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Mushroom hunters come armed



CRATER LAKE (AP) — Mushroom pickers armed with guns and knives are sneaking into Crater Lake National Park to seek the prized matsutake.

On Monday alone, rangers cited 13 people for illegally picking mushrooms in a national park. They have seized three guns and a dozen big knives so far, said Chief Ranger George Buckingham.

The guns included two snub-nosed .38-caliber revolvers and a .22-caliber rifle.

"We're being overwhelmed," Buckingham said. "Rangers are getting a little concerned when people start coming to the park with guns and knives."

The park is high in the Cascade Range, where the prized matsutake, or pine mushroom, can be found this time of year. Picking is legal with a permit next door on the Winema National Forest.

But just as logging and hunting aren't allowed in national parks, neither is mushroom picking, whether for commercial purposes or for fun.

The pickers cited Monday were part of a group of 50 working on the southern edge of the park, Buckingham said. Many of them ran when they saw rangers approaching.

With matsutakes in short supply and bringing prices of \$40 to \$70 a pound, mushrooms have become big business in the Northwest.

"The pickers feel threatened," Buckingham said. "That's why they carry firearms."

'We're being overwhelmed. Rangers are getting a little concerned when people start coming to the park with guns and knives.'

— George Buckingham,
Crater Lake chief ranger

George Sherbourne of Medford, treasurer of the Mount Mazama Mushroom Club, said he is worried commercial pickers will crowd out the people who do it for fun.

"Used to go out 15 years ago and never see a guy," he said. "It's getting like deer hunting now. You really have to dodge the bullets."

The Chemult Ranger District of the Winema National Forest has issued about 3,000 daily mushroom permits since Sept. 1, said John Zapell of the Forest Service. No citations have been issued on his district.

"This year we haven't checked anyone who hasn't had a permit," he said.

Meanwhile, park rangers will continue looking for mushroom hunters who venture into areas where it is illegal to pick.

"They like the early morning hours, trying to hit the boundary before our people get out," said Ranger Uwe Nehring. "But we're out there."

Slain German's companions jailed

GRANTS PASS (AP) — The couple traveling with a German man who was shot to death at a highway rest stop have been jailed while investigators decide whether they are in the country illegally.

"They are being processed as deportable aliens while the investigation is under way," David Beebe, district director of the Immigration and Naturalization Service in Portland, said Thursday.

Beebe said investigators were checking whether the couple exceeded the 90-day limit on foreigners being in the United States without a visa, as well as reports they had worked without a visa.

Investigators hoped to learn

more about the death by searching the van the three were traveling in Tuesday night, when the man was shot at an Interstate 5 rest stop north of Grants Pass.

"Most of the information is in the van," District Attorney Tim Thompson said.

Meanwhile, Sheriff Dan Calvert minimized the possibility that the victim had been killed by a robber. Robbery was the apparent motive in several tourist slayings in Florida, where 10 foreign visitors have been killed since last fall.

"I don't believe we have someone that is out there just arbitrarily shooting individuals," he told the *Daily Courier* newspaper.

An autopsy on the victim,

who apparently was shot in the chest, also was scheduled, Thompson said.

The victim was identified by the German consul in Seattle as Alois Wetzel, 37. His companions were identified as Erwin and Monika Rochholz, a married couple. Hometowns of the three weren't available.

Consul Lothar Schneider said Wetzel had come into the United States last May as a tourist, without a visa allowing him to work.

Beebe said Wetzel exceeded the 90-day limit on his entry into the United States last May through Freeport, Bahamas, and investigators were checking to see whether his companions had done the same.

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