

SCRAMBLE

SCOTTISH COUNTRYSIDE RANGER ASSOCIATION MAGAZINE ISSUE 124 SUMMER 2023



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International edition 2023

International – one of my personal favourite SCRA topics – though I am certainly biased as a past SCRA International Rep, from 2016-2022.

Just yesterday, I attended (albeit virtually) the funeral service of Gordon Miller, a keystone figure in the formation of the International Ranger Federation (IRF), and the first IRF President. The service was beautiful, with many Rangers in attendance, and of course speaking fondly of Gordon and his many adventures, his commitment to the global Ranger cause, and of course his love of a good pun. The service was a reminder to me of the kindness and generosity of the wider International Ranger Community, and our ability to come together, even in the saddest of times, to celebrate and share our memories and stories.

My own International Rangering experiences all started with an application to represent SCRA at the 8th IRF World Ranger Congress in Estes Park, Colorado, in 2016. In doing so, I took on the role of SCRA International Rep, and since then I've played host to visiting Rangers, fundraised to send a Malawian Ranger to the 9th IRF World Ranger Congress in Nepal, attended an annual conference of the Countryside Management Association (CMA) – our counterparts south of the border, hung out with Icelandic Rangers (our associations are twinned) in a dark hut to celebrate their association's 40th anniversary, and flown to Denmark with only 2 weeks' notice to take part in some workshops arranged by the European Ranger Federation (ERF). All the while making more friends and

contacts from all over the world.

For me, these experiences have really influenced my own confidence and progression, and I'm keen for others to have these same opportunities as far as possible. Obviously such opportunities took a bit of a nosedive over the last few years, however, as more opportunities start to trickle through again, SCRA is determined to have more Scottish Rangers taking part on the International Ranger scene, and supporting them to do so where we can.



Closer to home, the Rendezvous working group is also scheming and plotting for our next Ranger Rendezvous, which will take place in November 2024, alongside our 50th Anniversary celebrations, so keep your diaries free and join us for a great few days of networking, skill-sharing, and celebrating our beloved profession.

Finally, let's not forget World Ranger Day on Monday 31st July, where the International Ranger Community comes together to celebrate the vital work that we do and, importantly, remember all those who have sadly lost their lives in the line of duty.

As always, please remember to make some time for some self-care and relaxation, and what better way than having a gander at this fabulous collection of articles from our International friends! Enjoy!

Kate Elliott,
SCRA Chair

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NB. Snippets will no longer be included in SCRAMble. Please head to the new SCRA website for the new, upcoming 'News' section for Rangering news.

SUBMISSIONS We welcome submissions at any time to include in SCRAMble. These can be: case studies of successful management techniques/projects, articles on relevant countryside management topics, news from your site, letters about relevant topics, opinions about current issues.

PHOTOGRAPHS We are always looking for good quality images to use in our articles or simply to showcase the variety of habitats, flora and fauna in Scotland. We also are interested in seeing images of Rangers, and other staff, doing their everyday jobs. If you are happy to share your pictures, please get in touch. The deadline for the next issue is 23rd October 2023. For more information and to submit your articles and photos, email Emma Parker at SCRAMblemag@gmail.co.uk



A Summer in the *Subantarctic*



Macquarie Island Station and the Isthmus from North Head.

Kaely Kreger, formerly of the Parks and Wildlife Service, Tasmania

Come with me, dear reader. Travel, in your mind, south of Australia, south of Tasmania... south, between the waves, accompanied by Albatross, halfway to Antarctica. There! A sudden sliver of land in the vast Southern Ocean. This is Macquarie Island, an island of wonder, dreams, and millions of seabirds...

Last austral summer, I spent 5 months working as a Ranger on remote subantarctic Macquarie Island. Macquarie Island lies 1,500 km south of Tasmania. It is 35km long by 5km wide, surrounded by a vast ocean exceedingly rich in marine life. The island is 54 degrees south and lies in the path of the Furious Fifties, an intense westerly wind belt. The island is World Heritage listed for two reasons. The first: it is geologically unique; an island formed from the uplifted oceanic ridge between the Pacific and Australian plates, and the only place in the world where rocks



Macquarie Island Cabbage (*Stilbocarpa polaris*) flowers.

formed 5-6km below the Earth's surface are exposed in their original

geological location. The second: the island demonstrates "superlative natural phenomena or areas of exceptional natural beauty and aesthetic importance". The dramatic escarpments, undulating plateau and coastal terraces form a spectacular backdrop for enormous congregations of seabirds and Seals. An estimated 3.5 million seabirds and 80,000 Elephant Seals breed on the island each year.

Macquarie Island entered my imagination more than 10 years ago, when a friend of a friend gave a slideshow from their PhD fieldwork on the island. I already



Curious King Penguins at Sandy Bay, a tourist landing location on the relatively sheltered eastern side of the island.

loved and was drawn to remote, cold places, like the Tasmanian highlands. Suddenly, before me, were images of the most extraordinary plants and landscapes. One plant looked like an enormous Geranium, with dinner-plate sized leaves (I later found out *Azorella polaris* is more closely related to Parsley and Celery).

I was intrigued by the way these plants had evolved and adapted to live so exuberantly in such a harsh environment. The photographs of sedate Seals and elegant Albatross, though more familiar, were no less wonderful. From that moment, supporting conservation on the island became a lifelong, though remote dream.

The island's history features many highs and lows. Beginning in 1810, humans, bent on profiting from pelts and oil, almost wiped-out Fur Seals, Elephant Seals and Penguins. The island became a focal point for research in 1911-14, when the Australian Antarctic Expedition, led by Sir Douglas Mawson, established the first research station. Mawson's advocacy accelerated the end of commercial exploitation in 1919 and led to the island being declared a wildlife sanctuary in 1933. However, formal protection did not prevent the

devastating impacts of invasive species. Two or possibly three endemic bird species were lost due to Cat and Weka (a predatory bird) predation. Following the successful eradication of Weka and Cats, Rabbit numbers surged in the 2000s, devouring the megaherbs and soft



Pleuro (*Pleurophyllum hookeri*) in flower above Sandy Bay.

tussocks that held the steep slopes together. This devastation once again led to sustained advocacy, and in 2007 the most ambitious vertebrate eradication program ever undertaken

began. By 2014, the island was declared Rabbit, Rat and Mouse free. The island's vegetation and wildlife have since recovered dramatically.

“Two, or possibly three endemic bird species were lost due to *Weka* and cats”

Tussock has thickened, improving habitat for burrowing Petrels, though impeding researchers traversing the island! The charismatic megaherbs Macquarie Island Cabbage (*Azorella polaris*) and *Pleurophyllum hookeri* once again adorn the slopes.

The dream of Macquarie Island remained but seemed to float out of reach, as I gained experience in remote area ecology and Ranger work in Tasmania and New Zealand. Then, last spring, I was offered a provisional spot as a Summer Ranger on the island. After an overwhelming whirlwind of medical testing, life logistics, and four days sailing south, I joined the small Ranger team of two on the island.

My overwhelming impression upon first seeing the island was the fragility of the human presence. The station is built on a narrow isthmus, close to sea level, on an active tectonic boundary. An earthquake not long before we arrived dropped huge boulders alongside buildings, and huge waves from a storm brought the beachfront within metres of the critical communications building.

The overwhelming impression upon setting foot on the island is the wildlife (and the wind)! The isthmus is prime breeding habitat for Elephant Seals - we arrived just after the peak of their breeding season. Bull beach masters can weigh up to 3 tonnes and jealously guard harems of females from other males. They will charge, without regard, across baby seals and mothers to drive away interlopers. Giant Petrels and Skuas pick over the carcasses of baby Seals. Life and death, everywhere, all the time.

My role added capacity over the summer season. I maintained traps and bait stations monitoring for rodent incursion, supported tourist landings, assisted with priority wildlife population and botanical monitoring, and contributed to the station community. I spent many days and nights in the field, encountering the beauty of the island in all its intensity.



An Elephant Seal in motion at Sandy Bay.

“Bull beach masters can weigh up to three tonnes and jealously guard harems of females.”

Environmental challenges remain. Seal and seabird populations expanded following the end of commercial exploitation one hundred years ago and the more recent eradication of vertebrate pests. However, some populations appear to be declining again. Overfishing, long-line fishing, plastic pollution and climatic changes in the Southern Ocean could all be implicated. In 2008, dieback in the Macquarie Island Cushion Plant (*Azorella macquariensis*) was observed. Dieback proceeded quickly and the species was declared Critically Endangered in 2010. Cushion Plants form important structures in, and dominate cover of fjeldmark vegetation, which covers most of the plateau between 200-400 m in elevation. Initial research implicates climate change and disease in the decline.

Efforts to secure the environmental future of Macquarie Island and its remarkable wildlife are far from over, in this changing world. The story of Macquarie Island has inspired efforts to eradicate rodents from other subantarctic islands. These wild islands remain beacons of biodiversity, worthy of understanding and protection.



Southern Giant Petrel chick on the Featherbed.



Rosaura Garro, 42 years old, was born in a small town called San José de Metán, in the south of the Province of Salta, in the north of Argentina. She has been a National Park Ranger for the National Parks Administration for 20 years and she is currently working in Los Cardones National Park. She is the only female Park Ranger, and for the last 15 years she has been working as a Referent of the Area of Villagers, explaining projects and different social works with villagers and neighbouring communities. She also works actively and participates in the planning and monitoring of the sustainable use of key natural resources for productive development, and local and regional tourism in the Natural Protected Area. She is coordinating different projects for the development of sustainable activities to improve the quality of life of the different rural populations living in the Natural Protected Area and in the Buffer Zone.

Photo Los Cardones Natural Park Population Census Argentina. Credit Alexander Guzmán

The only female Park Ranger in Los Cardones National Park - ARGENTINA.

Rosaura Garro (translated into English by Ana Sanchez)

As Park Ranger of the Natural Protected Area, she frequently works to strengthen the relationship and trust between the inhabitants and the governmental institutions, aiming to achieve greater openness in communication between the different interested parties, which is an essential condition for planning the management of the Natural Protected Area for the future. In this sense, Natural Protected Areas can be consolidated as assets for sustainable development, where natural, cultural and landscape resources diversify activities that provide benefits and incentives to the population. It is necessary to strengthen participation and governance in the territories, taking into account the establishment of commitments and decision making that contribute to the effective management of the Natural Protected Area.

In this context, it is essential to discuss how to achieve effective, equitable and representative participation that seeks a win-win situation for the benefit of local communities or populations. This requires action and decision-making not only at the local level, but also at the national level that can support these working initiatives.

As part of her daily work, Rosaura carries out control and surveillance



Inauguration of the Cheese Rooms project . Credit Alexander Guzmán

activities, supports research with students from different universities who visit this Natural Protected Area and also carries out formal and non-formal environmental education workshops in the schools of the communities. She is currently participating as operational coordinator in the creation of a new Natural Protected Area in the province of Catamarca, the future Sierras de Ambato National Park and Reserve. She is always working for the conservation and vindication of women Park Rangers in Argentina.



Census of Camelids. Credit Rosaura Garro



Signature of the project Sierra de Ambato Argentina. Credit Alexander Guzmán

Tusk Trust award-winning Julius Obwona, inspects the donated equipment at Queen Elizabeth National Park HQ.

Delivering Ranger Care Boxes to Uganda

 **Steve Peach**

This article was previously published in the CMA Ranger Magazine 135: summer 2022.

Nearly three years ago I agreed to get involved in the Thin Green Line Foundation's Ranger Care Box programme.

In my spare time, I help run a very small charity, The Queen Elizabeth Parks Project, which twins the Queen

Elizabeth Country Park in Hampshire with the Queen Elizabeth National Park in Uganda. Sean Willmore, founder of the Thin Green Line Foundation, wanted to deliver some Ranger Care Boxes to Uganda and asked for my help. The Queen Elizabeth Parks Project is more than a simple twinning arrangement; it is in fact a community conservation initiative that links Rangers, teachers, and community leaders around both Queen Elizabeth Parks with the aim of 'Connecting People

and Wildlife'. The sharing of culture, with a focus on creating the bond of friendship, has helped to create a very successful partnership that punches well above its weight and has become a positive influencer in community wildlife conservation.

But back to the Ranger Care Boxes.

The Thin Green Line came up with the idea of asking for public donations to purchase equipment for field-based Rangers when it became clear that in some countries Rangers are asked to patrol or work from remote stations without some basic items of kit. Often, they are lacking simple items like mosquito nets, water bottles and water purifying technology, and rainproof coats. Although simple items, they are nonetheless vital for both individual and team morale and to improve the well-being of people who are being asked to put their lives on the line every day.

Each Ranger Care Box contains enough equipment for ten Rangers, but the contents change from country to country depending on local circumstances and needs. And people can donate towards part of or even a whole care box. So, the Queen Elizabeth Parks Project put together a plan for 15 care boxes which would provide enough kit for 150 Rangers. Our care boxes would contain first aid kits, water-purifying devices, waterproofs, gumboots, socks, sleeping mats, blankets, solar-powered lights, tarpaulins, hats, footballs and playing cards. The latter two items would help to entertain the Rangers in between patrols.

“During our visit, we met a female Ranger who *had part of her hand cut off when she was attacked by someone with a machete...*”

Everything was planned, orders placed, preparations for travel arrangements made and the funding from Thin Green Line arrived. A few weeks later so did Covid, and that was the end of any thoughts of going

to Uganda! Covid not only stopped travel in the UK, it impacted our colleagues in Uganda, and also made it difficult to procure some items. It was always an important part of our plan to purchase as much of the equipment as

now looking more like a warehouse. His desk was hemmed in by sleeping mats and his storeroom was almost impossible to enter, there was so much kit in it. The afternoon was spent sorting items into piles for each



Headteacher, Shakila, takes a class at Rihamu School in Kasese, western Uganda.

possible in Uganda to ensure that the benefit would stretch beyond the recipient Rangers. Eventually, Covid restrictions eased, and when the need for PCR travel testing ended in the UK and Uganda, a window of opportunity presented itself that we grabbed with both hands.

Our flight to Entebbe, via Nairobi was stress-free (apart from the 45 minutes take off delay at Heathrow) and after just under 20 hours of travelling, we arrived in Uganda and were met by our

of the three beneficiary parks and completing the final purchases. One hundred and fifty gumboots were the last to arrive on the back of a Zongshen motorised tricycle. After a not so good night's sleep (apparently there was a party happening in a nearby house), the team left Kampala at 7.30 am for the five-hour drive to Mbale, the nearest town to Mount Elgon National Park.

Mount Elgon National Park is 1,145 km² in size and shares a border with Kenya. The 4,321m high mountain is in fact one of the largest calderas in the world, and is home to elephants, buffaloes and over 300 species of birds. It is also home to diverse cultural groups, which makes the job of patrolling and keeping both animals and people safe one of the most complex in Uganda. Rangers here have suffered brutal assaults in the past, some even losing their lives. During our visit, we met a female Ranger who had part of her hand cut off when she was attacked by someone with a machete. Arrival at the Park was greeted by cheering Rangers and much bonhomie. After a short meeting with the Area

QE Parks Project local lead Ronnie Bwambale. Ronnie runs a safari company and has been supporting our project for over ten years. Ronnie helped us book into a local hotel and then took us to his office, which was

Conservation Manager, the excellent Fred Kizza, we met with Rangers and did an official handover of the Ranger Care Boxes. In truth, they were not really boxes, more Ranger Care Bags and Boxes.

We stayed overnight in Mbale, enjoying the company of some of Mount Elgon's wardens, and the

finally arrived, we dumped our bags and headed straight down to the canteen known as Tembo for some food and several Nile Specials! Beer always tastes great here, cold, and drunk to the background noise of frogs, crickets, hippos and hyenas. Unsurprisingly, sleep came easy. A hippo apparently visited the garden during the night, but I didn't hear it.

Murchison Falls National Park. Julius is a consummate professional and a force to be reckoned with, born out by the fact that he was a winner of the 2018 Tusk Trust Wildlife Ranger Award. Once the formalities were over, Julius was keen to show me the new Joint Operations Command Centre. When completed, this building will house Law Enforcement Teams, and handle everything from planning of patrols to processing of arrested people. At its centre will be a giant screen that will be able to display in real time where patrols are, any major incidents and significant animal encounters. This, together with other evidence gathering, will mean that resources can then be deployed to where they are most needed. This will be a massive step forward for the Park staff, and hopefully will lead to a reduction in the levels of poaching, alongside improved community engagement. Our reward for all our hard work was going to be an early morning game drive, and the following day we were all awake and in the truck by 6.30 am.

We picked up our guide, Ranger Daniel Tirwomwe, who was known to all of us. Another individual who is passionate about conservation, he spent the first 20 minutes telling us all about the issue the Park was having with invasive plant species and measures in place to deal with them. Daniel was a little surprised to hear that we had almost identical problems in the UK, and the talk soon started to

“A hippo apparently visited the garden during the night, *but I didn't hear it...*”

following morning again got up early to head back to Kampala, stopping en-route at Jinja, the place where the waters of Lake Victoria become the River Nile. After another night in a Kampala hotel (this time a quiet hotel), we once again were up for an early breakfast and drive to Queen Elizabeth National Park. It is beholden to me at this point to mention that while we were enjoying hotel hospitality and eating what we thought was a well-deserved breakfast, Ronnie was already up early and had loaded the vehicle!

Queen Elizabeth National Park is around 422 km from Kampala and in a fully loaded (actually overloaded) Toyota Landcruiser safari truck, took nearly nine hours to reach. When we

Our first morning at Queen was taken up with meeting Rangers who were attending a Law Enforcement Course, before heading over to Park HQ at a place called Katunguru. The drive to Park HQ takes you along the Kazinga Channel Track, the Kazinga Channel being a narrow stretch of water that links Lake Edward with Lake George. The track always provides great wildlife viewing and, on this morning, we saw elephants, Ugandan kob, waterbuck, warthogs, buffaloes, a single hippo and countless birds.

Once at Park HQ, we unloaded the truck and once again did an official handover to the Warden-in-charge of Law Enforcement, Julius Obwona. I had met Julius on a previous visit to Uganda when he was working in



Equipment for the Ranger Care Bags and Boxes are gathered at Ronnie's office in Kampala, ready for distributing throughout the country.

centre on budgets, bad decisions, public non-understanding – it could have been a CMA study day!

Queen is a diverse place with savanna, shady forests, lakes, wetlands and volcanic explosion craters. There are over 600 species of birds, 95 mammal species, as well as amazing reptiles and insects. The

“When I say close, *I mean really close!*”

highlight of the game drive was a close encounter with two adolescent lions. When I say close, I mean really close because as guests of the Uganda Wildlife Authority and our game drive being classed as an 'experiential' drive, we were allowed off-track and could drive right next to the lions. I felt slightly guilty as four other game drive vehicles were left on the designated track, enviously viewing our progress closer to the lions, constrained with distant views through binoculars. As I said slightly guilty, I think after 40 years in the conservation business, I might have earned this one.

Game drive complete, we headed off to visit two schools. The Queen Elizabeth Parks Project has set up a number of school partnerships, and we were very keen to visit at least some of the schools involved. Covid had made regular contact very

difficult, so it was vital that we drop in on the school to deliver some gifts and say hello. Rihamu School is situated in a busy town called Kasese, which sits at the edge of the Queen Elizabeth National Park and the Rwenzori Mountains National Park. This part of the town suffers extreme poverty and the occasional flooding. Both Park boundaries border Kasese and although it's a busy town there are still wildlife-conflict issues. Recently a family of elephants found their way into the town, after apparently an electric fence had failed. Shakila, the headteacher and owner of the school, told us that many of the children had to try to avoid the elephants as they made their way to school. The school is partnered with a very small rural school in the UK. We deliberately sought this contrast as we felt it would provide a more meaningful cultural exchange for the two schools. Before Covid, the schools were involved in a British-Council-funded exchange programme. This was a powerful experience for all involved and, interestingly, as this had come about as the result of our community conservation project, actually puts both Queen Elizabeth Parks firmly in the local spotlight.

Each year we organise the Conservation Cup, involving ten Ugandan schools taking part in football, rugby and artistic performance competitions. The idea being that we use sport and art to promote conservation. Rihamu won the performance cup last time. Our time in Uganda was very short, and we soon had to return to Kampala to make

our final delivery. Not having the time to travel to Kidepo National Park, we had arranged to meet some of the Senior Staff at Uganda Wildlife Authority HQ to hand over the remaining care box equipment, which they would take to Kidepo on our behalf.

Ranger Care Boxes are vital, not because of the equipment they provide (although this is of course very much needed) but because of the statement they make. For a Ugandan Ranger often working in a remote location, it is easy to think you are on your own, especially when colleagues are killed or injured. That the Thin Green Line Foundation provides this type of support boosts morale and enhances the sense of the Ranger family, that there are other conservation professionals who



A vehicle delivering mattresses arrives at Queen Elizabeth National Park.

understand what you are going through. The fact that some of the money for these care boxes comes from public donations, makes all the difference. It clearly demonstrates that people around the world care about and value the work you do.

In the words of one Mount Elgon Ranger, "It makes the sacrifices worth it and gives new energy to my commitment."

You can find out more about the Queen Elizabeth Parks Project by visiting

www.queenelizabethparks.org

Ranger Care Boxes by visiting thingreenline.org.au/our-projects/

Range Land Safaris by visiting www.rangelandsafaris.com/ (CMA members can get a 10% discount)



Steve Peach delivers equipment to Fred Kizza and Rangers at Mount Elgon National Park

Creating a future from nothing

Two years ago, I had no future. A University drop-out, looking after ailing grandparents while my mental health deteriorated. I had no prospects of job progression.

If not for my family, I would likely still be in that place. They sent me the details of a six-month Kickstart trainee Ranger position with the Cairngorms National Park Authority (CNPA) and it sounded perfect – as a long-time nature lover I would be able to work in the great outdoors, and as a Highlander I could still be close to my family. I had nothing to lose, and everything to gain.

When I was growing up, my parents always took me out to explore Scotland's wild places. Through my dad's work I became involved with biological recording, surveying amphibians and reptiles both in the UK and abroad. This experience was enough to get my foot in the door, and the CNPA were pleased to have someone local joining their trainee Ranger programme.

There were four trainee Rangers including myself, and we were each assigned a mentor to teach us about our new work. Having a 'personal tutor' was a great help as it was obvious who I could go to for advice on anything I encountered or

 **Danny O'Brien,**
Cairngorms
National Park Authority

**“Two
years ago,
I had no
future”**

Margaret Fraser Award

Ann McKillop

This year, it has been very hard to decide as there were quite a few articles that I thought were great. I seemed to lean towards the longer articles as they got more across and in more detail and analysis. I also seemed to be drawn to articles with some analysis or 'tips' in them. 'Working together' was a great theme and most of the articles in that issue contained good advice for fellow Rangers and had me nodding a lot whilst I read, recognising familiar themes and issues but appreciating a fresh perspective. I enjoyed the varied themes in the SCRAMbles recently which has resulted in lots of great Ranger input.

The award this year comes from the 'Seasonal Ranger' themed issue of Spring 2022.

The award this year goes to a Ranger who, as part of the Cairngorms National Park Kickstart Ranger team, amassed so much knowledge and experience in such a short time and this in turn helped him to overcome his difficult personal situation. It was good to see him make the most of these opportunities and that these are available for anyone interested in Ranger work, irrespective of their background. His confidence grew and as he says in his article: "trainees like myself can thrive with responsibility". Growing self-confidence in new Rangers is a great thing to watch – and nurture if you're part of their team. It's what I love about Rangering; teamwork, sharing, and supporting each other, and this article articulates this very well. I appreciated his honesty and enthusiasm. His appreciation for his colleagues also came through very well. Long may these types of programmes continue along with this young Ranger's career!

The Margaret Fraser Award in 2023 goes to Danny O'Brien's article 'Creating a Future from Nothing' in SCRAMble issue 120, republished here.

learned. I recommend it to anyone else running their own training programmes. The CNPA were keen on me learning about the National Park not only from them, but from all of their partner organisations too. I was given the chance to work with these organisations on some of their exciting projects. One of my highlights of the year was taking part in Cairngorms Connect's 'Willow Walk', which saw me help transport 3000 downy willow saplings over the Cairngorm

put in me and the freedom they allowed me in delivering the training was the single most important part of my development during my time working for them.

If there is anything to learn from this article it would be that trainees like myself can thrive with responsibility. By incorporating some form of independence into Ranger training programmes you may well be able to alleviate self-confidence issues and produce a

if it is only loosely connected with Ranger duties – just that someone else finds their knowledge valuable and worth sharing.

By the end of my placement, I had written blogs, had a radio interview, directed a short film, and presented a workshop at the SCRA Rendezvous on the LookWild biological recording system. None of this would have been possible without the support of the whole Ranger team, who were willing to



Attending a moth ID session with Cairngorms Connect and RSPB staff members. Credit: Pete Short

plateau. Interacting with RSPB and Cairngorms Connect staff on the hike really gave me insight into how different landowners have different requirements for land management, and how we as a Ranger Service must respect all of them.

While my traineeship may have started with shadowing the experienced Rangers, I was soon given the opportunity to show the team my interest in biological recording. After giving them an online presentation on a new recording scheme, the LookWild project, it was suggested that I should teach our volunteers how to use the system. This was a huge step up in responsibility and was the start of when I felt 'competent' at my new role. The trust the team

“By the end of my placement, I had written blogs, had a radio interview, directed a short film, and presented a workshop”

reliable work colleague, especially if they are given freedom in something they are already comfortable with. For me that subject was biological recording; others may be knowledgeable about an area they grew up in, or native flora and fauna. It doesn't really matter what they know, even

push me and the other trainees into making the most of our time in the park.

For any new trainees (or for any mentors to pass on, which is more likely considering SCRAMble's readership) I have sage advice, if perhaps rather overstated. You will only get out what you put in. Opportunities to be tested will come up and you must grab them. They may not be handed to you on a silver platter, but if you are enthusiastic, people will start to notice and approach you with their projects.

Show me your interps! - a Ranger History Book request.

By Ann McKillop

Work continues on the Ranger History book celebrating our work, and aiming to be published in 2024 for the 50th anniversary of SCRA.

Whilst I plough through boxes and boxes of dry reports and plans, I return to earth by interviewing Rangers across the country. Asking questions of the current Ranger cohort is fascinating. Yes, some issues never change – it's the nature of the job – but some aspects of the job have changed a lot.

My current obsession.

I am currently concentrating on a chapter on Interpretation. I have some great examples from my own era (1988 – 2018) but would like to hear what YOU see as good interpretive displays, tools, techy stuff or methods. What has caught your eye – or other senses – in Ranger centres, events, sites, or online? What have you created yourselves?

A lot of interpretive kit in the past was built by Rangers themselves.

Does this still happen? How are your budgets for such work?

In the old days....

In my era, it was mostly panels, guided walks, events, talks and



“I would like to hear what you see as good interpretive designs”

leaflets. Through excellent training, we produced good quality materials that were hopefully engaging for visitors and participants alike. The techiest thing I did was the flashy new things called QR codes in 2015. Like most techy stuff before it, we

hesitated at investing in it on site as we thought it might not last as a technology and be superseded quite soon. Would it work on a bulletproof GRP board? Should we just use cheaper fading laminated photocopies on site as a trial of the trail? Would the laminate be too shiny in the sun to scan? How many people know what a QR code is and how to scan it? Will there be a signal? Rangers on a learning curve as always!

Even with the attraction of technology, old-fashioned hands-on kit still serves me well in my voluntary work with SWT today. I have reconfigured an old 'pulley board' from 1996 (see centre photo). Simple construction, changeable questions and answers. Tried and tested. Job done.

Grab your trumpets!

I know from my own career that we Rangers are not good at blowing our own trumpets – we need to do it though and this book is a one opportunity to do that as a profession. It's your history – please share it with me! Send me your best interpretation (or other) stories, pictures and anecdotes via ann.mckillop13@gmail.com

Help make this book a lasting legacy for our Association as well as our profession.

Once a Ranger, always . . .

Duncan MacInnes

I have two things from my Ranger days: my Ranger Training Certificate, the only academic piece of paper that has ever been of any use to me, and a signed copy of Don Aldridge's 'Monster Book of Environmental Education', which I read every few years and am still trying to absorb.

Recently, on a damp Saturday in early May I was clambering around the stumps of some felled forestry on the Isle of Skye, encouraging 12 American students to plant trees. Sleat Community Trust had received 5,000 assorted broadleaves and we were desperate to get the last 500 in the ground. I fell into a muddy hole, explained the concept of midges to my overseas students, and pondered my life choices.

I have not always been a Ranger. My Rangering days were limited in time and geographical extent. For 30 years, until late 2019, I had led an interesting life promoting touring arts events in village halls across Skye, and into the wider Highlands and Islands. I retired with an interesting list of 2,153 events: major comedy names, mad touring theatre, bizarre jazz, orchestras and the best of the traditional music scene.

I was thrust into a Ranger Training course at Battleby in 1981, at a moment's notice and before I was even officially a Ranger. Don Aldridge, Ruth Grant and the other charismatic and enthusiastic staff with the then Countryside Commission for Scotland provided an introduction into this wonderful world and led me to become the first Ranger on Skye (and indeed the Hebrides). I was fortunate to receive the full training of 10-12 weeks in the year. The benefits lasted a lifetime and enhanced many different jobs.

Even as a Ranger I got involved in organising rural touring events that ten years later became my full-time job. But still, 30 years on, I state my trained profession as 'Countryside Ranger'.

I was an active Ranger for just five years, but I was also the SCRA Membership Secretary. I then became Editor of SCRAmble and had the joy of absorbing the lives and work of other Rangers in editing articles from across Scotland. It struck me that SCRAmble needed an International Editor so I talked my way into going to the International Ranger Gatherings in Poland and Costa Rica, where I met Gordon Miller and Rangers from around the World. I was delighted to become an Honorary Life Member of SCRA in 1990.

Twelve years ago, Sleat Community Trust bought 440 hectares of forest. Sitka and Larch have been felled and sold off. The Trust has replanted some commercial timber but is now creating a broadleaved wood. We have footpaths, a Wayfaring Course, a locally funded micro-Hydro scheme, a woodchip business and a Men's Shed providing logs for local fireplaces. Most of the work is done by a monthly gathering of volunteers.

As I clambered over another drainage ditch, I realised the life-long connection with those many skills I learned in 1981. Ranger work, promoting touring events and developing a community asset use many of the same skills, and there is an obvious link – all are related to that best form of tourism – that which connects visitors to, and is led by, the local community.

In 2022, Sleat Community Trust connected with Radical Travel, the collective of small-scale bus travel companies. They wanted their staff to

connect with the communities they visit, and set up volunteer holidays for paying punters. We have had four visits to date, and I find myself running the same sort of Workcamps I used to organise in the 1980s through the British Trust for Conservation Volunteers and International Voluntary Service. I am back where I started: writing information boards, building paths and footbridges, planting trees, all with a distinct lack of the energy I had 40 years ago. Last week we had our first Campervan light an open BBQ pit right next to a 'No Fires' sign. Some things never change.

This connected me with SCOTO, the Scottish Community Tourism group. I spoke last March at their first Gathering in Kingussie about Voluntourism and took part in a recent STV programme exploring community-led tourism, in culture, in Rangering, and community projects.

After the recent SCRA AGM I swapped emails with Ruth Grant. I explained I was realising that everything we do in our community woodland is Rangering work. "So why not have a Community Ranger?" she said. I am off to persuade our Trust that this is their next project. I'll make contact with other community-led Ranger Services. I might even apply myself – I have the Book and the Certificate.

Duncan MacInnes MBE MA

Countryside Ranger for the Clan Donald Lands Trust on Skye in the 1980s

Membership Secretary and SCRAmble Editor into the 1990s.
dm@cali.co.uk

Image opposite: Duncan MacInnes gets stuck in again to Ranger work after 35 years.



Walking the Thin Green Line *Oceania*

**Amanda Dudgeon, New South Wales
National Parks and Wildlife Service**

What does it mean to walk the Thin Green line here in Oceania and who are the crazy people behind the Ranger badge? Well, this is what I have been exploring during my yearlong, self-funded expedition around Oceania meeting, interviewing, and empowering Rangers.

I'm currently on day 331 and sitting in the airport in Darwin about to fly to East Timor, my 8th nation on the trip, to visit their wonderful Forest Wardens. My brain is not exactly firing on all cylinders after over 85,000km of travelling, 1,200km of hiking and more logistical nightmares that Incident Management training can ever hope to help you deal with. However, I thought it was important to get an article down on paper to share with you just some of the stories and interesting insights I have picked up during my journey across Oceania.

Being a Ranger in Oceania means protecting landscapes home to the oldest living culture in the world. That's more than 60,000 years of Australian Indigenous culture. Being an Oceania Ranger means respecting and connecting with the greatest diversity of First Nations cultures in the world and navigating the challenges of facing a confronting past to find a path forward together. It means protecting some of the last true wilderness in the world and many thousands of threatened species in the region with the highest levels of endemism globally. It means having to deal with more biosecurity threats and invasive species than many Rangers can even comprehend let alone deal with. It means

working in island nations physically separated by millions of miles of ocean yet culturally connected for millennia. It means dealing with every natural disaster in the book (and then some) on a regular basis, that's just business as usual. Being an Oceania Ranger is amazing, inspiring, confronting, heart breaking, exhausting, exhilarating and unbelievably rewarding. It's not for the faint hearted.

I'm sure many of you picture a khaki clad, deeply tanned, Akubra wearing Ranger when thinking of your Aussie colleagues, and in many cases you would be correct. Khaki is indeed the common colour of uniform down here and, in the hotter parts of the country, the classic Akubra does keep the sun off

when you're baking away in 45°C trying to change a Landcruiser tyre in the middle of the desert. However, we also have fantastic Marine Park Rangers who can spend over 230 days on the water each year undertaking compliance and reef monitoring activities across the Great Barrier Reef. That's not to mention our Wildlife Rangers who have the unenviable task of managing human-animal interactions. Which can more correctly be translated as helping potentially dangerous animals (crocodiles, cassowaries and snakes) in their natural habitat co-exist with very stupid humans. Plus, all of us have equally bright yet charcoal smeared fire uniforms critical for undertaking prescribed burn operations and responding to

Visiting Nelson Falls in the Franklin-Gordon Wild Rivers National Park which lies at the heart of the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area on the West Coast of Tasmania

wildfires. That's when we work the longest hours, do the most physically demanding tasks and face our greatest workplace safety risks. Yet it's also when we have the most fun and forge long lasting friendships across districts and agencies.

Our colleagues across the ditch in New Zealand are particularly good at pest management and have the most ambitious pest animal target in the world – predator (Possum, Stoat and rodent) free by 2050. Their biodiversity Rangers undertake extensive pest programs and run impressive threatened species projects. They do everything from being helicoptered onto remote alpine ridge lines to set hundreds of pest mammal traps, to spending hours crawling around on the forest floor doing snail surveys (they are the coolest snails, it was lots of fun!) and camping for

months on remote islands monitoring threatened bird species. It can be a very uncomfortable job but wow, they have some amazing experiences!

Our smaller island nation cousins are completely different again, though they have common ground with our First Nations Rangers in Australia and New Zealand – community, culture and Country. Kaitiaki (Mauri Rangers) and Australian Indigenous Rangers share a deep connection to Country, or Whenua, an intrinsic responsibility to their communities and a profound awareness of culture and cultural identity. In fact, when you think of what we do as Rangers and the many words around the world that translate to 'Ranger', it means guarding and healing the landscape as well as the cultural heritage that is intrinsically part of it.

The community Rangers of Tonga, Samoa, Fiji, Solomon Islands and Papua New Guinea (PNG) work for their villages in protecting their ancestral or Custom land and are not paid employees. They bring value to their communities in the form of agroforestry and finances for service tourism by guiding walks, highlighting cultural practices, and attracting tourists that then purchase local arts and crafts. Most have no uniforms, no formal training and no Government support. They are the most grateful, passionate, and truly heartfelt Rangers I have ever had the privilege to meet. At the Tenkile Conservation Alliance (TCA) in PNG, many of the 85 Rangers and project officers who greeted us, walked for more than 24 hours across slippery difficult trails just to meet us. Just because we were fellow Rangers coming all the way to TCA to visit them. That's what I love most about our Oceania

"I can't wait to meet many of you, at next year's World Ranger conference"

Ranger family, we meet as equals, with shared values and a shared view of our world no matter our nationality, language, ethnicity, income, or employer.

I can't wait to meet many of you at next year's World Ranger Conference in France and show you my documentary so you too can meet and appreciate the amazing human beings that are the Rangers of Oceania Walking the Thin Green Line for conservation.

Find out more about Amanda's walk by visiting <https://www.walkingthethingreenline.com>



Images this page (clockwise from top left) The amazing Community Rangers of the Tenkile Conservation Alliance (TCA) in the Torricelli Mountain Range, northern Papua New Guinea.

The hilarious Parks Australia Rangers of Norfolk Island, Australia pointing at absolutely nothing.

The wonderful NT Parks Rangers of Walker Creek Ranger Station in Litchfield National Park, Northern Territory.

The attendees of the inaugural Oceania Ranger Forum held in Rotorua, New Zealand, October 2022.

The lovely Department of Conservation Rangers of Dargaville Office on the Kauri Coast, North Island of New Zealand.

The resilient Christchurch Regional Council Rangers at Bottle Lake Forest Park, New Zealand South Island.



HEM of Remutaka Kaitiaki Rangers at Pencarrow Lakes, near Wellington on the North Island of New Zealand at a Toitū (native fish) relocation event run by Zealandia

Park Rangers in *Colombia*

■ **Carlos Andrés Angulo Ríos, Park Ranger,
National Natural Parks of Colombia
(translated into English by Ana Sanchez)**



Prevention, surveillance and control: Photo: Carlos A Angulo

Colombia is a vast and complex country, located in a privileged tropical region, which allows for a great variety of climates, cultures and some unique natural areas. Due to its geography and exceptional natural and environmental conditions, the Colombian Government decided to protect and conserve these vital areas of national, regional and international importance through the creation of Protected Areas. Thus began the creation of the National Natural Parks System, which is currently administered by the National Natural Parks of Colombia.

These natural protected areas currently require operational, administrative, and scientific staff, etc., dedicated to the care of these worldwide-important natural spaces. These areas provide environmental resources that are valuable not only to Colombians, but also to humanity. The Park Rangers share the dedication and love for conserving these places, and are themselves the central characters that will allow both the enjoyment and preservation of the environment that they care for and protect.

Although Colombia is a complex and extensive country, with regions of great geographical and cultural differences, to name but a few, Park Rangers are among the few public servants who have an institutional and State presence in every corner of this varied Republic. We are based in all the ecosystems that our National Parks protect, from the infinite sea, be it the Caribbean or the Pacific Ocean, to desert areas with scarce rainfall, plains, Andean valleys, moors, snowy areas and jungles such as those found in our Amazon and Orinoco regions.

Park Rangers are key players who, despite being absent from our families for long periods, have provided protection and conservation of nature on which

***“We Park Rangers are among the few public servants who have an institutional and State presence*”**

Park Rangers in Colombia are still among those servants who are recognised in the territories where we have an institutional presence. Although for the last 20 years, we have been calling ourselves ‘Park Rangers’, formally and legally this pleasing designation is not reflected in the legal norms that should regulate and govern this activity; an activity that is defined as a trade, not as a profession. We continue to be in the first line of defence,



Awareness-raising and environmental education: Photo: Carlos A Angulo

the wellbeing of human beings largely depends. In this way, we also contribute to a better country, in search of that longed-for peace.

protecting of all these natural resources (fauna, flora and geology) representative of the country, cultural and ancestral manifestations, as well as the



Waterbird census: Photo: Carlos A Angulo

goods and services it offers to locals and foreigners.

The Park Rangers have been victims of the violence found in Colombia. Despite these current circumstances, we continue to move forward with determination, love, and with the contribution of our experience, we defend life and all its manifestations. Although the fear of losing our lives persists, we continue in our honourable work day after day. We keep giving and contributing to the continuity and perpetuity of our National Parks System. The risk continues to exist every day from the moment we enter our protected area and carry out operational work in the field within the framework of Prevention, Surveillance and Control. We interact with key participants, such as farmers, fishermen, indigenous groups and, at times, with common criminals, who by default may be contrary to the function that we proudly perform.

In Colombia, in spite of the high turnover of Park Rangers (we lack a special labour regime, we receive low salaries, is scarce, no training

“The Park Rangers have been victims of the violence that has been experienced in Colombia ”

school, etc.), we remain firm in continuing our dedicated work. We persist, uncaring that we are not recognised as the heroes of conservation with ethics, morals, heads held high and, above all, VOCATION.



Monitoring and Research: Photo: Carlos A Angulo



Environmental awareness-raising for fishermen: Photo: Carlos A Angulo

Recognition Of Communal Guardians in Peru

Luis Muñoz Chanca, Chief of the Yanesha Communal Reserve (translated into English by Ana Sanchez)



Erik Valero chief of the Yanesha community. Photo: Luis Muñoz Chanca

In this way, the Communal Wardens, who contribute to the conservation, monitoring, control and surveillance of this protected natural area, became part of a global network of Park Rangers, making AMARCY, an association driven by the native communities themselves, the first ECA (Management Contract Executor) in Peru to receive this recognition in South America.

With this certification as Park Rangers, the Communal Wardens of the Yanesha Communal Reserve will be able to access training, courses and/ or certifications on the implementation of surveillance and control strategies.

Community surveillance is promoted by SERNANP in coordination with the Management Contract Executor (ECA), mainly in the communal reserves, as part of a strategy that involves these populations in the management and protection of their ancestral territories and the natural resources that they use sustainably. Therefore, the Communal Wardens carry out patrols together with the official Park Rangers.

We would like to take this opportunity to inform you that in October 2023 the 12th meeting of Communal Reserves will take place in the Yanesha Communal Reserve.

The Communal Wardens of the Yanesha Communal Reserve in Peru have been recognised as Park Rangers by the International Ranger Federation (IRF). The recognition was awarded to ECA-AMARCY, the first association made up of native communities in South America to obtain this distinction.

AMARCY is an indigenous organisation that existed before the creation of the Yanesha Communal Reserve. The Communal Reserve was created to support the conservation and landscape of the area, and to achieve a sustainable use of natural resources. Its work to promote research, education and tourism within the reserve is also of great importance.

The successful co-management, established in 2006, in the Yanesha

Communal Reserve in Oxapampa is internationally recognised. The National Service of Natural Areas Protected by the State (SERNANP), attached to the Peruvian Ministry of Environment, highlighted the recognition granted to the Management Contract Executor ECA-AMARCY as an official member of the International Ranger Federation (IRF).



Signing of AMARCY and SERNANP agreement Photo: Luis Muñoz Chanca

Echoes of Awakening Environmental Consciousness

■ **Julio César Vergara Zapata**
(translated into English by Ana Sanchez)

I came to work at Laguna del Laja National Park on 2nd May 1988. 35 years of joys, sadness, achievements, frustrations, betrayals, hopes, integral growth and a dream of Wildlife Conservation, inspired by a deep love of nature, especially mountain environments. I felt the commitment to contribute my bit to protect wildlife and their ecosystems; I was born for it and I knew it.

I spent 5 years living in the middle of the mountain range, getting to know the environmental phenomena; the rigor of the rain, the Puelche wind, the sub-zero blizzards, the gas and water pipes freezing, spending a lot of time isolated, and snow more than a meter deep, leaving beautiful winter landscapes. I started to get to know the flora, fauna and fungi. I participated in the preparation of the first flora cadaster of the Park with a professor from the University of Concepción. The volcanologists taught me about the Antuco and Sierra Velluda volcanoes. I learned to ski, rock climb and ice climb. I climbed the Antuco Volcano. The "Matuastos" Lizards, Geckos, Snakes, Condors, Hawks, and other species, amazed me. I rescued people and wildlife, participated in environmental

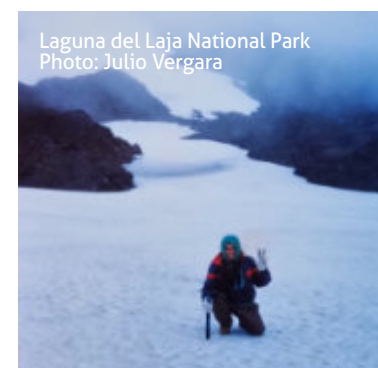
education, offered protection and support for scientists, among many other activities.

I was transferred to the Reserva Nacional Rio de los Cipreses on 3rd May 1993, a new wilderness area in central Chile. This was a tremendous challenge, meeting new colleagues, building new friendships and encountering new biodiversity. Among my achievements, I would like to highlight the three National Meetings of Park Rangers, the incorporation to the International Ranger Federation (IRF), and the creation and opening of the Cultural Centre for Wildlife, among others. In the mountainous area of the Reserve, there is a spectacular ecosystem of Guanacos (like Alpacas), Bustards, Foxes, Pumas, and Fungi, and culturally important Petroglyphs.

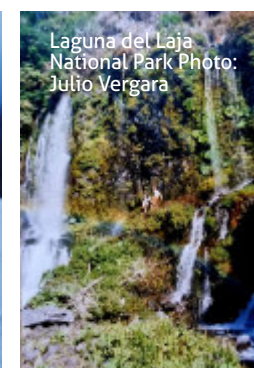
In June 2006, I was transferred to the Reserva Nacional Roblería del Cobre de Loncha, administered by the O'Higgins Region. I was faced with the arduous task of providing environmental education to approximately 1000 children from the surrounding communities, while managing the protection and rescue of wild fauna, surveying the ecological value of the Reserve, and studying dendrochronology, etc.

It is worth noting the creation of the first travelling exhibition of macro-photography of insects in the Reserve, contributed to enormously by entomologist and my friend Marcelo Guerrero.

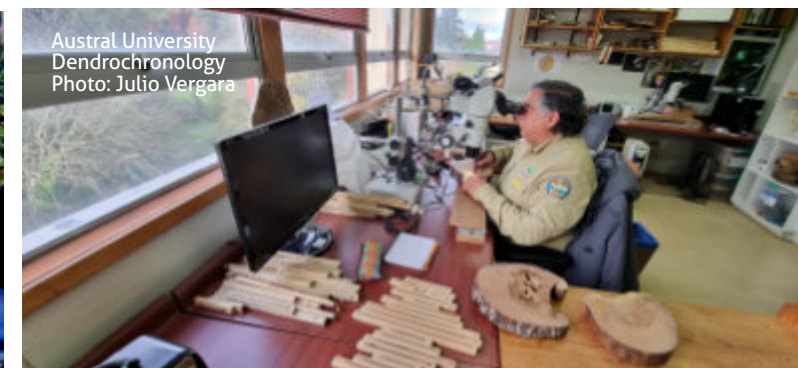
A new species of insect was found in the Poqui sector of the Reserve; Marcelo Guerrero dedicated it to me under the name *Heliofugus (rugosiheliofugus) vergarai*.



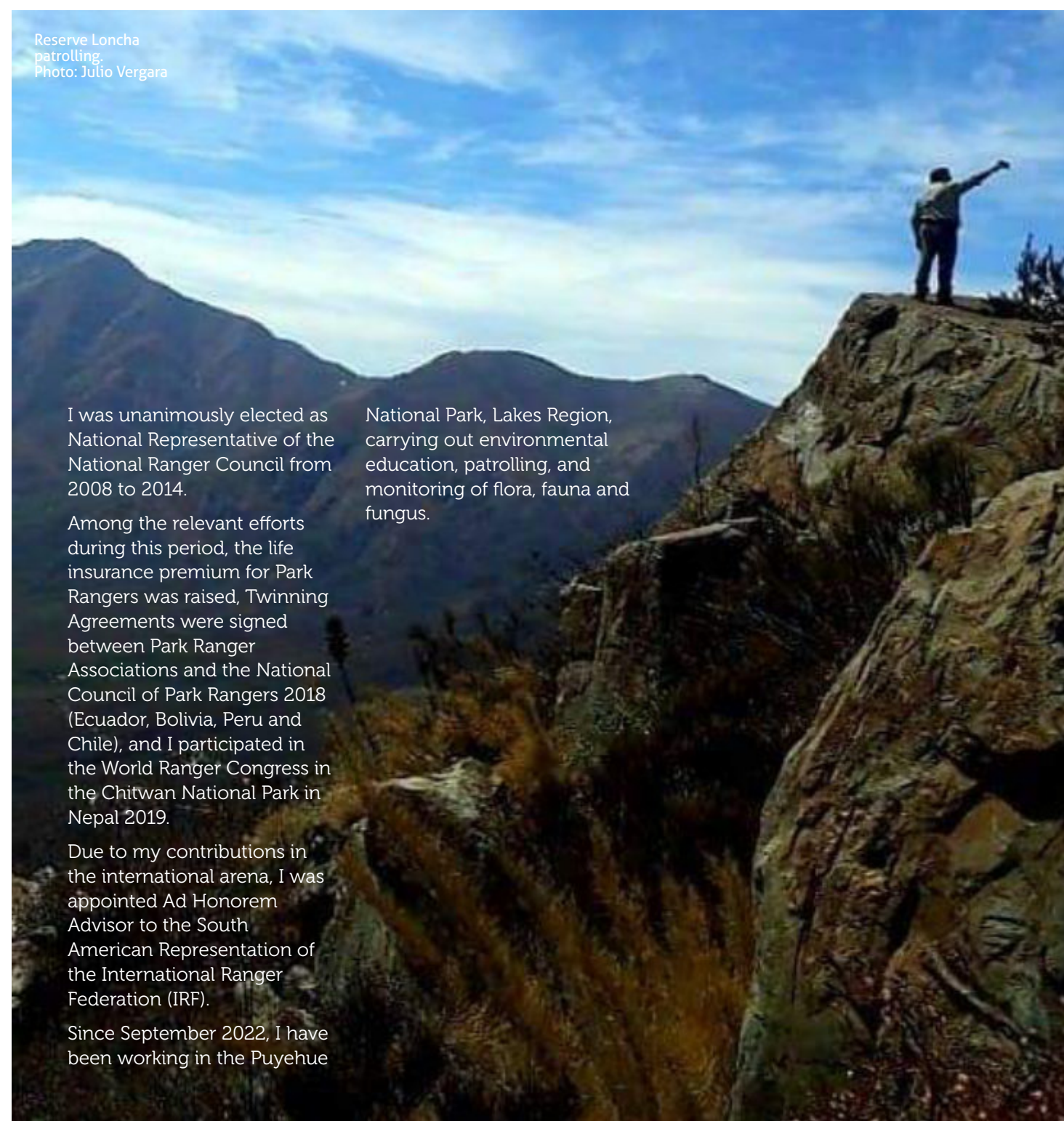
Laguna del Laja National Park
Photo: Julio Vergara



Laguna del Laja National Park
Photo: Julio Vergara



Austral University
Dendrochronology
Photo: Julio Vergara



Reserve Loncha
patrolling.
Photo: Julio Vergara

I was unanimously elected as National Representative of the National Ranger Council from 2008 to 2014.

Among the relevant efforts during this period, the life insurance premium for Park Rangers was raised, Twinning Agreements were signed between Park Ranger Associations and the National Council of Park Rangers 2018 (Ecuador, Bolivia, Peru and Chile), and I participated in the World Ranger Congress in the Chitwan National Park in Nepal 2019.

Due to my contributions in the international arena, I was appointed Ad Honorem Advisor to the South American Representation of the International Ranger Federation (IRF).

Since September 2022, I have been working in the Puyehue

National Park, Lakes Region, carrying out environmental education, patrolling, and monitoring of flora, fauna and fungus.

An indigenous ranger and its role in a society

Buntly Tao, Ranger, Range Forest Officer, Kamlang Tiger Reserve & Wildlife Sanctuary

I have been a state indigenous Ranger for the last 30 years, in the Department of Environment, Forest and Climate Change in the state of Arunachal Pradesh, India. I belong to the Nyishi tribe of Arunachal Pradesh in the Eastern Himalayan Mountain ranges, bordering Tibet to the north, Myanmar to the east and Bhutan to the west.

My tribe is a hunter tribe which hunts, forages and practices animism, but in recent decades most of the tribesmen have accepted the Christianity faith as religion. Hence, due to education and awareness amongst the tribal people, many social and cultural changes have taken place in recent decades, such as hunting, foraging and animistic practices which involve wildlife. Previously, bush meat was a preferred food choice for all occasions, and preserving trophies determined social status and hierarchy.

Being an indigenous tribal Ranger, I have a bigger role to play in dealing with our own people on wildlife conservation and generation of a sustainable economy through eco-tourism and allied services, and imbibing into the minds of young

generations the impact of environmental degradation and its negative implications.

But there are occasions where the country's laws, such as the Wildlife Protection Act 1972, Soil Conservation Act, Forest Conservation Act 1980 etc. collides with the tradition and cultural practices of tribal people. The role of an indigenous Ranger is vital at this juncture. The role



Members of the Special Tiger Protection Force (STPF), an indigenous Tribal Ranger Service recruited from fringe villages of the Tiger Reserve and Wildlife sanctuaries for protection duties. This is a part of a conservation programme involving local communities.

of non-tribal/ non-indigenous Rangers are seen by the tribal people as an intrusion or disrespect to the ethics and essence of tribal cultural practices, which has been transferred down to them from their progenitors and practicing since time immemorial. Hence, I sometimes found myself sandwiched between my job as a law enforcing officer and cultural aspects with being a member of a tribe. To find a middle path or a solution I adopt a resolution through tribal elders or tribal

judicial systems. The problem solved through the village council system is a permanent solution; even murder cases are mutually settled through the traditional system.

The Nyishi tribe to which I belong has a unique way of traditional dress, where animal parts or trophies are used.

Examples are beak and feathers of the Great Hornbill (Buceros bicornis) or the Greater Racket-Tailed Drongo (Dicrurus paradiseus) for tribal headgear, claws/feathers of an eagle to decorate traditional cane hats. Jaws of big cats and skin of Himalayan Black Bears (Ursus thibetanus laniger) to decorate a traditional sword (machete). And above all there are occasions where sacrifice of wild animals is mandated socially, such as in matrimonial and funeral occasions. The Nyishi tribe treats



My son in traditional attire

the Tiger as an elder brother, as per mythology, and never hunts it for any purpose. But if a Tiger is killed accidentally or in unavoidable conflict then the person has to undergo a very long and arduous shamanistic purification process lasting up to 1 year, similar to taboos when a human being is killed.

A Case Study

As the number of Hornbills and other birds and animal species were declining and tribe populations were increasing day-by-day, maintenance and practice

of tradition and culture was at stake. Through an indigenous Ranger an innovative idea was conceived... the creation of replicas (artificial) hornbill beaks, feathers, skins etc. from fiberglass and rubber/ durable plastic materials. Today, most of the tribesmen use artificial hornbill beaks and other items in their traditional dress. Shamans, however, still require original animal parts or trophies for animistic ritual purposes. But some

“The Nyishi tribe to which I belong has a unique way of traditional dress where animal parts or trophies are used...”

good news is that most tribesmen have adopted Christianity as their belief system and very few shamans are left. So, it's a blessing in disguise for conservation efforts.

The government has initiated a programme for conservation of Hornbills in the tribal areas, where a tribesman has to find a nest of a hornbills, adopt it, and take care of it till the new chicks are able to fledge from a sealed nest in a hollow tree and fly with parent birds. The female and chicks are sealed inside a hollow tree and all feeding is done by male hornbills. If the male is hunted during the breeding season, the female and chicks will die out of hunger inside the sealed nest. By adopting a hornbill nest, one has to take care of it from hunters/poachers from hatching eggs to maturity of chicks. The adopter is paid a fixed lump sum amount for the work thereby helping the family economically through conservation.

Today, more innovations are in the pipeline to replace all animal parts used for dress or animistic

purposes, and made available at affordable prices. It fulfils the requirements of tribal people to maintain their tradition and cultural ethos, and saves wildlife for the greater interests of mankind.

Mr. Buntly Tao (Ranger)

Range Forest Officer

Kamlang Tiger Reserve & Wildlife Sanctuary

Wakro, Lohit,

Arunachal Pradesh, India.

Mail: buntlytao@gmail.com



Myself holding a Greater Racket-Tailed Drongo



Myself wearing traditional attire

Rangering

for Vatnajökull National Park in Askja caldera in the highlands north of Vatnajökull glacier, Iceland

Júlía Björnsdóttir,
Seasonal Ranger in Askja, Vatnajökull National Park

Askja is a large central volcano in the highlands north of Vatnajökull glacier. Vatnajökull National Park encompasses all of Vatnajökull glacier and extensive areas around it, including Askja and surrounding area. The highlands are open to people throughout the year but travels are restricted by the weather and road conditions. This summer the roads to Askja were opened around 15th June as the winter was quite mild compared to the last few years. Roads, huts and other

infrastructure for the season's visitors are prepared by the Road Administration, Wardens from the Akureyri Touring Club and Vatnajökull National Park Rangers.

Rangers in Askja are based in Drekgil by the Dyngjufjöll mountains that surround the Askja caldera and there are usually four Rangers stationed there during the summer months. Most of the Rangers working for Vatnajökull National Park are Seasonal. As all year-round travels have increased



Lake Askja and Víti crater inside the Askja caldera. Photo: Júlía Björnsdóttir

massively in Iceland, the need for full-time Rangers has increased accordingly. The influx of all year-round visitors is one of the major challenges for administrators of protected areas.

I am one of the Seasonal Rangers in Askja. We start the day by talking to visitors at the campsite and in the huts, which are run by Akureyri Touring Club. We provide information on nature and local conditions, especially weather as it may change suddenly in the highlands. As we are located near the glacier, information about conditions of unbridged roads that go through glacial rivers are important information, as the rivers may have risen unexpectedly. Long distance hikers, who commonly cross the area on their route across the country, are looking for



Ranger Júlía Björnsdóttir doing an educational walk in Askja Caldera



The rake is an important tool for Rangers working in the highlands. Ranger Stefania Ragnarsdóttir preparing to rake some off road driving tracks. Photo: Júlía Björnsdóttir



Ranger Stefania Eir Vignisdóttir doing a daily educational walk on the new lavafield Holuhraun.
Photo: Júlía Björnsdóttir

information such as where to find fresh water. It's especially crucial in this area, as between the glacier and Dyngjufjöll mountains lies one of the biggest dust sources on Earth.

An important part of our nature interpretation and information sharing is doing different daily educational walks with visitors. One of those is a morning walk at Holuhraun, a new lava field formed during a large eruption from Bárðarbunga in Vatnajökull glacier in 2014-2015. This area is carefully monitored and researched, and one of our tasks is assisting different research groups. We do our best, in collaboration with the scientists, to include the most recent scientific results within our educational walks. The emphasis in the Holuhraun walk is on New Land in the Making.

Another daily educational walk is within the Askja caldera. We walk with visitors into the caldera and talk about the geology of the area, how the Dyngjufjöll mountains were built up by repeated eruptions under the Ice Age glaciers, how the main caldera was formed and about recent eruptions. The underlying thread in all educational Rangers' walks in Vatnajökull National Park is Climate Change and Retreating Glaciers. The Rangers working for Vatnajökull National Park have different backgrounds, some are educated geologists, some biologists, some

philosophers and political scientists, so we are able to emphasise different educational points in our walks. At the moment the land is rising, an indicator of magma collecting in the magma chamber under the caldera, so we inform visitors about how it is monitored by the Icelandic Met Office, the police and Vatnajökull National Park administration, including the Rangers. We keep all our senses sharp to notice if there's something different from the day before, for example if there is any new geothermal activity, sulphur smell, different colours, new sounds etc. Anything can happen inside an active central volcano - usually with good notice though!

When we are not doing educational walks and the so-called road Rangering, where we stop and welcome visitors entering the National Park with relevant information, we monitor the area, assist scientists, maintain trails, pick up rubbish and

clean composting toilets. One of the major challenges in our area of the highlands is restoring and recovering damage to nature caused by off-road driving.

At the end of the shift, we have a status meeting via two-way radios with all Rangers working in the north and east areas of the Vatnajökull glacier. We talk about how the day has been, the number of visitors, if something unusual or unexpected has happened, the weather forecast, etc. On a regular day all four of us are back in the Ranger's hut before dinner time. After work we cook something nice together while we reflect on our day and what we can expect the following day. Although we have a quite structured time plan during each shift, no two days are ever the same when Rangering in Askja.

Credit and further information at Vatnajökull National Parks' website: www.vjp.is



An example of off-road driving that needs to be raked. Photo: Júlía Björnsdóttir

Obituaries:

Gordon Miller Obituary by Bob Reid

It is with great sadness that I report the death of our friend, Gordon Miller, who passed away peacefully in late May after a long battle with Parkinson's disease. Gordon was one of the most committed and compassionate professional Rangers with great vision. Gordon's influence over his lifetime was truly global. He attended Manchester University where he completed his Degree in Countryside Management. He began as a Volunteer Ranger in the Peak District National Park, and then worked as a National Park Ranger there for his whole working life, based at Edale, with responsibility for Kinder Scout.

In 1982, Gordon became the Chairperson of the

Association of Countryside Rangers for England and Wales (ACR) and established mutual affiliation through joint projects with Scottish Countryside Rangers' Association (SCRA).

Gordon was part of the National Parks' Lose-hill Hall Training Centre team, where National and International Training Conferences were held, allowing Gordon to build links with many participants visiting the centre. He also organised joint overseas exchanges, one being to Poland in 1989 which included seven SCRA members. As our associations became engaged in working closely together, Gordon was one of the founders of the

International Ranger Federation (IRF) at SCRA's first International Conference on Loch Lomond, becoming the first IRF President. He was proud of being presented with SCRA Honorary Membership for his commitment to engage in our Association.

Gordon's home was open to all, especially if they brought a good Scottish malt whisky. We spent many evenings discussing the need to unify Rangers around the world to which Gordon gave his total commitment to IRF aims. To date, IRF has over 120 countries thanking him for his commitment and effort.

Even in retirement Gordon carried out many local projects, such as helping to

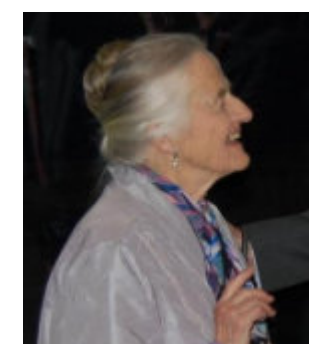
establish the village garden and orchard, and taking part in citizen science surveys recording bees.

I travelled with Gordon to the USA and Europe in the furtherment of our dreams to unite the global family of Rangers. I had the pleasure of calling him a true friend.



Dr Jean Balfour 1928-2023 by Ruth Grant

Jean Balfour was the Chair of the Countryside Commission for Scotland between 1972 and 1982, a time when, arguably, the Commission was at its most innovative and influential. Among its achievements during that period were: the establishment of its grants programme of which Ranger Services were among the main beneficiaries (getting 75% of salaries and running costs!), the development of Country and Regional Parks, a planning service that gave advice to local authorities on relevant planning applications, a research programme that included demonstration projects in the Cairngorms,



where a Ranger Service was established, in Glencoe looking at issues of managing increasing numbers of visitors, and studies of visitor pressures on the shores and islands of Loch Lomond, and the development of an innovative demonstration area in the old kitchen garden at Battleby where

examples of good design of countryside furniture (picnic tables, countryside car parks, and signage, for example) were displayed, backed up by a growing folder of technical specifications.

For Scotland's Rangers this was a time of development and growth of a new profession through the work of the Commission's Ranger Services Advisory Officer, Malcolm Payne; a seminal guidance note for employers and the National In-Service Ranger Training Course that was introduced in 1974. At the start of Jean Balfour's tenure there were under 20 Ranger posts in Scotland. By the end of it the number had increased to well over 100. This

could not have happened without her belief in Rangers and her commitment to delivering this new service.

Jean was also heavily involved in rural land use, including farming - her husband farmed near Glenrothes - and particularly forestry where she was highly regarded for her expertise. She owned the Scourie Estate in Sutherland including Handa Island, well known for its seabird colonies, and now a nature reserve managed by the Scottish Wildlife Trust. She used this knowledge and experience to the benefit of CCS's work throughout her tenure of the Chair.

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We welcome articles for SCRAMBLE at any time. Our next themes are:

- November 2023: Rural Crime**
- March 2024: TBC**
- July 2024: 50th anniversary edition.**

Please use the Author Guidelines to reduce the time our volunteer Editor and Designer have to spend.

Send your articles to: SCRAmblemag@gmail.com

NB. Snippets will no longer be included in SCRAmble.

Please head to the new SCRA website for the new, upcoming 'News' section for Rangering news.

And remember:

SUBMISSIONS We welcome submissions at any time to include in SCRAmble. These can be: case studies of successful management techniques/projects, articles on relevant countryside management topics, news from your site, letters about relevant topics, opinions about current issues.

PHOTOGRAPHS We are always looking for good quality images to use in our articles or simply to showcase the variety of habitats, flora and fauna in Scotland. We also are interested in seeing images of Rangers, and other staff, doing their everyday jobs. If you are happy to share your pictures, please get in touch.

The deadline for the next issue is 23rd October 2023. For more information and to submit your articles and photos, email Emma Parker at SCRAmblemag@gmail.co.uk



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