



Ranger Code of Conduct

A new Ranger Code of Conduct promoting professionalism, collaboration, and leadership for more effective and just conservation

Version 1.0



Objective

The ranger profession needs strong principles to guide behaviour and professionalise the ranger workforce. Rangers need a Code of Conduct to maintain high standards of practice and ethics. This document provides a common definition for a ranger and working templates for ranger values and codes of conduct. This was a clear request of the 2019 Chitwan Declaration from the World Ranger Congress.

Intended Use

The Code of Conduct and Ranger Values are aspirational documents that should inspire rangers. The aim is for rangers to strive to uphold the values and commit to the Code of Conduct.

The intention is for the Code of Conduct and Values to be adopted and implemented by ranger groups and institutions, with the documents adapted as needed to local contexts. The templates are a guiding resource, providing core principles for groups that want to develop their own standards. They are not enforced definitions or codes but there is strong encouragement to follow them as good practice guidelines that enable an effective and professional ranger workforce.

Development of the Code

This document was developed in 2020 by the International Ranger Federation (IRF), following a global, iterative consultation process with rangers, ranger associations, ranger employers, national and regional government bodies, human rights organisations and other relevant stakeholders. The first consultation phase garnered 177 responses from 51 countries, representing 663 people, while the second consultation phase received 620 responses from 41 countries representing 1,157 people. All comments and responses were collated, translated, reviewed and addressed by the authors, with all comments and corresponding actions noted for future records. A detailed report on the development process has been prepared separately.

The definition and codes are freely available working templates, curated by the IRF. These templates will be reviewed regularly. Any comments or suggested edits should be sent to president@internationalrangers.org.

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Rangers doing fire management in Brazil © Day's Edge Productions / WWF-US

Foreword

It was at the second World Ranger Congress (San José, Costa Rica 1997) that the International Ranger Federation (IRF) determined the need for a Code of Conduct that would service the global ranger sector. Whilst this was developed, it was never taken up and used as we would like the new Code of Conduct (CoC) to be used. On the back of a need to professionalise rangers and as a requested outcome of the Chitwan Declaration (2019), the IRF, with support from Universal Ranger Support Alliance (URSA) members, embarked on the development of this new Global Ranger Code of Conduct.

After a six-month process, with inputs from a diversity of rangers across the World, we are confident that the Global Ranger Code of Conduct is one which was developed by rangers for rangers and will be adapted to regional and national contexts. It will also enhance the core values and beliefs of the ranger profession through set principles which outline the norms and behavioural responsibilities or proper practices, of an individual ranger, an employer or funder organisation. It will remain a living document where the IRF will take any received inputs into an annual review process to ensure that it remains relevant.

Chris Galliers
International Ranger Federation President

KEY PURPOSES OF THE CODE:

- Builds and strengthens the reputation and understanding of the sector.
- Provides an operational framework for rangers and supporters of the profession.
- Helps guide rangers, ranger employers and possible supporters to make better decisions.
- Promotes implementation of globally accepted best practices and can contribute to the prevention of rangers violating laws and regulations.

"The IUCN World Commission on Protected Areas welcomes this new code of conduct for rangers and the extensive process of consultation that has taken place globally to develop it. The shared values and standards of conduct it establishes will help to unite rangers as responsible, accountable and respected individuals and teams, working at the forefront of conservation across the world to benefit nature and people."

Dr Kathy MacKinnon
Chair – IUCN World Commission on Protected Areas



Rangers take a brief rest on patrol, DRC © Chris Gordon/ Conservation Alpha

Message from the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights

Respect for human rights and safeguarding biodiversity through conservation are mutually reinforcing approaches. Conservation cannot be successful without respect for human rights and similarly, full enjoyment of human rights depends on the protection of biodiversity in our ecosystems. Wildlife rangers have an important role in this regard to bridge gaps and build trust between conservation workers and communities. In this context, the development of a model Code of Conduct for wildlife rangers is very welcome. The Code of Conduct will help institutionalise and professionalise the work of wildlife rangers. The Code of Conduct will contribute to further improving existing policies and guidance, and provide wildlife ranger institutions with a frame of reference that outlines values and appropriate behaviour of rangers, including in areas related to human rights. The Code of Conduct is designed as a core policy document that clarifies and explains responsibilities as outlined in international and national human rights instruments. It communicates in simple terms wildlife rangers' professional duties, including how to implement their human rights responsibilities, and should form a central part of a wildlife ranger's training framework. It is however important that the tailoring and adoption of this model Code of Conduct is a part of a consultative process including wildlife rangers and partners to ensure relevance and local ownership.

The adoption of the Code of Conduct will however not in itself create the necessary institutional policy framework guiding wildlife rangers. The Code of Conduct must be complemented with more detailed guidance for specific functional areas where wildlife rangers have special law enforcement powers such as the use of force and detention. For these areas, it is important to develop specific standard operating procedures.

In order to operationalise and complement the Code of Conduct it is important to ensure that it is part of a broader system of accountability that includes internal and external checks and balances. Such a system will help guide wildlife rangers in performing their duties in accordance with national and international law and the highest standards of professionalism and integrity. An important element of institutional accountability is that supervisors must ensure that wildlife rangers are fully accountable for their actions, including with regard to human rights. The Code of Conduct should be linked to an internal disciplinary system. In some situations, a breach of the Code of Conduct does not only violate an institution's internal policies but also violates national and international law. In such cases, the rangers' institution must cooperate with prosecutors or other external accountability mechanisms to investigate the alleged crime.

Adherence to the professional standards set out in the Code of Conduct should also be recognised in each ranger's individual performance appraisals. Human rights compliance in line with the Code of Conduct and other human rights standards should also be a condition for career advancement.

The Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights stands ready to advise wildlife ranger institutions on how to best meet the requirements to respect, protect and fulfil human rights.

Johan Olhagen
Human Rights Officer
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Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights

Ranger Definition

There is a wide range of working titles in use globally, all of which fit the definition of the term “Ranger”. We have identified a number of additional titles, listed in the appendix. For this document, the term **ranger** will be used to refer to any of the relevant working titles.

Rangers play a critical role in conservation; they are responsible for safeguarding nature, and cultural and historical heritage, and protecting the rights and well-being of present and future generations. As representatives of their authority, organisation or community, they work, often for extended periods, in protected and conserved areas and wider land- and seascapes, whether state, regional, communal, indigenous, or private, in line with legal and institutional frameworks. They should be dedicated and knowledgeable, and should always act in a professional manner.

Rangers provide a combination of services, which may include:

- Protecting, conserving and restoring natural and cultural values in protected and conserved areas and wider land- and seascapes
- Enforcing relevant laws, maintaining area integrity, ensuring compliance and managing visitors
- Maintaining a safe, secure and balanced environment for communities and wildlife
- Developing and maintaining trusting and respectful dialogue and relationships with key stakeholders
- Empowering, collaborating with, engaging and supporting indigenous peoples and local communities
- Providing education and awareness for communities, visitors, the younger generation and society
- Monitoring and researching wildlife, habitats, and features of cultural and historical importance
- Managing and controlling environmental risks, and providing assistance during emergencies



Photos (from top to bottom): Setting up forest camera traps, Thailand © Panthera; Patrolling marine protected areas, Thailand © Panthera; Game Ranger helps a white rhino during treatment, South Africa © Chris Galliers

Ranger Values

Rangers should strive to uphold the following values in their work and personal life.

Rangers should act as role models and ambassadors for their profession, the environment, and the people who depend upon these resources. Often, they are the “face” of nature. They should be proud, dedicated and passionate about their vocation, ready when duty calls, and compassionate towards nature and the people they interact with.

Natural and Cultural Values

Human well-being is directly linked to nature. Rangers must respect and conserve the natural and cultural values of the areas where they work, encouraging all others to do the same. They should understand that present and future generations have the right to know, enjoy and benefit from nature.

Principles and Accountability

Rangers should adhere to human rights and ethical principles. They are not corrupt, and should act with fairness, impartiality, and tolerance. They should not discriminate, abuse, intimidate or harass. Rangers respect gender, age, ability, race, socio-economic or ethnic status, sexual orientation, and religious beliefs or lack thereof.

Rangers should act in line with applicable laws, professional standards, values and guidelines. They are accountable for their actions and are transparent in performing their duties.

Excellence

Rangers should display a positive, proactive attitude and behave in a friendly, polite, professional, and responsible manner. They should be honest, truthful, trustworthy and humble. They should act with integrity and not abuse their position. They should admit mistakes and correct them. They are a credit to their organisation, whether on or off duty.

Rangers should be capable and versatile, and use their knowledge and skills to help conserve nature and protect the communities that depend on it, performing

their duties to the highest standards. They should aim to continually develop their knowledge and skills and share these with colleagues and other stakeholders.

Collaboration, Loyalty and Leadership

The ranger workforce is more effective through teamwork and collaboration. Rangers should be disciplined and loyal to colleagues and their seniors, the organisations and communities they serve, and the environments they protect, unless this compromises their integrity, or leads to other adverse effects.

Rangers and institutions should inspire colleagues and others by upholding ranger values, leading by example, treating everyone equally, supporting and mentoring, and enabling open and effective dialogue to create an organisational culture true to these values.

Respect

Rangers should treat the public, colleagues, communities and other rightsholders and stakeholders with respect and courtesy while upholding the law. They should maintain a sound and positive relationship with indigenous peoples and local communities, building trust through clear dialogue and transparent, appropriate action. Rangers should respect and value community and individual rights, culture, customs, knowledge, and livelihoods.

Rangers should treat information with respect and disclose it only where necessary in the proper course of their duties.

Safety

Rangers should act with the utmost respect for their own safety, and the safety of others, and not take unnecessary risks. Rangers maintain operational security to protect themselves, their colleagues, and the organisation.

Fortitude

Rangers should be courageous in their duties in spite of danger, criticism, or threats. Sometimes courage involves removing oneself from a dangerous situation. They should act appropriately if the actions of superiors, colleagues or other stakeholders contradict the ranger values or code of conduct.

Code of Conduct

PLEASE NOTE:

This Code has been written in the future tense to indicate a commitment to conduct oneself according to the Code. The Code is designed to inspire rangers to excellence. It has been written based on all ranger roles. However, some sections may not be relevant to all rangers. Ranger groups can adapt this Code to remove irrelevant sections. For examples, many rangers do not carry firearms, and so that section can be removed.

I commit myself to keep the following Code of Conduct:

As a Ranger, I have an important role in protecting and conserving nature and cultural heritage where I work for present and future generations; this is my primary role and objective. As an ambassador, I will follow the ranger values, honour my profession and uphold the applicable laws, professional standards, and guidelines at all times.

Professionalism

I am professional and proud to be a ranger. I will respect and follow lawful instructions from those senior to me and will always perform my duties diligently and to the best of my ability. I will ensure that I understand my duties and any instructions given to me. I will always try to develop my knowledge and apply it in my work. I will take responsibility for my actions, and act with honesty, integrity, and a positive attitude, even in difficult situations. As part of a team, I will be loyal to my colleagues, my organisation and the environment and communities where I work. I understand that any unprofessional conduct by me places safety, reputational or legal risks upon me, my colleagues and my organisation.

I will behave in a professional and respectful manner. I will foster peaceful and positive relationships with communities, respecting cultures, customs, rights, livelihoods, and knowledge. I will maintain clear, open, and effective dialogue with all stakeholders and colleagues, and duly act to build trust.

I will abide by my organisation's uniform code and ensure efficient use of organisational resources and assets.

Human Rights and Dignity

I will respect human dignity and uphold the human rights of all persons, following the United Nation's Universal Declaration of Human Rights. I will treat everyone with equal respect and impartiality without nepotism or favouritism. I will not discriminate against, harass, or abuse people under any circumstances, whether physically or orally. I will respect gender, age, ability, race, social-economic or ethnic status, sexual orientation, and religious beliefs or lack thereof. I will not tolerate actions by others that violate anyone's human rights, and will report any violations or wrong doing to the relevant authorities.

Integrity and Transparency

I will avoid situations in which personal, community or other interests conflict with my duties, and will declare them if they do. I will not accept or offer benefits, favours or other advantages that will compromise my role.

I will not commit or abet crimes and will not collude in illegal behaviour. I will actively oppose corruption, including bribery to obtain preferential treatment, information, or to ignore or abet criminal activity. I will report any such illegal activities to the relevant authorities.

Legality

I will make myself familiar with and abide by the laws and regulations relating to my work and conduct. I will only give and carry out lawful orders and instructions. To the best of my capacity, I will prevent any violations of laws and regulations, and address these according to established procedures and my powers and responsibilities.

Confidentiality

I will not disclose to unauthorised persons any sensitive information related to my work. I will follow all instructions related to information designated as confidential, unless my duty or the needs of justice strictly require otherwise.

Safety

In all my actions, I will do my best to ensure the safety of myself, my colleagues, my environment, Indigenous Peoples and local communities and visitors. I will strive to be physically and mentally fit to carry out my duties. I will never use illegal or intoxicating substances or alcohol while on duty.

Response to Violations of this Code of Conduct

I will report, challenge or act, following established procedures if the behaviour of colleagues or others in my organisation contradicts the ranger values or Code of Conduct. I expect the same from my colleagues should my actions fall below these standards.

Rangers and Law Enforcement role – To Be Included as Required – THE FOLLOWING IS FOR GUIDANCE ONLY

Rangers must always adhere to the UN principles, the national laws and the organizational rules of engagement in the country where they operate.

Use of Force

My primary goal is to communicate and to proactively engage to change the behaviour of those in breach of laws or regulations. I will only use force as a last resort. This will be the minimum force necessary to make a situation safe and will always be proportionate to the threat I face as I perform my duty within the law. I am responsible and accountable for any use of force and must consider this prior to any action.

Protection of Persons

I will ensure the rights and well-being of persons in my custody. I will not detain people indiscriminately or inflict or tolerate torture or cruel, inhumane or degrading treatment or punishment.

Firearms

I will ensure I know and respect all laws and procedures concerning firearms. I will be legally permitted to bear any firearms or weapons entrusted to me, and I will only act within my mandate. I will at all times either have them in my possession or ensure they are in a secure place. I should be trained in their safe use and maintenance.

I will only use firearms according to established procedures for animal management and control, or in self-defence or the defence of others when faced with an imminent threat of death or serious injury. I will only use intentional lethal force with a firearm against a human being if it is strictly necessary to protect life. I am accountable for all actions with my firearm and must consider less-lethal options before I rely on it to use force.

Reference

For any rangers without rules of engagement or standard operating procedures, we refer you to the UN principles on the use of force and firearms, including less-lethal weapons and ammunition:

<https://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/useofforceandfirearms.aspx>

https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/HRBodies/CCPR/LLW_Guidance.pdf

and the UN International Human Rights standards for law enforcement:

<https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Publications/training5Add1en.pdf>

Appendix: Terminology

There are a wide range of working titles in use globally, all of which fit within the definition of the term “Ranger”. We have identified a number of additional titles below. We recognise this list is not exhaustive, particularly the examples of non-English titles.

Please send any further examples to president@internationalrangers.org

Other Common Titles:

Community Game Guard; Community Ranger; Community Scout; Community Wildlife Scout; Conservancy Ranger; Conservation Officer; Environment Officer; Environmental Guard; Field Officer; Field Ranger; Forest Guard; Forest Ranger; Forester; Forestry Officer; Game Ranger; Game Scout; Marine Park Ranger; Marine Ranger; National Park Guard; National Park Ranger; Nature Conservator; Park Guard; Park Ranger; Ranger; Ranger Officer; Scout; Village Scout; Warden; Wildlife Guard; Wildlife Officer; Wildlife Ranger; Wildlife Scout.

Examples of Non-English Titles:

Bahasa:	Pemantau Hijau; Pengendali Ekosistem Hutan; Polisi Hutan; Polisi Kehutanan.
Czech Republic:	Strážce Přírody.
French:	Ecogarde; Forest Ecogarde.
German:	Naturwacht; Parkwächter; Reservatsaufseher; Schutzgebietsbetreuer; Waldmeister; Wildhüter.
Hindi:	Mahout.
Italian:	Guardia Forestale.
Malay:	Pengawal Keselamatan Hidupan Liar; Pengawal Keselamatan Hutan; Peronda Hutan.
Philippine:	Bantay Gubat; Bantay Dagat; Bantay Kalikasan.
Portuguese:	Vigilante da Natureza.
Slovak Republic:	Strážca Prírody.
Spanish:	Agente Medioambiental; Guardabosque; Guardafauna; Guardambientes; Guardaparamos; Guardaparque; Guardarecursos; Guardian del Ambiente; Guardianes de la Naturaleza; Vigilantes.
Swahili:	Askari.
Vietnamese:	Kiểm lâm.

Additional Titles:

Advisor; Agent; Agro-forester; Analyst; Animal Conservation Officer; Animal Tracker; Area Chief Ranger; Beat Guard; Beat Officer; Biodiversity Guardians; Boatman; Community Engagement Ranger; Community Guardian; Company Commander; Conservation Agent; Conservation Assistant; Council Ranger; Countryside Ranger; Curator; Eco-Monitor; Elephant Handlers; Enforcement Ranger; Environment Management Inspector; Environment Ranger; Environmental Agent; Environmental Compliance Officer; Environmental Leader; Environmental Operator; Environmental Preservation Agent; Environmental Protector; Extensionist Park Ranger; Field Service Officer; Field Supervisor; Field Technician; Fire Management Officer; Fire Protection Force; Fire Watcher; Forest Beat Officer; Forest Conservation Officer; Forest Ecosystem Technician; Forest Master; Forest Officer; Forest Patroller; Forest Range Officer; Forest Section Officer; Forest Warden; Forest Watcher; Forestry Agent; Forestry Technician; Frontline Staff; Game Officer; Game Watcher; Gamekeeper; Guard; Guard Monitor; Guardian; Honorary Warden; Indigenous Land Rangers; Indigenous Sea Rangers; Inspector; Interpretive Ranger; Land Rangers; Native Ranger; Natural Environment Agent; Nature Ambassador; Nature Guardian; Nature Park Ranger; Non-Commissioning Officer of Waters and Forests; Park Interpreter; Park Naturalist; Parks and Wildlife Assistant; Parks and Wildlife Officer; Patroller; Platoon Commander; Proprietor; Protected Area National Police Reservist; Radio Operator; Range Conservationist; Range Forest Officer; Range In-Charge; Range Officer; Ranger Corporal; Ranger in Charge; Ranger Naturalist; Ranger Sergeant; Ranger Team Leader; Researcher; Reserve Guard; Resource Management Specialist; Resources Guard; Rural Agent; Sea Rangers; Section Ranger; Security and Surveillance Agent; Senior Field Supervisor; Senior Ranger; State Inspector; Supervisor; Support Park Ranger; Technical Assistants; Technician; Tracker; Voluntary Park Ranger; Watcher; Watchman; Wildlife Conservationist; Wildlife Keeper; Wildlife Monitor; Wildlife Patroller; Wildlife Police Officer; Wildlife Researcher; Wildlife Watcher.



US Park Ranger and screech owl, USA © Richard Siggins

Cover photos (clockwise from top left): Rangers on a SMART training exercise, Philippines © James Slade/ GWC; Marine rangers in Ponta do Ouro Partial Marine Reserve, Mozambique © Peace Parks Foundation; Ranger in Copo National Park, Argentina © Jason Houston / WWF-US; Anti-poaching rangers, Cameroon © Adam Smith/ ZSL; Monitoring new mangrove growth, Indonesia © James Slade/ GWC



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