



THE THIN GREEN LINE

NEWSLETTER OF THE INTERNATIONAL RANGER FEDERATION

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FEDERATION NEWS AND NOTES

President's Report

Fourth World Congress

I am pleased to report that the organizing committee of the Victorian Ranger Association in the state of Victoria, Australia, has established dates for the Fourth World Congress of the International Ranger Federation. The Congress will be held from March 21 to March 28, 2003 at Wilsons Promontory National Park. March was chosen as it is the time when the weather at the Prom (as the park is affectionately known) is the most stable. The tentative schedule looks like this:

- Friday, 21 March – Arrive in Melbourne with a welcoming function in Melbourne in the afternoon so that rangers from Australia who cannot attend the Congress will have the opportunity to meet their colleagues from other parts of the world.
- Saturday, 22 March – Travel to Wilsons Promontory Park via the scenic route.
- Sunday, 23 March – Congress Program
- Monday, 24 March – Congress Program
- Tuesday, 25 March – Field Trip
- Wednesday, 26 March – Congress Program
- Thursday, 27 March – IRF Business Day, Close of Congress
- Friday, 28 March – Departure

The Congress organizers will also be providing pre and post Congress tours and shadow rangers opportunities for interested participants. Organizers plan to focus the Congress program on the tasks that we rangers most commonly perform: protection, interpretation and resources management. If you have suggestions for program items, please contact Andy Nixon at anixon@parks.vic.gov.au or Elaine Thomas at ethomas@parks.vic.gov.au.

As I said in my last message, please begin to save your pounds, pennies or pesos. Not only will the Congress be interesting and give us a further chance to exchange ideas and establish contacts with rangers from other countries, it should also be fun! The Congress organizers are negotiating with the Australian Rangers Association on whether to use its website, www.ranger.org.au, or create a separate site for Congress information and registration. We will let you know the address as soon as this issue is decided.

IRF Consultancy

In my last message, I told you a little about the IRF Consultancy. I have received the following communication from Mike Marshall, our former treasurer and one of the inspirations behind the Consultancy.

International Ranger Federation Consultancy Ltd. has now been registered as a company limited by guarantee in the UK. IRFC Ltd. will be the trading and business arm of IRF, with any surplus being transferred to IRF. The company is wholly owned by IRF with Rick Smith, Gordon Miller and Colin Dilcock as IRF's nominated directors, and Sue Clark as company secretary. Declan Keiley and Mike Marshall will be the working directors and will manage the business of the company. The first board meeting of directors will be held this month.

Two contracts are currently in progress – ranger training in Albania and the TOPAS European Project. The Albania contract will be completed in June, but TOPAS continues for three years. IRFC Ltd. will shortly have a website on which all relevant information will be available. However if you want more information about the company and its operation, please contact either Declan or Mike.

Mike can be contacted at Marshall.I.R.F@btinternet.com and Declan at keiley.broads@dial.pipex.com.

Trip to Mexico

On March 1st, I flew to Tuxtla Gutierrez, the state capital of Chiapas in Mexico. I was then transported to a training site, El Encajonado, near the Biosphere Reserve, El Ocote.

The training course is aimed at working field rangers and includes modules such as basic inventory and monitoring skills, fire control, first aid, identification of species, and conflict resolution. There were also field trips to nearby reserves. Rangers from El Salvador and Argentina attended as well as Mexican rangers from various parts of the country. The coordinator of a similar training course in Brazil also attended.

On the last day of the course, I presented information regarding the IRF and tried to encourage the formation of a Mexican national ranger association. The park rangers in the course established an organizing committee. This committee has as its main goal an investigation into whether there is sufficient interest among their colleagues to establish a national association. They gave the committee two months to complete the survey. The principal coordinator of the course, Marina Koller, will keep me informed of progress in this matter.

Mongolia

We have also heard from a contact in Mongolia requesting information regarding possible affiliation of Mongolian rangers with the IRF. This is a very preliminary contact. Our correspondent reported that most of the rangers in Mongolia are part time employees.

Ivory Coast

The President of the Game Rangers Association of Africa, Arrie Schreiber, and I have signed the official documents recognizing our newest affiliated member of IRF, the Ivory Coast. Congratulations to Joachim Kouamé and his colleagues in the Ivory Coast for their efforts in promoting the preservation and protection of that country's heritage. Joachim, the first president, can be reached at ahounze@yahoo.fr. Please write him and congratulate him on taking this important step toward the future. This affiliation is a direct result of our meeting in Kruger and the protocol that the African delegates signed prior to departing South Africa.

IRF Website

Our volunteer executive director, Gordon Miller, has informed me that IRF's website will be established soon. He and I have reviewed the information that we wish to post on the site. He is in final negotiations with a private company that will sponsor the site during its initial phases. Please contact Gordon with any ideas regarding the site. His email address is gmillereco@compuserve.com. In the meantime, you can read the latest IRF information on the Association of National Park Ranger of the US website at www.anpr.org, thanks to that organization's web manager, Teresa Ford. The information is available in Spanish and English.

Closing Thoughts

As we enter the 21st century, civilization is rapidly closing in on our remaining wild places and is increasingly careless about our cultural heritage. Our national parks and protected areas are evidence that people believe that some areas are so important and some values so eternal that they must be part of the legacy that we pass on to future generations. To compromise this legacy to meet the needs of the current generation would be to abuse our trust responsibilities to our children and to the species that share the planet with us. If, through the lack of a coordinated approach to resolving the issues of sustainable development, we allow these areas to become environmentally or historically impoverished, we will be guilty of not exercising appropriate stewardship of the legacy we received from previous generations. We simply must find a way to satisfy the needs of the current generation without squandering our legacy or abusing our trust responsibilities for the beings, including our children, who inhabit, or will inhabit, the planet. This is what the IRF, through its affiliated members, attempts to do. I am proud of all of you for choosing to help us achieve this goal.

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

Cuarto Congreso Mundial

Tengo el placer de informar que el comité organizador de la Asociación de Guardaparques de Victoria, del estado de Victoria, Australia, ha establecido la fecha para el 4to. Congreso Mundial de la Federación Internacional de Guardaparques. El congreso tendrá lugar desde el 21 al 28 de marzo de 2003, en el parque nacional Wilson's Promontory. Se eligió marzo porque es el momento en el que el tiempo en el "Prom" (como es parque es conocido afectuosamente) es más estable.

El programa temático se ve así:

- Viernes 21 – Llegada en Melbourne y una ceremonia de apertura en la ciudad para que los guardaparques de Australia puedan conocer a sus colegas de otros países.
- Sábado 22 – Viaje al parque nacional Wilson's promontory vía ruta escénica.
- Domingo 23 – Programa del Congreso.
- Lunes 24 – Programa del Congreso.
- Martes 25 – Salida de campo.
- Miércoles 26 – Programa del Congreso.
- Jueves 27 – Día dedicado a asuntos de la FIG y cierre del congreso.
- Viernes 28 – Partida.

Los organizadores también proveerán tours antes y después del congreso y oportunidades de trabajo voluntario para los participantes interesados.

Los organizadores planean focalizar el programa del congreso en las tareas que nosotros los guardaparques hacemos más comúnmente; protección, interpretación y manejo de recursos. Si Ud. tiene sugerencias para temas del programa, por favor contáctese con Andy Nixon en Anixon@parks.vic.gov.au o con Elaine Thomas en ethomas@parks.vic.gov.au.

Como dije en mi último mensaje, por favor comiencen a ahorrar sus libras, peniques o pesos. El Congreso no solamente va a ser interesante, y nos va a dar otro chance de intercambiar ideas y establecer contactos con guardaparques de otros países, también va a ser divertido. Los organizadores están negociando con la Asociación de Guardaparques de Australia si van a usar su página Web, www.ranger.org.au o si van a crear un sitio aparte para dar información sobre el congreso y registrarse. Les diremos la dirección tan pronto como el asunto esté decidido.

Consultoría De La Fig

En mi último mensaje les dije un poco sobre la consultoría de la FIG. He recibido la siguiente comunicación de Mike Marshall, nuestro anterior tesorero y uno de los inspiradores de la consultoría:

La consultoría de la FIG ha sido ya registrada como una compañía limitada con garantía en el Reino Unido. La IRFC, por sus siglas en inglés, será el brazo que negociará la FIG, con toda ganancia ha ser transferida a la FIG. La compañía es enteramente perteneciente a la FIG, con Rick Smith, Gordon Miller y Colin Dilcock nominados como directores por parte de la FIG y Sue Clark como la Secretaria de la Compañía. Declan Keiley y Mike Marshall van a ser los directores de trabajo y manejarán la compañía. La primera reunión del directorio será el 10 de abril. Dos contratos están ya prosperando, entrenamiento de guardaparques en Albania y el proyecto europeo TOPAS. El entrenamiento en Albania será completado en junio, pero TOPAS se extenderá por 3 años.

La FIG pronto tendrá una página Web donde estará disponible toda la información relevante. Pero si Ud. desea más información sobre la compañía y su operación, por favor contáctese con Declan o con Mike. Mike puede ser contactado en Marshall.I.R.F.@btinternet.com y Declan en keiley.broads@dial.pipex.com

Viaje A Mexico

El 1ro. de marzo volé a Tuxtla Gutiérrez, la capital del Estado de Chiapas en México. Luego fui transportado al sitio de entrenamiento, "EL encajonado", cerca de la reserva de Biosfera "El Ocote". El curso está dedicado para guardaparques de campo e incluye módulos tales como inventario básico y técnicas de monitoreo, control de fuego, primeros auxilios, identificación de especies y resolución de conflictos. Hubieron también salidas de campo a reservas vecinas. Asistieron guardaparques de El Salvador y Argentina, así como guardaparques mexicanos de varias partes del país y el coordinador de un curso similar en Brasil.

El último día del curso presenté información sobre la FIG y traté de impulsar la creación de una Asociación nacional de Guardaparques Mexicanos. Los guardaparques asistentes establecieron un comité organizador. Este comité tiene como objetivo principal investigar si hay suficiente interés entre sus colegas en establecer una asociación nacional. Se dieron dos meses al comité para completar dicha pesquisa. El principal coordinador del curso, Marina Koller, me mantendrá informado sobre los progresos en esta materia.

Mongolia

Hemos también tenido noticias de un contacto en Mongolia pidiendo información sobre la posible afiliación de los guardaparques de Mongolia a la FIG. Se trata de un contacto muy preliminar. Nuestro corresponsal reportó que la mayoría de los guardaparques de ese país son trabajadores de media dedicación. En algún lugar de esta edición de "La delgada línea verde" encontrarán la descripción de uno de sus guardaparques. Es una historia inspiradora.

Costa De Marfil

El Presidente de la asociación de los Guardaparques de África, Arrie Schrieber, e yo firmamos los documentos oficiales reconociendo a nuestro mas nuevo miembro: Costa de Marfil. Felicitaciones a Joachim Kouame y sus colegas de Costa de Marfil por sus esfuerzos en promover la preservación y la protección del patrimonio de aquel país. Joachim, el primer presidente, puede ser contactado en ahounze@yahoo.fr. Por favor escribanle y felicítenlo por dar ese importante paso hacia el futuro.

Pagina Web De La FIG

Nuestro voluntario Director Ejecutivo, Gordon Miller me ha informado que la página Web de la FIG será establecida pronto. El e yo hemos revisado la información que queremos poner allí. Él está con las negociaciones finales con una compañía privada que va a financiar el sitio durante la fase inicial. Por favor contacten a Gordon por cualquier idea referente al sitio Web. Su correo electrónico es gmillereco@compuserve.com. Mientras tanto Ud. puede leer la más última información sobre la FIG en la pagina Web de la Asociación de Guardaparques Nacionales de Estados Unidos www.anpr.org gracias a la organizadora del sitio, Teresa Ford. La información se encuentra en español y en inglés.

Pensamientos Para El Cierre

Al entrar el siglo 21, la civilización va acercándose rápidamente a los lugares silvestres que van quedando y está siendo cada vez mas descuidada con nuestro patrimonio cultural. Nuestros Parques Nacionales y Areas Protegidas son evidencia de que la gente cree que algunas áreas son tan importantes, que algunos valores son tan eternos, que tienen que formar parte del legado que pasemos a las generaciones futuras. Comprometer ese legado para cumplir con las necesidades de la presente generación sería abusar de la responsabilidad que tenemos sobre nuestros niños y las demás especies que comparten el planeta con nosotros.

Si debido a la falta de coordinación para resolver los problemas relativos al desarrollo sustentable, permitimos que esas áreas se vuelvan mas pobres ambientalmente e históricamente seremos culpables de no haber llevado bien el rumbo del legado que recibimos de las generaciones previas. Simplemente tenemos que buscar la forma de poder satisfacer las necesidades de la presente generación sin maltratar el legado o abusar de nuestras responsabilidades para con los seres, incluidos los niños que habitan o van a habitar el planeta. Esto es lo que la FIG, a través de sus miembros afiliados, trata de hacer. Estoy orgulloso de todos ustedes por haber elegido ayudarnos a alcanzar esta meta.

Rick Smith, Presidente
Federación Internacional de Guardaparques
Asociación de Guardaparques Nacionales
EEUU

Vice President's Report

I have received several letters from rangers asking IRF to finance their study in other countries. Many rangers around the world are in search of more knowledge and the recognition that a diploma often brings. An increase in the level of education of the "world ranger" is one of our objectives, but unfortunately we do not have budget for this. IRF is still very young. Perhaps in the future we will be able to help our colleagues with such support.

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

He recibido algunas cartas de guardaparques, pidiendo que la FIG financie sus estudios en otros países. Muchos buscan los conocimientos y el reconocimiento que les traería una diploma. Uno de los objetivos de la FIG es mejorar el nivel de educación de los guardaparques pero, desgraciadamente, todavía no tenemos un presupuesto para hacerlo. Acuérdense, por favor, que la FIG todavía es muy joven como organización. Tal vez en el futuro tengamos los fondos disponibles para ofrecer a nuestros colegas este tipo de ayuda.

Juan Carlos Gambarotta
Vicepresidente de la FIG
Asociación de Guardaparques y Guías de Naturaleza
Uruguay

Third World Congress Proceedings

The proceedings from the Third World Congress in Kruger National Park in September last year should be available by the time you read this note. All delegates who attended the Congress will receive a copy, probably by electronic mail.

Mike Marshall will also be producing printed copies for circulation to delegates who do not have access to email, to partner organisations, and to other bodies. If you have any special requests for a copy to be sent to an individual or organisation, please send me details. My email address is marshall.i.r.f@btinternet.com; my fax number is +44 1328 878951.

Mike Marshall
Director
IRF Consultancy

IRF Exchange Bureau

IRF is setting up an Exchange Bureau which will collect and collate information from individuals and organizations. This information will then be available to members of IRF member associations.

The Bureau will have two roles:

- It will provide a holding area/matching agency for those wishing to take part in a job exchange or study/learning visit to another country or park.
- It will offer a check list which will contain most things appropriate to any exchange.

To be able to provide this service, IRF needs the following information from you :

- Name
- Address
- Ranger association [if there is one in your country]
- Membership number [if applicable]
- Your email address
- Your fax number
- Type of exchange that interests you: Short visit? Long stay? How long?
- Are you able to host short visits to your park by other rangers? Yes / No
- Are you able to host long visits to your park by other rangers? Yes / No
- Which country/countries would you prefer to exchange with?
- Would your employer permit / support an exchange? Yes / No
- Is a work permit required for your country? Yes / No

Eventually the Exchange Bureau may include information about visa requirements and the specific details of hosting, i.e. room/room plus food/costs/donations to host, experience wanted/offered, etc.

The Exchange Bureau is just getting started, so any ideas, thoughts, suggestions, advice, or information about previous exchange experience will also be very welcome. Please send the information to Rob Ackrel (rob@ackrel.fsnet.co.uk).

NEWS ABOUT IRF ASSOCIATIONS

Bundesverband Naturwacht (Germany)

The following was prepared by Andy Collins, a member of England's Countryside Management Association (CMA):

At the end of March, thanks to the generosity of CMA and the Bundesverband Naturwacht, I was privileged to attend the latter organization's annual study seminar and annual general meeting (AGM) in the Harz Mountains. Although their Association is relatively new – only seven years old – they are already a thoroughly professional organization and a force to be reckoned with. Germany is a federation of states (Laender) and the Secretary of State for Planning, Economics and the Environment for the local Land (Sachsen Anhalt) gave a very positive and supportive key-note speech which, thanks to a press conference, was widely reported in the local media.

Many German rangers are active in the former East Germany, as the bulk of the country's protected areas were created there shortly before reunification, just over 10 years ago. Although perhaps, in the eyes of (former) West Germany, the East is still economically the poor relation, its rangers are taking the lead in creating a vibrant image for the profession. Unlike CMA, the Germans already have a professional ranger qualification which is recognized country-wide and delivered by training institutions in each Land. So I'm not sure how relevant my contribution (on CMA's introduction of a professional membership and CPD) was.

However, I was struck by the similarities between us and our German counterparts, in terms of the sort of people attracted into the profession, what we do, what we are seeking to achieve through our work and the dedication we all bring to it. As the seminar program said, "Other people's image of us is determined, primarily, by us ourselves," and German and English rangers are all working hard to ensure that we come across as friendly, sympathetic, reliable, creative and, above all, professional, mediators, facilitating people's greater understanding of the natural world around them.

In Brandenburg and Sachsen Anhalt, the two Laender I visited, that natural world is still immensely rich and varied (they have cranes, storks, eagles of all sorts and beavers, to name but a few of the more spectacular species) and I can't wait to get back.

Andy Collins, Bollin Valley Partnership, Cheshire/CMA Midlands Region, England

Asociacion de Guardaparques Argentinos (Argentina)

The Second National Congress of the Argentine Ranger Association – and the First Latin American Ranger Congress – will be held in Malargüe, Mendoza, from October 11th to the 14th. The organizing body is the Argentine Ranger Association; the co-sponsor is the International Ranger Federation. Congress secretary Laura Chazarreta can be reached at guardaparques@latinmail.com. There will be pre-Congress training on October 9th and 10th in the following fields:

- Introduction to Geographic Information Systems (GIS)
- Environmental Interpretation
- Conservation Biology
- Graphic Interpretation

There will be presentations on:

- Ranger Training in Latin America
- International Financing, a Bolivian case study Corridor of the Americas
- Economic Value of Natural Environments Biological Reserves
- Wetlands and the Ramsar Convention
- The System of Protected Areas in Mendoza The Natural Resources of Mendoza

There will be workshops on:

- The role of the conservation officer as extension agent indigenous communities
- The use of firearms
- Management of exotic species
- Protected area design
- Valley management

1er. Congreso latinoamericano de Guardaparques y 2do. congreso nacional de la Asociación de Guardaparques Argentinos. 11 al 14 de octubre de 2001, Malargüe, Mendoza. Organiza : Asociación de Guardaparques Argentinos. Auspicia : IRF. Secretaría del Congreso : Laura Chazarreta guardaparques@latinmail.com.

Cursos:9 y 10 de octubre:

- Introducción al Sistema de Información Geográfico Interpretación ambiental
- Biología de la conservación
- Interpretación Gráfica

Conferencias:

- La capacitación del guardaparque en América Latina. La financiación Internacional,el caso de Bolivia. Corredor de las américas.
- Valoración económica de los ambientes naturales. Reservas de Biósfera.
- Humedales, la Convención de Ramsar.
- Red de áreas protegidas de Mendoza.
- Recursos naturales de Mendoza.

Talleres:

- El rol del Agente de conservación como extensionista. Comunidades indígenas.
- Uso del arma.
- Manejo de especies exóticas.
- Diseño de áreas naturales protegidas. Yungas.

Rick Smith, President, IRF

Scottish Countryside Ranger Association (Scotland)

As you may be aware, our countryside is currently in the grip of foot and mouth disease. As part of the government's efforts to eradicate this disease, various restrictions have been put on the movement of livestock and people. Since rangers are involved with access to the countryside in most areas of Scotland, we are amongst the front line troops, helping to prevent the spread of the disease and giving advice to the public about which areas are open. Much of our usual workload for this time of year has had to be suspended and, in areas close to the infected parts of Scotland, most of our resources are now being used for projects related to controlling the disease.

Our role is to close access to areas already infected or with a chance of infection, and to open areas where there is little or no risk. There is still a great demand from the public to be able to go out and enjoy the countryside. We are trying to accommodate this and to open as much as we can. Our tourism industry is being affected by a lack of bookings, and we have to try to help them as much as we help the farmers. It's a busy and difficult time for us all.

One casualty of the crisis is our annual conference which has had to be postponed. We felt that because our members were busy with the disease, there would be a low attendance. We felt it would be better to have it later in the year, rather than risk it not being fully supported. Apart from this our main areas of concern at the moment are the latest consultation on the new access legislation – we have a meeting coming up to co-ordinate our response to that.

SCRA has also commented on the country's second national park, which is in the Cairngorms. We have already commented on that one. Coming up are the governments policy papers on natural heritage zones and protected areas. Its going to be a busy summer.

We still hope to send a member to Iceland for this summer's exchange. We do have one of our chaps going over there to give a presentation soon. There is also another member going to the Czech Republic to talk to their association. We may also be sending a delegation to Iceland in the autumn (that's the fall for our colonial friends) to help them celebrate the 25th anniversary of their association.

Our website (www.scotranger.freeserve.co.uk) is now up and running. Check it out for more news and contacts. If anyone wants to have a link put in, send the details to me at nefrs@craigtoun.freeserve.co.uk and I'll sort it out.

Tony Wilson, Fife Ranger Service, Scotland

Asociacion de Guardaparques del Uruguay (Uruguay)

Next month, our association will have elections, so I will stand down as president. During the period of my presidency, we achieved several things. The association was founded with a handful of rangers, now there are 25 associates. We trained 27 new rangers and the president of the country was present at the end of the training course. We stopped the search for gold in a provincial park. Most importantly, people now know what a ranger is and why we are necessary, why parks are necessary.

But things are not easy. Poaching is rampant, and even policemen are sometimes afraid to confront poachers at night. The motor of my patrol boat was stolen two times in a year. And we are still working without the frame of a law. Things are not easy, but we will keep working.

Juan Carlos Gambarotta, Uruguay

Game Rangers Association of Africa (South Africa)

The GRAA held a very successful seminar at Hell's Gate on the Western Shores of Lake St Lucia in the KwaZuluNatal province of South Africa in February. The main theme was World Heritage Sites, as Greater St Lucia Wetlands Park has been so designated. What was unique about this meeting is the fact that four delegates from Kenya and one from Namibia also attended, thanks to sponsorship by IFAW. Arrie Schreiber was re-elected as the chairperson during the AGM that followed the seminar.

Prawn poachers are currently targeting Lake St Lucia and rangers are in constant danger. These poachers are normally armed with automatic rifles and do not hesitate to use their weapons. The GRAA plans to address this situation through the IRF in the near future to drum up support for the conservation effort.

As a direct outflow of the GRAA African Initiative, a new portfolio was established in the GRAA Central Committee (GRAACC) and will be managed by Barrie Barnes. The Ivory Coast became the first national association of rangers and is known as Game Rangers Association of Cote d'Ivoire, or GRACI. Their president is Joachim Kouhame. The affiliation process with IRF has been completed and GRACI has become the newest member of IRF. Congratulations to GRACI and welcome in the international fold of rangers! Other African countries also in the process include South Africa itself, Kenya, Egypt, Cameroon and Namibia.

An initiative called the Associated Support Base has been approved by the GRAACC and will probably be launched in March next year in the Kruger National Park in South Africa. The aim of this exercise is to recruit corporate members and also to create a body within the associated members of the GRAA similar to the honorary rangers of the South African National Parks. Those of you who attended the Third World Congress in the Kruger National Park last year will recall the valuable supporting role that these people played.

The plight of conservation and the game ranger in Africa was highlighted during the Congress, and out of this the idea of a ranger relief program was born. One of the pressing needs identified at the time was a shortage of game ranger uniform and/or equipment in certain African countries. The American and Australian delegates at the congress undertook to gather new and used uniforms for distribution as and where required in Africa.

The Australian Ranger Association has put together a consignment of over two tons of new ranger clothing and uniforms for distribution to needy African rangers. This consignment has been shipped to South Africa; costs were picked up by the Australian Ranger Association. Thank you very much, Australia! The consignment arrived safe and sound.

A GRAA business plan was drawn up for the training of rangers in Mozambique at the request of the Mozambican Department of Wildlife and Forestry. The fundraising drive has been initiated and hopefully the training can start during 2001. Some 750 rangers need to be trained up to middle management levels. The uniform donation from Australia has been earmarked for this project.

The GRAA would like to request that future donations first of all be cleared with the GRAA before sending it to Africa. The importation costs involved is normally very high and solutions for obstacles like this must be found before the equipment is shipped. A needs assessment is currently in the process on the African continent in this regard.

Very exciting conservation news on the African continent is that the different countries have reached agreement on the Trans Frontier Conservation Area (TFCA) between South Africa, Zimbabwe and Mozambique. The core area will include areas like the Kruger National Park in South Africa, Coutada in Mozambique and Gonarezou in Zimbabwe. The surface area will be approximately 5 million hectares in size! Plans are already in place to translocate animals such as African elephants, to train rangers, and to develop needed infrastructure.

GRAA activities in South Africa for the near future include a golfing day (Rangers Challenge) in Phalaborwa to the west of Kruger National Park. Interesting prizes will be on offer. There are also plans to have a stand at the winter game festival in July at a place called Swadini, also in the Eastern Lowveld near Kruger. The aim is to raise much-needed funds and also to expose the GRAA to the public in general. Both days promises to be lots of fun as well. Anybody interested?

A closing note: GRAA has presented its “Norman Deane Trophy for Excellence” to David Zeller for his “display of courage and determination under extremely difficult circumstances.” During the millennium floods that struck the area in February, 2000, David placed his own life at risk to save Carol and David Hughes of Sabie Park from the roof of their holiday home. Entering the treacherous waters, David led the way and brought the grateful couple to safety. During the hours that followed, David went the extra mile and saved many belongings of other members at Sabie Park, entering the flood waters time and again to negotiate the best escape route.

Arrie Schreiber, Kruger NP, Republic of South Africa

Asociace Strazcu Prirody CR (Czech Ranger Association)

The Czech Ranger Association is holding its annual meeting at the end of this month in Podyji National Park. Colleagues from the Slovak Ranger Association, Romania, Scotland and England attended. A report will appear in the July issue.

Michal Skalka, Sprava NP Krkonose, Czech Republic

RANGERS AROUND THE WORLD

Latvia

Following their return from the Third World Congress, Valdis Pilats and Maris Mitrevics were involved in the organization of an exhibition of African wildlife in the Nature Museum of Latvia. The publicity in the media included information about their visit to Africa and about IRF. The opening ceremony included the playing of music on African drums. Valdis is now working on a two-year project funded by the Danish government – the development of the Latvian Environmental Interpretation Service.

Oman

Rick Smith and Juan Carlos Gambarotta received this letter from colleague Keith Swenson, currently working in Mongolia. Keith writes about an extraordinary ranger he knew while working in Oman – a story worth sharing with all:

“Thank you for your encouraging words. As you know working in developing countries can be difficult. A lack of infrastructure, government will and qualified people sometimes make for a frustrating experience. It certainly doesn't make me feel like a hero, but I do know a couple.

“If the International Ranger Federation were to ever recognize or give awards to outstanding rangers, there is one man I know who deserves to be credited for his work and dedication to the job. I consider him one of the few 'Great Men' I've met in this work. His name is Al Loti bin Saeed bin Musabha Al Harsusi, or just 'Loti' and is a ranger with the White Oryx Project in the Arabian Oryx Sanctuary in the Sultanate of Oman.

“Loti first came to the attention of the park management when looking for a person to fill a new position patrolling for and observing Nubian ibex. They inhabit the eastern portion of the Arabian Oryx Sanctuary, along a great and beautiful escarpment. The story goes that a previous field manager put out the word they were looking for an ibex ranger. Loti showed up at headquarters and said he had an ibex in the back of his small Toyota truck. The field manager said he wasn't looking for dead ibex, but Loti assured him it was very much alive. When Loti heard about the ibex job, he stalked a male ibex at a water hole, wrestled it to the ground, tied it up and brought it to headquarters to show he knew ibex and where to find them. He was hired on the spot.

“When I worked with Loti he was one of my best rangers. He lives alone in the area he patrols, an escarpment and depression within the Arabian Oryx Sanctuary. No wife, no children. He sleeps outside year round using tent nor shelter to block his view of the desert stars. He keeps a few camels to supplement with milk, his diet of dates, coffee and the occasional goat. Loti is still a true Bedouin, living close to the land.

“Loti doesn't read or write in his tribal language of Harsusi, or Arabic, the national language. People would say he is an uneducated man. But, I've seen him track oryx for tens of kilometers through the deserts varied and difficult terrain, name different plants and their uses and crack open a rock and ask me how old I thought it was and how it was formed. He already had his ideas. When Arabian wolves pulled down an older male gazelle, Loti showed me the sign and tracks in the desert where the wolves chased the gazelle, first hit it and then took it down. As always, he was delighted to show me the world in which he lived. Walking along with him, I was like a child and he was just turning the pages of a fascinating book, showing me the signs in the desert and making it very clear. I could easily see the story and I learned a lot. We tracked a caracal lynx in the same way and once tracked poachers for more than 150 kilometers on the barest of signs, right to their camp. Tracking and confronting poachers is something we did all too often together.

“During my years as field manager for the White Oryx Project, poaching became very serious and just about wiped out the wild oryx for a second time in 30 years. We finally put an end to it by working closely with the Sultan's Special Forces. Through that time though, Loti patrolled mainly alone, confronted more poachers than the other rangers, who worked in pairs, and was threatened with violence on many occasions. Indeed, there were a number of exchanges of gunfire. The same problems many African parks are familiar with. Loti never wavered from his position, patrolled his ground, and as an 'uneducated man' just knew how to be a ranger. When the rest of the ranger force were frustrated and depressed from the loss of animals and the difficult task of protecting them, Loti was their model. He was always quick with encouragement and his infectious laugh. When the situation looked dark, Loti was the sunshine that kept the task at hand in focus.

“Loti is one of these guys you can always rely on for his work in the desert. As one of the most honorable men I know, he could look straight in the hearts of others and know what kind of a person they were. He never asked for much, but was out there seven days a week doing his job of protecting the wildlife in the sanctuary. I must admit, at times I was worried for his life. He could stand up to the most violent of poachers and yet be extraordinary with school groups that would visit the sanctuary. Showing kids, in his way, the natural desert that he lived in.

“I say he is extraordinary, but so were most of the rangers there I worked with. They lived close to the land, had amazing tracking abilities, were good wildlife observers and could live in the harsh desert conditions. But Loti was head and shoulders above them all, humble and well respected. I could go on, there is a lot to say about this man. But, if ever the IRF does recognize individual rangers for their work, Loti is my nomination. He truly is a hero for conservation.

“I am very glad to have contact with the International Ranger Federation and now that I'm working in Mongolia, will do what I can to lift the standards of ranger work here. Again, thanks for the encouragement.”

UPCOMING EVENTS

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| 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 11-14, 2001 | Second National Congress of the Argentine Ranger Association and First Latin American Ranger Congress, Malargüe, Mendoza, Argentina. Contact: Laura Chazarreta at guardaparques@latinmail.com or Marcelo Ochoa at Olrog@arnet.com.ar . |
| 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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