

**REPORT by BRIAN MARTIN on the
INTERNATIONAL RANGER FEDERATION
5th WORLD CONGRESS**

Stirling University, Scotland, 14 June – 20 June 2006

I attended the Congress and presented a paper on management planning for protected areas. I thank RMIT University for their financial support.

THE IRF

The International Ranger Federation was founded in 1992 and now has representation from 52 countries. The goals of the Federation are to provide a forum for rangers from around the world to share their successes and failures in protecting the world's heritage and to promote information and technology transfer from countries in which protected area management enjoys broad public and government support to countries in which protected area management is less well supported.

It has a range of programs to assist park rangers in developing countries even to the extent of supplying uniforms and equipment and providing support for the families of rangers killed by poachers and insurgents.

The IRF has become a major player in the international conservation community, particularly since the World Parks Congress in Durban in 2003, due to its members' day-to-day role in managing the world's protected areas.

THE CONGRESS

The Congress is held every three years. This meeting was attended by about 200 people from 40 countries. Unlike many conferences that I have attended it did not deal with theoretical issues nor was it concerned with inter-governmental politics. Instead, it had a strong focus on practical issues of nature conservation and the personal experience of those who work in the 'front line' of conservation. We were reminded that about 30 rangers had lost their lives in the line of duty since the last Congress.

Keynote speakers

Keynote speakers included:

Rhona Brankin, Deputy Environment & Rural Affairs Minister

John Markland, Chairman of Scottish Natural Heritage

Drennan Watson, President of Scottish Country Rangers Association

David Sheppard, Head of IUCN Protected Areas program

Professor Roger Crofts, Senior advisor on natural heritage

Sir Crispin Ticknell, Senior UK diplomat and government advisor

The keynote addresses tended to focus on broad scale environmental issues and the problems faced by ranger forces worldwide. David Sheppard presented a scenario of park management in years to come where parks would be much more managed by communities rather than by government agencies and that funding would come from partnerships between government and the private sector.

Presented papers

I presented a paper *Planning for National Parks: Victoria, Australia* which dealt with various aspects of preparing plans for protected areas. Although directed at the Victorian situation

many of the observations apply to other constituencies. I obtained useful feedback from a number of people after the session.

The representative from Malawi expressed interest in my paper and research work and suggested the possibility of me helping to develop a park planning project in Malawi which might be used as a model by other countries in the region. For a number of reasons I think this is not likely to eventuate but at least it is an indication that my paper was well received.

Workshops

This was one of the more valuable parts of the conference as the workshops were held in small venues and there was opportunity for extended discussion. There were parallel sessions so some interesting material was missed. I attended:

(a) *Indigenous community based land and sea management in Arnhem Land*

Phil Wise, NT Parks and Wildlife

Djawa Yunupingu, Dhimurru Land Management Aboriginal Corporation

This discussed *Indigenous Protected Areas*, a relatively new concept in Australia.

(b) *Evaluating management effectiveness of protected areas*

Marc Hockings, UQ, IUCN

Sue Stolton, CMCC, and others

This reviewed the major IUCN program on management effectiveness. I have on CD the documentation of the presentation, other resources and material from the World Parks Congress 2003 and can provide copies.

Field trips

I visited (a) Glencoe and the Loch Lomond & the Trossachs National Park and (b) Loch Leven National Nature Reserve.

Both trips emphasised the complexity of legislation, land ownership and management of land set aside for cultural and nature conservation in Scotland.

Publication of proceedings

I understand that it has not been decided at this stage how the conference proceedings will be published.

Conclusion

As usual on these occasions, the opportunity to discuss issues face-to-face with colleagues and develop relationships was one of the most valuable outcomes. I had the opportunity to talk to many of the speakers and other participants and have made useful contacts in the IUCN, USA, New Zealand, Finland, Norway, Poland and Malawi as well as with some of the participants from Australia.

The conference also was an opportunity to prepare and deliver a paper on aspects of my research work and this seemed to be well received.

SCOTLAND

Access rights to public and private land

The *Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003* gives everyone statutory access rights to most land and inland water. This is substantially different to the law in England and Australia. The Scottish law provides that people only have these rights if they exercise them responsibly by

respecting people's privacy, safety and livelihoods and the environment. Equally, land managers have to manage their land and water responsibly in relation to access rights. A comprehensive *Scottish Outdoor Access Code* has been produced and I have a copy for those interested.

The application of this legislation is still being worked through but while it is beneficial in providing greatly improved public access to most land it produces anomalies such as the removal of protection from walkers, dogs etc of breeding areas for rare and endangered waterfowl at, for example, Loch Leven and replaces it with code of practice for visitors. Whether this is sustainable remains to be seen.

Community ownership of land

Scotland has a history of most of the land being owned by a very small number of people, mostly in very large estates. There has been a move in recent years for local communities to buy back some of the land and manage it by community trusts. Part of this movement was demonstrated in several areas that we visited where community owned forestry projects are being developed. Over the last hundred years, particularly after the Second World War, creation of extensive plantations of exotic trees for forestry has transformed the Scottish landscape and there is now a community movement to restore native woodland.

The Crannach, on Deeside, is 510 ha of privately owned native woodland and heather moorland. It was bought in 1985 by four partners and their intention is to re-establish native flora and fauna on this land. To date, they have planted over 173,000 native trees and are encouraging natural regeneration of native woodland. This group has been very professional in its activities but the question remains as to who will be responsible for long-term management.

In contrast, the *Colin Burt Reserve for Wildlife Conservation* at Killin, is a project of the Fife Air Cadets Conservation Group in association with a number of other organisations. They hope to restore an area of cleared area and plantation trees to native woodland and wetland. The intent is to help educate and promote environmental awareness to the youngsters across Fife. Unfortunately, they did not appear to have a clear management strategy and might benefit from further professional advice.

NGOs role in protected area management

The major non-government conservation organisations in Scotland (National Trust for Scotland, John Muir Trust and the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds) own and manage large areas of land for nature conservation, often jointly with each other or with private landholders and the government organisation Scottish Natural Heritage. NGOs and private landowners have their own park ranger forces.

Scotland's national parks

For social reasons and because of the pattern of land tenure, Scotland has held back from declaring national parks until recent years. *Loch Lomond & the Trossachs National Park* was declared in 2002. It comprises 1,865 sq km, a permanent population of about 15,600 people and has a board of management with 25 members appointed by the Scottish Executive. *Cairngorm National Park* was declared in 2003. It has a population of about 16,000 people. Its 25 member Board of Management has comprises five members elected by local residents, 10 appointed by nomination by the four local government authorities and 10 appointed by Scottish Ministers (five of the appointed members must be locals). This park has a very large number of different land tenures with separate ranger forces (?25) and straddles four local government areas. It remains to be seen whether this style of management is sustainable.

It is important to note that these are IUCN Category V Parks (Protected landscape) and substantially different to national parks as they are known in Australia. That is, villages, resource extraction such as forestry, hunting and other uses continue to be allowed and the park agency acts more as a planning authority.