



INTERNATIONAL RANGER FEDERATION NEWSLETTER

Winter-Spring, 2000

Volume 7

Number 1

IRF News

President's Report

The year 2000 has arrived and the Kruger Congress beckons, with almost 300 delegates registered already (see the Congress report below). Treasurer Mike Marshall recently returned from a meeting with the GRAA Congress committee and Merle White of Mpumalanga Promotions, the Congress organizer. Group members are working hard to make this a memorable Congress. UNESCO's World Heritage Committee recently approved a grant of over \$25,000 to support delegates from World Heritage Sites. Jane Zimmerman, a professional fundraiser, is also working hard to raise funds for delegates and other Congress support. As before, fundraising has proven difficult, and we cannot rely on previous sources for support. I urge member associations to pursue potential sources of funding in their respective countries so that we can help our less affluent colleagues from the developing world.

Gradual progress is being made in increasing our membership base by seeking contacts in existing ranger associations and encouraging the formation of associations in those countries that lack representative organizations. Vice President Rick Smith and South American Representative Juan Carlos Gambarotta have been working hard in that continent, with Argentina becoming the latest and most significant association to recently apply for membership. Following efforts made by European Representative Vlado Vancura and myself, we've finally received word that Russian rangers have formed an association, and that Hungarian rangers are keen to follow. In Eastern Europe, the Slovak and Czech Ranger Associations have met to discuss closer cooperation. We otherwise continue to make slow progress on new member contacts, but recent information from Southeast Asia gives grounds for optimism in that quarter.

The response to the request for short annual reports from member associations has been disappointing. The information requested is important if the IRF annual report is to have any real significance. The strength of the Federation lies in its member associations and the shared knowledge of what each is achieving in meeting the needs and aspirations of our "grass roots." I would urge member associations who have not responded to do so as soon as possible so that we can produce a comprehensive report of our activities.

The need to fund basic Federation activities over the long term continues to be a priority. A business plan is being prepared to help us target potential support. Meanwhile, we continue to build on our relationships with other partners and potential collaborators.

The loss of life of more rangers in protected areas and the continuing and devastating loss of wildlife, particularly in Africa, continue to be major issues that the Federation must address. These issues will be discussed at Kruger, but we are also looking at ways in which action can be taken sooner with other international organizations and agencies. Feedback from member associations will be vital if we are to make a meaningful contribution to action.

The Federation provides the only worldwide forum for rangers in protected areas to address issues which concern them in day to day operations and to bring such issues to the notice of international agencies and governments. I encourage member associations to share their concerns with other member associations and to use their IRF International Executive Council representative to broaden discussion. There is a wealth of experience throughout the Federation – we should strive continuously to unleash its potential for the benefit of all.

A World Congress every three years provides an excellent opportunity to put issues on the world stage, but it will only provide that opportunity for a few fortunate delegates. Local, regional and continental gatherings are equally important and will provide greater opportunities for individual rangers to influence the way forward.

Last November, I was invited to Australia to address the annual meeting of the Australian Rangers Association in Darwin, Northern Territory, a conference also attended by Rick Gale of the U.S. Association of National Park Rangers, who shared his extensive experience in fire management with delegates. The meeting provided an excellent opportunity to meet with Kristen Appel and her colleagues and discuss a potential bid from Australia to host the Fourth World Congress in 2003. I also visited the state of Victoria, where I attended a meeting of the Victoria Rangers Association and met with Mark Stone, the chief executive of Parks Victoria. I have no doubts that Australia could provide an excellent location for the Congress, and Parks Victoria has expressed a willingness to support the Congress in that state. We await a decision from the Australian Rangers Association on a definitive bid.

Gordon Miller
President

Vice President's Report

I spent three weeks in January working for the Interamerican Development Bank in South America – a week each in Uruguay, Argentina and Chile. During the trip, I got to do some IRF work on the side.

I spent some time with Juan Carlos Gambarotta in Uruguay and met some of the graduates of the recent park ranger course that Juan Carlos organized. IRF was listed as a co-sponsor. Six or seven of the graduates had been hired on a temporary basis by protected area managers by the time I left the country.

In Argentina, I met with Salvador Vellido, the new president of the Argentine Ranger Association. The rangers are very well respected by other employees in park administration, since the ranger's work stoppage last summer and fall evidently convinced the administration to rehire the technical employees that it had been forced to fire.

In Chile, I met with some rangers and talked with them about affiliation. Juan Carlos will be contacting them. CONAF (the Corporacion Nacional Forestal), which runs the protected areas in Chile, has just created a park ranger corps. This should help provide ranger there with better identity and give them access to their leadership.

One of the recommendations that the consultants are making to the Interamerican Development Bank is that it fund a six-country study of the park ranger profession. The countries would be Brazil, Bolivia, Argentina, Paraguay, Chile and Uruguay. This study would look at issues such as training, career ladders, compensation, educational requirements and the like. This would be the first time that such an international lending organization would look at our profession in an analytical fashion.

Rick Smith
Vice President

Third World Congress Update

The Congress is now fully subscribed. Approximately 300 delegates and 30 accompanying persons are expected. Specific information on travel and other arrangements has been sent to each delegate. The program for the Congress has largely been completed.

Highlights of each day follow:

- September 11 – Welcoming ceremonies, keynote address on area integrity, a late afternoon demonstration of game capture equipment, and an evening welcome function.
- September 12 – An early morning game drive, keynote address on communities, an evening game drive, and formal and informal evening presentations by delegates.
- September 13 – Full-day field trip through the southern region of Kruger National Park.
- September 14 – An early morning game drive, keynote addresses on ecotourism and business, an evening game drive, and more evening delegate presentations.
- September 15 – An early morning game drive, report by the chairman, Congress resolutions, a presentation on a Congress in Australia in 2003, an evening game drive, and continuing evening presentations.
- September 16 – Morning and evening game drives and an IRF program.

A number of pre-Congress tours, each four to five days long, will also be offered, and there will be programs for accompanying persons. The latter include game drives and cultural and arts tours.

Delegates with any questions should contact the Congress secretariat by phone or fax at 27-13-735-5195 or via email at merle@mpu.co.za.

Merle Whyte
Congress Organizer

IRF President To Address UNESCO

President Gordon Miller has been asked to present a keynote speech on behalf of IRF to the initial meeting of the UNESCO World Heritage International Task Force in Paris in April.

The meeting will bring together representatives of all the major organizations in world heritage matters to discuss an action program for “capacity building for outreach, natural heritage, networking, education, cooperation and training.”

This should lead to a five-year program concerned with climate change, partnerships, international conservation conventions, capacity building, communications, sustainable use, and outreach programs.

New Ranger Association

Natalia Danilina has sent along a note announcing the formation of a Russian ranger association, called Partnership for Zapovedniks and National Rangers. The main aims of the organization are to give law support, provide social help, and arrange exchanges for inspectors in Russian protected areas.

The first meeting was on December 27th. Dr. Yury Gorshkov, director of Volga-Kama Zapovednik, was elected as president of the organization (he can be reached at raifa@online.kzn.ru); Michael Volkov, a young lawyer, was elected as executive director of the Partnership (dgo@sci.smolenck.ru). Natalia is also one of the founders and a member of the Partnership council.

News About IRF Associations

Asociace Strazcu Prirody CR (Czech Republic) – Michal Skalka

The board of the Czech Ranger Association met in January in Prasily, Sumava NP, and conferred about these items:

1. The chairmen of the Czech Ranger Association and the Slovak Ranger Association prepared an agreement on cooperating to increase professional standards, members and activities for both association.
2. A catalogue or list of scholarships will be prepared. Reciprocal scholarships will be available. Parts of this catalogue will appear in the newsletters of the two associations.
3. A leaflet about ranger service and the Czech Ranger Association will be prepared in electronic format.
4. The association will try to joint the two-year-long European Ranger Project, funded by the Johan Jacobs Foundation (see last issue for details).
5. In case it proves impossible to undertake a joint project with the Danish Ranger Association, the Czech Ranger Association will try to manage similar projects in Europe for about ten of our members.
6. Two badges will be developed with the association logo and the Czech work for “ranger” on each.
7. The next meeting will be in a new national park – Labske Piskovce – in 2001.
8. A handbook for rangers will be prepared by a small group of rangers.
9. The second edition of the association’s newsletter, Zpravodaj, has been finished. It will be printed this month and released at <http://www.krnap.cz/asociace>.

National Park Wardens Association (Canada) – Mark Halley

In 1997, a private company conducted a study of Canadian wardens in Alberta to determine whether they thought it would be safer for them to enforce the laws if they were able to carry handguns. They found that a majority of wardens thought that not having a hand gun lessened their ability to protect the public.

This report was submitted to Parks Canada. Tom Lee, the chief executive officer for Parks Canada, has nonetheless denied wardens the right to carry guns and told an Ottawa newspaper that wardens could stay home if they didn’t like the decision. NPWA has called the decision “unacceptable” and has received support from national media, the North American Wildlife Law Enforcement Officers’ Association, IRF and other organizations.

Bundesverband Naturwacht e. V. (Germany) – Heike Flemming

The German Ranger Association now has 132 members. One or two will be delegates to the Congress in South Africa. Some areas of Germany provide further education for forest and agricultural workers so that they can become rangers. Because of changes in forestry and budget cuts, many workers will be losing their jobs and hoping to find an occupation within nature protection and landscape management. We therefore have to be careful to assure that the ranger profession will not be watered down. That’s why the title for the association’s annual conference in March is “Rangers in Germany: Between Animation and Restriction.”

Countryside Management Association (England/Wales) - Vicky Thomas

The chairman of CMA attended the Scottish Countryside Ranger Association’s annual general meeting in February; the vice chairman attended the Northern Ireland Countryside Staff Association’s annual general meeting, which was also attended by members of the Ranger Association of Ireland. The four associations hope to meet together in 2001, hopefully to be followed by a meeting of European ranger associations in 2002.

There’s also a lot of networking going on. CMA members are hosting rangers from elsewhere in parks in the UK – Albanians at The Broads, Indians at Epping Forest, Portugese in the Peak District. IRF literature is currently being distributed in Cuba, Malaysia and India.

Naturvardarna (Sweden) – Thomas Hansson

Swedish rangers will hold their general assembly and yearly seminar on ranger work at Faernebofjaerden National Park from November 15 to 17. The park is not far from Stockholm if anyone wants to visit and join them.

Scottish Countryside Ranger Association (Scotland) – Tony Wilson

SCRA has managed to raise around \$1,500 to help the Nigerian ranger service send a delegate to the Congress in South Africa. This was done by way of a sponsored climb on a climbing wall. The wall and an artificial cave system were loaned to SCRA by kind permission of the Scottish Scout Association. We had a thoroughly enjoyable day and managed to help some of our colleagues in Africa.

We are currently exploring links with the UK/US Countryside Exchange Scheme and the Department for International Development. The hope is to see if these agencies can help us with various overseas projects. We'd like to build some bridges, which may come in useful in the future.

Several members are investigating exchanges with a number of countries through contacts with IRF. If these come off, we'll report them here. Scotland hopes to run three pilot projects for the European Ranger Project's new award scheme aimed at helping disaffected youth. We hope to run these over the first few months of 2000 along with several other European nations. If successful, they may become the basis of a larger-scale project.

Just a reminder that SCRA's annual conference is in St. Andrews (the home of golf) from April 5-7. Delegates from Ireland, England and Iceland will be attending; we'll be only too happy if anyone else wants to come. This year's theme is "The Water of Life", with sessions focusing on conservation, interpretation/education and mediation of our freshwater and marine resources.

Slovak Rangers Association (Slovakia) – Vlado Vancura

SRA's international activities continue. In the past, SRA organized a number of international meetings with the goal of expanding the IRF idea to nearby countries – Hungary, Poland and the Czech Republic. The last meeting of the executive bodies of the Slovak and Czech Ranger Associations was held jointly in Sumava National Park in the Czech Republic. This meeting was only the next step in long-term mutual cooperation between these two associations.

At the meeting, members of the two organizations talked about such important issues as future mutual cooperation, participation at Slovak/Czech ranger meetings, coordination of mutual activities concerning presentation of associations at the Third World Congress, etc. It was agreed that all these issues will be included in the formal agreement of cooperation which should be signed this coming summer.

Frosty but sunny weather provided a wonderful frame for this successful meeting. After the official meeting, our Czech hosts organized a study excursion to the park for the Slovak rangers. Sumava NP is a bilateral protected area which has achieved great progress since the velvet revolution in former Czechoslovakia in 1989. For Slovak rangers, it was a great experience to learn how things can be done and how differently parks are received by the Czech parliament and government.

Naturvejlederforeningen I Danmark (Denmark) – Ida Marie Jensen

Hello to friends all around. Thank you for some very good times in Poland and Costa Rica, where I met many of you at interesting, friendly and joyful Congresses. I have been working on getting more rangers in Denmark interested in IRF. It has now succeeded and four or five rangers from Denmark will be attending the Congress in Kruger. Best wishes to all for a good Congress. Peer Norgard will be taking over for me as the new representative for our association.

Upcoming Events

March, 2000	Annual Conference, Bundesverband Naturwacht.
March 1-3, 2000	Annual General Meeting, Naturvejlederforeningen I Danmark, Denmark. The theme is "About Life Quality, Success and Development: Which Target Group Will We Meet Beyond 2000 and Which Meaning Does It Have for Us Rangers?"
March 7-10, 2000	Conference, California State Park Rangers Association, San Rafael, California, USA.
March 14-18, 2000	Ranger Rendezvous, Association of National Park Rangers, Hyatt Regency Hotel, Knoxville, Tennessee, USA.
April 5-7, 2000	"Uisge Beatha: The Water of Life," Annual Training Course and Conference, Scottish Countryside Ranger Association, St. Andrews University, Scotland.
April 14-16, 2000	Meeting, Czech Rangers Association, Podyji National Park, Znojmo, Moravia. <au be held from May 4 to May 6.
September 10-16, 2000	IRF Third World Congress. Kruger National Park, Republic of South Africa.
November 15-17, 2000	Annual General Assembly and Seminar, Naturvardana (Swedish Ranger Association), Faernebofjaerden National Park.