A Partnership
That's For The Birds
by Sandy Ferreira

Steve Simmons, teacher and educator with 32 years experience as a woodshop instructor at Merced High School passed on this valuable information to me the other day. Steve developed and monitors a Wood Duck Project in Merced, and this new project "The Raptor Works" (a Barn Owl Nest Box program), has evolved from the Wood Duck Project.

Barn owl nest boxes are built by Steve's ROP students at Merced High School which represent a win-win situation. Among the biggest winners are the students who learn valuable work habits and business skills making and selling the nest boxes. The students came up with the name of their company, wrote company rules covering such issues as sick leave and unexcused absences. "It's an incentive," Simmons explains. "Some kids will earn more than others, if they're at work all the time. Once they are here, they are expected to work." A small portion of every sale goes towards their profit sharing program: Five dollars from every twenty dollar box sold will go into a scholarship to fund barn owl research so students can learn more about barn owl habits and nesting preferences.

Another winner is the Sunsweet Dryers, which donates wood for building all the nest boxes—scrap lumber which other wise would be hauled off to the landfill. This Madera facility has been a driving force behind the new program, which aims to make the boxes available to growers, with first priority to the grower members of Sunsweet and the other co-ops in the Sun Diamond family. "The project is an outstanding example of how agriculture-related business can work with the community to give nature a helping hand."

Finally the big winner is the barn owl. There is strong evidence that barn owls provide excellent rodent control and help reduce damaging rodents an mice in orchards and vineyard, which in turn allow growers to reduce chemical use as growers look to "natural means" of controlling pests. One valley grower Hans Smith, said he had a tremendous gopher problem in his new orchard. "I lost 270 trees in just one year. We put up some owl boxes and now I can count on one hand—one finger—the number of gopher mounds I can see." The owls, of course win, we're providing a habitat and a comfortable, safe nesting place. And the losers? "The only losers in this partnership are the rodents." If you have any questions about this program or would like to order a barn owl nest box, contact "The Raptor Works," at (800) 343-8362 or (209) 673-4140.

Rescue the Land and Water Conservation Fund
by Ken Miller

We all know about the Land and Water Conservation Fund. Right? Well if we don't we should. The LWCF is America's largest government money source to buy new parklands. It was created in 1964 to provide money for the acquisition and development of parks. Taxes from offshore oil drilling are taken in and are supposed to be used for park acquisition. I believe that the fund provides matching funds for local agencies. My District has used it numerous times, I know that the City of San Jose has used it, and I'm sure that many other local agencies have utilized it as well. The fund has paid for the acquisition of nearly 7 million acres of parklands and the development of over 37,000 park projects.

Up until the 1980's things were going well for the fund but since then Congress has been raiding it to pay for other programs. The fund has taken in $19 billion but has spent only $8 billion on parks. Last year $900 million was taken in but only $138 million was spent on parks. This amount was the lowest since 1974. The rest of the money went to cover the federal deficit. This money could have been used to preserve scenic lands that have now been mined, logged, and developed. Don't get me wrong. I'm not anti-development but I do think that it is a shame scenic areas are developed when there was money available and not used to buy it for parkland.

(Story continues on page 4.)
The Issues of Arming Park Rangers
by Ed Ancheta, Jason Russell, and Boyce Whitlock

One of the many challenges and problems that today's Park Rangers face is whether or not a firearm should be implemented as part of the standard enforcement equipment. This problem was addressed as a class project in a San Jose State University Recreation Resource Management class. The class project was to identify the issues involving the arming of Park Rangers from the Park Administrator's point of view.

The hypothesis predicted that Park Administrators priorities would differ from the Park Rangers primary issue of "need."

The class interviewed Park and Open Space Administrators to identify what they believed were the primary issues when deciding whether or not to arm Rangers.

The Rangers' "need" to be armed issue almost never surfaced when Park Administrators identified what they believed to be the primary issues concerning arming of Park Rangers.

The following 10 issues were identified by the Park Administrators as the important issues. The listed issues are general in nature and in no particular order of priority.

1. Political and social climate of the community
2. Cost, equipment, safety retirement
3. Qualifications of current Park Ranger staff
4. Career suicide to even discuss the subject (issue)
5. Legalities of arming Park Rangers
6. Training
7. Public perception of an armed Park Ranger
8. Administration lacked the skills and experience in managing law enforcement personnel
9. Guns in volatile situations increase the chance of violence. This included a general dislike for guns all together
10. New ranger role in the eyes of other existing law enforcement agencies.

Summary:
The polices makers' concerns were not directed at the "need" to be armed, but at numerous other administrative issues. Park Rangers seeking administrative decisions concerning the arming of Rangers would benefit their cause by resolving/addressing other administrative issues as well as the issue of "need."

A future Resource Management class will address each of the listed "issues" as individual research projects. This will develop an information base that will benefit both the Rangers and Administration in developing future Law Enforcement policies. If you or your department has an issue that you would like to address concerning the carrying of fire-arms, please forward it and have it added to the above list. Send your ideas or issues to:

San Jose State University
1 Washington Square
Instructor: Michael Quane
Department of Recreation and Leisure Studies
San Jose, CA. 95192-0060
Need Information?
Look to the World Wide Web
by Tom Smith

I received my CSPRA/PRAC conference registration information in the mail yesterday, and it really looks like a great one. Hope to see you all there. Several articles ago, I told you that I was going to give you some Web site information that might be usable. What is the Web? The World Wide Web is a multi-media linking system for finding and accessing Internet resources. It allows a user to explore a topic of interest from many different angles, through the "links" that are established. Each Link has a "home page." The home page is the opening screen. Kind of like a table of contents for that Web site. The more I "surf" through the Web for park related stuff, the more excited I become about what is out there. There are mountains of information on the web! For someone like me, who is a teacher, and a park "junkie," it is fantastic stuff!

I really don't want to step on Gary Lech's conference presentation on surfing the web for information. I know that Gary will have information for all of you who attend, that will be very useful. However, not all of you will be there, and maybe I can tell you a little about what is available. So much so, that I am considering not requiring a textbook for my class at San Jose State next fall. Most libraries have access to the web, including universities like San Jose State. One of my favorite publications is Park Science. This journal is published by the National Park Service and a hardcopy is available on a quarterly basis. But it is also on the World Wide Web. Ok, what is Park Science? It is a magazine which integrates science and research with resource management. A real park resource management journal! Sure, a lot of the material is related to the national parks, but I have found that many articles can be applied to any park agency or system. What is nice about having it appear on the Web is that you can read it there, and only make copies of those articles that are of interest to you. That is what I did until my subscription found me after I retired. You can find Park Science at http://www.nps.gov/parksci. (I put a period after the phrase ends a sentence. The real address ends with no period.) Park Science does accept a $10 donation if you are so inclined. They can use it. If your budget does not have the bucks, they still will send it to you free.

All web services include search "engines." A search engine finds subject matter for you. You type in the words like "natural resource management," and it searches the web for any information relating to that subject. I use "Yahoo Recreation" a lot. One of my students, as an example, did a term paper on mountain bicycle use in parks with information entirely gleaned from the Web. He received so many "hits" from his search engine that it was frustrating. Over one thousand, as I recall.

I have fun bringing the Web pages of park agencies (like Santa Clara County's) up on the screen. Most all of these tell about the parks in the agencies system, and other useful information for potential park users. PRAC member Jim O'Connor was instrumental in designing Santa Clara County's web page, and did a great job! Mid Peninsula has a very nice page, as does East Bay Regional Parks. I will list those, and others at the end of this article. California State Park's page can be reached by using www.ceres.ca.gov/parks/. Their page is also informational, contains some management information, but mostly in a generalist sense. I did obtain a copy of a very useful user survey that State Parks had done, and was able to get their budget off the Web. One thing that is very useful to State Park "watchers," are the minutes of the Commission meetings.

I guess I use the National Park Service's page and the Forest Service page more than any. Their pages not only are for information to potential visitors to their sites. They also include many pages of information pertaining to management, management philosophy, research that is being conducted, etc. The Forest Service's page about fire, as an example, is excellent. The following are web sites that you might find of use:

Aquatic Plants: http://aquat1.ifas.ufl.edu/
Biodiversity: http://muse.bio.cornell.edu/
Biodiversity and Ecosystems network: http://straylight.tamu.edulbenelbene.html
Biological Survey: http://www.nfrcg.gov
Forestry: http://www.metla.fi/info/vlib/forestry.html
National Biological Survey: http://www.its.nbs.gov/nbs/
Landscape Architecture: www.cir.toronto.edu/virtuallib/larch.html
Plants Database: http://plants.usda.gov/npdc
Remote Sensing and GIS: www.gis.umn.edu/

General Areas of Interest:

National Park Service: http://www.nps.gov
Bureau of Land Management: http://www.blm.gov
United States Forest Service: http://fs.fed.us
Santa Clara County: http://www.clareaweb.co.santa-clara.ca.us/parks/parkhome.htm
San Jose and Others (Including all in the Bay Area) http://acoates.com/park.html

I guess that is enough for a start. I am sure Gary will have some more added material for us.

Oh ya. If you want to find out what is going on in Bill's house, type http://www.whitehouse.gov.
Park Rangers From a National Perspective
by Russ Hauck

I recently received some membership literature from the National Recreation and Park Association which describes jobs in the natural resource and park management field including foresters, soil conservationists, fish and game wardens, range managers, and park rangers. While each of the descriptions is fairly specific as to the duties of the position it describes, the paragraph describing park rangers is lengthy, broad, and diverse using terms including: interpretation, provide information, enforce laws, care for and maintain parks, ensure visitors fully experience natural and cultural heritage, ensure the safety of park visitors, conservation, research, park planning, record keeping, facility construction, trail building and landscaping.

Park Rangers have been generalists for decades. In the good old days, a ranger would travel on horseback into the backcountry to do trail repair and scold those who were found breaking the rules. In today's increasing fiscally-challenging workplace, we are pushing more and more toward specialization. Many park ranger programs have been sucked up by police departments and consequently their programs focus almost exclusively on enforcement. There are other park ranger programs whose rangers only do interpretation and are prohibited by policy from contacting law breakers.

As a profession, specialization is our enemy. During difficult budget periods, those programs that are more enforcement oriented get cut or eliminated in favor of police department budgets as they perform a similar function. Or in a more likely scenario, when a ranger retires or resigns his/her position is converted to a police officer position until the point comes when the last ranger goes and the program ceases to exist. Interpreters are eliminated allowing school teachers to assume the educational function. Contract gardeners hired to convert the nature center's native plant display to picnic facilities which can be rented to produce revenue.

A Big Thank You From Region 1
Director
by Sandy Ferreira

I would like to thank the membership for their votes and continued support as Director of Region 1. This past year it has been challenging and a new experience for me. I look forward to serving you and PRAC in the next two years. I especially would like to hear from all my members in Region 1 and am looking forward to meeting each and every one of you!

As Director, one of my jobs is to increase membership and to sponsor regional training in our area. I would like to hear from you to find out what kind of training would meet your needs. If anyone would like me to send them membership applications for PRAC, please give me a call, I'll be happy to do this for you.

Land and Water Conservation Fund
(Continued from page 1)

Money for parks will be crucial for our quality of life in the coming years. Our population has doubled since 1940 and will double again by 2050. If we think that our parks are crowded now, wait fifty more years. Additional money to acquire parks is available from the LWCF but the fund is not being wholly utilized in the manner it was intended to. I fear that if the fund is not used it just makes it that much easier to eliminate it.

As employees, we owe our commitments to our respective agencies, and as members of PRAC our focus is on California Rangers, but we are all part of a brotherhood (I hope the female rangers will forgive me for using that antiquated term) that has a long, proud, nationally recognized history that we have an obligation to uphold.

Regardless of your program's primary focus, do what you can to establish/maintain yourself as a generalist: watch nature programs on television; subscribe to outdoor magazines; attend advanced officer training classes; thumb through the penal code periodically (yawn) to refresh your memory or discover something you have missed in the past; read a book relevant to the field (I know I'll get an attaboy from Smitty for that suggestion).

If it hasn't happened already, the day will come when you tell someone that you are a park ranger and they will expect you to answer their question about speed limits in the park (21113 CVC) or the gestation period of a possum (12-13 days) or the archery deer hunting season (varies; check your local regulations) or the condition of the roads in Yosemite (what roads)!

We are standing at a crossroads with park development. The population pressure on parks is increasing. We have a means to acquire more parkland. Get your administration to look into the LWCF and contact your representatives and let them know that you think that the fund is important. Tell them that the money should be used for parks—that is what it was originally intended for.
Smitty's Book Report

You know, it kind of puzzles me sometimes. There are a lot of people out there that look at the environment in ways that sometime make me cringe. Good, well-meaning intelligent people, who do not believe that this world is in a little bit of trouble environmentally. They always come up with some excuses that seem to defy logic. The Rush Lindbaughs of this country. There seems to be a large group of people who use the wonders of science everyday, yet flush the findings of renowned scientists from all over the world. The airwaves and papers are filled with a growing infection of doubt, complacency, and outright lies about environmental concerns.

Paul and his wife Anne, of Stanford University have written a new book about the environment. This is the same Paul Ehrlich that wrote The Population Bomb several years ago. The Population Bomb was written to alert the world about overpopulation. This new book, The Betrayal of Science and Reason, takes on all the people who use "pseudoscience" and a confusing array of assertions and "stories," to prove that the Endangered Species Act, Clean Air and Clean Water Acts should be weakened or repealed, and that other environmental problems (like ozone depletion, etc) are not really true. The book counters all the campaigns of misinformation. It gives trustworthy insight into the planet's environmental status, which is backed by Nobel prize winners and other great scientists of the world.

The Ehrlichs take on the Wise Use movement and the environmental anti-science people. There are several chapters about the "fables" of population and food, non-living resources, biodiversity and the Endangered Species Act, about atmosphere and climate. The book tackles all these environmental issues head on. My favorite chapter concerned itself with the environment and the economy. Maybe because it is what we hear about more often than any. "Gosh, we can't do that. It would cost 500 jobs!" Certainly some people in the business world are concerned about the environment, but only because of the dollars it is going to cost to clean up their acts.

It is a book worth reading, if only to boost your own knowledge so that you can offer come-backs to those that tell you that the systems that your park represents are not in trouble. The book is, obviously, a success, as my local bookstore tells me that they are having trouble keeping it on the shelves.

Ehrlich, Paul R, Ehrlich, Anne H.
Betrayal of Science and Reason, How Environmental Rhetoric Threatens Our Future

A Weird but True Park Story
by Ken Miller

One of my co-workers shared this contact with me that I think you will find amusing. Maybe this can be the start of an on-going column in the Signpost.

While driving into Rancho San Antonio Park the ranger saw a white Grand Cherokee driving erratically in a parking lot and also going from one lot to the next. A woman in her fifties was driving the Jeep and holding a black lab's leash as it ran alongside the vehicle. The Ranger drove up, said hi, and asked what the woman was doing. She matter-of-factly replied that she was exercising her dog. The ranger asked if she usually visited the park and she replied that this was her first time and that she thought it was a great place. Sensing the opportunity for a good PR contact the ranger told the woman that he was concerned for the dogs safety and re-directed her to another park where dogs are permitted. He did mention that the woman would have to leave her Jeep behind to enjoy taking her dog on the trail. The woman, Jeep, and lab were last seen happily leaving Rancho San Antonio. Keep your eyes open for people exercising their dogs from their vehicles. This could be the next big visitor conflict that we will have to manage.

Does this sound like you? Call Sandy Ferreira PRAC Region 1 Director at: (510) 791-4340 (w) or voice mail (510) 494-4895 box 5341 to volunteer. Or call 1-800-994-2530 to leave a message.

The Signpost
PARK RANGERS ASSOCIATION OF CALIFORNIA
Board Officers
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Pam Helmke
(408) 277-4539
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Bob Donohue
(916) 895-4972
Fax (916) 342-6921

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(510) 791-4340
Fax (510) 494-4895

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(408) 356-5702

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(415) 691-2165

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David Brooks
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Fax (408) 277-3241

Region 3 Director
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email:
prangerd@ix.netcom.com
DavidB8480@aol.com

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