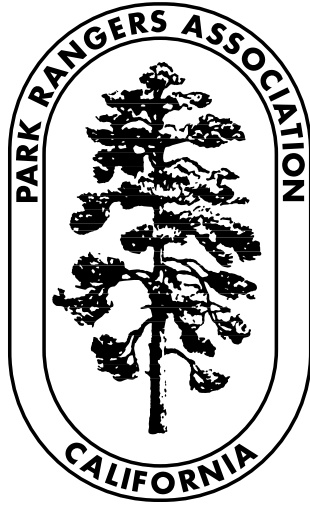


The Signpost

May – June, 2007



Ranger News and Updates

by Matt Cerkel

This years California Parks Conference was a great success. It was the best Parks Conference I have been to yet. I just wanted to say thanks to the organizers and say “great job!” I enjoyed meeting many of you there and the training offered was informative and enjoyable. I can’t wait until next years conference in Tahoe.

While at the conference, I got an update from Ranger Trent Finch of the City of Grass Valley. Since I last wrote about the Grass Valley ranger program last spring there have been several positive developments. The City of Grass Valley is now in the process of issuing body armor, batons, OC and handcuffs to Ranger Finch, who is still the sole ranger for Grass Valley. The question of peace officer status has not yet been resolved, but things seem to be moving in the right direction.

The panel discussion on “Generalist Rangers” was enlightening. However, listening to all the discussion it became clear that there may not even be agreement on what a “generalist ranger” is. As I listened to the discussion I heard rangers from various agencies speak on the issue. All of these rangers considered themselves to be as generalists, although some seemed to work in more of a specialist ranger role. Therefore, what is a “generalist ranger?” PRAC’s Park Ranger Training and Standards (Generalist Ranger) Certificate goes a significant way in addressing what a “generalist ranger” is. What we now need are agencies to adopt these standards as a minimum standard for what a “generalist ranger” is and use these standards to define the duties of a “generalist rangers.” In my opinion, a “generalist ranger” would have some level of law enforcement authority (peace or public officer), interpretation, light maintenance duties, SAR, and EMS duties. Additional duties of “generalist rangers” would be agency dependent such as wildland fire and resource management. Currently I’m encouraging my employer to adopt the PRAC Standards for our Ranger IIs and above.

One thing I would encourage all members to remember is we are always in the public eye and should strive to a higher standard than the public. On the last day of the conference, I was in Yosemite Valley and I observed a white unmarked SUV with a low-profile LE lighting package that I had seen parked at the conference for several days. This vehicle was driving around the Valley with what appeared to be 5 or 6 passengers, one of them in the cargo area of the SUV in clear violation of the state’s seat belt law. If I observed it, so did others. We as rangers should lead by example and set the standard, especially in parks.

Before signing off there will be upcoming, PRAC sponsored training coming up. Bob Donohue’s outstanding “Obtaining Voluntary Compliance Workshop” will be held on **April 24th** in Marin, most likely at MMWD’s Sky Oaks Watershed Headquarters, you can contact me at region1@calranger.org for more info. I’m also in the early stages of planning a basic Search and Rescue course, which would be a 4 to 8 hour, classes covering subjects such as search theory, planning, lost person psychology, etc. This course would help met PRAC’s Standards for Fire-Rescue. I’ll keep you all posted.

From the President's Patrol Truck

Have I mentioned how lucky I feel that I am a Park Ranger? As I sit in my patrol truck overlooking the lake I work at I feel blessed. I enjoy going to work every single day. Even after ten years of being a ranger every day brings a new experience.

At the 2007 California Parks conference in Yosemite I had the opportunity to present numerous awards at the banquet. The first award went to David Brooks. David was selected by the Board of Directors as the 2007 Honorary Ranger. David has been a park Ranger for over twenty five years and has been the Editor of the PRAC newsletter since 1992. David was the first recipient of the Citation award as well as the Founders award.

The next award that I was honored to present was the Citation award. The President has the power without a vote by the Board to recognize an individual who has gone above and beyond. I was honored to present the citation award to former PRAC President Mike Chiesa. Mike has been on the Board of Director's for over ten years, four of those years as President. He has been on numerous conference planning committees in which he has chaired two of them. He is very instrumental in promoting PRAC as well as the park ranger profession. Mike also took the time to guide me through my first year as president. Thank you Mike!

PRAC also presented two generalist ranger awards to State Park Ranger Frank Padilla and National Park Ranger Jeff Oulfs. Good job guys.

I would like to take a moment to apologize to Jacob Feickert. Jacob had submitted his documentation to me and was approved to accept the Generalist Ranger award at the conference. Unfortunately his paperwork fell through the cracks and his name was not mentioned. I will taking Jacob's plaque to his work to present him with the Generalist Ranger award in front of his peers. Good job Jacob!

I would like to thank John Havicon and the CPC planning team for putting on an outstanding conference. I am still getting people calling and emailing me saying what a great conference it was and how great the sessions were. In the past I would boast about how the 2003 COC in Tahoe was the best conference ever. However, I think the 2007 Yosemite Conference may have outdone the Tahoe Conference and now is the best conference ever.

The 2008 Conference will be back at the Embassy Suites in South Lake Tahoe so make your plans early. I will be telling you more about that as time gets closer.

Lastly, elections for the positions of President, Region 2 and Region 4 are coming up this year. If you know of anyone or if you are interested in running for a board position go to the website at www.calranger.org to see what the minimum qualifications are. If you have any questions please email me at president@calranger.org. John Havicon will be sending out nomination requests in September.

I wish all of you a safe summer and remember how fortunate we are that we have the best jobs in the world.

Until next time...

Lee

PRAC 2007 BBQ/Raft Trip

By David Moskat

It's that time of year again folks! Invite your friends and family to the PRAC 2007 BBQ/Raft Trip along the American River. Enjoy a relaxing float down the Lower American and finish off the day with refreshing beverages and great eats! Horseshoes and other entertaining activities will be provided once you reach the shore. Mark your calendars!

Rafting is optional-if your interested in the rafting portion of the BBQ, please RSVP so I can get an idea of how many rafts to get.

Where: Sacramento, California @ C.M. Goethe Park, one of Sacramento's oldest county parks.

When: Thursday, June 06, 2007

Rafters meet at 11:00 am @ Goethe Park

BBQ'ers meet up around 4:00- 4:30 pm @ Goethe Park

Price: \$10.00 gets you food, drinks, and a great time

\$15.00 gets you food, drinks, and includes the rafting trip

RSVP Call 916-342-0105 and ask for David Moskat,
or you can email me at Davidmbv@yahoo.com

Directions to C.M. Goethe Park:

From I-5 or Highway 99---Take U.S. Highway 50 (east), once in Sacramento take the Bradshaw Road off-ramp. Head north on Bradshaw towards Folsom Boulevard. Turn right at Folsom Boulevard and follow the brown and white signs to the park entrance on Rod Beaudry Drive.

If you have any questions about the location give me a call.

Thanks and hope to see you all there!

PICNIC



Just my take...

by David Moskat

It started around two years ago, when I first began working for Sacramento County Regional Parks. At that time, I was able to go on several ride-alongs with seasoned park rangers. This gave me the opportunity to pick their brains and to learn what they liked best about the environment they were hired to protect. After awhile (perhaps seeing the passion that I had for the great outdoors) one ranger suggested I read the "The Outdoor World of the Sacramento Region" a local field guide that included a wealth of information on the native plants and animals in the Sacramento Region. I guess at that point I got hooked. Now while on patrol, I search for different types of plants, animals, and birds that I wasn't even aware existed. However, as my desire to learn more about our environment increased, so did the number of field guides I had to lug around, one for birds, trees, plants, wildflowers, mammals, minerals/rocks, etc.

I recently read an article on Geocaching, a form of entertainment whereby people explore a local area in search of hidden items called "caches." These caches

are hidden and participants then try to locate them using handheld GPS (Global Positioning System) units. The locations of these caches are posted on websites by map coordinates. Groundspeak, the company that runs the website Geocaching.com explains "Once found, a cache may provide the visitor with a wide variety of rewards. All the visitor is asked to do if they get something is they should try to leave something for the cache." Apparently, the appeal is in the hunt for the treasure, or cache. Well, here's my take...

After learning more about Geocaching and hearing arguments for and against its use in our parks, I have to confess that I can still relate to the intrigue Geocachers experience on one of their hunts. The only difference is that I look for things that are already in our parks, rather than those that are artificially brought in. Local ecosystems are home to communities which are made up of populations of various organisms. These organisms are the true treasures that park rangers are given the special privilege, power, and responsibility to protect and look after. I think that once a person becomes aware of these treasures, it will open up an entirely different way of looking at things-many of which may be right under their boots!

So, I was thinking...wouldn't it be great if people came to our parks using their GPS systems to hunt for things already around us, rather than bringing things into our parks that don't really belong there? Who knows, maybe a new appreciation for nature and its intricate ecosystems may be born, or perhaps something might actually be learned!

Below are a list of links that may be helpful in getting started on one of these new GPS treasure hunts.

- The California Natural Diversity Database (CNDDDB) is a program operated through the California Department of Fish & Game that inventories the status and locations of rare plants and animals in California. CNDDDB staff work with partners to maintain current lists of rare species as well as maintain an ever-growing database of GIS-mapped locations for these species. Link through the Department of Fish & Game's website at: <http://www.dfg.ca.gov> or <http://www.dfg.ca.gov/bdb/html/cnddb.html>.
- The California Native Plant Society (CNPS) is a non-profit organization dedicated to the understanding and appreciation of California's native plants and the conservation of natural habitats through education, science and advocacy. CNPS can be contacted at: <http://www.cnps.org>.



(Story continues on page 5)

Just my take...

(Continued from page 4)

Action Alert

Your help is needed with "Project Budburst"

Dates: April 1–June 15

Be a part of this nationwide project to collect spring data on leafing and budding of native plants. With

your data, scientists will compile valuable environmental information that can be compared to historical records to illustrate the effects of climate change. Individuals and groups are welcome to join this scientifically relevant research study. For more information, go to: www.budburst.org.

Get to know what's what!

National Audubon Society maintains an active "Watch List" of Birds in California. Learn to recognize birds of importance. "Nearly half of all the birds on Audubon's Watch List occur regularly in California. Each fall, thousands upon thousands of birds migrate south along the Pacific Flyway and coastward from the Great Basin to spend the winter in California's marshes, riparian areas, and verdant grasslands." For more information, go to: www.audubon.org or <http://www.audubon.org/bird/watchlist/bs-bc-california.html>.

The California Department of Fish & Game has several great resources that are free to the public.

- The California Wildlife Habitat Relationships (CWHR) is a state-of-the-art information system for California's wildlife. CWHR contains

life history, geographic range, habitat relationships, and management information on 692 species of amphibians, reptiles, birds, and mammals known to occur in the state. CWHR products are available to anyone interested in understanding, conserving, and managing California's wildlife. For more information, go to: <http://www.dfg.ca.gov/bdb/html/cwhr.html>

- Also, check out their Biogeographical Data branch. You can easily search for California's Wildlife including: Amphibians, Reptiles, Birds, and Mammals. It's very easy and you get lots of information on life history and a cool range map! Contact them at: <http://www.dfg.ca.gov/bdb/html/cawildlife.html>.

Thanks for the Honor!

David and I would like to thank the members and the Board of PRAC for the life time membership award. He is truly a man of few words so I am trying to fill in. Every other month the deadline for the newsletter appears on our calendar. I know that is the weekend I won't see much of David as he is busy shuffling articles and correcting spelling. The grumpy editor appears and I disappears! When he is all done I proof read it and find the other errors.

David does this as his "community service" to the ranger field and profession. He feels this is one way he can help out and keep up the standards he was taught to by so many other rangers and park professionals. Between David and myself there are 60+ years of experience in the parks field and many, many stories. We try to keep some of those standards going in the newsletters with your articles.

There have been many funny stories about "the public". There have been sad stories about rangers lost to many causes; work injuries, shootings, and illness. The conference stories vary mostly about the locations. The best part is reading the joy of what you do that comes through your stories. We are truly in a rare field that lets us connect with each other through this planet.

David is very happy to get this award; his humbleness was a cover for the joy in his heart of finally being recognised. Take it from his wife who's heart was also grateful for him and so proud! It was great to see him on the stage getting the award from the group that he works so hard for. He cares a great deal about "rangering", parks and the people in them. Thank you for acknowledging all his hard work.

Happy trails! We will see you "out there."

Patty Walker (& David Brooks)

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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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