

Parks in Europe: discover how they work!

EUROPARC 12th International Junior Ranger Camp

Bavarian Forest National Park, July 2013

This report fulfils the objective:

2.2.2 NATURE AND BIODIVERSITY – Awareness raising/environmental education

- To promote the values and benefits of protected areas in Europe to the public, and specifically young people

of the EC LIFE + Programme

NGO operating grant 2013

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1/ Objective and Theme

The core theme of the camp was “Parks in Europe: discover how they work” with the objective to help youth to better understand protected areas and N2000 sites in Europe, their values and benefits to society, considering also the wider European context and their role for the implementation of global and EU priorities, with specific reference to the European Biodiversity Strategy.

Discover and experience the main functions and missions of different protected areas in Europe was the focus of the camp: to better understand how PAs are managed, their work for the conservation of habitats and species, and how they contribute to implement international legislation. Four main areas of work, in order for the Junior Rangers to experience protected area management in a practical way, were selected: Ranger functions, Communication, Nature Conservation and Visitor Management. All those were investigated during the camp with thematic and practical activities, with games, discussions and a final evaluation at the end.

2/ Camp site and Accommodation

The camp took place in the Wildnis Camp education centre of the Bavarian Forest National Park, from the 13th to the 20th of July 2013. The camp facilities offered possibilities to strongly connect to nature being located close to the core area of the National Park, providing accommodation in nature thematic huts and plenty of space for outdoor activities.

3/ Participants

There were 46 participants present, coming from 11 European countries and representing 15 different protected areas:

- Romania, Tarcu Mountains N2000 Site: 4
- UK, Scotland, Cairngorms National Park: 3
- Netherlands, Weerribben-Wieden National Park: 3
- Netherlands, Drents-Friese Wold National Park: 3
- Estonia, Lahemaa National Park, Vilsandi National Park: 3
- Spain, Aiguestortes i Estany de Sant Maurici National Park: 3
- Germany, Bavarian Forest National Park: 4
- Germany, National Park Vorpommersche Boddenlandschaft: 3
- Czech Republic, Protected Landscape Area Ceske Stredohori : 2
- Latvia, Gauja National Park: 3
- Czech Republic, Krkonošsky National Park: 3
- Serbia, Djerdap National Park: 3
- Italy, Prealpi Giulie Natural Park: 3
- Slovenia, Triglav National Park: 3

Among the participants there were 29 Junior Rangers and 14 mentors and rangers. Furthermore were present: 2 members of the EUROPARC Federation staff, a volunteer Ranger from Australia, 4 supporting Rangers of the Bavarian Forest National Park and 6 “senior Junior Rangers” of the park. The Junior Rangers were between 13 and 17 years old, and there was a perfect balance of gender at the camp, with almost 50% each.

4/ Programme and activities

The programme has been structured around the four above mentioned missions to create a sort of park directorate managed by Junior Rangers at the camp. Four thematic related activities were chosen, in which the Junior Rangers have been actively involved: Communication - produce the newspaper of the camp and update the Junior Ranger Facebook page; Visitor Management - build a new path for visitors in a wild area of the national park; Nature Conservation - recreate the natural condition in a meadow after big tracks passage; Ranger functions - follow a Ranger in his daily mission.

The structure of the camp not only allowed the participants to learn intensively about the Bavarian Forest National Park but also to experience the management of a N2000 site (Bavarian Forest National Park DE6946301) through practical activities at first hand (see four thematic activities above). Furthermore during the activities the participants experienced the values and benefits of N2000 sites and other protected areas for society: learning about ecosystem services like water purification and climate change mitigation in the bog restoration activity; understand the value of protected areas for health and wellbeing providing the setting for recreational activities during the path building activity; learning about the importance of communicating the values and benefits of N2000 sites and other protected areas to the wider public in both the communication and ranger activities.

Following the suggestion of the 2012 Junior Ranger Camp, a 2hs workshop session was also organised by the participating rangers, where each of them presented and shared with the JRs a different nature activity. The programme included also: daily presentations by the JRs of the different protected areas – including N2000 sites - represented at the camp; introduction about relevant EU policies for nature conservation, outdoor games and evening camp fires; excursions to discover the park; a visit to a glass factory and to the town of Zwiesel, and much more with plenty of opportunities to socialise and exchange ideas and experiences.

The programme included a session addressed exclusively to the adult Rangers and mentors, where we discussed about the future development of the Junior Ranger programme, looking at the need and interest for some to promote a new specific programme for the Junior Rangers over 18 years. The meeting has been an opportunity to share experiences and good practices between more and less experienced, present youth environmental education programmes in protected areas of Australia, and to introduce a Master thesis being prepared by one of the mentors on the impact of the Junior Ranger programme. During the meeting the newly published Junior Ranger guidance publication was presented and distributed. This new brochure will also help raising the importance of young people being actively involved in protected areas.

The full programme is in the annex.

5/ Camp preparation

The camp was for the first year directly coordinated and managed by the EUROPARC team, in agreement and with the support of the hosting park. This has been quite demanding but very successful, as it gave the opportunity to structure the programme using the experience gained during the previous camps.

Before the camp the Junior Ranger Facebook page has been a useful focal point to present the camp, distribute information, and to facilitate the first interactions among the participants. Some pre-camp work has been asked to the JRs and to the Rangers in order to get them involved with active contribution to the camp programme. Specific invitations have been sent respectively to the JRs and to the Rangers.

At the end of the camp an evaluation meeting was held: one for the Rangers and mentors and one for the youth. Ideas for improvements were collected and then shared. Further comments and feedbacks have been collected at the end of the camp via email and Facebook.

6/ Budget

As said before, in the history of the International Junior Ranger Camp 2013, this camp was the first to be directly coordinated and managed by the EUROPARC team. That meant that finding the resources to organise and host the camp was also EUROPARC's responsibility.

Due to the budget revision of the EC NGO-Grant, the size of the event and number of participants initially planned have been reduced and there hasn't been the possibility to support the participants with their travel costs. But the level of ambition of the camp wasn't changed.

The Bavarian Forest National Park kindly supported the financing of the camp. Sparkasse Freyung-Grafenau, dm Drogeriemarkt Cham and Junior Ranger Verein Nationalpark Bayerischer Wald e.V. sponsored some camp activities.

7/Evaluation

Rangers and Mentors evaluation

The general feedback from all Rangers and Mentors, was really positive. They appreciated the opportunity to exchange ideas with their colleagues, and to collect good practices to improve the Junior Ranger programme in their home protected areas. Main expectations were to discover a new park, exchange with other rangers and mentors, discover how the Junior Ranger programme is managed in other parks, and collect inputs for activities to be done at home with Junior Rangers. For many it was good to see they are not alone in their difficulties/challenges. In the workshop session exclusively organised for the Rangers and Mentors, they expressed their need for more support through their park administrations, especially in financially difficult times, when very often environmental education is one of the first fields where budget costs are undertaken. A further need was identified by many of the represented protected areas: to develop a programme for older Junior Rangers, aged 17 to early 20 to train them in order to support the protected area with the Junior Ranger programme and other Ranger activities.

No main remarks on the accommodation and facilities: perfect location, easy access to nature and to visit the surroundings, super service and food. Good to have lunch packed, but better to have some variation every day. Good to have a Ranger Meeting Room.

Timing was great, and the programme included a good variety of activities, with good equilibrium between demanding and relaxing. It was interesting and useful to have group activities. This gave the chance for youth and rangers to know better each other and to have easier interaction.

Concerning the activities all were very interesting and the four missions have been very effective and successful. It's always nice to build or leave something that the Junior Rangers have done for the hosting park and for nature conservation. It was also good to have the Junior Rangers involved in the daily management of the camp site with groups for the different duties every day. The fact of having a similar programme structure for each day was appreciated and helped to give a good rhythm to the camp.

It was good to meet and have during the camp the support and active involvement of other park rangers! Positive to have good ice breaking games on the first two days: it helped to create a good and positive atmosphere.

Junior Ranger presentations about their home protected areas were good and it was important to have youth involved in the preparation of the posters before the camps. Information, documents and pre-camp organisation, registration process were very clear, made on time and useful. Someone suggested that it might be good to recommend having one boy and one girl from each park next year.

Junior Rangers Feedback

The Junior Rangers were really enthusiastic of the camp, and their main expectations have been met: meeting new and old friends, discover the Bavarian Forest National Park, learn about protected areas in Europe.

In general the feedback was very positive, and expectations were satisfied! They had a very good time. Several said they didn't want to leave because at home it will be boring and they will miss their new friends.

No major remarks on the facilities. The youth enjoyed sleeping in the thematic huts at the Wildnis Camp. They did understand that in order to have a good atmosphere in the camp, rules had to be followed and the camp had to be kept clean.

It turned out that the practical outdoor missions were more interesting and of course physically demanding than the Communication mission: the more action, the better. Therefore bog restoration (Nature Conservation) and building the hiking trail (Visitor Management) were the favourite missions. They appreciated it to be in smaller groups and for all four missions with the same people. That gave them the chance to get to know each other better. They mentioned they were proud to be part of a team, e.g. the four groups they formed. The activities were explained well to them as they did say in the feedback, that they understood not only the duties of a protected area but also why they are necessary.

The Junior Rangers appreciated the possibility to make new friends and improve their English. They mentioned that now they think differently about other cultures and people. The camp helps to overcome cultural bias. They are curious about the other protected areas that they've got to know and want to visit them.

The camp strengthened their self-confidence. They said they were proud to represent and introduce their protected area to others and therewith also show what they've learned all ready about their home protected area. They learned to appreciate the uniqueness of protected areas and realised that despite differences in landscape and heritage, all protected areas have similar issues and challenges to deal with.

They appreciated learning new things about protected areas in Europe, getting to know other protected areas than their own, discover new species and were looking forward to share their newly acquired knowledge with their fellow Junior Rangers back home.

EUROPARC Team comments and feedbacks

The agreement with the Bavarian Forest National Park was made in the second half of 2012 and the first arrangements were made before the end of the year. Registrations started on the 26th of March and were closed on the 10th of May. A big effort has been made to accept all the registrations that have been submitted to EUROPARC: it was the biggest camp ever EUROPARC has organised.

A day meeting at the camp site was set at the end of May, to check the logistics and to agree the camp objectives and main line of the programme. That was very useful as it gave the opportunity to agree on the camp objectives and to structure the main headline of the camp.

The active and personal involvement of the Head of the Ranger service of the park has been very much appreciated and helpful. A second meeting was set the day before the camp start to revise the programme and to finalise the last details, and an evaluation was made after the camp in a meeting at the camp site and with further email exchanges after the end of the camp.

The camp was in general very well organised, good timing and camp preparation well managed. The National Park has been of great support with the logistics, with the precious help of their Ranger team, and with the management of the three outdoor missions which were introduced and presented by the park director.

As reported by the Junior Rangers and the mentors, the objectives initially set were successfully reached with the activities proposed. The camp has effectively offered a chance to the Junior Rangers to better understand and to experience directly what are the missions of protected areas in Europe and to discover how similar protected areas can be, even if set in different countries and landscapes. The camp has showed to be a good opportunity for youth to understand the role of protected areas and N2000 sites in Europe, and to get the feeling to contribute to the implementation of wider European policies, such the EU Biodiversity Strategy.

The creation of tasks and missions has been very valuable, and there has been a good distribution of activities across the week. Start slow and get more intense in the second part of the camp. To have the Junior Rangers presentations of their protected areas in the morning every day was a good solution.

The coordination and lead of the camp was clear and well managed! Rules were clear and simple.

Location in the building was even too perfect. No logistic issue to deal with: chef, cleaning personell and host were taking very good care of all... This makes obviously easier life in such camps.

Daily short functional meetings and two more formal meetings with Rangers and mentors were organised, with good participation and involvement from their side.

Activities were nicely presented and introduced, with the support of the park rangers and of the senior junior ranger team: that was very helpful and helped to get a good involvement of the Junior Rangers. The involvement of older Junior Rangers in some tasks of the camp seems a reasonable function for them in the future.

The evaluation activity with Junior Rangers and with Rangers could be improved in the future, with new interactive methods.

Feedbacks from the BW National Park

“Very good organized, with a really good programme: good action (the games, the group-games - building a team), good feeling to work with the group, to speak with them. We have been able to put in place a wonderful environmental-education-programme - to say or to do ‘the right thing on the right place at the right time’ in an effective way.”

“It was a very good idea to work with ‘duties’ ... to give them a mission!”

“A very good platform, also for the future!”

8/ Conclusions

EUROPARC believe this was a hugely successful event, delivering the objectives set and having impact on the structure and content of many Junior Ranger programmes in Europe. It serves as a good practice example on how to share the values and benefits of protected areas with young people and giving them the opportunity to understand through hands-on activities the function and management of protected areas in Europe.

It was successful because we

- Set a definite purpose / intention for the Junior Ranger camp 2013 and compiled a coherent programme to deliver the objectives.
- Had very interested and committed participants that were chosen by our member protected areas.
- Had the chance to have participants from a large range of N2000 sites and protected areas around Europe providing the opportunity to the participants to learn from different examples.
- Had clear and focussed planning and the support of the National Park Bavarian Forest who assisted us in its delivery.

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The structure of the camp with the different thematic activities, allowed the participants to experience the values and benefits of N2000 sites and other protected areas for society: learn about ecosystem services like water purification and climate change mitigation in the bog restoration activity; understand the value of protected areas for health and wellbeing providing the setting for recreational activities during the path building activity; learn about the importance of communicating the values and benefits of N2000 sites and other protected areas to the wider public in both the communication and ranger activities.

Furthermore each international Junior Ranger camp fulfils the role to foster European integration by bringing people from many different countries together, creating a strong network of people committed to the common aim of conserving and enhancing Europe's biodiversity, regardless of their background. Herewith the camp helps to overcome cultural bias.

9/ Further actions

Following the Junior Ranger camp itself EUROPARC widely disseminated the new Junior Ranger Guidelines that were presented at the camp to all members encouraging them to establish a Junior Ranger programme themselves or to support them in the continuity of their programme.

The report about the camp, which gives information and inspiration to other Junior Ranger camp organisers is made available on the EUROPARC website.

The Junior Ranger participants made new friends and are planning to visit each others' protected areas to learn more about nature conservation in other countries and experience it first hand.

The Ranger workshop lead to the idea to set up a programme for „older“ Junior Rangers, aged 17-25, in the parks, including training opportunities for the youth to build on their leadership and advocacy skills. They could then support their park in leading Junior Ranger activities for younger participants and be ambassadors for nature both in their park and the surrounding communities. A workshop to take actions further is already planned for the EUROPARC conference in 2014.

An ongoing facebook page and youth orientated social media information is sent out on a regular basis.

Further advice from EUROPARC integrating young people into the work of protected areas will also be produced.

ANNEX: Programme International Junior Ranger Camp 2013

Friday 12 July	Arrival and setting
17:00	Organising team arrives in Zwiesel Friday evening - Saturday morning/afternoon prepare the camp
Saturday 13 July	Arrival and setting
18:00	Pick up people at train station. Minibus transfer from Zwiesel
18:30	Setting at the camp + basic instructions
20:00	Intercultural Dinner with JR special home food
21:00	Icebreaking and small games in the evening
Sunday 14 July	Introduction and official welcome day – Park discover day
7:30	Breakfast
8:15	Ranger Meeting
9:00	Presentations and expectations (ID cards) Games (to know each other) Camp rules, structure, organisation daily duties (cleaning, timing, dishes, rubbish, ...)
12:30	Intro on BW and park visit excursion to Park Visitor Centre Park presentation: 2 parks present themselves (30 min)
16:00	Welcome and official/formal opening of the camp – Present the topic of the camp. Present the Mascot and award the winner
18:00	Free Time + Ranger Meeting
19:00	Dinner
20:30	Evening “Fire” - little games
22:00	Good Night
Monday 15 July	Camp activities start
7:00	Breakfast, packed lunch
8:00	Welcome from the Director of the park and Mission to the JR
8:30	How parks work in Europe: short EUROPARC presentation, intro on EU policies and share of experiences, and how our respective experiences can help to successfully achieve the mission that we got for the camp... Game to define departments we will need, and set the groups that will work together during the camp. Activities will last half day, and will be done in the morning on Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday. Groups composed by 3-4 JR teams (9-12 participants in each group). Groups will rotate during the camp and all will do all the activities: Nature conservation (Bog restoration), Visitor Management (Build a new trail), Rangering (Activity alongside a park ranger on his day mission), Communication (Daily news paper, Interviews in the camp, Pictures, Facebook updates...).
10:30	1st Group's Mission (half day – packed lunch)

14:00	Park presentation: 1 park presents itself 15 min
15:00	1h Sport games at the camp site (ring, rug-bottle, other games).
16:00	Ranger Workshop 2hs: rangers from all over Europe will present a small activity to the JRs and share their knowledge with the JRs.
18:00	Free Time
19:00	Dinner
20:30	Evening fire
22:00	Good Night

Tuesday 16 July

7:30	Breakfast, packed lunch
8:15	Ranger Meeting
8:30	Park presentations: 2 parks present themselves 30 min
9:15	2nd Group's Mission (half day – packed lunch)
15:00	1h Sport games at the camp site (ring, rug-bottle, other games)
16:00	Ranger meeting: to share different experiences and present the new EUROPARC Junior Ranger guiding principles... Afternoon activity for JR at camp
18:00	Free Time
18:30	Park presentations: 2 parks present themselves 30 min
19:00	Dinner
20:30	Evening Fire – star gazing

Wednesday 17 July

7:30	Breakfast, packed lunch
8:15	Ranger Meeting
8:30	2 Park Presentations
9:15	Excursion to the Lusen Mountain – Bus transfer, + Tree path excursion – Visitor Centre – Botanic Garden – Animal Enclosure
18:00	Free Time
19:00	Dinner Pub-quiz - Park quiz night: quiz game on protected areas and nature related topics. Played by JR teams with small prices.
20:30	
22:00	Good Night

Thursday 18 July

Culture in the Bavarian Forest National Park

7:30	Breakfast, packed lunch
8:15	Ranger Meeting
8:30	Park presentations: 2 parks present themselves 30 min
9:15	3rd Group's Mission (half day – packed lunch)
13:00	Excursion to glass factory Aichglas and Zwiesel
18:00	Back at camp, Free time
19:00	Dinner
20:30	Evening Fire
22:00	Good Night

Friday 19 July

7:30	Breakfast, packed lunch
8:15	Ranger Meeting

8:30 Park presentations: 2 parks present themselves 30 min
9:15 4th Group's Mission (Half day packed lunch)
15:00 1h Sport Games
16:00 Evaluation with JR and with Rangers
Conclusions and presentation of what groups have done, Closing
18:00 ceremony, awards and certificates
19:30 Special Dinner
21:00 Evening party: barbecue and traditional Bavarian music

Saturday 20 July

Departures and Cleaning (mini Bus to Zwiesel according with travel schedule)