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"Is that Gun for the Bears? The National Park Service Ranger as a Historically Contradictory Figure"

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The 'Yellowstone Model' of exclusionary, or fortress conservation, has spread widely across the globe since 1872. While in many other countries there has been a concomitant ever-increasing militarisation of park guards, the history of the United States (US) Park Ranger offers an alternative narrative. This paper traces the complex history of the US Park ranger through time to show how the Ranger as an outward embodiment of state power has been contradicted by administrative and practical logics directing rangers to educate, welcome, and guide park visitors. Rangers' work as territorial enforcers, and as strong-arms of the state has been tempered and defined by multiple disciplining forces over time. Using a political ecology approach, this paper examines how shifting political economic contexts, shifts in park use and park visitors, and a changing national law enforcement milieu influenced how and in what ways National Park Rangers have performed law enforcement in US parks over the past 100 years. The paper concludes by laying out why comparisons between US National Park Rangers and park guards in other parts of the world may be troubled by a number of socioeconomic and political factors. (Text from author's abstract)

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