

# *Twining Agreement Israeli and German Ranger Associations*

*Program from 17th to 25th January 2019*

*Protocol, résumés and activities*

*International ranger exchange produces first results*



During the **World Ranger Conference** of the IRF in Colorado (USA) in 2016, Ilan Yeger as representative of the rangers in Israel (**Israel Nature and Park Authority INPA**) initiated an idea. He encouraged an exchange of expertise by personal meetings between rangers from Israel and their colleagues from Europe. The same idea to connect rangers on an international basis, was the driving force which led rangers in Europe to establish the **European Ranger Federation**, an idea that was put into action in 2017.

The main stated aim is to facilitate international exchange of the employees 'in the field'. In the field of research for example, there are joint international projects on a regular basis. However, also rangers working in their protected areas can benefit from such an exchange during their everyday work for example for dealing with visitors, offences, practical conservation or visitor management measures or communication strategies.

Previously, already in May 2017, a first group of rangers from Israel arrived to the Bavarian Forest National Park. The exchange was a huge success. During the conference of the **European Ranger Federation** in the Czech Republic, in a formal ceremony, an official Twinning Agreement Protocol was signed not only by the chairmen of the national organizations but also by the president of the European umbrella association, Frank Grütz, as well as the president of the International Ranger Federation, Sean Willmore. Moreover, several more Twinning Agreements between ranger NGOs all over Europe were signed.

In early summer 2018, a delegation of Israeli rangers visited the rangers from the Brandenburg Park Rangers Association for several days. Several excursions were made to various protected areas of different categories (nature parks and biosphere reserves) which were then discussed. Followed by several days in the Black Forest National Park.

In spring 2019, the first official return visit of rangers from Germany to Israel took place. The participants were Mario Marschler, area manager of the Schlaubetal Nature Park and Ralf Hegewald, area manager biosphere reserve Spreewald (both from the ranger service Brandenburg), as well as Jens Liß, ranger Black Forest National Park, Urs Reif, head ranger Black Forest National Park and Michael Großmann, head ranger Bavarian Forest National Park.

The German delegation was completely overwhelmed by the multifaceted and at times fascinating impressions of their journey, the great hospitality and the knowledge they gained.

Another outstanding fact was that the Israeli rangers not only had to have in-depth expertise but also needed to be 'masters of diplomacy'; most of the time, it seemed nearly impossible to cope with all the tasks. The history of Israel, especially the deep wounds of the Holocaust and the current political trends are omnipresent and extensive knowledge about it as well as respect and tolerance need to be standard tools of all rangers.



The colleagues from Israel presented their nature protection work in a largely problematic environment to the German delegation with great self-awareness. What was striking was the will to give their all for protected areas or individual species to achieve an improvement, prevent deterioration and enable reintroduction of animal and plant species where it seems virtually impossible.



What became apparent was that an "individual" is able to make a difference. This is also done by in-depth dialogues all over Israel - which has been impressively shown time and time again. Thanks to modern technology, each and everybody is kept in the loop.



However, there are many similarities. Apparently the pressure bearing down on highly motivated rangers in Israel as well as in Germany has to be a key focus in Ranger management. Major issues in both countries are new trend sports as well as endangered nature overcrowded with tourists which pose an increasing challenge for species protection worldwide. The mutual exchange about measures for visitor management, patrols and methods of information work was of enormous value for both

sides as "problems" and "solutions" might be similar but in the course of the discussion, new ideas formed.

Based on the knowledge exchange on training methods of rangers in Germany, a train-the-trainer seminar will be held in Israel this summer. The aim is to further educate rangers from all over Europe on the topic of "disclosure and prevention of poaching". The rangers from Israel are very well trained on this topic and highly motivated. The first seminar is going to be held at the end of July, beginning of August 2019.



The next visit of rangers from Israel is going to take place within the 24. and 25. calendar week 2019. Both National Parks, Black Forest and Bavarian Forest, are the hosts and plan a 4 day presentation of their protected area each.

A reflection at the end: the Israeli rangers under the umbrella of the **Israel Nature and Park Authority (INPA)** carry out valuable work in terms of nature protection, also for Europe. This became very obvious concerning bird migration and bird protection as well as their efforts to reintroduce species.



*Text prepared by the German delegation,*

*Mario Marschler, Ralf Hegewald, Jens Liß, Urs Reif, Michael Großmann*

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