

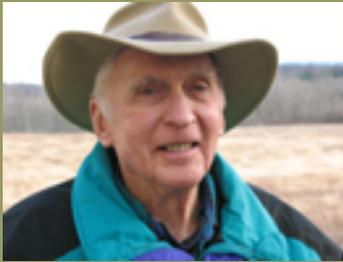
# Mountain Protected Areas UPDATE

No. 56 - December 1, 2007

## IUCN/WCPA-Mountains

### UPDATE EDITOR

[Dr. Lawrence Hamilton](#)



*The Mountain Protected Areas UPDATE is a quarterly newsletter edited Dr. Lawrence Hamilton and distributed to members of our Mountain Protected Areas Network*

Note: Names of Network Members appear in *bold italics* in our Newsletter

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## IUCN/WCPA-Mountains

### VICE CHAIRMAN

[Dr. Graeme Worboys](#)

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### IN THIS ISSUE

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*When I finally get out myself, I hike up and into the mountains, where I get smaller and smaller with every step. The immensity of it all lets me breathe and feel good again for the first time in a long while, and for some reason I start to remember who I am.*

~ Reporter Elizabeth Arnold on travels through populous China.  
From the radio series: Stories from the Heart of the Land

*From here, it's the long run out back to civilization. We'll follow the stream down the canyon and then get in our rented Land Cruiser and drive four days east across Tibet, then south through the Himalayas to Kathmandu, --back to traffic jams, dirty air, lots of problems and worry. The trick is going to be taking the mountain back with me, to not let it disappear, so I can stand there in the middle of the worry and feel the mountain like a foot on my chest.*

~Scott Carrier, after a visit to Mount Kailas  
From the radio series: Stories from the Heart of the Land

## A New Format for UPDATE

Luddite that I am, this entry into the cyberworld for UPDATE is only accomplished with great assistance from *Linda McMillan*. The bulk of you MtPA Network members are receiving this electronically, through Linda. While I still have funds for duplication and postage, I will mail hard copies to those who requested them. Those recipients of hard copy will still get the personal notes I like to scrawl across the top, to keep engagement levels higher. In the process of confirming who wished to still receive UPDATE and in what form, the Network members who did not respond were dropped. We now have a smaller, more dedicated core. Credit for the attractive new format goes to Linda. Note that she will keep the number of photos and density to a minimum, to accommodate those without high-speed internet connection.

Note that this newsletter system will arrive each time in two separate formats to accommodate any Internet connection styles: html format and simple text format. We will keep the html version modest in size, with the number of photos and density at a minimum to accommodate those without high-speed Internet connections. Also note that at the bottom of newsletter is a link that lets you update your email address so that you can continue to receive the newsletter. That section also contains our privacy information and a way to "unsubscribe" from the

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newsletter if you wish.

We will review the situation after a few issues have been handled in this new way. I must say, it is a relief for me not to continue begging for funding to support the hard copy, and neither *Linda Hamilton* nor I will miss stuffing, sealing and mailing; but I will greatly miss the more personal sense of connection the paper copy gave us. Please inform me of any mail or email address changes, so you will remain in the Network.

~ Larry

## Tech Tips for our new format of UPDATE

Dear Network Members:

Welcome to the new digital version of the Mountain Protected Areas UPDATE! I've been working closely with Larry Hamilton to set up a new system to transmit his superb UPDATE newsletter in digital form. The Constant Contact newsletter system we are using allows us to send these newsletters in two different versions in order to accommodate any Internet connection style: "HTML format" which displays messages with colors, images, and formatted text; and "Simple Text format" which simply displays messages in unformatted text.

To ensure that you will always be able to read the UPDATE, we will send everyone both versions. You can open each one, decide which one to keep, and delete the other. We will strive to keep the HTML version conservative in size, with just a sprinkling of low-resolution photos. Depending on the security levels you've chosen for your computer, you may need to approve the downloading of the images for the HTML version. If you see only empty boxes with a red "x" in them instead of images, just right click in one of the boxes and scroll to the choice "Download images". That should let the images display immediately throughout the body of the newsletter.

Note that at the very bottom of the newsletter, where you see the blue "SafeUnsubscribe" logo, is a link that allows you to update your email address changes for us automatically. Doing this ensures that you will continue to receive the digital newsletter. That section also contains privacy policy information and a way to "unsubscribe" from the newsletter if you wish.

If you have any problems or questions about receiving the digital version of the UPDATE newsletter, please let me know. Any questions about the newsletter content should be sent to our excellent Editor, [Dr. Larry Hamilton](#).

Thanks again to Larry for continuing to keep us informed on global Mountain Protected Area issues each quarter!

~ [Linda McMillan](#)

## WELCOME NEW MOUNTAIN PROTECTED AREAS MEMBERS!

This is a time of transition for UPDATE, and so also for the Mt PA Network. Members who did not indicate that they wished to continue receiving the newsletter, have been dropped from the list. But at the same time, new members have been added.

Welcome to the following, and we look forward to hearing from them:

*Meena Gurung* of Nepal, currently a graduate student in Vienna, Austria

*David Mabunda*, Chief Executive, South African National Parks

*Thymio Papayonnis*, Director, Mediterranean Institute for Nature and Anthropos, Greece

*Brian Peniston*, Co-director, Asia Program, The Mountain Institute, Nepal

*Michael Quinn*, Faculty of Environmental Design, University of Calgary, Canada

*Judith Safford*, Executive Director, UIAA, Switzerland

*Ang Tshering Sherpa*, Chairman, Asiatrek, and President, Nepal Mountaineering Association, and President, Union of Asian Alpine Associations, Nepal

*Zealeam Terera*, Afroalpine Ecosystem Conservation Project, Ethiopia

*John Harbison*, Vermont Sierra Club, USA

## Mount Athos Peninsula Protection Project (Greece)

A Special Environmental Study of the peninsula containing the [Athos Holy Mountain](#) has been carried out by a multi-disciplinary group of 20 scientists. The main objective was to identify the management measures that are necessary to protect the entire region of Greece's most holy mountain, with all its biotic and abiotic components while promoting a compatible local economy and safeguarding the spiritual and social values of the area. Mount Athos rises out of the sea to an impressive height of 2,033 m.

The peninsula's steep slopes and gorges, variety of aspects and of rock types produces a great variety of habitat types for flora and fauna. The flora is composed of Mediterranean elements (70%), Northeastern origin (15%), Balkan elements (9%), Mid-European (4%) and local endemics (2%). Twenty-two species of the 1,453 species are Greek endemics, with 14 being local endemics. Several are rare or threatened. One hundred seventy-three bird species have been recorded, 29 of which are in the IUCN Red Book. The peninsula is remarkably free of infrastructure, other than the 20 ancient monasteries and 14 "scates". Scates are such things as shrines, hermitages, pilgrim huts. There is however, a fairly dense forest road system for fire protection. Many of the forests are associated with the monasteries.

A zoning system is proposed: Zone 1 - Absolute Protection; Zone 2 - Nature Conservation (biogenetic reserves, protected cultural landscape features, and coastal and marine conservation areas); Zone 3 - Sustainable Management. An Environmental and Forest Board of the Holy Mountain is proposed as the administrative body. We wish the proposers well in this endeavor.

## El Angel (Ecuador) Ecological Reserve, and Water

[El Angel](#), created in 1993 in the Andean páramo of northeastern Ecuador, sits on a plateau at about 4,000 m, and contains cloud forest as well in its 15,715 ha. While it is a Category Ia ecological reserve, the growing thirst of haciendas and farms of the lower watershed hot, dry areas is creating threats. There is pressure to develop dams or reservoirs in this reserve area to augment the existing stream flows that were diverted into irrigation canals and into village water supply to satisfy growing population. Conflict between upstream and downstream users was resolved only when a consortium of researchers, local officials, NGOs and national and international agencies (Canadian International Development Research Centre) was formed. This soon focused on protecting the water source páramo and cloud forest, working on inefficient, leaky irrigation, and water allocation based on monitoring and equity. The message seems now to have taken hold: conserve the health of the upper watershed source, - the páramo. Information at:

[La Corporación Grupo Randi Randi \(CGRR\)](#)



## Their Legacy Lives On!

The tragic September 2006 helicopter accident in Nepal, which ended the lives of 23 Himalayan conservation leaders, was memorialized by a fund-raising campaign to establish training opportunities and awards for young Nepalis. Our MtPA Network was particularly impacted through the loss of three members, *Chandra Gurung, Mingma Sherpa and Narayan Poudel*. These three were also personal friends to many of us.

The Mountain Biome Executive Committee wishes to thank those of you who contributed to the scholarship fund that was set up through the World Wildlife Fund, USA. Donations may still be made. Send to: Eastern Himalayas Memorial Scholarship Fund, World Wildlife Fund, 1250 24th Street NW, Washington, DC 20037. This fund, specifically to honor Mingma and Chandra, is in two divisions. The 2007 Mingma Sherpa Memorial Scholarship has just been awarded to **Bimala Lama**, a young Nepali woman who has passed the Certificate Level program at the Institute of Forestry, Hetauda Campus. This award will enable her to pursue a Bachelor's degree at the same institution. She will help build a new generation of conservation leaders. The Chandra Gurung Memorial Award is for the Master's degree, and will be implemented later this year.

A young man, **Karma Bhutia** who has been working with The Mountain Institute as a Non-Timber Forest Products Officer, has been selected by WWF for the first Mathew Preece and Yeshi Lama Young Conservationist Leader Award. This was a subsidiary award set up by WWF to honor their two lost comrades who were working with local communities. We ask **Brian Peniston** of WWF to please pass on our congratulations to Bimala and Karma.

From a recent letter from Carter Roberts, CEO of WWFUS who participated in a memorial tribute in Kathmandu, excerpts follow:

*The day was a perfect blend of celebration and poignant tributes. Everyone came together first at the WWF Nepal offices for breakfast and a lamp-lighting ceremony. Later, 800 people attended a ceremony in honor of those who were lost. A renowned Buddhist nun sang a mantra to open the program, and then we heard from family members and others who shared remembrances of their loved ones. Several community and national leaders were recognized, and we also awarded the first scholarships created in memory of those who died. The afternoon was capped off with a truly unforgettable speech by a nine-year-old girl from one of the Eco-Clubs in Chitwan, introducing a conservation pledge taken by club representatives from across the country. (The program for the awards ceremony is at WWF's [Remembering Conservation Heroes](#) site.)*

*Separately, I joined Anil Manandhar, WWF Nepal's Conservation Program Director, to visit our legendary Terai Arc Landscape Project. This project represents the vision and legacy of Mingma Sherpa and Chandra Gurung, two of the WWF Staffers who were lost in the crash. I sat with members and leaders of some of the 1,500 user groups who engage with 200,000 people in an array of activities from sustainable forest management to civilian antipoaching patrols. I also participated in an antipoaching sweep with our staff, park guards and community members and tracked more than a few rhinos in vast landscapes of saccharum grass. The Nepal program in this landscape and many others exceeded most of their goals for the past year. Poaching levels are down to 90%, and 1,500 bio-gas stoves were installed. Truly remarkable progress in an extraordinarily challenging year.*

## Huangshan and Yosemite - Sister World Heritage Sites

Huangshan is the place most renowned in China for its mountain landscapes of peaks and pines while Yosemite is the mountain site most celebrated in the United States for its impressive walls and waterfalls. In addition to their natural value and beauty, both parks have deep cultural meanings, enshrined in stories and legends. The name "Huangshan" means "Yellow Mountain" and dates from 747 AD when the Tang Dynasty Emperor Zhuangzong renamed the mountain massif in honor of the ancient Yellow Emperor, Huang Di. The name "Yosemite" comes from a Miwok word for "grizzly bear" and may have its origins in accounts that Tenaya, a famous chief of the Yosemite Indians, lived in a country infested with grizzlies. On May 13, 2006 [Huangshan NP](#) Manager Cheng Yingfen and [Yosemite NP](#) Superintendent **Michael Tollefson** signed a cooperative agreement for interchange. Both are World Heritage Sites.



*Ed (Mr. Sacred Mountains) Bernbaum* points out that both parks have deep cultural meanings, enshrined in art, legends and literature. He has documented these, and the common public values the two parks share, in a proposal for a joint exhibit

entitled "Huangshan and Yosemite: Sister Sources of Inspiration". This would be in both Chinese and English, and would emphasize how these cultural values promote conservation of nature both physical and biotic. Since the sister park relationship builds on the sister city relationship between San Francisco and Shanghai, venues for the exhibit could include museums and other sites in each city, such as the Asian Art Museum of San Francisco and the San Francisco and Shanghai International Airports, as well as at each park.

## Crossing Boundaries and Connecting Landscapes

[Two Countries - One Forest](#) (2C1F) is a coalition of NGOs on both sides of the Canada/USA border, dedicated to conserving the wildlands and biodiversity of a 33-million ha (80 million acre) expanded ecoregion, the Northern Appalachian / Acadian Ecoregion. This includes parts of New York, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Maine, all of Vermont, Québec, New Brunswick, Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island. The area is dominated by forests (82%), is largely mountainous and water-rich (rivers, streams, lakes, ponds, wetlands). It is only now roughly 7% in Category I-IV (IUCN) protected areas, mainly in the mountains. There is a substantial amount of Category V of various levels on US National Forest and State and Provincial forest lands.

I have just participated in a meeting organized by 2C1F in Montréal which presented the scientific background to the conservation design mapping (that has been carried on over the past five years) to the NGOs which will move the science "into the streets". The action NGOs have accepted the job as a key part of their programs. They include: The Sierra Clubs of Canada and USA, The Nature Conservancy and Nature Conservancy Canada, Wildlands Project, Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society, Wildlife Conservation Society, Center for Biodiversity/Forest Watch, and many other regional and local organizations. Missing is a representation and commitment from government land- and water-managing agencies such as US Forest Service, State Natural Resources Departments, Provincial Forestry and Wildlife Departments. Individuals within these agencies may have bought in, but there has not been a vision adoption by officialdom. This is in distinct contrast to Australia's Alps to Atherton continental-scale corridor, where public organizations are leading the way. At least 12 members of our Mt PA Network participated in this month's meeting. Among the presenters were: *Harvey Locke*, *Steve Trombulak* and *Jim Sullivan*. *Steve Trombulak* and I have co-authored a case study of the Greater Northern Appalachian Bioregion which was presented a year ago at the Pappallacta, Ecuador meeting on connectivity, and which will appear in WCPA's forthcoming book edited by *Graeme Worboys*, *Wendy Francis* and Michael Lockwood.

One of the presentations was a case study of how one group, with which I am affiliated, is working on the Northern Green Mountains. This is an attempt to establish conservation connectivity across the Québec-Vermont border linking the northern portions of the Green Mountain National Forest to Sutton Mountain and north to Mount Orford Park and beyond. It involves 463 km<sup>2</sup>.

## Rapid Assessment Visual Expeditions

The International League of Conservation Photographers (ILCP) was established at the 8th World Wilderness Congress in Alaska in October 2005. The WILD Foundation (*Vance Marten* and crew) is the host and organizational sponsor for ILPC. Founder and first Executive Director (and a board member of WILD) is Cristina Mittermeier. ILPC has initiated a project [RAVE \(Rapid Assessment Visual Expeditions\)](#) to collect compelling visual and communication materials in threatened ecosystems, that create public awareness and action. Teams consist of several specialized photographers (wildlife, landscape, camera traps *etc.*), writers and videographers.

The first RAVE was carried out in El Triunfo Biosphere Reserve in Chiapas, Mexico. This 120,000 ha area has one of the largest protected cloud forests in Central America. It houses 24% of the animal species registered in Mexico. This cloud forest is the last refuge in Mexico of [the fabled Resplendent Quetzal](#). The area is threatened by illegal logging, agricultural incursions and a proposed road. This expedition in April 2007, brought back 30,000 photos and 30 hours of video footage, already in use to develop books, calendars, magazine articles, TV documentaries and presentations. Money raised will support a local NGO's [El Triunfo Conservation Fund](#) (whose logo shows the Quetzal).



## Mount Elgon Transboundary Ecosystem, Kenya and Uganda

(from *Mountain Research and Development* 27(3):215-219)

[Mt. Elgon](#), an extinct volcano, is one of Africa's few single peaks rising 2,000 m above the surrounding ground, reaching a height of 4,321 m. The Mt. Elgon ecosystem houses a rich and unique fauna and flora. There are 37 globally threatened faunal species (22 mammal, 2 insect, and 13 bird species, of which 9 species are endemic), making the area a priority for species conservation.

The Mt Elgon ecosystem comprises 4 broad classes: a community of mixed montane forest; a broad belt of bamboo and low canopy montane forest; a zone of high montane heath; and a high moorland community. Most of the plant species in the forest zone above 2.000 m have been shown to be endemic to the Afro-montane region, and a number of species in this zone are endemic to Mt. Elgon. The renowned dominant tree species include Elgon teak, cedar, *Podocarpus* species, rosewood and others. Intriguing and unique plants include giant groundsel, giant lobelia, and giant heather.

Additionally, the Mt. Elgon ecosystem constitutes a major catchment with many tributaries draining into the major rivers that lead to large bodies of water, -- lakes Victoria, Turkana, and Kyoga, and finally joining the Nile River system. The Mt. Elgon core ecosystem consists of 5 protected areas (Mt Elgon NP and the Namatala Central Forest Reserve in Uganda; Mt Elgon NP, the TransNzoia Forest Reserve, the Mt Elgon Forest Reserve, and Chepkitale National Reserve in Kenya), open areas, and other categories of land use without conservation status. The key values of Mt. Elgon are presented in the form of natural heritage biodiversity water catchment, agricultural base, and tourism. Because of its value and uniqueness, Uganda and Kenya are in the process of nominating Mt. Elgon as a Transboundary Biosphere for recognition as a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

Attempting to address the problem of encroachment into the protected area by impoverished farmers and graziers, a 4-year [Mount Elgon Regional Ecosystem Program](#) has been launched by the East African Community (a regional intergovernmental organization of 5 countries). It is funded by Norway, with IUCN's Mount Elgon Project providing the technical advice. A MOU on Cooperation in Environmental management has been signed by Uganda and Kenya. After two years of operation, illegal wood harvesting and poaching have been drastically reduced, and previously degraded sites within the protected areas have started to regenerate. Joint patrols, joint tours for stakeholders and collaboration in work plans and budgets are now in effect.

## Forest Bridge of the Americas

The Panama Country Office of The Nature Conservancy is playing a major role in a TNC program thrust called **Forest Bridge of the Americas**. This area is the Central American melting-pot of flora and fauna from both North and South America. TNC has identified 11 conservation action sites stretching south from Mexico's Yucatán Peninsula to the Darién Gap of Panama. These contribute in a major way to the theoretical Mesoamerican Biological Corridor (formerly the Path of the Panther). The target set for 2009 for TNC is to work with partners to positively impact 6 million hectares of forest land. TNC has brokered debt-for-nature swaps in Belize, Guatemala, Panama, and soon to be announced, --in Costa Rica.

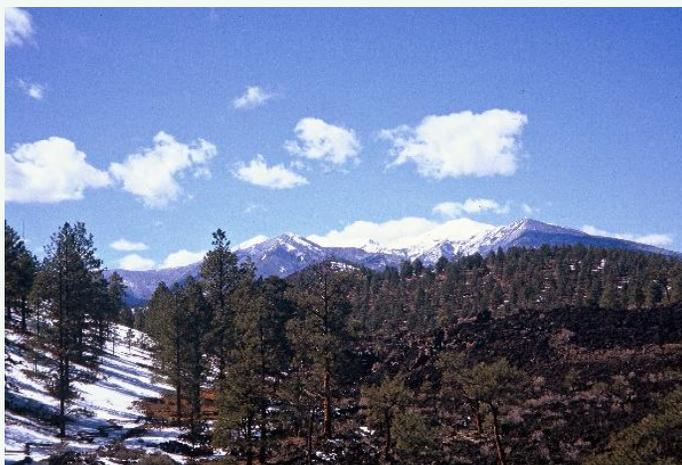
In Panama for instance, TNC helped establish the [Darién National Park](#) back in 1980 (now over 600,000 ha), and has recently negotiated a debt-for-nature swap to fund this park in perpetuity. As well as jaguar, harpy eagle, sloth and tapir, it is thought that there may be [Andean spectacled bear](#) in this key area which is as yet uncrossed by the Pan-American Highway. The Panama half of [La Amistád International Park](#) is receiving priority treatment to reduce land clearing and destructive logging through alternative livelihood generation such as ecotourism and organic honey, coffee, cacao and fruits. Also a focus is the [Chagres NP](#) which is a key mountain watershed, providing the replenishment water to operate the Panama Canal, and the bulk of the water for Panama City and Colón. Here, strategies include private land reserves, regulating development due to watershed values, and another US\$3 million debt-for-nature swap.

*Larry Hamilton* is one of the co-leaders of a Vermont Nature Conservancy visit in February 2008 to visit several of these action sites, and to establish a partnership with the Panama Country Program and an NGO there. *Linda Hamilton* has her binoculars

polished up for anticipated heavy-duty and exciting bird watching!

## Decision Day for San Francisco Peaks (USA)

[December 11 is International Mountain Day](#), the fifth since the International Year of Mountains in 2002. It is also a special day for the [Sacred San Francisco Peaks](#). This is the day that a panel of judges makes a ruling on whether the US Forest Service and the Arizona Snowbowl should be allowed a ski-development expansion and use of treated wastewater from the City of Flagstaff for snow-making. This volcanic massif complex is sacred to 13 Native American tribes, and of cultural significance to 22. The application of wastewater with its load of organic and synthetic compounds not removed in treatment, is a sacrilege to these tribes, who formed a Coalition to Save the Peaks to fight the development. In spite of a pro-development ruling by the Forest Supervisor of the National Forest, and loss of a lawsuit in the District Court in Flagstaff, the coalition prevailed in Circuit Court of Appeals in a March 2007 decision. The next battle will be decided December 11. If the no-development ruling is upheld, the developer and Forest Service could take it to the Supreme Court. The current US Federal Administration and land management agencies view this as a precedent-setting case that could affect decisions at many areas where Native Americans have sites of special spiritual value. This will pressure them to appeal if the December 11 decision upholds the no-development ruling.



Skiing here is marginal, at best. During the winter of 2002-02, the Snowbowl was open only 4 days! Global warming will only increase the risk of unreliable snow. The San Francisco Peaks (Mount Humphreys is tallest at 3,851 m) rise in isolation above the semi-arid Colorado high plateau. They capture the bulk of the rain and snow, nourishing the aquifer and streams that provide water for the City of Flagstaff and surrounding dry lands of ranches and small homesteads. Due to the moisture, the elevational zones and differing orientations and microhabitats, it is a regional biodiversity haven.

I have written up the story of this mountain issue in *Mountain Research and Development* and *Scottish Mountaineer*. As a member of the Delos Initiative of the WCPA Task Force on Non-Material Values, I was asked to prepare it as a case study for the Delos Initiative meeting that occurred in Halkidiki, Greece October 24-28. I collaborated with young Navaho activist Jeneda Benally, and she presented it superbly at the meeting. The papers will be published, and the experience in Greece, on the holy peninsula of Mount Athos, has given her new strength in the battle to [Save the Peaks](#).

## Mountain Recreation vs. Tourism in New Zealand

Network member *Rodney Garrard* who recently completed a study on the sustainability of mountaineering activities in [Aoraki \(Mount Cook\) NP](#), has sent us a summary paper of the issues involved in New Zealand's mountains as hotspots for tourism:

The [Southern Alps](#) offer a wide variety of opportunities for mountain-based recreation and tourism. Traditional mountaineering activities are multi-day tramping and climbing in summer (usually) and ski-touring in winter. These long-established mainstream sports have been complemented in recent years by numerous other mountain-based activities such as mountain biking, paragliding and ice climbing to name a few. Such activities are often referred to as "trend" sports.

We are seeing a noticeable drop of numbers in areas like climbing, ski touring, long tramps etc. and an increase in trend sport. This past summer 2006-07 some of the high altitude huts were inhabited by just a small number of guided parties. There are similar trends in Europe. People are increasingly "time poor" these days. The popularity of glacier kayaking here in Mount Cook Village is testament to this, --visitors are able to experience the alpine environment here in an afternoon and move on to the next destination.

The increasing demand for indoor and outdoor ice climbing ventures on the West Coast represents an example of this change.

Backpackers come and do a one-day ice climbing experience on the Fox Glacier. They have never climbed an ordinary mountain, don't know how to put one foot in front of the other one and yet they are "ice climbing". It looks sexy in the photos but it gives them completely the wrong picture of mountaineering.

The change in use is partly due to technological developments in equipment and transportation, and the glamorization of these activities through various publications. Because most of the trend sports are highly commercialized, the media coverage is also financed by guiding companies and gear outfitters, as part of their marketing campaigns, and this has led to an increased social acceptance of trend sports rather than "old-fashioned" activities such as tramping.

Some tourism operators view the crowding on the [Tongariro Crossing](#) with sadness. Others would cheer for a cableway to the summit of Pare te Tai Tonga. Some climbers resent the aircraft noise in the West Matukituki. Others fly in to Bevan Col. Some trampers enjoy talking to overseas visitors in huts. Others seem to think the worst thing that can happen in the hills is to meet someone different to themselves. In this debate, the goodies don't wear white hats and the baddies don't wear black ones. It's awfully inconvenient but that's the way it is.

It has been claimed that few countries have such a pronounced interest in mountain-base tourism as New Zealand. If this is true then such interest is not matched by a correspondingly high level of research into the adverse impacts such activities have on the mountain environment. To date, there has been very little work focusing on:

- The importance of mountains to sustainable tourism and recreation in New Zealand.
- Mountain ecosystem responses to tourism and recreation.
- Spatial and temporal modeling of tourist activities and their implications for mountain ecosystem health.

*Gordon Cessford* of DOC is one of the rare birds doing such research.

## A "Hot" Issue in Bulgaria: Construction in Rila National Park

[Rila NP](#) is the largest of three national parks in Bulgaria, IUCN Category II. It is also part of the EU's Natura 2000 network of specially protected areas together with the buffer zone around it. The national park is one of the largest protected areas in Europe and the highest mountain of the Balkan Peninsula. It is one of 9 PAs in Europe certified for management quality by [PAN Parks](#).

*Piotr Dabrowsky* of Poland tells us of a road and lift being constructed not far from the Rila Lakes in the Buffer Zone. He is helping to mount a campaign of awareness of, and opposition to, this illegal construction which started in summer of 2007.

The lift is constructed without:

- A concession agreement which is necessary for territories that are exclusive public property as is the national park;
- Up-to-date environmental impact assessment. (The investor quotes a 9-year-old assessment, which expired 4 years ago.)

The road:



- Is build without environmental impact assessment;

- At some points the road acts as a border of Rila NP and the agreement has been to reconstruct the road within its old site. However, at some points the road is now double its original size and enters the park territory.

Both projects:

- Need to be assessed in line with Article 6 of the Habitats Directive about their impact on the Natura 2000 sites. Despite the fact that this assessment is missing, both projects are in implementation.

The investor of the ski lift has much bigger plans than just the lift. Together with the municipality it promotes a large scale ski development project inside the National Park. As construction of new ski facilities is forbidden by the Protected Areas Act and the Park Management Plan, the investor is putting high pressure on the government to pave its way for permission of the ski zone. Meanwhile, the NP Director, under whose management Bulgaria became the first country to have a second PAN park, was fired by the Minister of the Environment and Water without any prior notice or justification.

Piotr urges citizens from abroad to check the campaign website ([Campaign for preservation of the protected areas and territories in Bulgaria](#)) and to write letters to the Bulgarian authorities. Or, information from [Katerina Rakovska](#) [krakovsk@wwfdep.bg](mailto:krakovsk@wwfdep.bg) or [World Wildlife Fund - Bulgaria](#).

## Biosphere Reserve Andino Norpatagonica in Argentina

Grouping together established Argentine protected areas into a very large Biosphere Reserve has recently been blessed by [UNESCO](#). This area has an approximate area of 2,500,000 ha. It includes such well-known National Parks and Reserves as Lanin, Nahuel Huapi, Los Arrayanes, Los Alerces and Lago Puelo. And, at the Provincial level it brings in 5 Natural Protected Areas and Forest Reserves including the 80,000 ha Río Azul - Lago Escondido and the 82,134 ha Río Turbio. Further information from Argentine MAB Committee President [Alfredo Reca](#).

## Bits and Pieces

Wolves have been re-introduced, or have been returning on their own to many Mt PAs around the world. The success of [wolf re-introduction, into Yellowstone NP](#) for instance, has been well-documented and we have reported on this from time to time. Similarly we have reported on the amazing spread of the wolf from Italy's Apennines into the European Alps, especially with reference to the movement from Alpi Marittime across to France's Mercantour NP. Wolves have an amazing mobility, given adequate habitat and protection. Perhaps a record has been made by a female Scandinavian wolf who was radio-collared as a pup in southern Norway in 2003. She recently was killed in Northeastern Finland, about 6 miles from the Russian border. During her relatively short life, she wandered 15,555 km according to the GPS data.

*Wendy Francis*, co-editor of our book from the Papallacta, Ecuador Connectivity Corridors meeting, is now Senior Conservation Program Manager for the [Yellowstone-to-Yukon Initiative](#). And by the way, that book is coming along nicely and will go to print soon.

*Paul Dingwall* (New Zealand) was recently awarded honorary citizenship of Jeju Province in Korea, in a ceremony hosted by the Governor, in recognition of the role he played as IUCN evaluator of the successful World Heritage nomination. He has also been appointed to an international advisory committee for the [Jeju Volcanic Island and Lava Caves World Heritage Area](#). Quite an honor, says Paul, even though he doesn't quite know yet what it all means.

[Nahanni National Park Reserve](#) (the world's first Natural World Heritage Site) has been greatly enlarged this year, increasing in

size from roughly 5,000 km<sup>2</sup> to include an additional 5,400 km<sup>2</sup>. Moreover, the federal government is proposing a further expansion in cooperation with the traditional First Nations people, the Sahtu Dene and Metis of important watershed lands. This would involve another 6,000 km<sup>2</sup>. Public consultation is currently taking place. Further information at [Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society](#).

In September, [Skaftafell NP](#) celebrated its 40th anniversary. Copies of a new book *Skaftafell in Iceland: a Thousand Years of Change* by *Jack Ives* arrived from Finland just in time. To top it off, Jack was conducted to the President's residence and presented with the [Knight's Cross of the Order of the Falcon](#). The citation reads "in recognition of his scientific research in the field of natural history over the course of 50 years in cooperation with his Icelandic colleagues, as well as for his book on the Skaftafell National Park." What an honor! Congratulations, Jack.

National Geographic Society's Conservation Trust Advisory Board has awarded a grant of US\$20,000 to support *Alton Byer's Mountain Institute project*, Conservation and Restoration of the Mera Peak Alpine Zone, Makalu-Barun National Park, Nepal. We have previously provided the basic elements of this project in describing a previous prototype at Sagarmatha NP.

*Philip Bubb*, our cloud forest point person at [UNEP-WCMC](#) (World Conservation Monitoring Center), is developing a joint project with the national biodiversity information centers of Mexico, Costa Rica and Colombia to improve cloud forest research and science-based policy for montane cloud forests. The Mexicans have already raised US\$4 million. UNEP-WCMC holds the data base for cloud forests.

Apologies for not reporting this earlier, but congratulations to *Marija Zupan•i•Vicar* on becoming an IUCN Councillor. (It's especially good to have a mountain advocate in such a policy-making position.) And congratulations also to *Jan Cerovsky* who was recently awarded the Albert Toepfer Award by EUROPARC.

The **Balkans Peace Park Project** is a grassroots network effort to create a trans-national, cross-border mountain park in Kosovo, Montenegro and Northern Albania as a symbol of peace and cooperation. As well as conserving the rich biodiversity of this least-known mountain range in Europe, it would hopefully stimulate ecotourism, promote local employment and promote environmental conservation. Information at [the Balkans Peace Park Project](#).

Another honor for *James (Muddy Boots) Thorsell*. This time he is being recognized for his outstanding work in getting protection of Canada's natural heritage. In a ceremony on November 21 in Ottawa, the Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society presented him with the [James B. Harkin Conservation Medal](#). Harkin was "the father of Canada's National Park System". Our boy Jim has "fathered" a large number of parks worldwide as executive officer for WCPA and then as World Heritage Advisor. Congratulations, Jim.

Melting glaciers aficionados may see some [remarkable repeat photographs](#) of Glacier National Park (USA), taken by the US Geological Survey. Dan Fagre is the researcher behind this. Models show that if current rates of global warming continue, ALL of Glacier NP's glaciers will have melted by 2030.

*Elizabeth Fox* has completed her stint for the Mountain Forum in Kathmandu, and although based back in Italy, is currently working in the kingdom of Bhutan with the Nature Conservation Division of His Majesty's Government on human-wildlife interactions.

It was a proud moment when the first **Kenton Miller Award** was presented at the Bariloche, Argentina meeting of the Latin American Parks Congress, October 6, 2007 to Dr. Heliodoro Sánchez by *Kenton Miller*, acting on behalf of WCPA Chair *Nik Lopoukhine*. Heliodoro is a researcher, university professor and park manager, who at one time was Director of Colombia's National Parks Department.

And to end 'Bits and Pieces' with a bang, we are mightily pleased to announce that our WCPA Vice-Chair (Mountain Biome), is now *\*Doctor\* Graeme Worboys*. Well done, mate!

## Some Recent Publications of Interest

*Gobernanza de los Sistemas Nacionales de Areas Protegidas en los Andes Tropicales*. 2006. Compiled by Alex Rivas Toledo. Photos by *Robert Hofstede*. [IUCN. Regional Office for South America](#) with assistance from Conservation International. Available by contacting: [IUCN-Sur](#), Av. De los Shyres 2680 y Av. Gaspar de Villarroel, Quito, Ecuador.

*Friends for Life*. New partners in support of protected areas. 2005. Edited by Jeff McNeely, IUCN. (We missed reporting on this earlier.) It came out of the Durban World Parks Congress from a stream of workshops to which MtPA Network members contributed. [IUCN Publications](#) Services Unit, 219C Huntingdon Road, Cambridge CB3 0DL, UK.

The July 2007 issue of *Mountain Forum Bulletin* is on the theme Melting Mountains and highlights climate change issues in Cameroon Highlands, the Himalaya, Brahmaputra River Basin, European Alps and Bolivian Andes. Bulletin may be downloaded at [the Mountain Forum website](#). *Elizabeth Fox* was responsible for this issue.

## UPCOMING MEETINGS and EVENTS OF INTEREST

**Natural Areas Association International Workshop | March 16-27, 2008 | Kathmandu, Nepal**

This is one of the learning and travel workshops of NAA, for conservation professionals. This one will include such highlights as: Annapurna Conservation Area, Shevpuri NP, Royal Chitwan NP, Cultural World Heritage Sites in Kathmandu, International Mountain Museum, and some trekking in the Himalayas.

Contact: [Abi Rome](#).

**Understanding and Managing Amenity-led Migration in Mountain Regions | May 15-19, 2008 | Banff Centre | Banff, Canada.** This is an international workshop being organized by [Laurence Moss](#). More info at the [Banff Centre website](#).

**Society for Conservation Biology Annual Meeting (North American section: USA, Canada, Mexico, Greenland) | July 13-17, 2008 | Chattanooga, Tennessee.** The title is one we well know: "From Mountains to the Sea". More info at [The Society for Conservation Biology \(SCB\) website](#).

**IUCN World Conservation Congress | October 5-14, 2008 | Barcelona, Spain.** Invitations were extended to organize events in the World Conservation Forum October 6-10. The 3 streams are: A New Climate for Change; Healthy Environments - Healthy People; Safeguarding the Diversity of Life. Registration begins January 2008. More info at the [IUCN website](#).

**Living in the Alps - the New Challenges | October 8-10, 2008 | Triglav National Park, Slovenia.**

VI General Assembly and International Conference of Alpine Protected Areas Network ([ALPARC](#)). For more information contact the ALPARC [organizers](#).

## Thanks for your participation in our Network

Your contributions of news, information, images, and alerts add value to our Newsletter and to our Network.

We welcome your input!