

WORLD RANGER DAY

commemorate and celebrate

- 🌐 Ranger 🌐 Naturoppslyn 🌐 Garde Moniteur 🌐 Game Guard 🌐 Nationalparkbetreuer 🌐 Guardaparques 🌐
- 🌐 Naturwejleder 🌐 Neach curaim na duthcha 🌐 Naturwacht 🌐 Boswachter 🌐 Guardiaparco 🌐 Gozdar 🌐
- 🌐 Gajowy 🌐 Termesztvedelmior 🌐 Ceiwad 🌐 Conservator 🌐 Game Ranger 🌐 Roje 🌐 Miskininkas 🌐
- 🌐 Warden 🌐 Natur und Landschaftspfleger 🌐 Vigilantes de Natureza 🌐 Guardarecurso 🌐

What is World Ranger Day?

World Ranger Day is observed on the 31st of July each year.

It is the day to commemorate the many rangers killed or injured in the line of duty.

It is also the day to celebrate rangers and the work they do to protect the world's natural and cultural treasures.

The first World Ranger Day was observed in 2007 on the 15th anniversary of the founding of the International Ranger Federation.

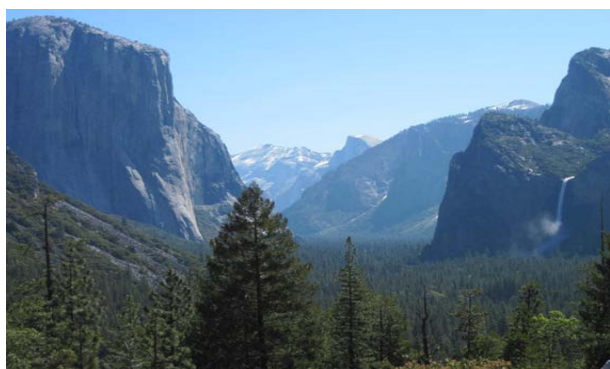
Parks and protected areas – a little history

'...not for royalty or the rich, but for everyone, for all time.' – Ken Burns, documentary film-maker

In 1810, the English poet William Wordsworth described his country's Lake District as a "sort of national property in which every man has a right and interest who has an eye to perceive and a heart to enjoy".

This idea of a 'national property' was not unique to Wordsworth. In the 19th Century, as Western civilisation spread across the wilds of the New World, other people were enamoured with the idea that areas of natural wonder should be preserved on behalf of all a nation's citizenry.

In 1864, then United States President Abraham Lincoln echoed this sentiment in Congress when the Yosemite Valley was ceded to the state of California "upon the express conditions that the premises be held for public use, resort, and recreation...inalienable for all time".



The Yosemite Valley

In 1872, Yellowstone National Park in the US became the world's first truly *national* park. At that time, Yellowstone, unlike Yosemite, was part of a federally governed territory. As there was no state government to assume stewardship of the land, the federal government took on direct responsibility for the park.

First National Parks (by continent)

North America	Yellowstone	1872
Australia	Royal	1879
South America	El Yunque	1903
Europe	9 in Sweden	1909
Africa	Virunga	1925
Asia	Jim Corbett	1935

During the 20th Century, as more land was set aside by national governments for public recreation and environmental protection, efforts were made to reach an international consensus on the standards and terminology used to manage government preserved areas. One result of this process was the creation of the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) in October 1948.

By the 21st Century, the IUCN had developed six Protected Area Management Categories to define protected areas according to their management objectives. These categories are recognised globally by various national governments and international bodies such as the United Nations.

The six categories range from pristine wilderness, to natural areas allowing sustainable human activity, smaller habitats protecting identifiable native species, and sites of cultural significance.

National parks are a Category II Protected Area. By 2010, according to the IUCN, over 7,000 national parks had been established worldwide.

In recent times, there has been a push to include Community Conserved Areas (CCAs) in the category of Protected Areas. Typically, CCAs are sites of significant biodiversity and cultural value conserved by indigenous and local communities through customary laws or other effective means. While conservation is one objective, the management of CCAs is also related to the maintenance of local communities' livelihoods and cultural values.



CCAs are equivalent in many ways to the conventional government-managed protected areas, but official recognition of this type of local designation has only lately come to pass.

Rangers

Ecologist, historian, teacher, diplomat, policeman, labourer, administrator...

The world's protected areas are a gift from past and present societies to future generations, and the preservation and management of these special places rests largely on the efforts of the men and women in the field: the rangers.

The term "ranger" first appeared in 12th Century England. Rangers were officials employed to "range" through the Royal Forests, protecting the King's lands from poachers while also maintaining law and order. Today, rangers continue this role on behalf of the public in protected areas around the world.

In 1916, Steven T Mather, the first Director of the US National Parks Service, gave this account of the work of a ranger:

If a trail is to be blazed, send a ranger; if an animal is floundering in the snow, send a ranger; if a bear is in a hotel, send a ranger; if a fire threatens a forest, send a ranger; and if someone needs to be saved, send a ranger.

As the key protectors of park resources, rangers do indeed perform these heroic acts, but they also do much more.

They are ecologists and historians, seekers of the knowledge that will help them better understand and maintain their local areas. They are educators, passing on this knowledge to locals and visitors. They are diplomats and negotiators, building relationships with stakeholders. They are enforcers of the law. They are labourers, information-technology specialists, office managers and administrators.



Winter fox control, Alpine National Park, Australia

The late Dr Kenton Miller, one of the leading figures in international protected area conservation, sums up the importance of rangers:

The future of our ecosystem services and our heritage depends upon park rangers...there has never been more of a need for a well prepared human capacity to manage [protected areas]. Park rangers are the backbone of park management. They are on the ground. They work on the frontline with scientists, visitors, and members of local communities.

The Thin Green Line

Rangers on the frontline...

Just as the police are said to be 'the thin blue line' between order and chaos, rangers can be described as 'the thin green line' between nature conservation and environmental degradation.

Moreover, Dr Miller's notion that rangers work on the 'frontline' in protected areas is not entirely figurative: the fact is rangers die defending the natural environment.

Ranger Deaths, August 2010 to July 2011 (by country)	
Argentina	1
Australia	1
Bolivia	3
Cambodia	1
Cameroon	1
Central African Republic	3
Colombia	2
Democratic Republic of Congo	11
India	9
Iran	4
Mozambique	1
Nepal	1
Pakistan	1
Peru	1
Philippines	6
Rwanda	2
Spain	1
Uganda	1
United States	6
Zambia	1
...includes 31 homicides.	

Rangers face a variety of risks in performing their duties. The most obvious are those that come with working in wild areas. Many rangers have been killed by the animals they strive to protect, particularly in Africa and Asia. Death also results from extreme weather conditions and vehicle accidents in remote areas.

But the leading cause of death is not from natural hazards – it is man-made. The most dangerous adversary the ranger faces is the armed poacher.



Rangers are indeed the thin green line of resistance against those who would, for their own selfish purposes, exploit, plunder or otherwise destroy the world's parks and protected areas and the plants and animals that live in them.

The International Ranger Federation

A 'world family of rangers'...

In 1991, a small group of rangers from Scotland, England and the United States met during an international conference in Loch Lomond, Scotland, to discuss building links between rangers around the world.

At this meeting was Gordon Miller, then chairman of the Association of Countryside Rangers for England and Wales. He explains, "We wanted to establish a federation of national ranger associations so that we could set about increasing the growth of these associations in countries where they did not exist and build a world network."

One year and much work later a charter founding the International Ranger Federation (IRF) was signed at the Peak District National Park in England.

"Rangers around the world may work in very different circumstances, but basically they have a lot in common," says Mr Miller. "I refer to the Federation as the 'world family of rangers'. Our common thread is the shared empathy we all have for protecting nature in the parks and protected areas we work in."

The aim of the IRF is to bring every member of the ranger family into the fold. This is achieved by providing a forum for rangers to share their experiences, as well as through a commitment to exchange programs, joint activities, and international meetings, such as the World Ranger Congress, where names can be put to faces.

Mr Miller states "the more representative we become the more we can reflect the views of those working at the grass roots in protected areas".

From 42 countries, the IRF now has 47 regular member associations, 5 associate members, and 2 provisional members.

www.int-ranger.net

The Thin Green Line Foundation

'Would you risk your life for our planet's tomorrow?'

The Thin Green Line Foundation (TTGLF) supports the families of park rangers killed or injured on the frontline of conservation throughout the world.



It was established in 2007 by Sean Willmore, a ranger from Australia. Mr Willmore spent most of 2004 filming the work of rangers on 6 continents and in 19 countries. From this experience came his documentary film *The Thin Green Line*. The world premiere in 2007 involved 35 countries, 330 locations and 15,000 people, and this enthusiasm resulted in the birth of TTGLF.

By sharing the stories of rangers from around the world, TTGLF's message is that it's not up to rangers alone to protect what is priceless: we all need to work together for a sustainable future.

TTGLF provides assistance to rangers who are financially or materially unable to support themselves or their families due to injury in the course of their work, provides assistance to the families of rangers killed in the line of duty, and supports programs that prevent the injury and death of rangers in the field.



Widows of rangers from the Democratic Republic of Congo using sewing machines provided by The Thin Green Line Foundation. The sewing machines allow the women to make items which can then be sold to generate income. [Photo by Juan Carlos Gambarotta from Uruguay]

TTGLF asks the question: "Would you risk your life for our planet's tomorrow?" Rangers do, and they need everyone's support.

www.thingreenline.info

We can do nothing to bring back the fallen rangers, but we can honour their memory and ensure their sacrifice is never forgotten.

World Ranger Day 2011

