National Park, will be successful in creating a national ranger association in that country when a national meeting of rangers is held this March. For 30 years (I turned 40 in Bazaruto National Park in Mozambique), I wondered if I would ever walk in Africa. No I wonder if I will get a chance to do it again.

I am very proud of our IRF and happy to know that our colleagues in Galapagos Islands National Park believe we acted well and in time regarding the troubles they have had there. This is very important for us – as we continue to grow, both in complexity and in the number of associations within IRF – we will certainly (if unfortunately) need to defend the rights of rangers to work well and in peace in the future.

I'm also happy to find that there was some progress in creating associations in several African countries after the Congress in Kruger National Park. It was good to see that many African rangers in different countries often spoke of Africa as a country instead of a continent, forgetting the differences and obviously keep in mind the similarities. That will help in the formation of peace parks.

Bolivia is progressing rapidly in the formation of a ranger association, and that will be an example in South America because we all know that Bolivia is very poor. This shows that the most important thing is the will to organize.

Finally, I want to thank Gordon Miller for the “President’s Award” that he gave to me at the Congress in Kruger – a painting by Mike Landman, former chief field ranger for that park. No gift could represent more things to me.

As with anything that is alive, the federation will have good and bad times. Many things will depend on us, many others will not. The end of a year and the arrival of a new millennium bring new hope to us. Let's keep that feeling. I wish you all – rangers of the world – happiness and good work.

Juan Carlos Gambarotta
Vice President, IRF
Asociacion De Guardaparques y Guias de Naturaleza
Uruguay

Newsletter Changes

There are two changes in the design of this newsletter.

The first is the name. As you can see, this newsletter is now called “The Thin Green Line” and includes the IRF symbol. The name has a story. Some time ago, the English Army was involved in a desperate fight. Its last soldiers, who were dressed in red, formed a long thin line and were able to hold on. That became known as “The Thin Red Line.” Rangers are like that – they are the last line, the last barrier holding back those people who would exploit, trample or otherwise destroy the world’s last few unspoiled parks and protected areas and the plants and animals that live there. They are The Thin Green Line.

The second is the “date” of publication. The newsletter will still come out four times a year, but will be on a given month rather than by season. Ranger Andrew Nixon, president of the Victorian Rangers Association in Australia, has pointed out that the seasons are reversed in the southern hemisphere. When we have winter above the equator, you have summer below the equator, so it doesn't make sense to have a seasonal “date” for the newsletter. Thanks, Andrew. We in the Northern Hemisphere have learned an interesting lesson about global perspective.

In future editions of the newsletter, I would like to carry stories about rangers at work – their successes, their problems, their new ideas and innovations. Stories about the real, hard work done every day. One of my jobs for the U.S. National Park Service is to put together a daily newsletter that, among other things, tells the stories of rangers and the incidents they deal with in the parks – law enforcement, search and rescue, firefighting, and so forth. You can read it on the web at: <http://www.nps.gov/morningreport>. If you get a chance, you might look at it. Those are the sorts of stories we would like to print in The Thin Green Line. Send them to me at either of the following addresses: Bill_Halainen@nps.gov, or BHalainen@hotmail.com.

One last note: This newsletter comes out only in English because we have not yet been able to find anyone who will volunteer to translate it into other languages and because we can not afford to pay to have it translated. That means that those readers who are not native speakers of English must do the translations themselves. Those of us who are native English speakers must therefore write in clear, simple English whenever possible and avoid use of special terms and jargon. We owe it to our friends in non-English-speaking countries.

Bill Halainen
Editor
Association of National Park Rangers
United States

Invitation

Mikhail Paltsyn, science director for Katunsky Biosphere Reserve in Altai Republic, Russia, has sent along an invitation to IRF members to participate in an international conference called “Nature Reserves and Sustainable Development,” which will be held in Ust-Koksa in Altai Republic from July 25-28, 2001. To learn more about the reserve, visit this web site: www.wcmc.org.uk:80/protected_areas/data/wh/altai.htm. If you need additional information, please contact them.

Congress IV – Victoria, Australia, 2003

The committee organization the Fourth World Congress has now been established. There are six representatives from the Victorian Rangers Association and a representative from Parks Victoria, the Congress’s major sponsor. Of the six, four have been delegates to previous Congresses – Elaine Thomas, Fiona Smith and I were at Kruger and Tony Long was at the Congress in Costa Rica. The remaining two members are Joanne Hopkins and Graham Parkes. A number of other folks are helping out on subcommittees, including Andrew Markwick, who was at the First World Congress in Zakopane.

An advisory group from the Australian Rangers Association will also be providing some valuable ‘steering input’ to the congress organization, but the size of Australia and the cost of getting around will preclude regular on-site involvement.

The congress will likely start in the city of Melbourne, with a day and two nights there. It will provide an opportunity for many park staff from the state to meet delegates during the congress’s first day and night. The congress will then move to one of Australia’s and Victoria’s premier national parks – Wilsons Promontory. Delegates will spend five or six nights there. We will be booking out all roofed accommodation at the park, which is currently at around 270 beds. Further accommodation will be available in tented sites (established camps). Extra roofed accommodation is available outside the park, but the campground does have room for over 3,000 campers, so we should be right. No worries, mate !

The theme of the congress has yet to be formally decided, but the congress will have a 'practical' focus, with opportunity for delegates to participate in a wide variety of workshops. The location at Wilsons Prom is a beautiful coastal park. Since we are planning the congress for late March, ocean waters should still be great for swimming.

Our second meeting is coming up in early February, during the busy bushfire season. (At the moment, it's 41 C here in Melbourne – but don't let that concern you, as our average is 26 C). There's lots more to tell you; we will keep you updated in each IRF newsletter.

Andy Nixon
Congress IV Committee
Victorian Rangers Association
Australia

Training of Protected Area Staff (TOPAS)

IRF will be part of a training initiative with TOPAS (Training of Protected Area Staff), a European partnership which has successfully developed a bid for funding under the Leonardo II program. The training program development and testing covers three years, with an immediate start. The partners come from Italy, Iceland, Germany, the Czech Republic, Portugal, Slovenia, England and Austria, and are mostly from training centers and universities, although ranger representation both in the partnership and on the technical board is significant.

Up to nine training modules will be developed to include all protected area staff, although the ranger training course developed through the European Ranger Project will be a keystone to all training. The funding is 75% from the Leonardo II program and 25% from the partners, with a total budget of E730,000 [about £480,000 or US \$710,000]. The IRF element is to design and produce the first information leaflet and to use our contacts and databases to distribute it throughout Europe with the assistance of member associations. We will also be responsible for the organization of a suitable event to secure a wider knowledge of TOPAS by the general public and European institutions. The leaflet is being designed for us by Gunter Mitlacher of the German Rangers Association and the event is being prepared by IRF Consultancy.

A website is being developed in the Czech Republic and will be freely available to everyone to obtain information about the program and its results. A condition of the grant is that any work resulting from the program should be freely and easily available to all.

IRF will need to provide some matching funding or equivalent in staff time to fulfil the contract. This is not expected to be difficult or to present problems.

Thanks go to Heike Flemming of the German Rangers Association, who has represented IRF for the past two years in the development of this project, and to the team at the Internationaler Arbeitskreis Sonnenberg who have provided the secretariat and most of the hard work in ensuring that the project came to fruition.

IRF will benefit through the widening of our network in Europe, through enhanced partnerships assisting in the raising of professional standards, and through the development of ideas which may be adapted elsewhere in the world. TOPAS also paves the way for the continuation of the youth/ranger mentoring scheme that was tested as part of the European Ranger Project [a full report on that project is now available from Mike Marshall – preferably via email]. Further information about TOPAS is also available from Mike.

Mike Marshall
Countryside Management Association
England

Members' Web Sites

A new member's directory will be published in April and sent to you. Meanwhile, here's a short listing of all member association web sites. It includes the new site for the Scottish Countryside Ranger Association:

Australia	http://www.ranger.org.au
Canada	http://www3.ns.sympatico.ca/npwa
Czech	http://www.krnep.cz/asociace
Denmark	http://www.natur-vejleder.dk
England	http://www.countrysideassociation.org.uk (under construction)
Italy	http://users.iol.it/ecopol
Scotland	http://www.scotranger.freeserve.co.uk
United States	http://www.anpr.org
US - California	http://members.aol.com/csprweb/
Uruguay	http://geocities.com/custodios_uy

NEWS ABOUT IRF ASSOCIATIONS

Scottish Countryside Ranger Association (Scotland)

As we approach our annual general meeting (AGM), a great deal of our efforts are focused on the changes to our membership structure. We intend to introduce our new professional membership category at this meeting. The hope is that it will raise the profile and status of our members in the eyes of both our employers and the public. The package has been written and we are now fine tuning it to suit our members' requirements.

One of our members met with colleagues from Slovakia when they visited Clydemuirshield Regional Park. As a result of this visit, he intends to travel to Slovakia this year on a good will mission. We already have good links with this country and hope this will strengthen them further.

There is concern in Scottish rangers at the moment as more and more of the jobs in our sector are filled not with rangers but with various types of "project officers." The posts these officers fill are identical to the job description of a ranger, but for some reason the employing authority prefers the alternative title. Our concern is that this dilutes the public's perception of who they meet with in the countryside. They are used to dealing with rangers, but now have a new type of official to deal with. We are also concerned about how this will affect our membership and the career paths of our members.

This ties in with the forthcoming change in the legislation governing access to the Scottish countryside. Regular readers will know that this has been going on for a few years now, but we are about to have the bill go through our parliament. When this happens, we hope to have funds available to increase the number of rangers in Scotland, but as yet the politicians have to debate the bill and come up with the funding. There is concern that the whole structure may change, along with the name of the officers who deal with it. Most of those who have been asked feel that the logical choice for implementing the changes are rangers, but the final say is with our politicians.

I recently attended the annual conference of our sister organization, England's Countryside Management Association. This was part an arrangement which keeps the associations in the UK closely linked.

Finally, a reminder that our association magazine, SCRAMble, is available to anyone who wants it. The cost is £3 plus postage. Also keep in mind that our conference is at New Lanark this year, and runs from the 25th to the 27th of April.

Tony Wilson, Fife Ranger Service, Scotland

Countryside Management Association (England)

CMA is sharpening its image. In addition to its new professional membership category, which is constantly expanding, CMA's national magazine, Ranger, is now being produced in color. A web site is also under development. It is still under construction, but can be visited at www.countrysidemanagement.org.uk. Any constructive criticism will be appreciated. There is also a free e-group network, enabling members throughout England and Wales to communicate with each other.

Vicky Thomas, Grand Western Canal Country Park, England

Australian Ranger Association (Australia)

Seventeen rangers from the Western Directorate of New South Wales NPWS held a very successful three-day ranger conference in the historic homestead at Willandra National Park during the last week of November. The conference brought together rangers from a large part of the state, from Narrabri and Coonabarabran in the north east to Buronga and Tibooburra in the west and all points in between. The main aims of the conference were to promote networking among rangers working in isolated areas, provide updates on future management directions within the NPWS, and learn about interesting projects that rangers within the directorate have been working on.

The first day was taken up with speakers from the head office of the Western Directorate and Roger Lembit, president of the National Parks Association. On the second and third days, rangers gave presentations about projects they have been working on, including protection of threatened species like the brush tailed rock wallaby in Warrumbungle National Park and the Bathurst copper butterfly and malleefowl in Yathong Nature Reserve, soil stabilization in Mungo National Park, community biodiversity surveys, and aboriginal site protection in a popular picnic area.

Time was also spent discussing areas of concern affecting the day to day work of rangers. Some of these were contentious, some were not, but all the issues raised had suggested actions for their correction or resolution. These issues have since been presented to the Western Directorate's senior management team for further consideration, deliberation and action where possible.

While the 40+ Centigrade heat for the first couple of days necessitated the consumption of cold liquid refreshment after the day's business, later cooler weather allowed for an impromptu game of soccer, where not spilling your drink was more important than scoring or following the rules. Other highlights of the three days included a tour of Willandra NP, spontaneous night time concerts and great cooking by Susie Gardiner, who looked after us all in grand style.

Sometimes we all get so busy in our own little patch that it's easy to think we are doing it all on our own. The great thing about this conference was that we were once again reminded that most of the wheels have already been invented and used by someone else and that there is a lot of expertise and great work being done by rangers.

The conference was organized by a small committee of rangers (one from each region) and regional manager Ross McDonald, who kept the senior management team informed and on side. It was surprisingly easy to organize with everyone chipping in, and I strongly recommend that other rangers organize their own conferences. It's well worth the effort !

Steve Woodhall, Central West Region, New South Wales, Australia

Game Rangers Association of Africa (South Africa)

A very exciting event took place at the congress in Berg-en-dal when a Memorandum of African Continental Understanding was signed by almost all of the African delegates. So far, I have received feedback on progress from Dr Hamdy Oushy from Egypt, Mary Kisivuli from Kenya, Florence Sibanda from Namibia, Joachim Kouane from Ivory Coast, and Samson Essam from Cameroon. The good news is that Namibia, Kenya, Mozambique, Malawi, Ivory Coast, and Zambia are in the process of the formation of national associations, with Uganda and Tanzania to follow.

This is surely a good start and hopefully the momentum can/will be maintained. The year 2001 holds great promise for African ranger capacity building. This is also very much in line with the African renaissance initiative that was begun by President Mbeki of South Africa. The GRAA will be seeking support in this effort from the South African government.

IFAW will also be sponsoring certain African delegates to attend GRAA's annual general meeting this year at Hell's Gate on the shores of Lake St Lucia in South Africa.

Delegates to the congress received very valuable input and logistical support from the Honorary Rangers of the South African National Parks. The GRAA plans to launch an associate support base in 2001, based on the model of the honorary rangers. This support base should be made up of members of the public in general and should be spread as wide as possible across international boundaries.

The GRAA have now reached the point that it can no longer exist based on management by volunteers and elected committee members only. We need a full time office as soon as it possible. The establishing of a GRAA full time office is another project for 2001. Business plans have been drawn up and we hope to obtain support from some as yet unidentified source.

The Mozambique Conservation Agency approached the GRAA at the beginning of last year, requesting support to train their conservation staff up to mid-level management. Previously, the GRAA was also involved in training of field rangers in Gorongosa National Park. The business plan for this daunting project is in place with a total budget of \$3 million U.S. for the training of about 750 personnel over a three year period. If this is successful, we hope it can be repeated for other African countries who are also in need of training and capacity building.

Arrie Schreiber, Kruger NP, Republic of South Africa

UPCOMING EVENTS

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|----------------------------------|---|
| March 15-18, 2001 | California Parks Conference, California State Park Rangers Association (U.S.), Holiday Inn-Northeast, Sacramento, California, USA. |
| April 25 – 27, 2001 | Annual General Meeting, Scottish Countryside Ranger Association, New Lanark, Scotland. |
| September 3-6, 2001 | Joint Conference: Rangers Association of Ireland, Northern Ireland Countryside Staff Association, Scottish Countryside Ranger Association, and Countryside Management Association, Lancashire, England. |
| October 29 –
November 2, 2001 | 25 th Anniversary Rendezvous, Association of National Park Rangers (U.S.), Snow King Resort, Jackson Hole, Wyoming, USA. |
| July 31, 2002 | 10 th anniversary of the founding of International Ranger Federation, which took place at Loosehill Hall, Peak District National Park, England. |
| March, 2003 | IRF Fourth World Congress, Victoria, Australia |
| September 17-18, 2003 | World Parks Congress, Durban, South Africa |

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