



Interp Corner

by Denise Edwards

The role of the ranger can differ drastically from one park to the other, from one agency to the other and from one region of California to another. Despite these differences usually most rangers may be required or requested from time to time to lead some sort of interpretive talk or walk. The most common of these would be the old faithful nature walk.

Often times we are so anxious to deliver the most fact filled informative talk to ensure that every visitor knows every name (Latin and common) for every single known animal, plant, insect, tree, shrub and plant, that we seem to lack the creative and interesting aspects of the park's unique features. The idea is to find a topic that will teach the public about the history or culture that is inherent to the park in a way that relates to them and/or sparks an interest in them to explore more about the park in their own way. In other words, don't be afraid to break down the information into bite-sized pieces for your audience. Hopefully you can use your creativity to keep the interest of the younger participants as well as the know-it-all who are simply showing up to let you know that they already know everything you have planned to talk about.

The University of California Press has a series of books called the *California Natural History Guides* that are simple, easy reading references on about 40 different topics that could lead you to the theme of your presentation. There are guides that include statewide information on topics such as *California Butterflies to Poisonous Plants of California to Edible and Useful Plants of California*. There are also guides that focus on specific areas, such as the *Natural History of Big Sur* or *Weather of Southern California*.

So instead of a talk about the native plants of the park, the theme could be about the typical diet of the Native American tribe that inhabited the land that is now your park. Or the topic could involve taking a visit to the Medicine Man and what plants may have been used by the Native American doctors. Spending the time to research the details of the resources could reveal some interesting stories and tidbits that might just be enough the stump the know-it-all in your group. Remember to pick your theme and then only three to five sub-topics will be needed to support your theme. Sometimes less is more but you will never have too much of the creativity. Oh and of course props and free things will always get you out of a bind.

Region 5 News

by Lori Charett

I recently participated in a Resource Fair for high school students with disabilities. While I was providing information to the students about volunteer and outdoor recreational opportunities in our parks, it occurred to me that I may have committed a faux pas while interacting with the students. Some of the students were visually or hearing impaired, others had a developmental delay, or other learning disabilities. Proper etiquette calls for a change in how we interact with people to avoid offending someone. So, its important to know how to properly interact and use the "people first language." The resource from which I am using to write this article is called "Think before you speak" and is published by the Community Interface Services in Carlsbad, CA. I hope the following information proves useful to you; it may save you and/or people with disabilities an embarrassing or awkward moment. *See page 7 for more.*

From the President's Desk

If you are reading this, you must be surviving your summer thus far. I know summer is in full swing and one only needs to look around their park to see that. As we do our best to stay afloat in the flood of park visitors, we must continue to seek ways to improve our profession and ourselves. PRAC plays a very important role in achieving these goals. Members that take advantage of the networking and training opportunities that PRAC offers realize the true benefit of PRAC membership. Together we are stronger and knowledge is power. PRAC offers opportunities for park professionals to exchange ideas and to gain new knowledge. The amount of opportunities available depends on the interest, support, and initiative of you, the members. I encourage all of you to take full advantage of the opportunities PRAC offers you to network and gain knowledge such as PRACNet, the Signpost, the annual conference, and training workshops. I further challenge each of you, to work with your regional director toward developing a training schedule for your region for the next year. Remember that PRAC is your organization and together we are PRAC.

The planning committee for the 2005 Parks Conference is forming and going to work on putting together another high-quality conference. The 2005 Conference will be held at the Double Tree Hotel Sonoma Wine Country in Rohnert Park. Volunteers are still needed to pull things together. This is a great opportunity for members from the Bay Area to get involved with planning a conference. Lee Hickinbotham has volunteered to be the PRAC Co-Chair for the conference and I am giving him my full support. If you are interested in helping plan this conference, please contact Lee or myself.

In other news, Sonoma County Regional Parks is now providing its park rangers with body armor. I first brought the issue up with the department in 1999 during negotiations. After five years, with several discussions and lots of information gathering, this essential piece of officer safety equipment is being provided to the Sonoma County Regional Parks Department's peace officers. A majority of the rangers, realized the importance of this safety device and were utilizing either personally purchased body armor or body armor that had been removed from service from allied agencies. Every Sonoma County Park Ranger has now been fitted for a brand-new protective vest. The protective vests are of the same style and specification as the vests issued to Sonoma County Deputy Sheriffs. The Sonoma County Park Rangers are pleased to now be provided with the new protective vests. I am glad that the Sonoma County Regional Parks management and the Sonoma County Law Enforcement Association were able to work together on this issue and make it finally happen.

That is all for now. I hope to see you around the parks and I hope the rest of your summer passes without incident.

Stay safe,

Mike Chiesa

The Games Suspects Play

by Chris Kemp

Over the years I have noticed certain deceptive patterns suspects make when contacted. Nervous mannerisms are displayed and watching them develop is interesting when you know what's coming. I call these "The Games Suspects Play." What the suspects don't realize is that we know about these games and we can play them even better. Some of the many that are out there are: the name game, the false yawn, ignoring the ranger, the sacrificial lamb, and the "I gotta have a smoke NOW."

The name game is the most common; it is immediately suspicious that someone you contact has no ID on them at all. Two key questions can help narrow down a suspect's identity: (1) Do they have a driver's license or an ID card and, (2) Have they ever been arrested. If they answer yes to either question they WILL be in the DMV system or the local system. If the identity they provide returns as not being on file, they have provided a false name. The only problem you may encounter with this technique is if their name is something common like John Smith, Jose

Gonzalez, or something that will return two hundred hits on the system.

The false yawn is another favorite: how often do you notice a suspicious person giving off a big yawn and stretching around you? They are telling you they are so unconcerned by your presence that they are relaxed and can yawn. This could be because they have something to hide. Try contacting someone that does that around you the next time, and see what turns up. Another one is the ignoring the ranger. This can be an indicator of being ready to run, fight, or just hoping you'll go away because they are hiding something. I prefer to call for backup and start patting people down when this happens.

The sacrificial lamb is my favorite. How many times have you been near a suspicious looking group and one of them comes over and asks the stupidest question in the world? "Uh Ranger, is there hunting allowed here even though the sign says national wildlife preserve, no hunting allowed?" You can bet the person sent over is the one warrant and drug free. The group is

unsure of your intention when they see you and has to send someone un-arrestible to scout the situation. This could be innocent (yeah right), could mean someone has contraband or are hiding it while you are distracted.

The "I've gotta have a smoke NOW" is another good one. After smoking marijuana people will hide the odor by lighting up cigarettes when the ranger comes by. Unfortunately by then usually all the pot is gone and you just have the pipe. Lighting up a cigarette could also mean they anticipate going to jail because there is a reason you don't know about. (Are they on America's Top Ten Most Wanted?) Many jails don't allow smoking so they have to fill their craving one last time.

Many times the suspects resort to these patterns without knowing it. Once you see it coming it is a cue that can increase your safety and show where the contact is headed. Plus you can know what they are thinking before they do.



2005 Parks Conference

A New Element-GrayBears

by Jeff Price, Retired PRAC Member

The California Parks Conference will offer a new component in 2005. PRAC and CSPRA are supporting a parallel, senior **“GrayBears Track”** to accommodate the specialized interests of retired members.

Registration profiles for past conferences show few retired members attend. It's no surprise workshop titles such as Hand Puppets, HazMat, Legal Update or Trail Construction are not much of a draw for retired members. Those who do attend typically chat with old friends in the lobby or just participate in tours, luncheons and the banquet.

Recently, we pitched the concept of a **“GrayBears Track”** to the PRAC Board and President Mike Chiesa and got the green light. The CSPRA Board is also in full support. We plan to provide retired members a specialized program at the Conference, while leaving the option open for the usual and customary events, meetings and banquet. The planning team

for PRAC at this point is Tom “Smitty” Smith and myself, joined by 3 retired members from CSPRA. We'd like to add a retired PRAC member closer to Rohnert Park. If you are retired, know the Sonoma County area, are fortunate enough to live there or just want to help out, please drop me a note jeff@jprice.net or call (805) 278-9201 and let's chat about your ideas and suggestions.

The 2005 California Parks Conference will be at the Sonoma Wine Country Double Tree Resort in Rohnert Park, Monday March 7th through Thursday March 10th. The Sonoma Airporter Bus can shuttle you directly to the Double Tree Hotel from San Francisco and Oakland airports for \$24.00.

Look for updates on the 2005 Conference “GrayBears Track” development in your next issue of the *Signpost* or online at <http://www.calranger.org>.



Mountain Lions in the News

by Lee Hickinbotham

When I was at the Anaheim conference I attended a session led by California Fish and Game Warden Bob Turner. Bob's session elaborated on mountain lion attacks from previous years and ended with the most recent attack in Orange County. His session provoked an interest that recently was brought into my own backyard.

A mountain lion had wandered down the creek and ended up in a Palo Alto neighborhood. It occurred on

my day off and I ended up ascertaining the information via the Internet. So I contacted Deborah Bartens, Naturalist with the Palo Alto Open Space. She informed me that the cougar had followed San Fransquito Creek down out of the foothills. It was roaming around the neighborhood when it was chased up a neighborhood tree by a residence's dog. The police responded along with Vector Control and Animal Services. The cougar acted like it was going to leap out of the tree, so the police made a quick decision to dispatch the cougar. The decision was based on the fact that a tranquilizer gun was not readily available and the elementary school was due to let out in the next hour.

The public had mixed feelings on the death of the cougar. The media had a field day forcing the police to put out a press release elaborating on the decision to dispatch. As a park ranger I believe the police made the right decision. The cougar was out of its habitat and it was a threat to the community. Could the Police have made the decision to tranquilize the cougar and relocate it? Possibly. However, after reading a book on mountain lion attacks that Deborah had recommended, I stand by my statement.

The book is titled "*Cat Attacks*" by Jo Deurbrouck and Dean Miller and costs around \$17. The book provides detailed accounts of mountain lion attacks. Stories of children being dragged away and mauled beyond recognition. It tells of how this shy animal known for its aversion of the public is becoming more aggressive; is following us, watching our every move.

After I read this book I have a new respect and fear for the giant cat that roams the hills around us. So remember to take the time to read and enjoy the book.



Members Only Access, Coming Soon

Website To Be Password Protected

by Jeff Price, PRAC Webmaster



The PRAC Board will be limiting Website and PRACnet access to **members only**. A password will soon be required to login to the PRAC Website and subscriber access to the organization's e-mail based list server, PRACnet, will be limited to PRAC members.

We are working on a Website configuration that will split content into two separate components: A **public** area and a **members only** area. The portion available to the public will contain information on who we are, how to join PRAC, upcoming Parks Conference materials and our membership benefits page. The portion available to **members only** will contain information on PRAC Scholarships, our professional training programs, subscription to the PRACnet list server, access to *The Signpost* online, use of Job Mart information on agency hiring, PRAC Standards and Training Certification, Merchandise, the Ranger Directory, By Laws, internal committee organization and other member information.

The Board has determined that use of the PRACnet list server on YahooGroups should also be restricted to PRAC

members. If you are currently using PRACnet but are not yet a PRAC Member, your e-mail account may soon be discontinued. Please take advantage of this advance notice to join PRAC and get the full benefits of membership in this professional organization. Find information on Active, Retired, Associate, Agency, Supporting and Student membership in this issue of *The Signpost* or on the PRAC Website at <http://www.calranger.org>

As a reminder, your access password was printed on the 2004 Membership Card you recently received in the mail. Watch for these changes to be implemented soon.

A screenshot of a web browser login form. The text reads: "To view this page, you need to log in to area 'Welcome to PRAC Members Secure Site' on www.calranger.org. Your password will be sent in the clear." Below this are two input fields: "Name:" and "Password:". There is a checkbox labeled "Remember this password" and two buttons: "Cancel" and "Log In".

Starting Over

by Lee Hickinbotham

You have heard stories of people in the "Dot Com" world jumping ship every time a new start up company gets established. Get the most stock options available; make the most money before the company goes belly up.

I am often asking my yuppie, high tech friends if they love their job. Ninety percent of them are frustrated with the traveling, the long hours and the stress of being in a building all day. I then ask them why they stay in that field if they aren't happy and it always goes back to the money.

I love my job! I don't make a lot of money but I have a great office (the out of doors) and I am happy. I love the diversity that being a generalist ranger has to offer. Recently, a job opening occurred at an agency where I've always wanted to work. This is where I had started my career as a seasonal ranger and now there was an opening for a full time position. I was faced with a decision of

leaving an agency where I had a lot of seniority, a huge bank of sick leave and the comfort off being a big fish in a small pond. I knew that if I got hired with the other agency I would be starting over, literally. I would be coming in at the bottom of the seniority ladder. I would have to accrue sick and vacation time all over again.

So, I weighed all the pros and cons, talked to my wife and prayed. I took the leap. Things turned out better than I could ever imagine. The change has rejuvenated my drive to be a great ranger. It's like I am learning the job all over again but with 6 years of experience behind me. I brought knowledge and experience with me that made the transition easier. I may be the rookie but I am in no way green.

We spend eight hours a day at our jobs; we might as well have fun doing it.

Think Before You Speak

Interacting & Etiquette

by Lori Charett

People with disabilities prefer to be called “people with disabilities.” This way, you acknowledge that they are, indeed, people first.

People with disabilities have the same rights as everyone else—the right to fall in love, marry, hold down a job, acquire an education, etc. Above all, they have a right to self-esteem. To ensure these rights, people with disabilities should be referred to in terms that acknowledge the ability, merit, and dignity of the individual. By making an effort to become sensitive to, and aware of, the language we use, we create an atmosphere of mutual respect. This will give you some ideas for using “People First” language.

Learning the Language

- Speak of the person first, then the disability
- Emphasize abilities, not limitations, ex: “He *uses* a wheelchair”
- Understand that although the disability may have been caused by a disease, the disability itself is not a disease and is not contagious.
- Don’t label people as part of a disability group—say “people with disabilities” not “the disabled.”
- Be aware that choice and independence are important. Ask a person with a disability if she/he wants assistance before you help. Your help may not be wanted or needed.
- Be aware of the distinction between *disability* and *handicap*: A *disability* is a functional limitation that interferes with a person’s ability to walk, hear, talk, learn, etc. A *handicap* is a physical or attitudinal constraint that is imposed upon a person. Use handicap to describe a situation or barrier imposed by society, the environment or oneself.
- Be considerate of the extra time it might take for a person to get things said or done.

People who use wheelchairs:

- Don’t lean on a person’s wheelchair. It is part of their personal space.
- Don’t discourage children from asking questions about the person or why they use a wheelchair.
- If the conversation lasts more than a few minutes, sit or kneel to get to eye level.

People who have speech difficulties:

- Give whole, unhurried attention to the person.
- Keep your manner encouraging, rather than correcting.

- Rather than speak for the person, allow extra time and give help when needed.
- When necessary, ask questions that require short answers or a nod or shake of head.
- Don’t pretend to understand when you don’t. Repeat what you do understand; the person’s reaction will clue you in and guide you.
- Look for communication aids like pictures or symbols.

People who are visually impaired:

- Ask the person if she/he wants help in getting about. When providing assistance, don’t grab and start steering—allow the person to take your arm, bent at the elbow.
- Always identify yourself and any others who may be with you. For example, say “On my right is...”
- Use the person’s name when starting a conversation to let him or her know where the conversation is directed. Let the person know when you need to leave.
- When offering a handshake, say, “Shall we shake hands?” If the person extends a hand first, take it or explain why you can’t.
- In handling money or other papers, identify each piece as you place it in the person’s hand.

People who are hearing impaired:

- If necessary, get the person’s attention with a wave of the hand or a light tap on the shoulder.
 - Don’t be embarrassed about communication via paper and pencil.
 - Speak clearly and slowly but without exaggerating.
- Don’t shout!**
- Try to maintain eye contact. Allow for a clear view of your face— the person may be lip reading. Don’t speak directly into the ear.

Examples of *How to say it*:

Say	Instead of
A disability	Disabled or handicapped
Retardation.....	Retarded
Cerebral palsy	Palsied, C.P., or spastic
Short stature	Dwarf or midget
Developmental delay	Slow
Emotional disorder or mental illness.....	Crazy or insane
Say paralyzed	Invalid or paralytic
Say mobility impaired	Lame
Say without speech or nonverbal	Mute or dumb

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The *Signpost* is published by THE PARK RANGERS ASSOCIATION OF CALIFORNIA (PRAC). THE ASSOCIATION MAILING ADDRESS IS P.O. BOX 1533, STEWARTS POINT, CA, 95480.

The *Signpost* Editor is DAVID BROOKS. ARTICLES OF 1,000 WORDS, OR LESS ARE WELCOME. ALL SUBMISSIONS BECOME PROPERTY OF PRAC AND MAY BE EDITED WITHOUT NOTICE.

SUBMISSIONS CAN BE MAILED TO DAVID BROOKS, 560 HILLCREST DR., BEN LOMOND, CA, 95005. INFORMATION CAN ALSO BE SUBMITTED BY TELEPHONE AT (831) 336-2948.

Submission deadlines ARE THE LAST day of JANUARY, MARCH, MAY, JULY, SEPTEMBER, AND NOVEMBER.

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