

The Signpost

November–December, 2011



Eyes to the Skies

(and ears too!)

by Shane Romain, Park Ranger

Fall is my favorite time of year. The weather is an interesting mix of cool nights, perfectly warm and sunny days, with even a little rain mixed in. It is also a time of change. Leaves showcase their brilliant colors, grasses and flowers are displaying their end of the season brilliance, and animals are on the move.

When I notice that squirrels are starting their insanely frantic ritual of storing food for the upcoming winter, I know it is time to pay closer attention to the sky. The changes on the ground are a clue of what is to come. In as early as August, migratory birds take to the skies and leave their summer homes to make new homes for the winter. Raptors (birds of prey), Waterfowl (ducks geese and swans), Neotropical (birds that nest in North America but winter in the tropics of Mexico, Central and South America), and other classifications of birds migrate south in the fall to survive the winter.

If you work in a park in California or Nevada, chances are your location is underneath a great highway in the sky. The Pacific Flyway is an ancient migration route that runs from as far north as Siberia and as far south as South America. Whether your location is along the coast, in a valley or situated in a mountain forest, migratory birds are going to visit your area in some capacity.

Some birds will come to your area to stay for the winter, some will just stop and rest. Perhaps if your park is located in the mountains you have noticed that your hummingbirds are no longer there but have been replaced with a higher number of raptors. Along the inland areas of the coast you may witness higher numbers of Neotropical birds stopping in for a rest before they continue south.

My location, Bidwell Park, is located in the northern Sacramento Valley. The Sacramento Valley offers excellent wintering habitat for many varieties of birds, especially waterfowl. Every year I have the privilege to welcome home thousands of ducks, geese and swans. I was thrilled when I first heard a flock of White-fronted geese fly overhead a few weeks ago. Although I could not see them, I could recognize their high pitched barks. Last week I heard the familiar purring sounds of Sandhill Cranes flying overhead. I looked up and there they were. Huge grey birds in flocks of 10 to 50, their bright red Mohawks flashing in the sun. I could hardly contain my excitement! It was like welcoming home friends that have been away on a long vacation. Soon the Bald Eagles and Snow Geese will arrive!

The migration of birds has fascinated humans for thousands of years. There are many questions that have yet to be answered about how animals and birds migrate. Some birds fly hundreds of miles in just a few days! I never cease to be amazed by the phenomenon of migration. Maybe you too will ponder the magic of migration this fall and have your eyes and ears to the skies.

Time For A Little Winter Reading...

by Park Ranger Marie D. Fong

If you have been looking forward to a few days or evening off this winter in which to spend a little time relaxing and enjoying some great reading here are a few suggestions for relatively light and enjoyable Park Ranger reading. While there is no lack of Park Ranger themed literature these are a few of the newest publications. No interpretation manuals or how to improve your skills here, just a few humorous nods and a sense of camaraderie with your fellow Rangers or outdoor enthusiasts.

Moose Droppings by William J. Lewis

If you have been looking for a new book with a little Ranger humor then this recent release by longtime NAI member William J. Lewis might be what you are looking for. Bill Lewis, noted author of *Interpreting for Park Visitors*, has authored *Moose Droppings*, a collection of amusing and adventurous anecdotes from his three-decade career with the National Park Service. Bill is a founding member of NAI and recipient of the prestigious NAI Fellow award.

Moose Dropping & Other Crimes Against Nature by Tom Brennan

A collection of witty one-liners, tall tales, practical jokes, and funny stories for a book about Alaska humor by Author Tom Brennan, a newspaper editor and columnist in Anchorage, writes about the indignant tourist who hears of moose droppings and wants to know from what height the moose are dropped; about the practical joker in Sitka who creates a near-panic when he charts a helicopter to drop a load of old tires into the crater of a nearby dormant volcano, then sets the tires on fire; about the equally engaging



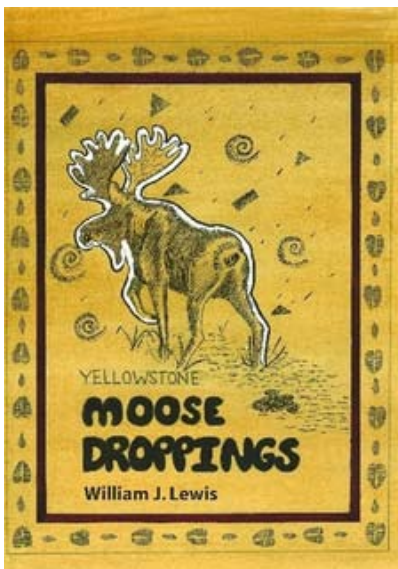
tales of people, animals, and politicians.

Ranger Confidential: Living, Working, and Dying in the National Parks

by [Andrea Lankford](#)

For twelve years, Andrea Lankford lived in the biggest, most impressive national parks in the world, working a job she loved. She chaperoned baby sea turtles on their journey to sea. She pursued bad guys on her galloping patrol horse. She jumped into rescue helicopters bound for the heart of the Grand Canyon. She won arguments with bears. She slept with a few too many rattlesnakes. Hell yeah, it was the best job in the world! Fortunately, Andrea survived it. In this graphic and yet surprisingly funny account of her and others' extraordinary careers, Lankford unveils a world in which park rangers struggle to maintain their idealism in the face of death, disillusionment, and the loss of a comrade killed while holding that thin green line between protecting the park from the people, the people from the park, and the people from each other.

Ranger Confidential is the story behind the scenery of the nation's crown jewels—Yosemite, Grand Canyon, Yellowstone, Great Smokies, Denali. In these iconic landscapes, where nature and humanity constantly collide, scenery can be as cruel as it is redemptive. Andrea Lankford is a former national park ranger and the author of three books, including *Haunted Hikes: Spine-Tingling Tales and Trails from North America's National Parks*, which was featured in *USA Today*, chosen by *People* as a 2006 Travel Pick, and described by *Newsday* as “spell-binding.” (amazon.com)



The Heart of Congo

by Pam Helmke

On October 1st I had the pleasure of representing both the San Jose Park Rangers and the Park Rangers Association of California at a very special event.

The Heart of the Congo Silent and Live Auction is an annual event in support of the Advance Force Park Rangers working in Virunga National Park in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). This event is organized by Happy Hollow Zoo as part of the zoos continuing support of conservation issues across the globe. Virunga National Park, Africa's oldest National park and the second oldest national park known, is home to some 700 of the endangered Mountain Gorillas. The Park is located in a very volatile part of the world and the rangers must not only worry about well armed professional poachers but serious habitat destruction from charcoal farmers to problems with rebel insurgents. In addition to the Mountain Gorillas the rangers also protect many other animals including hippopotamus. The hippo population in the region has declined from over 22,000 animals to about 300 in just over 10 years due to mass slaughter during local uprisings. The Advance Force Rangers are doing their best to protect these fascinating animals as well as the Mountain Gorilla.

These brave men, who stand proudly on the thin green line, pay heavily for the honor and privilege of defending these magnificent animals and their habitat. Over 150 DRC rangers have been killed in the line of duty over the last ten years. This year alone 11 Virunga National Park Rangers have been killed in the first 7 months of 2011.

For over 5 years Happy Hollow Zoo has hosted a series of fund raisers and sent funds to support the Rangers. The Zoo has developed a personal relationship with the rangers and Wildlife Direct, a Congo based conservation group founded by Dr. Richard Leaky.

Working with Wildlife Direct Happy Hollow Zoo is able to assure that funds collected in the United States reach the rangers and are used to support their work.

This year the funds will be used to set up a fund to support the families of the rangers who have been killed in the line of duty. Each surviving spouse will receive an annual stipend to allow them to provide food and housing for the family.

In past years the funds raised by Happy Hollow have:

- Provided salaries for Rangers who had not been paid in almost 10 years, yet continued to perform their incredibly dangerous job
- Purchased Ranger uniforms and boots
- Improved the water sanitation system at Bukima patrol post in the gorilla sector, which houses 17 guards and uses a 20-year-old well in which the water is filthy
- Provided tents and food rations for patrols
- Restocked the mostly empty pharmacy at the park headquarters which serves the gorilla sector, the Rangers and their families
- Provided funding towards the purchase of aircraft to allow for improved surveillance of the massive park

As the evening came to a close I stood as the sole ranger in a room filled with people who were willing to donate so much to support complete strangers on the other side of the world. I listened and watched a video message from the Virunga Rangers thanking the Happy Hollow members who have supported them in their efforts and saw the joy on their faces as they made the message. It made me realize how remarkable and brave our colleagues who serve in these remote areas are. It made me proud to stand with them in support of parks and open spaces across the globe.

For more information on supporting the Virunga National Park Advance Force Rangers:

<http://wildlifedirect.org/> or

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San Jose CA 95112
408-794-6400

TRAINING CO-OP

by Patrick Boyle, Region 1

As the budget crunch continues to tighten its belt around my ever expanding waistline I started thinking about CO-Ops. It might have had something to do with the bagel and avocado sandwich I was eating, during a break on yet another mandatory IIPP training meeting. But I began to think of all the training we do as departments related to parks and started thinking if neighboring agencies couldn't share or offer to include their neighbors in some of that training. This would allow us to have some cost sharing, and share ideas and experiences. Obviously we all have special niche training that relates to

our department and some agencies are larger than others but there is usually always room for at least a few more individuals. I have started making some calls to some of the larger agencies in my area (BLM, State Parks, Forest Service) trying to see if we can not share or at least post some training schedules and if there is room to open it up to other agencies. My own agency is an army of 6. For most of us there is a neighboring PRAC Agency that you might be able to CO-OP with. It's worth a shot... give your neighbor a call or pass the idea along to your supervisor.

Identification Needed

Can anyone identify what agency may have produced this patch (and no it's not state parks)?

Contact Jeff Ohlfs, desertraveler2@roadrunner.com



From the Bedside Table of Patrick Boyle

"To Fell a Tree" by Jeff Jepson

This book came recommended by a professional faller I occasionally work with so I ordered a copy from Bailey's Supply. The author does a great job with explaining the tools, equipment, and step by step procedures needed to safely get your tree on the ground as well as limbing and bucking solutions. It is probably the best book I have read for the layman and professional faller. It keeps ideas and concepts simple with lots of illustrations and detailed instruction. It even has a section on use of ropes and falling difficult trees. I am a firm believer of keeping my feet on the ground and this book keeps me well grounded in safety and on terra firma without having to climb the tree. Get this one and add it to your training library for your department. Hope you get a chance to do a little reading by the fire this fall....

A Day of Magic in San Jose

by Pam Helmke

On Thursday September 22nd park professionals and environmental educators from as far away as Humboldt County met at San Jose's Guadalupe River Park for a full day of interpretive training. Frank Padilla from California State Parks made the long trek to Northern California to teach a full day session on his ever popular Using Magic and Science Toys in Outdoor Education. The full day format gave students time to practice skills and spend time with Frank working on ways to add these fun and exciting demonstrations into their programming.

Frank arrived bright and early with a literal truck load of material and each student had a chance to try at least 3-4 new skills. From time tested favorites like Mentos Fountains (or Nucleation Gone Wild) to magical Ghost Bubbles every participant had a chance to experience in a very up close and personal way the excitement magic and science can bring to a program.

This training program provided each participant with 8 hours of PRAC continuing education credit in the Interpretive Domain and the program was also accepted by the National Association of Interpreters for 8 hours of CE. PRAC's co-host for this course were our colleagues from the Guadalupe River Park Conservancy—a not-for-profit environmental education and park support group that has been one of the key supporters in the development of San Jose's Guadalupe River Park and Gardens. The Conservancy provided classroom space and hotel accommodations during Frank's stay allowing PRAC to keep the registration fee to a very reasonable \$50.00 per student.

Our thanks go out to Frank for spending a few days in San Jose to share his obvious love of interpretation and science with his peers.



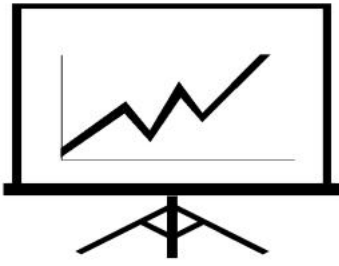
Conference Call

Drop a dime on us....

Assuming you can find a payphone

by Patrick Boyle

We are looking at making the upcoming conference one that you will never forget. However with all great expectations there is a ton of prep work that needs to be done prior to the event. With that in mind we are calling you out to give us a ring. We need to know what type of training topics we can provide for you. We are also looking for speakers and session instructors. If you have attended a memorable training recently that you think the rest of us will benefit from let us know the details. I am not a mind reader (you can ask my wife cause I get it wrong all the time...) so we need to hear from you. (Otherwise you might have to listen me ramble on in person instead of just in this newsletter.) POST and AG credits take some legwork and paperwork so get us your ideas big or small ASAP. Thanks for taking part in your conference.....



Natural Resources Communication Workshop

January 9-13, 2012

The Natural Resources Communication Workshop, sponsored by the Western Section of The Wildlife Society, is designed to help natural resource workers more effectively communicate with general as well as technical audiences through personal presentations using good visual aids. The workshop focuses on the use of computer-generated images created with Microsoft's PowerPoint software. The workshop is practical-oriented and enhances participants' communication skills in planning, preparing, presenting, and evaluating presentations. Since many of the problems in natural resources management are people-oriented, more effective communication can significantly improve many management programs.

Workshop Content:

1. Discussion topics include:

- Planning: communication principles, audience analysis, graphic design
- Preparing: creating computer-generated graphics, photographic composition, rehearsal tips
- Presenting: equipment setup, speaking tips, dealing with difficult audiences
- Evaluating: evaluation of performance

2. Each participant will bring a selection of computer-generated images (ex., graphics created with PowerPoint or other presentation software programs) for organization into an illustrated talk.

3. Each participant will prepare graphics (titles, graphs, charts, maps, cartoons, etc.) to be used in their presentations.

4. Each participant will give a 5- and 15-minute presentation (which will include graphics prepared during the workshop). These presentations will be evaluated by the class and the instructors.

Instructor: Dr. Jon K. Hooper, Professor, Calif. State Univ., Chico (Certified Wildlife Biologist, Certified Interpretive Trainer, Ph.D. in Wildlife Ecology, 35+ years teaching communication workshops around the country). Dr. Hooper will be assisted by Ms. Kim Rubin, who has experience as a tour guide and environmental interpreter. She has 10 years experience facilitating the Natural Resources Communication Workshop.

Location: California State University, Chico (90 miles north of Sacramento)

University Credit: Participants receive 1-unit CSUC Continuing Education credit. The workshop is worth 40 contact hours in Category I of The Wildlife Society's Certified Wildlife Biologist Renewal/Professional Development Certificate Program.

Application Procedure: The initial deadline for applications is October 28, 2011 (Friday). Late applications are accepted (such applicants will become participants if the workshop is not yet full; otherwise, they will be placed on a waiting list in case of cancellations). The tentative registration fee is \$749. The workshop is limited to 16 participants. Since more applicants usually apply than there are spaces available, the registration fee is not due until an applicant has been officially accepted into the workshop (this occurs shortly after the October 28 deadline).

Since the workshop has a limited capacity, all applicants will be contacted after October 28, 2011 to notify them if they have been accepted. Instructions on paying the registration fee will be provided at that time. Payment must be received before applicants will be fully registered. Failure to make timely payment will result in alternate applicants being selected.

To apply, send a letter, fax, or email describing: (1) your current position within your agency or organization, (2) how you will use the training, (3) any special reasons why you feel you should be chosen as a participant, and (4) if you already have official agency/organization approval to attend. In your application, include your address, phone number, fax number, and email. To apply or for more information, write or call:

Dr. Jon K. Hooper
Dept. Recreation and Parks Management
California State University, Chico
Chico, CA 95929-0560
(530) 898-5811 or 898-6408
fax: (530) 898-6557 e-mail: jhooper@csuchico.edu

Flash!!! Participants in the 2012 workshop will not only learn professional tips for using PowerPoint, but also will gain exposure to Photoshop Elements (digital photo editing and cataloging software).

Fire Shelters—"Be Prepared"

by Richard Weiner

Every year in September the Park Rangers of Claremont have a review course on the proper use of fire shelters. Hoping to never have a need to use them, the use and deployment has to be practiced. With the help of the Los Angeles County Fire Department (Sta.62) the rangers attended a two-hour class on fire shelters. The first half was a short video on the make-up of the shelters, areas of escape, selecting a deployment area, and how to stay safe once inside your shelter. The second half was the hands on portion. Each ranger was given a shelter and told to deploy the shelter, get into it, and then was checked by one of the firemen to see if it was correctly done and secured. These reviews keeps us prepared in the event we ever have to use them.



The City of Claremont is located in the foothills of the Angeles National Forest. Two years ago, a fire from a near by city was headed our way and hikers had to be evacuated from our Wilderness Park. The Wilderness Park, which backs up to the Angeles National Forest, is only about 2000



acres but is used by numerous hikers and bikers daily. Arrival of fire units can take up to half an hour to reach those within the park so it's necessary for park rangers to be prepared and trained in the use of fire shelters and other equipment they may need to protect themselves and others. "Are you Prepared"?



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

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