



IUCN
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INTERNATIONAL
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Messages from [HRH The Duke of Cambridge Prince William](#) and [Dr Jane Goodall](#) and the 2014 [Honour Roll of Rangers](#) are available [here](#).

For immediate release

Rising murder toll of park rangers calls for tougher laws

Gland, Switzerland, 29 July 2014 (IUCN/IRF) – With poachers responsible for more than half of ranger deaths over the past two years, IUCN, the International Union for Conservation of Nature, and the International Ranger Federation (IRF) call for a toughened stance against wildlife crime globally, marking World Ranger Day celebrated across the globe on 31 July.

Fifty-six rangers have lost their lives in the line of duty in the last 12 months, 29 of whom have been killed by poachers, according to the latest information released today by the International Ranger Federation, which has been monitoring ranger deaths since 2000. Last year's death toll has reached 102, with poachers and militia responsible for 69 of those deaths.

As more deaths are reported every week and as the figures represent only the confirmed deaths from some 35 countries that voluntarily report to the IRF, the actual number of rangers killed in the line of duty worldwide could be two to three times higher.

*"Rangers are the guardians of our planet's most precious natural assets and it's unnerving to think that every day they go to work, their lives are at risk as a result of human greed and cruelty," says **Julia Marton-Lefèvre, IUCN Director General**. "Without solid protection, proper law enforcement and a strong support network for those unsung heroes of conservation, our efforts to protect wildlife are a lost cause. All conservation action should start with supporting those that put their lives on the line to protect nature every day."*

Almost 60% of all rangers killed this year are from Asia, with the majority of those from India. India, Thailand, Kenya and the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) have seen the sharpest increase in ranger deaths caused by poachers in recent years. Areas rich in elephants, rhinos, sandalwood, rosewood and other valuable resources are most affected. In DRC's Virunga National Park alone, some 140 rangers have been killed in the last 15 years.

*"We are extremely concerned that rangers continue to face high levels of violence and are being murdered at an alarming pace," says **Sean Willmore, President of the International Ranger Federation**. "Although the world is slowly awakening to their plight, we need to turn this awareness into meaningful action on the ground and make sure that the dangerous work rangers do to protect our valuable wildlife receives the support and respect it deserves. This still remains our challenge."*

The Federation and its charity arm The Thin Green Line Foundation offer equipment and training to rangers and support the families of those who have lost their lives, helping secure health care, education and employment for the widows and children left behind.

*"The work of the International Ranger Federation has been crucial in providing rangers with the support that they need to do their job, which today is one of the most dangerous professions in the world," says **Trevor Sandwith, Director of the IUCN Global Protected Areas Programme**. "We need to make sure that this support has a strong backing from governments and the international community, and that tougher, more effective laws are put in place to prevent any more tragedies from taking place. Efforts also need to be made to halt the problem at its source where it is being driven by consumer demand."*

In South Africa, which lost more than 1,000 rhinos in 2013, a rhino poacher has recently been sentenced to 77 years in prison — possibly the heaviest penalty handed to wildlife criminals to date.

The extent and impact of illegal wildlife trade and new approaches to combat it, including effective enforcement strategies to combat wildlife poaching and associated crime, will be discussed at the IUCN World Parks Congress 2014 taking place from 12 to 19 November in Sydney, Australia.

Notes to editors:

- More than 1,000 rangers have been killed worldwide and many more injured over the last 10 years.
- In Thailand, more than 40 park rangers have been murdered in the last five years, with many more injured or left in a critical condition.
- A record number of 1,004 rhinos were killed in 2013 in South Africa, which is home to 83% of Africa's rhinos. 343 rhino-related poaching arrests were made in the same year.
- Over 20,000 elephants were illegally killed in Africa in the past year alone.
- Rangers in Uganda, DRC and Rwanda have been directly responsible for an increase in the number of Mountain Gorillas, risking their lives to ensure the survival of this Critically Endangered species.
- Community Maasai Rangers in Kenya have helped increase the local lion population on their community lands from just 6 individuals to over 70.

A number of events are being held around the globe to mark World Ranger Day, including South Africa, Australia and Thailand. Messages of support to rangers have come through from around the world, including from [HRH The Duke of Cambridge Prince William](#) and [Dr Jane Goodall](#).

An e-kit including messages from HRH The Duke of Cambridge Prince William and Dr Jane Goodall, and the Honour Roll of Rangers that have lost their lives this year is available [here](#).

A series of prime-time debates at the IUCN World Parks Congress in Sydney, [the World Leaders' Dialogues](#), will include a session called "The Nature of Crime", which will discuss effective enforcement strategies to combat wildlife poaching and associated crime. The Dialogue will bring together the President of Gabon Ali Bongo Ondimba, the Australian Minister for the Environment Greg Hunt, CITES Secretary-General John Scanlon, Director of the Environment Investigation Agency Mary Rice and President of the IRF Sean Willmore, and will be moderated by the award-winning Kenyan journalist Jeff Koinange.

About the IRF

The non-profit organization The International Ranger Federation (IRF) and its charity arm The Green Line Foundation were established to raise awareness of and support the critical work that the world's park rangers do in conserving our natural and cultural heritage. Founded in 1992, the IRF has a membership of 63 ranger associations from 46 countries, on six of the seven continents. The role of the IRF is to empower rangers by supporting their national or state ranger organizations, or assisting in the establishment of local ranger associations in countries where they do not currently exist. <http://internationalrangers.org/> <http://thingreenline.org.au/> [IRF on Facebook](#)

About IUCN

IUCN, International Union for Conservation of Nature, helps the world find pragmatic solutions to our most pressing environment and development challenges. IUCN's work focuses on valuing and conserving nature, ensuring effective and equitable governance of its use, and deploying nature-based solutions to global challenges in climate, food and development. IUCN supports scientific research, manages field projects all over the world, and brings governments, NGOs, the UN and companies together to develop policy, laws and best practice. IUCN is the world's oldest and largest global environmental organization, with more than 1,200 government and NGO Members and almost 11,000 volunteer experts in some 160 countries. IUCN's work is supported by over 1,000 staff in 45 offices and hundreds of partners in public, NGO and private sectors around the world. www.iucn.org [IUCN on Facebook](#) [IUCN on Twitter](#)

About the IUCN World Parks Congress 2014

Conserving the earth's most valuable natural places and promoting nature's solutions to global challenges is the focus of the IUCN World Parks Congress 2014 taking place in Sydney, Australia from 12 to 19 November. The world's 200,000 protected areas, covering over 14% of land and nearly 3% of the oceans, conserve threatened wildlife, boost our food, water and climate security, and help people reconnect with nature. With its theme "*Parks, people, planet: inspiring solutions*", the Congress will bring together people from all walks of life to showcase protected areas as the best investment in our planet's – and our own – future. <http://www.worldparkscongress.org/> [WPC on Facebook](#), [WPC on Twitter](#)