



## West Valley College Receives Professional Citation from PRAC Board

The PRAC board was proud to present the Professional Citation Award to the Park Management Program at West Valley College in Saratoga.

The program was founded in 1972 by Tom Smith and John Nicholas to prepare students for a career working in parks, open spaces and other public lands. Over the 40+ years of the programs existence thousands of students have passed through the doors and gone on to work as rangers, interpreters, park maintenance staff, resource managers, planners and many other careers in public land management.

For those of you who may not know West Valley College is also the birth place of PRAC. The relationships developed by Tom Smith as part of the park management program grew to become the founding members of our association.

President Heather Reiter and Past President Pam Helmke made the award presentation at the 2014 California Parks Conference and Training during the annual Awards Banquet in the historic Ahwahnee Hotel dining room.

Park Management Program Founder Tom Smith and the current Park Management Program Chair Chris Cruz were on hand to receive the award for the college.



*Chris Cruz, WVC Coordinator, Jeff Ohlfs, Tom Smith. PRAC award to West Valley College for contribution to park education in California*

## Calendar of Upcoming Events 2014

- May 15<sup>th</sup> Introduction to Tracking Class  
<http://www.calranger.org/training/index.html>
- June 2<sup>nd</sup> Deadline for Scholarship Applications
- June 15<sup>th</sup> Deadline fo articles for July Signpost
- July 10<sup>th</sup> PRAC Board Conference Call
- July 15<sup>th</sup> Scholarship Award Winners Announced
- July 31<sup>st</sup> World Ranger Day  
<http://internationalrangers.org/world-ranger-day/>

## From the Redwoods

I am pleased to say that we can put another successful parks conference under our belts. For those of you who made it out to Yosemite and the 150th Anniversary Celebration of California State Parks, it was wonderful to see you all and catch up. I want to especially thank the conference chairs, Jeff Ohlfs and Mike Lynch, for putting together such an amazing conference this year. I think we all left Yosemite feeling a renewed sense of purpose and dedication to our chosen professions. Congrats to all who worked to make the 2014 conference an unmitigated success, and special thanks to the PRAC Board for their dedication and diligence.

If you couldn't make it out to Yosemite this year, fear not! Your PRAC reps Richard Weiner and Candi Hubert are whipping up a fabulous training conference slated for March 2-4, 2015 in sunny San Diego. The theme for 2015's conference is "Boots on the Ground," and, you guessed it, it's all hands on. The vision for the San Diego conference is to present new skills and ideas that you can take back to your agencies and implement immediately. So if you're worried that you didn't get dirty enough in Yosemite, then make sure you register for the San Diego conference.

I want to briefly mention a vote that was taken at our General Membership Meeting to change our Association by-laws (the minutes of which will be posted shortly on cal-ranger.org). I asked the board and the membership to consider moving away from paper, mail-in ballots (currently stipulated in our by-laws) in favor of secure email ballots. The idea behind this is to save on paper and postage, but also make things more convenient for our membership come election-time. Of course, those of you who don't have reliable access to the internet can still opt to get a paper ballot, but this will be the exception and not the rule. Since any change to our by-laws must go to a general membership vote, you can expect the (hopefully) final paper vote to hit your mailboxes soon.

Finally, I want to talk about PayPal. Wasn't it easy to register for the conference with PayPal? Wouldn't it be easy to renew your membership that way? Or pay for training sessions? Or donate lots of money to the Association? I think so, too. So that's why we're going to add it to the website to make all of your financial transactions with PRAC a breeze (we'll still take your checks, too, if PayPal isn't your speed). Look for this new feature in the next few months and test it out when you register for the San Diego conference.

Have a safe and wonderful spring!

**Heather Reiter**

PRAC President,  
Chief Ranger, City of Santa Cruz

# Valor and Life Saving Awards Presented at the 2014 California Parks Conference

The Board of Directors proudly presented the Park Rangers Association of California Valor Award to California State Park Ranger Robert Peek for his actions on March 31, 2013. Ranger Peek was off duty and asleep at home when he was awakened by loud popping. Looking towards the windows he saw huge glow in his bedroom. Outside, flames estimated to be 20 feet high were shooting up from his neighbor's home across the street.

Realizing his neighbor was home, Ranger Peek ran to fire thinking that his neighbor was most likely asleep and unaware of the fast moving, life-threatening fire. Ranger Peek climbed a rear deck railing to access the victim's bedroom. He was unable to fully awaken the victim and needed to break down the door to the rear of the house to pull the victim, uninjured, to safety.

Ranger Peek delivered the still stunned victim to his wife for care and then used local water sources to keep the flames away from the home's propane tank to prevent an explosion. Although he is not trained in fire suppression or rescue and had no safety equipment Ranger Peek fought the fire until relieved by the local fire department. Responding Fire Department personnel told the media that had Ranger Peek not rescued his neighbor he would not have survived the fire.

The Medal of Valor may be presented to any uniformed park professional who has been killed in the line of duty, or at the risk of their own life, displays extreme courage, bravery, and devotion to duty in exposing oneself to grave danger in the face of a seemingly hopeless situation notwithstanding the officer's own imminent peril. The Park Rangers Association of California Medal of Valor recipient must have demonstrated that there was a conscious awareness of the imminent threat to physical safety at the time the action was performed.

The Board also presented the Association's Life Saving Award to California State Park Rangers Henry Berry and Mike Gleckler for their actions on July 6, 2013.

While on duty at the California State Railroad Museum, Rangers Berry and Gleckler received word that a visitor had collapsed. Ranger Gleckler arrived on scene and found CPR being performed by other visitors. Ranger Gleckler assessed the victim and found he was unresponsive and pulseless. While Ranger Gleckler deployed an AED, Ranger Berry arrived and took over giving compressions to the victim. Rangers Gleckler and Berry continued to provide critical life support treatment until Sacramento Fire Department arrived on scene and a pulse was detected. The victim was stabilized and transported to a local hospital for treatment and was released home to his family. During the awards presentation at the Ahwahnee Hotel California State Parks Superintendent Mark Hada read a moving letter from the victim and his family thanking Rangers Gleckler and Berry for their professionalism and swift action.

The Park Rangers Association of California's Life Saving Award may be presented to any uniformed park professional in California or Nevada who performs an exceptional act under emergency conditions, not involving bravery, wherein a service is rendered that results directly in sustaining a human life.



*PRAC President Heather Reiter presents State Park Ranger Robert Peek the Association's Valor Award*

## Historical and Conference Reflections

Another conference has come and gone. This time it was in a most beautiful setting in Yosemite Valley. Cannot be any better than that! As always it was great to see old friends from CSPRA and PRAC. Shelton Johnson's living history presentation was one for the books. I have never seen one better anywhere.

It was also a time to reflect on the past on how far PRAC has come since the "Founders" met in Raleigh Young's yard at Steven Creek County Park. There were three of us in attendance. Beside myself, Raleigh and Bill Lawrence were also there. It was an idea that came from Raleigh and Bill that an organization like PRAC be started. Their first suggestion was for just a Bay Area thing, but that idea grew into a statewide organization. Like even today, we had trouble trying to identify what a park ranger really was.

State Parks were also in attendance in Raleigh's yard that day long ago. I believe it was Ron McCall. CSPRA had a huge part in our early history. We might have even had a copy of their by-laws. Our first conference was held in San Mateo and I was the "host." The keynote speaker was Bill Wendt, then Chief Ranger in Yosemite. I believe we might have had fifty there, plus or minus. Yes, there were Tee shirts. It was very popular. It had a picture of a bear in a ranger uniform. They sold like hotcakes! Jerry Lawrence of Palo Alto was our interim President.

It was very difficult to get memberships and to get the word out to the rangers in the state for a variety of reasons. Our memberships when I was President had trouble reaching forty. All the Founders beat the bushes for people. Some agency administrators had some unfounded fear in our being. I think professional park rangers scared them a little. The California Park and Recreation Society (CPRS) also tried hard for us to disband and join them. CPRS, was, and I believe still is, more "R" than "P" and more administration than field level. That did not help to not have them on our side. I was President at the time and simply told them that we became an organization because there was no field level representation in CPRS, and because of them, we were. I believe our dues were \$7 and theirs was \$81. Do the math.

It soon became apparent that our conferences would not be much good without a larger attendance base. Denzil Verardo was President of CSPRA, and we happened to discuss this problem one day. I had first met Denzil when he was a ranger in Big Basin when we had interns there. We soon, with permission of both organizations, both signed an agreement in the late 80's to combine the conferences because we had like professional and common issues. It was also apparent that in the early years of this agreement, that CSPRA would have the vast majority of the conference attendees and there was some early PRAC grumbling. Some conferences only had less than 10 of us there and we sometimes felt like intruders. Now we are the majority and kind of hold them up for a variety of reasons. I might be way off, but I had the feeling that this past conference most CSPRA people were retired folks from the old days.

As Raleigh and Bill and I talked about the struggles of the past, it also came to me that all the Founders should be honorary members. If I am and Jerry Lawrence is, then all the Founders should be. We are all growing older and may not be around long much longer. Not being morbid, I thought often this past week that this might be the last one for me. I hope not. How often do we honor someone after they are gone? It's time!

**Cheers, Smitty**

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What I know has come to me one curiosity at a time. I have no formal training in most of the fields I write about, so I turn to libraries, journals, and countless interviews with specialists in the field. The best way to learn is by following, pausing and getting down on hands and knees. The questions come freely.

*Craig Childs*

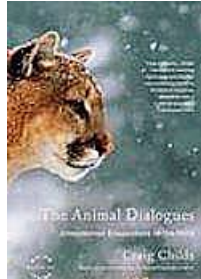
## From the Bedside Table

# The Animal Dialogues by Craig Childs

by Patrick Boyle Region 1

So I promised an uplifting book after the last book left us all feeling a little depressed. This is just what the doctor ordered to lift your spirits and renew the magic found in nature. I first heard Craig Childs featured on NPR's Morning Edition a few years ago. I have finally just got around to reading some of his work, and I have found a new favorite author in the nature section. He has written several books, mainly centered on life in the desert southwest. He has lived in a teepee, joined archeological digs, backpacked into areas I would not even consider, and always finds something special in the environment he is currently exploring.

The Animal Dialogues is a great romp throughout North and South America focusing on some of the critters he has



encountered. Not only does he have an easy writing style but it reminds you of the feelings you had when first encountering these animals on your own. His descriptions put you right into the moment without being overly wordy. He fills his encounters with great facts about the animal as well as the present conditions of the environment. I learned some things about myself and the creatures we share this planet with in reading this book. Join me in celebrating Craig Childs and his encounters with everything from napping with porcupines, picnicking with a praying mantis, and the beaching of a blue shark. Each tale is marvelously told capturing the magic of the moment. Hope you get a chance to read a little by the beach or in the shade of your favorite tree.

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## PRACnet Are You Subscribed? by Jeff Price, PRACnet Moderator

Our membership e-mail list server, PRACnet, provides for the exchange of professional information and thought between 128 individual PRAC subscribers. Since its inception in April 2000, PRACnet members have transmitted over 3,000 messages regarding events, jobs, training, requests for help, and other items of interest.

If you are reading this as a paid-up PRAC member and are NOT already subscribed to PRACnet, you are really missing a great member benefit. Drop a note to: [webmaster@calranger.org](mailto:webmaster@calranger.org) or visit <http://www.calranger.org/pracnet/> for more information and to get added today.

We care about your privacy and protection on PRACnet. To that end we employ a strong SPAM filtering system to block unwanted junk posts, and we only allow confirmed PRAC members to subscribe and send messages. We do now allow document and image attachments up to 1 MB, but be sure they are related to the information in your post.

If you are currently subscribed, here are some hints on making PRACnet a more useful communication tool:

- Post job opportunities or planned agency training opportunities yourself directly on PRACnet at [prac-net@googlegroups.com](mailto:prac-net@googlegroups.com).
- Don't reinvent the wheel; if you are starting a new project, ask other members if they have already been down the same road.
- Members agree to abide by several rules of "Netiquette" such as only sending personal opinions, information or links pertaining to the profession. Your Moderator assures compliance.
- Alert members to professional issues or threats to our parks, so others can provide support.
- If you change addresses, let us know so we can update.

It has been my pleasure to serve as your Moderator on PRACnet over the past 12 years. Please ask when you have a question and pass along any suggestions for improvement to me at: [webmaster@calranger.org](mailto:webmaster@calranger.org). Note that we have now fully migrated from the old Yahoo list server and are now using the simpler Google Groups system, so be sure you have added our new address to your computer when you post messages: [prac-net@googlegroups.com](mailto:prac-net@googlegroups.com).



[HTTP://WWW.CALRANGER.ORG](http://www.calranger.org)

# Firewood Sales In Campgrounds

by Patrick Boyle Region 1

This question came across my desk so I am passing the info on to all our members. It is based off of a few phone calls to the Board of Equalization. Our agency is just getting started on the process but with summer around the corner I thought I would get ahead of the curve a bit.

The selling of firewood in campgrounds in California requires a sellers permit, (with few exceptions), unless you are a federal agency. The California State Board of Equalization (BOE) handles all the sellers permits and tax collections for the State. It does not matter where your firewood originates from, or who cuts it. It does not matter that we are government agencies. Just like the taxes that come out of our paycheck to pay our wage, Uncle Sam wants a cut of the firewood sales to fund the parks. (so to speak in very loose terms.)

Back to California, if your agency purchases firewood and sells it at the campground it should have a sellers permit and issue the firewood supplier with a resale certificate. This keeps your agency from paying sales tax up front and allows for the collection of taxes on the final sale end. If your agency utilizes wood from the park to generate firewood then only a sellers permit is required.

The easiest way to probably handle reporting the taxes would be to sell the firewood with the tax included, rounding up to the nearest dollar. This way we do not have to have some odd change to hand out and keep on hand. This works well for those of us who are mathematically challenged, or who have volunteers and hosts handling our firewood sales. At the reporting period you can just deduct the applicable sales tax from your total sales and send a check to the BOE.

Your filing dates for paying the sales tax collected will vary based on what your projected sales amount is for the year. They can be monthly, quarterly, or yearly. Most of us would probably fall under a quarterly reporting period as the bulk of our sales are seasonal. (Summertime) Every local district has its own set sales tax, to find yours contact your local tax assessor. The

BOE has a very helpful website where you can find all this information and more at

<http://www.boe.ca.gov/>

I also recommend reading the BOE pub 73 (sellers permit) and pub 61 (exemptions and exclusions) for more info.

[www.boe.ca.gov/pdf/pub73.pdf](http://www.boe.ca.gov/pdf/pub73.pdf)

<https://www.boe.ca.gov/pdf/pub61.pdf>

Nevada firewood sales are a little more in the gray area. I could not get a solid answer to the question. I stymied the tax guy at the Nevada Department of Taxation with this question. He directed me to their document NRS 372.300 that exempts wood sales for domestic heating, but not to outside cooking and heating. (Propane for your home is not taxed but the 5 gallon bottle for your BBQ is taxable.) The case could easily be made that the fire was for domestic purposes (ie heat and cooking) since the campsite in fact becomes your temporary residence while camping. He recommended posing the question to the tax board for a definitive answer. I will leave that to y'all in Nevada so I do not open a can worms on your behalf. Visit the Department of Taxation and also see NRS 372.300

[http://tax.nv.gov/uploadedFiles/taxnv.gov/Content/TaxLibrary/TB\\_Propane\\_Dec2013.pdf](http://tax.nv.gov/uploadedFiles/taxnv.gov/Content/TaxLibrary/TB_Propane_Dec2013.pdf)

I have always thought selling firewood was a way to help keep the campers from hacking down all the trees and vegetation in the campground. (It certainly does not stop them, but I like to think it helps.) Now we just need to cut down a few more trees for the additional paperwork. The writing on the bathroom wall in our staff bathroom say "No job is complete until the paperwork is finished." Or in this case until Uncle Sam gets paid.



# Western Bluebird Program

by Joe Chandler



The Western Bluebirds of Mason Regional Park have made a remarkable comeback. All but gone in the late 90's there are now hundreds of these beautiful

birds inhabiting the area. Western Bluebirds are small birds, a little larger than a sparrow. What they lack in size they make up in beauty. The males are a beautiful shiny blue with a bright rust colored breast. The females are a grayish blue with a pale orange breast. And, on the male the throat is blue while on the female it is a grayish blue.

Bluebirds are cavity nesters. They depend on finding cavities in trees or nesting boxes hung by bird lovers across the country. Mason Park has twenty nine such boxes spread throughout the park.

Western Bluebirds are primarily insect eaters occasionally eating seeds or berries. They will perch on fairly low branches, see an insect and swoop down to capture it.

These beautiful little birds look peaceful but, they are extremely defensive of their nests often vigorously attacking those checking the nests boxes.

Nesting in Mason Park begins around the first of April and continues into July. The average nest will contain four vibrant blue eggs but, some nests have had as many as seven. Some eggs can be very pale and almost white. Often



when one batch of young fledge, another nest is built and egg laying begins again. On occasion one box may have as many as three nests in a single season. The female does most of the nest building taking over a week to complete the first nest of the season. The nesting material is usually grass. One of the problems in Mason Park is the use of plastic Easter grass left behind by park visitors. This can become entwined in the nest and around the chicks. Studies have shown that around half of the young were not fathered by the defending males.

There is competition for the next boxes in Mason Park. Of the twenty nine boxes in Mason Park usually at least one of them is occupied by a Tree Swallow often after the Bluebird has started it's own nest construction. And, on occasion, a House Wren will use one of the boxes filling it up with it's twig nest.



The incubation period for Western Bluebirds is approximately 12-18 days. The chicks will stay in the nest anywhere from 18-25 days. Watching this rapid growth from egg to fledgling is amazing. Some of the time there will be three adults attending the nest and upon occasion chicks from a previous nest will assist.

Prior to 1996 there were few if any Western Bluebirds in Mason Park. Dick Purvis, the grandfather of a Western Bluebirds in Orange County, placed eight nesting boxes in the park. When the first Western Bluebird nested in one of his boxes it was approximately thirteen miles from the closest known Bluebird nest. Since that first nest we have fledged 1553 Western Bluebirds from the twenty nine boxes now in Mason Park. The Mason Park Western Bluebirds are a true success and a welcome part of the park.



# Legal Update

Robert C. Phillips, San Diego County Deputy District Attorney (Retired)

## Miranda; Non-Custodial Questioning:

*People v. Davidson (Nov. 26, 2013) 221 Cal. App.4th 966*

**Rule:** Initial on-the-scene questioning of a criminal suspect, so long as “brief and causal,” is not likely to require a Miranda admonishment and waiver. The fact that the suspect has been handcuffed is but one factor to consider when determining whether Miranda is implicated.

**Facts:** A brand new Suzuki motorcycle disappeared from the driveway of its owner in Simi Valley at some time during the early morning hours of April 22, 2012. At about 9:45 a.m., defendant was seen pushing the victim’s motorcycle down a nearby street by a witness who figured something was suspicious when he saw loose wires hanging from its ignition. The witness called police, providing a description of the defendant. Simi Valley Police Officer Patrick Coulter responded to the call. He observed defendant, matching the broadcast description, still pushing the motorcycle with “jumper wires” hanging from its ignition. When defendant saw Officer Coulter, he pushed the motorcycle behind a high profile vehicle in a vain attempt to hide. Officer Coulter ordered defendant to put the bike down, remove his backpack, and step towards him. Defendant was carrying a flat-blade screwdriver at the time, which he set on the seat of the motorcycle. Officer Coulter was concerned about the screwdriver being available as a weapon, the fact that defendant was acting “hanky,” and that he appeared as if he were thinking about fleeing. So he immediately handcuffed defendant and, while telling him that he was being detained for investigation, had him sit on the curb. Immediately upon applying the cuffs, Officer Coulter asked defendant, referring to the motorcycle, “Is this your vehicle?” Defendant responded that he’d found the motorcycle in some bushes in a nearby industrial-office area. Not finding this explanation to be plausible under the circumstances, Officer Coulter arrested defendant and searched him, finding a meth pipe in his pocket. At trial, defendant made a motion to suppress his statement, arguing that because he had not been admonished of his Miranda rights when asked about the motorcycle, his statement was inadmissible. The trial court found that defendant was not in custody for purposes Miranda, making any such admonishment legally unnecessary, and denied the motion. Defendant was convicted of auto theft and appealed.

**Held:** The Second District Court of Appeal (Div. 6) affirmed. In finding that no Miranda admonishment was necessary under the circumstances, the Court quoted an earlier case in setting out the guiding principle for this type of situation. “When circumstances

demand immediate investigation by the police, the most useful, most available tool for such investigation is general on-the-scene questioning, designed to bring out the person’s explanation or lack of explanation of the circumstance which aroused the suspicion of the police, and enable the police to quickly determine whether they should allow the suspect to go about his business or hold him to answer charges.” (People v. Manis (1969) 268 Cal.App.2nd 653, 665.) In considering all the surrounding circumstances of this case, including that the defendant had been handcuffed, the Court found that defendant’s situation fell squarely within the above principle. Handcuffing a suspect during an investigative detention is but one factor to consider, and does not automatically make subsequent questioning a “custodial interrogation” for purposes of Miranda. Defendant in this case was handcuffed only because he was acting “hanky,” he appeared that he might be ready to flee, and he had access to a possible weapon; i.e., the screwdriver. He was told he was only being detained immediately before being asked about the motorcycle. The detention was brief, with the challenged question being asked on a public sidewalk and not at a police station where interrogations are typically prolonged and intense. So what defendant perceived as a custodial interrogation was in fact no more than a single question asked to confirm or dispel the officer’s suspicions. Under these circumstances, there was no need for a Miranda admonishment and waiver before asking about the motorcycle.

**Note:** The bottom line is that defendant was not under arrest, but only being detained. Miranda is typically not required in the detention situation. And it was only a detention (as opposed to a “de facto arrest”) because the officer had some valid safety-related reasons for applying the handcuffs. But the Court also pointed out that there are limits to this rule. “Miranda warnings are not required ‘until such time as the point of arrest or accusation has been reached or the questioning has ceased to be brief and casual and became sustained and coercive’” (quoting People v. Manis, supra, at p. 669.). So don’t push this envelope too far. The whole purpose in finding such questioning to be a “noncustodial interrogation,” not requiring Miranda, is that such questions are necessary for a quick determination whether a crime has in fact been committed and whether the right suspect has been detained. Once this determination is made and the detainee is in fact arrested, then any further questioning can no longer be considered “brief and causal.” And by the same token, letting the questioning get more direct, intense, and accusatory may itself very well convert the detention into an arrest.

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