JUNIOR RANGER SUMMER CAMP

The MEC organized a Junior Ranger Summer Camp part one from June 22 to June 30 on national park conservation, and part two from June 30 to July 19 in Hatgal to improve English language proficiency for students from grades 4-9. The camp started with 30 students who were selected based on their participation during the school year and their submitted personal statements describing their aspirations as a Junior Ranger. The JR camp was led by MEC local staff instructors, a camp instructor from Canada and three Peace Corps volunteers. Activities at the camp were specially designed to enhance each student’s academic, leadership, and communication skills. The camp staff and volunteers helped students expand their knowledge of national parks not just locally but globally, while building essential skills that would prepare them to become responsible leaders of their communities. The camp activities were enhanced by integrating various science projects such as water quality monitoring, the reintroduction of wild onions, conservation of wildlife, and practical use of GPS equipment.

RALLY FOR RANGERS FOUNDATION (RIRF)

Rally for Rangers Foundation provided ten more Yamaha AG 200 motorcycles to ten park rangers of the Olgontenger Strictly Protected Area Administration. The co-founders of the RIRF, Tom Medema and Wesley Thornberry, worked tirelessly raising awareness, recruiting riders and fundraising around the world to ensure the Rangers had reliable transportation to fulfill their duties. The hand-over ceremony of the motorcycles took place on September 2, 2017, at the foothills of Olgontenger Mountain. This year’s rally included adventurous souls from the USA, Canada, Australia, and Mongolia. The highlights of this year’s ride from Ulaanbaatar to Olgontenger Strictly Protected Area was filmed by our talented volunteer, Jeff Colhoun. The documentary will be released early 2018, but please watch the trailer by visiting https://vimeo.com/233919758. Over the past four years, the committed riders and our supporters have delivered 45 new motorcycles to six national parks of Mongolia. In 2018, the RIRF will be delivering new motorcycles to Altai Tavan Bogd National Park in Mongolia and Torres del Paine National Park of Chile. For more information, please visit our website at www.rallyforrangers.org.
Another highlight of the ceremony on September 2nd was the Governor of Zavkhan province, Mr. D. Batsaikhan, awarding our board member, Robert McIntosh, with an Honorary Medal of Zavkhan province for founding the Rally for Rangers to assist the rangers in Mongolia. We are honored to announce that on September 6th, the Minister of Environment and Tourism, Dr. D. Oyunkhorol, awarded Mr. McIntosh with the honorary medal of “Merit Worker in Environment” to recognize his commitment, dedication, and efforts to strengthen the management of the protected areas of Mongolia since 2011.

SISTER PARK ARRANGEMENT

On August 25, the Minister of Environment and Tourism of Mongolia, Dr. D. Oyunkhorol, and the U.S. Ambassador to Mongolia, Jennifer Zimdahl Galt, signed a Sister Park Arrangement between Denali National Park and Preserve and the Otgontenger Strictly Protected Area. Following the signing of the sister park arrangement, Denice Swanke, Deputy Superintendent of Denali National Park and Preserve and D. Batdelger, Superintendent of Otgontenger Strictly Protected Area Administration signed the biennial action plan in Otgontenger Strictly Protected Area on September 2. The event was attended by the local officials, a delegation from the Ministry of Environment and Tourism, and representatives from the U.S. Embassy, other foreign delegates, and local community members. The Sister park relationship will promote cooperation between Otgontenger Strictly Protected Area and Denali National Park and Preserve for mutual benefit that will enrich the experience and abilities of their personnel through the exchange of professional and technical knowledge and through sharing lessons learned and best practices in the administration of both protected areas.

COMMENCEMENT OF JUNIOR RANGER PROGRAM IN HANKH SOUM

Following the classroom renovation in Hatgal, the MEC was able to renovate and adequately equip the Junior Ranger (JR) classroom at Hankh Secondary School of Hovsgol province from October 31 to November 12 with the generous support of Australian Aid. The JR program in Hankh will serve a total of 145 students (64 female and 81 male) from the fourth to sixth grade.
During the summer camp, the Junior Rangers worked in groups to design environmental projects to implement in Hatgal during the 2017-2018 school year. The initiatives include: 1) "Eco-Bags" project to reduce plastic bags and promote smart spending, 2) "No-Trash and Clean Environment" project to make furniture for the classroom using recycled plastic, 3) "Recycling in Every Household" project to introduce recycling in the community, 4) "Eco-Student" project to make trash bins from recycled materials and install at the school, 5) "Clean Environment" project to promote health and hygiene at school, and 6) "Eco- Produce" project to build greenhouse to provide for the school cafeteria. Our Junior Rangers aim to complete their initiatives by May 15, 2018.

From September 9-10, the Ulaan Taiga Specially Protected Areas Administration (UTSPAA) celebrated the 20th anniversary of the establishment of the Horbol Saindag Strictly Protected Area, the 5th anniversary of the UTSPAA and increased counts of Argali sheep. In 1990, the Argali sheep population decreased to 33 heads. Since the establishment of the UTSPAA, the administration has worked tirelessly to raise awareness, educate local communities and advance conservation efforts in the protected areas. As a result, the population of Argali sheep reached more than 100 heads in 2016. The event was celebrated with all protected areas staff, local officials, community members and honorary guests and partners.

The Lake Hovsgol National Park Administration (LHNPA) constructed new entrance fee collection stations in Hatgal and Hankh. Inspired by the LHNP entrance sign designed and fabricated by Yosemite National Park and installed in Hatgal in commemoration of the sister park relationship, the LHNPA built and installed a new entrance sign at the park entrance in Haagtok of Hankh and Jankhai pass. In May and November of 2017, the LHNPA organized "Open Door Day" to provide more information about park activities to local community members and to address any public inquiries. During the commencement of the MEC Junior Ranger program in Hankh soum in November, on behalf of the LHNPA, specialist G. Sainbayar led a discussion session about the national park with the Junior Rangers.
2018
Happy New Year