This year's park conference was quite a success. A big thank you to all the conference planning committee and volunteers who worked to make this conference a big success. Over two hundred participants attended the conference, sixty-five percent were PRAC members and the remaining thirty-five percent were CSPRA. From the feedback that I have received, everyone seemed to enjoy the conference. Some of the highlights were the off-site field trips that were scheduled at four EBRPD locations on Thursday. These were well received and attended. Paul Ferreira did a great job. Thank You! Also the Interpretative Beer Tasting Program that Ira Bletz puts on was excellent. We tasted beer from all over the world and learned about the history of Beer, its components and how it is processed. If you haven't tasted Ira's home brewed cranberry beer, give him a call and taste some, it's very good.

On Friday and Saturday the Silent Auction was ongoing. Participants were able to bid on a given item and the person with the highest bid won it. Another highlight was the vendor displays and exhibits. This year, exhibitors were scheduled for one day only rather than all four days of the conference. This worked out well because exhibitors had exclusive time scheduled which did not conflict with the breakout sessions. There were many different displays and items for the participants to see. In addition, park and rescue vehicles were set up outside the hotel for everyone to view.

As part of the opening session, Russ Hauck, Region 4 Director, recited a poem "Ode to A Ranger." It was an inspirational poem which describes the important role of a ranger and his/her duties. I asked Russ how long it took him to write it, he replied, "I worked on it 10 minutes a day for the last four months." Russ received a standing ovation and was asked to read it again at the Banquet on Saturday night. PRACs' honorarium Huell Howser was so inspired by Russ's poem that he asked to meet Russ and get his permission to publish it! Great job Russ! (See page 4 of this Signpost for a copy of this poem.)

Fridays evening program ended with an old fashioned BBQ dinner and line dancing which was held at Heather Farms in Concord. On Friday, Saturday and Sunday there were many interesting breakout sessions scheduled throughout the day. These were well attended by all participants.

Another hot item at the conference was the T-shirts. The conference logo featured an outline of a human. Inside the human were drawings of a multitude of different native species of animals in California. On the front, an outline of the state of California, featuring native species too. T-shirt sales far exceeded our expectations, and at the end of the conference, only a few were not sold.

Another item that I would like to mention was a book that was written by Mike Lynch, California State Park Ranger. The book is entitled "Rangers of California State Parks." It documents the history of the State parks and has great photos. It very interesting to read about our profession. The book can be ordered either in Hardcover Edition @ $24.95, or Softcover Edition @ $14.95. You can call (1-916-885-4527) to order this book. I recommend it.

Next year's park conference will be held in San Luis Obispo March 9-12, 1998. Mark your calendars and I hope to see everyone there next year. Thanks again to PRAC and CSPRA for this years conference. The theme "Parks Renewing the Human Spirit" was truly evident everywhere.

Ed. Note: To Sandy, thank you for being on the Conference committee and working so hard.
Random shooting on the American River Parkway injures three; Frustrates Rangers

Sacramento County Park Rangers faced a bizarre set of events March 23 when a teenage suspect decided to try to become a serial killer by randomly shooting at innocent park visitors on the American River. The suspect, on three different occasions attempted to kill the victims by shooting them with a .22 caliber handgun as they passed by him along the bike trail and horse trail. One victim was shot in the back, narrowly missing his heart, as he was walking along the horse trail with his sister. On the following day, another victim was shot in his abdomen as he rode passed the suspect on his bicycle. The third victim was shot in the head with the bullet passing through his ear, cheek and out his nostril when he was also walking along the bike trail.

Park Rangers and Sheriffs Deputies closed a seven mile portion of the parkway and staged a manhunt for the suspect. A composite drawing of the suspect was made and was distributed to the media and surrounding businesses. As luck would have it, an anonymous tipster recognized the composite as the person he had sold a gun to and provided the Deputies the suspects name and address. The Sheriffs arrested the suspect and recovered the weapon. The suspect admitted to the deputies that he shot all three victims. He explained that he shot one of the victims because he had a mean look. The suspect will be facing attempted murder charges.
Wildlife Disease Exposure: Lyme Disease
by John Havicon

Springtime is the most prevalent time for ticks and the threat of Lyme Disease. In California, the only tick that is known to carry Lyme Disease is the Western Black Legged Tick. These tiny Arachnids can be found on grasses, brush and in wooded areas. They live by biting warm blooded animals inhabiting these areas (hosts), and sucking their blood.

Lyme disease is a bacterium (spirochete) that inhabits the digestive track of the tick. The spirochete is transmitted to humans through it's bite. Lyme disease is preventable and may be cured by an early diagnosis and antibiotics.

Signs and Symptoms
An early sign of lyme disease may include a spreading rash within thirty days of the bite. The rash is generally characterized as a “bull’s-eye” rash, although only about 1/2 of the victims develop the “bull's-eye.” Early symptoms may include fatigue, headaches, muscle aches and pain, and general malaise. Advanced symptoms may include chronic arthritis of one or more large joints (especially the knee). Nervous system abnormalities and irregular heart rhythms may also be felt.

Early treatment is important as it can shorten the course of the disease and reduce the late complications.

Prevention
Humans are generally bitten by adult ticks but can be bitten at any stage of the tick’s two-year life. Be cautious of the tick’s habitat which is moist, shaded and riparian areas. Ticks tend to look for their host during times of higher humidity, the morning and evening, or moist foggy days.

- Adult ticks will usually crawl around on their host looking for an appropriate spot to bite and also searching for a mate. This process of crawling around can take two to three hours. We can remove most ticks at this time simply by checking ourselves after entering tick prone areas and periodically checking every two to three hours.
- Take a shower as soon as possible.
- Wear long pants and tuck your pant leg into your boot.
- Use repellents on your clothes such as DEET (especially around the legs and ankles).
- If you are bitten, it is important to remove it completely. When removing embedded ticks use forceps and grasp the tick as close as possible to it's head. Pull straight outward.
- Don’t try unscrewing, burning it with a match or applying kerosene or oils. These methods may cause the tick to vomit and release the spirochetes into the victim.

This information was provided to me by California Vector Control. If you would like more detailed information or brochures you can contact me (John Havicon) at (916) 875-6672.

Conference Wrap-up
by Ken Miller

Well we all survived another great conference. I actually came up a day early to go on a tour. We did the Black Diamond Mine tour which was incredible. We got local history, mining techniques, geology, and a great underground hike all in a three hour tour. The Sheraton Hotel was one of the best conference facilities that I can remember.

Thursday night was the miniature golf tournament (I don't remember reading about that in the flyer) and then on to Interpretive Beer Tasting. Ira Bletz is an incredible presenter. He used his interpretive skills and held the attention of a group that got rowdier as the night went on. It was probably because he was in charge of the beer pouring. A great example of the carrot, stick, and donkey theory.

PRAC had more people in attendance at this conference than CSPRA. That is certainly a change from PRAC's earlier days and we all deserve a pat on the back for helping to make PRAC what it is today. Russ Hauck's poem was a milestone in the conference and literally brought things to a standstill. I even danced the Macarena at line dancing (never would have thought that would happen) so I must have been having fun!

The conference was great and if you weren't there you missed out. Next year is in beautiful San Luis Obispo. Hope to see you there.

Director’s Report.

Dear Fellow Rangers;

It was certainly great to see old and new friends at this years conference. I felt overall this was one of our finest; great presentations, great food, and even a little poetry (good job, Russ). I was also impressed that Huell Howser was able make time from his busy schedule to share with us. What an honor! My compliments to our East Bay hosts. I can’t wait to see what’s in store for us next year at San Luis Obispo.

Sincerely,
John Havicon

The Signpost
I started my day in the usual way putting on my uniform and belt; I climbed in my truck and counted on luck to be kind for the day I’d be dealt.

The radio sings with multiple things which one should I choose first; Problems here, problems there, I really don’t care I guess I’ll start with the worst.

“There’s a transient down” said the camp host with a frown as I walked up to check out the site; “I’m not sure he’s breathing or if his heart’s beating and it looks like he’s been here all night.”

I gave him a nudge but he didn’t budge with a harder one he woke with ajar; My mind was at ease as he started to wheeze, I won’t have to do CPR

He rose to his feet smelling far less than sweet I searched him, my hand in a glove; I asked him some questions, he replied with suggestions I’m physically not capable of.

He had a real attitude this cantankerous dude and an evil sinister laugh; His eyes were shifty, is he fifty-one-fifty? No, just fifty-one-forty-nine-and-a-half.

So he picked up his stuff, walked off in a huff, turned, looked and shook his clenched fist; I said “Have a nice day as he shuffled, away I thought “I spent four years in college for this?!?”

I’m back on my way to continue my day to see what I might see; I stir up the gravel and continue to travel wondering what’s in store for me.

Communing with nature is quite an adventure it’s entirely what you make it; Maybe they were communing, but it looked more like mooning when they came out of the bushes naked.

I yell “STOP” as they near, “You can’t do that here; There are families, and young and old folk; Besides, I have a notion you’ll need Calamine lotion ‘cause those bushes are poison oak!”

So off of the trail and down to the jail I carted this birthday suit pair; Booked and confined, one cried and one whined as I drove off leaving them there.

Now back on patrol, I continue to roll my eyes searching for suspicious activity; There are those out there who are likely to share in this less than noble proclivity.

As I continue to scan, my eyes soon land on a group with something to hide; My eyes then fix on an assorted mix of plastic baggies all open wide.

“I’m not real clear why you’re doing that here” I state as I whiff their strong odor; “But we all know that’s not oregano and that stuff’s not good for your motor.

So back to the station with a stack of citations and an envelope full of their dope; A piece of advice to each of these guys: “Next time use your hemp to make rope.”

The next call I’m sent on is a mountain biker who went on a trail that’s a challenge to all; Needless to say, he didn’t go all the way before the terrain caused a spectacular fall.

I pick up the skin that once was his chin as I shift into medical aid mode; I hope he’s learned his lesson and won’t again soon be messin’ ‘cause the road rash is more abundant than road.

I do a quick patch job with an alcohol swab and a package of four-by-four gauze; I question his sanity, ignoring pain-induced profanity “Was this challenge for some worthy cause?”

He says “There’s no limit to life while I’m in it and man’s quest to control the earth’s elements.” I scoff “When all’s said and done, Mother Nature’s the one you might as well be juggling elephants.”

I arrive for my lunch with the service club bunch to speak of my profession’s worth; Of mammals and bees, and flowers and trees, and commitment to protecting the earth.

I put on a show to let them all know of all the good things we do; I speak of our mission and of our ambition to the environment we must all be true!

My message is strong, and it isn’t too long til they listen not making a sound; They seem to have learned when my attention is turned to a table where sits the group’s clown.

He raises his hand, I acknowledge the man he says, “I have a question and I must ask it... What can you do about Yogi and Boo-Boo and have you recovered the pic-a-nic basket?!?”

The rest of my day goes the usual way with a little of everything; Interpretation, education, information, incarceration; What will my next contact bring?

A lot of the time it’s not hardcore crime that seems to demand our attention; It’s thoughtless actions and other infractions that arise and are worthy of mention.

“Pardon me there, but were you aware it’s illegal for you to pick poppies? You didn’t know? You will now, though, Sign here, press hard, three copies.”

(Continued on page 5.)
My next assignment is to work on refinement of people’s respect for the land; The method I like is leading a hike and discussing the objects at hand.

I’ve prepared a talk on the red tailed hawk in flight they’re as majestic as religion; But in this urban lair, the city slickers don’t care you might as well talk about pigeons.

Interpretation is a celebration of what nature has to offer; But it’s real hard to try when supplies you must buy and there’s no money left in the coffer.

It’s quite an obsession this chosen profession and the giant reward that one gets; For blood, sweat and tears over so many years and only being paid in sunsets.

From jacking up hoodlums to preserving rare woodlands and checking the daily fire index; From high mountain rescue to planting of fescue to spraying for harmful insects.

The most peaceful of trails to riotous jails to relocating an errant bee hive; From smelly old skunks to smelly old drunks to patrolling God’s country by four wheel drive.

From fallen trees to infectious disease to contributing to an Environmental Impact Report; From flowers with pistils to gangsters with pistols to testifying in Superior Court.

We’re enforcers, we’re teachers, we even fix bleachers we fight fires, build trails, protect nests; The tools of the trade—a field guide, a spade, and even a bulletproof vest.

We’re underpaid we get teased, our budgets get squeezed and we face our fair share of danger; But with not one bit of sorrow, I’ll be back tomorrow for another day in the life of a ranger.

Notes About “The Poem” by Russ Hauck

For those of you who did not attend the annual Park Ranger conference in March, I presented the poem “Ode to a Park Ranger” which was warmly received. It is included in this issue of the Signpost. As a copyrighted piece of work, expressed written permission is required for republication. These remarks will serve that purpose.

The poem “Ode to a Park Ranger” may be reproduced in any publication under the following conditions:
1. The work may not be altered or edited, and must appear in full as written;
2. The work may not be sold, or a fee charged except when appearing as part of a publication that has a standard annual subscription or per issue rate;
3. The source of the poem must be identified;
4. I would appreciate a courtesy copy of any publication in which the work appears for my file.

Feel free to use the poem without restriction when making an oral presentation to a group such as a service club, or at a campfire program. I have found that when presenting the poem orally to a group, it is helpful to preface it with an explanation such as:

“5150 is a California code section for a mentally unstable person who is eligible for involuntary placement for psychological evaluation. There is also a “street” term for someone who is “wacky” but doesn’t meet the criteria of 5150.”

I would be happy to send you an original copy if you would like one. I have also printed the poem on quality stock paper, mounted it in a frame and sent it to Mr. Huell Howser, who was presented with an honorary lifetime membership to the Park Rangers Association of California at the conference in Concord. I would be happy to send you a frame-ready copy if you would like. My phone number is on the back page.

I think the poem accurately portrays the typical park ranger. In fact, as you read it, you may very well see yourself represented.
A Forgotten Group?
by Tom Smith

Some of you were at the general meeting and heard Raleigh Young talk of including a maintenance section at the next conference, or even making an attempt to recruit some maintenance people into the organization. Another proposal he suggested might be to start a maintenance organization and attach it to PRAC as a sister group (such as the national park maintenance people have done.) As Raleigh was talking, I looked around at the faces, and saw many people “communicating” their disapproval. Did they think this was a threat? Are we really elite?

When I got home, I took out the PRAC Ranger Directory and did a very short and quick survey of the agencies in the book. What I found was a state where there were 103 park agencies that had a title close to that of a “park ranger.” Twenty one agencies reported that their rangers did nothing but resource management and law enforcement. Twenty agencies stated that their rangers did no enforcement at all. That left 62 with a split role. Their rangers did both law enforcement and maintenance. Over 80% of the park rangers in California did maintenance work. I quickly counted the number of employees of those agencies that did no enforcement. There were 265. Two hundred and sixty-five potential members of PRAC. That sounds to me like a group that is ripe and ready to pick. Are we missing a group that we should be of service to? As professionals, don’t you think that we should begin to try to do all we can to professionalize the maintenance/operations field as well? It certainly is an area that we all bitch and complain about. Hell, we might even recruit some state park maintenance people. In the first year of PRAC, we debated long and loud about who should be allowed to become a member. Indeed, we even heard a great deal of trouble trying to agree on a definition of what a park ranger was. We came up with any uniformed park employee.

I don’t think that Raleigh was suggesting that we take the word “ranger” out of PRAC. I think that he just wanted you to think about giving such a section of PRAC some support. At least, to get something going in this field. He just wants to hang on coat tails for awhile. Like we hung on CSPRAs’ for so many years.

Those of you that know me know that I feel quite strong about the role of maintenance in the overall park operations picture. In case you don’t, I feel that we cannot afford to hire maintenance people off the street anymore. Maintenance is no longer just pick and shovel. It is specialized licensing, hazardous materials, computers, spread sheets, environmental law and policies, and a lot more. We need people that can read and write and “cipher.” I don’t think that requiring a couple of years of college for some maintenance position is out of the question. Take a look at your budgets. Who spends the most money? A talented, professional, motivated maintenance person can make your job so much easier.

When I went to Albright Training Center, a National Park Service Academy, my roommate was a maintenance supervisor at Yellowstone National Park. I learned more about park operations from him than anyone else I have ever worked for or been in contact with since. I can hear the skeptics. Good luck. There aren’t many maintenance people out there that are willing or that know that much. Well, look around. How many park rangers belong to PRAC?

Maybe this idea will fall on its face. Then again, maybe it won’t. We all know that if we are to get out from under CSPRA, and I hear that a lot during conferences, we are going to have to increase our membership. Let us try a maintenance section at next years conference, and see if there is interest. Maybe some help on getting out an interest or needs survey. One administrator I know said that he would send as many maintenance people as he could. That is a good start.

Wildlife Disease Exposure
John Havicon

Recently I was called to assist in rescuing an injured deer on the parkway. The deer appeared to be sick and too weak to move on its own. My partner immediately slipped on some latex gloves and recommended that I do the same. I have handled many animals in the past, but I never really thought about them passing on their illness to me. When I teach my First Responder classes to the Rangers, I constantly remind them of the variety of diseases that may be transmitted when treating injured victims. I remind them to protect themselves by using gloves, masks and pocket masks and wash up after the contact.

There are in fact, several diseases of wildlife that can be transmitted to humans. The more common of these are: Rabies, Bubonic Plague, Tularemia, Lyme Disease, Encephalitis and Hantavirus. There are also less common, tick-borne diseases such as Rickettsia, Colorado Tick Fever, and Rocky Mountain Spotted Fever.

As a series, I would like to describe some of these diseases, their treatment, and how to protect yourselves in future Signpost. The bottom line is to preventing exposure. When handling any sick, injured or even “dead” animal, slip on those latex gloves and wash soon afterwards. Be aware of tick and mosquito habitats. If you must enter their habitat, try to wear long pants and long sleeved shirts. It is also advisable to use tick/mosquito repellent and make periodic tick checks every two to three hours.
Smitty's Book Report

I hope that you all got to the conference. For the first time, we out numbered CSPRA by over two to one. When I got home, another book review request was awaiting from Dave, with an April 1st deadline. Ouch! The old budget has taken a real hit this month, so I looked to my bookshelves for help. I guess you all know about budgets, don’t you? The problem is, I don’t know which books I have reported on, which ones I haven’t. I have been keeping a record on my computer but experienced a "crash" on my old computer and lost some files. As some of you know, I have given my professional library to Santa Clara County, and I don’t have too many books just "floating around" in the den.

Recently, I was involved with a small problem on the Castle Rock State Park general plan committee. There were several people on the committee that wanted to disperse people from off a well used ridge, to a rather sensitive riparian canyon. All of us out there know that it doesn’t take a rocket scientist to know that you cannot divert people from one sensitive area to another equally sensitive area—or any area, for that matter—without impact happening. I needed some proof that dispersal doesn’t really work. Also, the canyon is the watershed for a river that is going through the process of being listed as a threatened habitat for Coho and steelhead. I had to do something. My son Bob (who is with California Dept. Of Fish and Game) gave me the documents for the listing procedures, but I needed more. I turned to an old favorite author of mine when it comes to finding out all you need to know about resource impact. His name is David Cole. He and a co-author, Bill Hammitt, wrote a book about managing natural resources, and particularly wilderness. The title of the book is Wildland Recreation, Ecology and Management. There on page 253, was the information I wanted, Dispersal of Use. The book cited several studies about dispersal that allowed me to give some teeth into my argument with the committee. It is not the first time I have used this fine text. It is just filled with material that you can use to manage your areas.

It is a fine resource for all of you that are trying to manage the fine line between allowing recreation use, and protecting the resource. Looking at the table of contents reveals a very comprehensive attack on the subject matter. The book starts by discussing what wildland recreation is and what recreation resource impact is. It looks at all the components. Soil, water, wildlife, and vegetation and impact “patterns.” Part III of the book covers environmental durability and visitor use, and Part IV covers all the strategies for management.

What I really like about the book is that it is very readable, and easy to understand. It is a great resource book for your shelves. One of the things that I look at when calling upon resources to use and that is the reliability of the reporter. Is this just another graduate student getting something published, or am I really reading something written by an expert? Cole’s expertise at wildland recreation resource management is well documented. He is, indeed, a real expert. So is Hammitt. Bill Hammitt is a professor in forest recreation at the University of Tennessee. Surfing the Web also tells me that even though this book was published in 1987, it is still not dated.


More Weird But True Park Stories

By Ken Miller

One of our Rangers was patrolling a recently acquired piece of property that is not yet open to the public. There has been a lot of historic use of the area and there is a beautiful pond that attracts trespassers. The Ranger drove around a corner and saw a man who was only wearing socks and shoes! The Ranger stopped the man. Information was that he was embarrassed to be caught naked. The man was cited for being in a closed area and initially gave a false I.D. but fessed up when our dispatch couldn’t get a drivers license match. The man seemed OK and got his verbal identification. I guess that the man couldn’t get a drivers license match. The man was cited for being in a closed area and given a verbal warning for the false information. Hopefully he found his clothes and went on his way. Who knows...Maybe this is what happened to the naked guy at Cal.

This next story happened to me. Dog contacts always seem to be the worst. You’d think that you are telling people how to raise their children by the way they react to dog rules. I saw one couple with a large off-leash dog just in front of another couple with a small leashed dog.

I thought to myself this will be a good ticket as the people with the leashed dog will appreciate me dealing with the loose dog. I stop the first couple and explain to them that I will be issuing a citation. They tell the second couple (their friends) to continue their hike and they will catch up to them. Oops! Well I’m committed to writing the ticket. Of course the woman doesn’t have an I.D. Am I the only person who carries their I.D. with them nowadays? The woman is from out of state and says she doesn’t have a California drivers license. My false information warning bell is starting to ring. Dispatch runs her and gets a match for an I.D. card. Same woman’s name, D.O.B., and address. Only problem is that the card is for a male. Hmmmm. I issue the cite and check the female box. Was this a case of a simple DMV mistake or is there more to the story? I really don’t want to know.

The Signpost
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## Membership Application

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## Voting Membership

- Regular $35

## Non-voting Membership

- Agency:  
  - (1-25 persons—6 mailings) $75
  - (> 25 persons—12 mailings) $100
- Student $10
- Associate $15
- Supporting $50

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