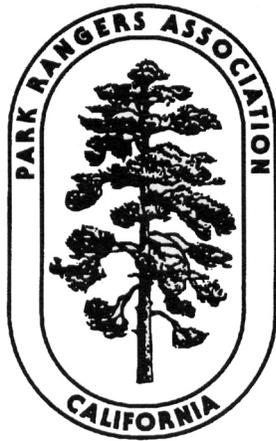


The Signpost

March-April, 2003



Advanced Officer Training a Success!

By John Havicon

During the last week of January, Sacramento County hosted a week long *Advanced Officer's Training for Park Rangers*. The class was attended by 12 rangers from Sacramento County Parks, 3 from Mountains Recreation & Conservation Authority, 1 from East Bay Park Police and 1 from Fulton-El Camino Park District.

Our week started with Deputy District Attorney Robert Saria providing us with the latest information on search and seizure, the Miranda warning and courtroom testimony and demeanor.

The next two days our instructor was Frank Daley, a retired investigator from Alameda county. Mr. Daley taught us techniques of interrogating suspects, interviewing witnesses and investigative techniques. Mr. Daley involved us in a lot of role playing and scenarios which helped make the training more realistic.

On Thursday, we had Fish & Game come in and talk to us about hunting law, water pollution and fishing law. The afternoon was followed by a basic report writing session with Sheriff's Sergeant Jeanne Williams.

Friday's session was resource training provided by Marilee Flannery, Beth Etgan and Linda Maurer from our local nature center. They provided some basic interpretive techniques, flora and fauna knowledge and talked to us about hazardous interactions with wildlife.

We finished Friday with night firearms training with rangers Steve Ingalls and Morris McGee instructing. The night shoot was not only fun but also enlightening, as it provided obstacles that you don't normally have during the daytime.

I think everyone that attended this session walked away with some valuable training. The nice thing was that all of the training was geared toward park rangers and the things we deal with. We will be repeating this training next year, so mark your calendars for the last week of January, 2004.

Region 1 News

By Denise Edwards

As the newly appointed Region 1 Director, I would first like to thank you all for trusting me in this capacity. I am very excited to become more involved with PRAC and to be a resource for the members of Region 1. I am looking forward to meeting more of the members, facilitate training opportunities and to provide any necessary services to the organization.

I have been working with Sonoma County Regional Parks for the past year and am currently attending the National Park Service Academy. I have had the opportunity to work with a variety of very experienced park professionals throughout the training and I hope to be able to bring some of this training and knowledge to the organization.

Recently, I have had the pleasure of working with the 2003 Parks Conference Planning Committee to help with organization of the upcoming event. As the Volunteer Coordinator, I have been busy with recruitment of student volunteers and look forward to providing a helping hand at the Conference. Hope to meet you there.

From the President's Desk

A lot is going on these days. Besides the usual annual ritual of putting our parks back together after winter storms and preparing for the spring crowds we are all facing the challenges that are being created by the current budgetary problems the state and most local agencies are having. For those that have been in this business for a while, we know it is a cycle, we have our good years and our bad years. It is always a challenge for us to keep what we have and continue to provide a high level of service to the public that we serve. State Parks is going through a major reorganization and is facing drastic budget cuts. Local agencies are not immune from budget issues. The City of Fremont Park Ranger program is in jeopardy. Unfortunately, many politicians and citizens take for granted the role parks play in a community and the genuine value of a park ranger program. It is up to all of us to sell our profession and ourselves to the public as well as our elected representatives. We are stronger when we present a united front. It is very important that we all do what we can not only to help our own agencies but also to provide support to our brothers and sisters in other agencies. PRAC is prepared to stand by any agencies that need our support and will do everything in our power to help our members and their agencies. PRAC supports the City of Fremont Park Ranger Program and recognizes the value and importance of the work that they do.

PRAC has teamed with the California State Parks Foundation, CSPRA, SPPOAC, CALPA, and the *California State Lifeguard Association* to sponsor *Park Advocacy Day*. Park Advocacy Day will be held on **Monday, April 7**, at the State Capitol. The purpose of this event is to educate legislators on the importance of parks and the demands placed upon parks. Activities will include a rally at the capitol followed by teams of park professionals visiting legislators to educate them on the importance of parks. I call upon PRAC members to attend this event and show their commitment to the importance of parks. If you would like to participate in this event or learn more about it, please contact me.

On a brighter note, the *2003 Parks Conference, at South Lake Tahoe* is almost here. It is not too late to sign up for what will be one of the best conferences ever. There are fun, exciting and educational field trips and social events scheduled as well as an excellent line-up of diverse training sessions being offered. It is going to be hard to decide which sessions to attend. The real benefit to the conference is, as always, the networking with our fellow professionals. Our colleagues from all over California and Nevada will be there, as well as fellow professionals from Oregon and as far away as the East Coast. The 2003 Conference Planning Committee, consisting of your fellow professionals from throughout California and Nevada, has put in many hours and a lot of hard work to put this conference together and we are rather proud of our final product. I am very excited about this conference and cannot wait for it to be here. I hope to see many of you there. You will be sorry if you miss it.

The planning committee for the 2004 Parks Conference is being assembled and a location should be announced soon. It will be in the Southern California region, in a coastal county. If you are interested in helping out with the planning process, please let me know. Volunteering on a conference planning committee can be a lot of hard work but it is also very rewarding and fun. It is only through the hard work and dedication of our members that we can put on a top-notch conference.

Applications for the *2003 PRAC Scholarships* are being accepted. You can download an application off of our web site or call the PRAC office to request one mailed to you. Two \$500 scholarships are available, the *Thomas Smith Scholarship* and the *PRAC Scholarship*. Any student or regular member, enrolled in a minimum of 6.1 units, and enrolled in a course of study in parks and recreation, forestry, recreation management, resources management, or a related field is eligible to apply.

Alright, I hope your spring goes well and I look forward to seeing you at the conference and hey, let's be careful out there!

Mike Chiesa

Greetings from Region 3

By Don Pearson

Having just returned from my first board meeting of PRAC at South Lake Tahoe, I feel both challenged and excited about the next two years. The excitement extends to the leadership that has been elected to carry out the mission of PRAC. I now appreciate Lee Hickinbotham's article in the recent *Signpost* where he says he is so excited about the upcoming conference.

For those of you do not know me, let me introduce myself, I am the Recreation Director for El Dorado Irrigation District, a position I have held for the past 22 years. I graduated from Sac State with a degree in Recreation Administration in the mid 70's. Before this, I worked as a Recreation Supervisor for the City of Placerville. Having worked for smaller agencies my entire career, I have worn many hats. My most favored hat is that of a maintenance person, yes the maintenance person; that unsung hero of all parks without this person why would anyone want to come to our parks. Perhaps to see the garbage overflowing, the broken water lines or the unkept toilets. I think we all agree that if parks were not maintained in a safe and well-kept manor, parks, as we know them today would not continue for the enjoyment of our visitors. In these times of tight budgets, park administrators are faced daily with the challenges of

where to make cuts. PRAC officials have done an outstanding job in the past making an excellent case for the need to keep trained professional Rangers in agencies across the state. I believe the same effort needs to be extended to the professional Park Maintenance people as well. The park profession is not just the Park Rangers but includes Park Interpreters, Park Maintenance personnel, Clerical and Administrators. Our bylaws state any uniformed person may belong to PRAC, what better way to increase our membership than to extend an open invitation to park maintenance personnel state wide. This would allow a better exchange of ideas that will only better our profession. As you might tell, I have volunteered to oversee the resource maintenance and resource management committee of PRAC. Like those Board Members in the past and those Board Members to come, I am asking the membership of Region 3 to contact me for training idea, possible social activities or any concerns that might need to be brought to the attention of the board. Your current Board is continuing the tradition that has been set in the past of hardworking individuals who volunteer their time to see that our profession only gets better, but we need your help and ideas so we may continue to work for you.

A Glow in The Dark

By Lee Hickinbotham Jr.

A couple of months ago my partner and I got a report of someone burning incense in one of our downtown parks. Since it was a light day we headed right over to see if we could find some action. We walked through the park to the location the RP had told us about. In the sand next to the playground were about 100 incense sticks burned down to just a pile of ash. We thought that this was kind of odd. The first thought that came to our minds was perhaps some kids had found a pack of incense and lit them all at once. We cleaned up the mess and headed back to the Ranger Station to contact the RP for more information.

The RP informed us that she had seen the incense burning at about 7:00 am. My partner and I decided to come in earlier the next day to see if it was a one-time deal or if it was some sort of "cult-related" ceremony. Since we normally start at 7:00 am we decided to come in at 6:00 am in order to be there early enough to educate whoever was doing the burning. We got to the downtown park around 6:15 am. We smelled the incense burning and quickly made our way over to the playground only to find the incense had already been burning for a half an hour with no one in sight.

This intrigued us, so the following Saturday we came in at 5:30 am. We parked around the corner of the park and silently approached the playground. It's very dark at 5:30 in the morning so we brought our night scopes that we use on night hikes, just so we could be ready to catch our perpetrator. Remembering what John Havicon had written in the last newsletter about blending in to the environment, we stealthily hung close to the trees, our radios turned to the lowest volume and scanned the area. We were ready to write a citation for littering, fire not in a barbecue and being in the park after hours. Well, to our dismay, again we found around 100 incense burning in the sand with no one around. Discouraged, we contacted the police department ask them to do a drive by earlier the next day.

A couple of weeks later the mystery was solved and the 5150 was identified. He stated that he was burning the incense for religious reasons. He was warned that he could be cited for littering in the park.

At least we got to use our night vision for something other than night hikes.

In the Spotlight:

Henry David Thoreau - Part I

“The Making of a Legend”

By Steve Carlin

This is a series that will focus on pioneers of the environmental movement and is courtesy of NEPRA

When David Henry Thoreau was born on July 12, 1817, he was the 3rd of child of John and Cynthia Thoreau who owned a farm on the outskirts of Concord, Massachusetts. Thoreau (which is properly pronounced as THOR'eu) himself later stated that he was born in “the most estimable (deserving of esteem) place in all the world, and in the very nick of time, too”. When young David at age 16 enrolled at Harvard College to become a teacher, there were only four professions to choose from—the ministry, medicine, law or teaching—and most of his family had taught including his father, aunt and his older sister. The whole family helped to scrap together enough money to pay for his college expenses and Thoreau was often awarded \$25 as “exhibition money” for his high grades. During one summer vacation, he spent six weeks sharing a small hut with his college room-mate, Charles Stearns Wheeler, on the shore of Flint's Pond (today called Sandy Pond) in Lincoln, Massachusetts. After graduation, Thoreau was rewarded by receiving a teaching position in his hometown, which he was very fortunate to obtain as the country was in the midst of an economic depression.

His good fortune was not to last, as Thoreau's public teaching career was to end quickly as he resigns after not wanting to discipline his students with a whip which was a common practice. Around this same time, Thoreau changes his christened name from David Henry to Henry David. Both of these “irregular” actions brought a lot of attention to him and ire from the local community. Despite his perceived oddity with the community, Henry became quite popular with the older Ralph Waldo Emerson who saw a lot of promise in the young man. At this point, Emerson, born in Boston, had settled in Concord and was writing lectures and books, publishing his first book titled *Nature* in 1836.

Henry Thoreau was enjoying his life in Concord running his own private school with his older brother John Jr. The school was praised for its innovations; “It was one of the first in our educational history to operate on the principle of ‘learning by doing’ and to devote a considerable part of its program to field trips.” On weekly field trips, the students, both girls and boys, were taught about the area's history of the Indians and of natural history. These were two of Thoreau's life long passions and he was always eager to impress others with the wonders of both. On summer break from school in 1839, the two brothers took a long desired vacation by taking a boat trip on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers. Henry's good life was to turn suddenly with the closing of their school due to John's continued struggle with tuberculosis and then his tragic and sudden

death from tetanus. Thoreau was understandably quite depressed and needed to find something new to get on with his life. He had long been thinking of writing and he was eager to start fresh by moving to a quiet place where he could do so. In 1841 he wrote in his journal, “I want to go soon and live away by the pond, where I shall hear only the wind...my friends ask what I will do when I get there. Will it not be employment enough to watch the progress of the season?”

Thoreau was thinking about returning to Flint's Pond but Mr. Flint denies his request to build a cabin there. He was disappointed and would remain emotionally restless as he felt he had little to show for his years. Another opportunity would arise in 1845 and he would not let it pass him by. With permission from Emerson, Thoreau proceeds to build his own house down by the shores of Walden Pond and live there from July 4th, 1845 to September 6th 1847. Emerson had always loved the woods around Walden Pond and took the first step in preserving them in 1844 by purchasing 14 acres “before the woodchoppers had laid them to waste.” The threat on these precious woods had grown even greater that same year with the building of the railroad by the pond. Thoreau now had been granted his wish to “get away from it all” so that he could get down to work on writing a book about the 1839 river voyage he took with his brother.

This voyage, which he described in his first book: *A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers*, is a symbol of Thoreau's deep admiration for his brother.

For Thoreau, his move to Walden Pond was more than just a mere change of scenery but a change in how he lived. He was going to simplify his life; “Our life is frittered away by detail. Simplicity, simplicity, simplicity!” and live out his own experiment in nature; “by my experiment.” Renowned biographer Walter Harding wrote:

“Remembering what he (Thoreau) had said so boastfully at his college graduation, he determined to reverse the Biblical instruction and after working one day a week, to rest six—though the rest would be merely a euphemism. Those six days of each week he would devote to writing and the observation of nature.”

Thoreau during this period of 2 years, 2 months and 2 days was by no means unproductive. He completed drafts, in addition to his first book, of his masterpiece *Walden or Life in the Woods* and of his famous essay *Resistance to Civil Government (Civil Disobedience)*. Thoreau used his amazing powers of observation to gain an even greater respect and appreciation for the natural world and especially Walden. Emerson once stated that he thought Thoreau

Story continues on page 5.

February 6, 2003

Ms. Susan Smartt, President
California State Parks Foundation
P.O. Box 548
Kentfield, CA 94914

RE: Parks Advocacy Day

Dear Ms. Smartt:

As supporters of California's magnificent State Park system we are pleased to endorse the first annual Parks Advocacy Day in Sacramento and join the California State Parks Foundation as a partner in that effort. We recognize the importance of educating legislators and the public on the many roles parks play and the services they provide to the citizens of California. Our association will make every effort to keep our members informed of this event and encourage participation by utilizing our web site, e-mail list, mailing list, and our newsletter, *The Signpost*.

Recent studies done by State Parks demonstrate dramatic increases since 1999 in park attendance, arrests, land acquisition and state population compared to a decrease in State Parks general fund allocation. Even with the passage of bond acts and a one-time allocation by the Governor, there remains an estimated \$300 million backlog in State Parks maintenance projects.

Staffing and maintaining our parks is at a critical point with fewer rangers and lifeguards, budget cuts and a hiring freeze continuing even as visitations increase dramatically. Not only do our parks provide Californians with a place for recreation and renewal but are a vital resource for schools, relied upon heavily by our educators. Next to schools, parks provide more educational programs than any other organizations in the state.

Though the mission of State Parks is to protect the state's "most valued natural and cultural resources" they are susceptible to aggressive acts of legislation authorizing non-mission use of park lands. Across the state proposed uses include: road building; cemetery expansion; a private golf school; a skateboard park, a vehicle racetrack; low income housing; and a bullet train running through the heart of one of the largest State Parks in California.

We look forward to meeting with legislators, supporting key legislation that will benefit parks and protect them from "non-mission" use and demonstrating our role in a large and growing parks constituency.

Sincerely,

Michael R. Chiesa

PRAC President

Henry David Thoreau - Part I

Story continued from page 4.

had "preternatural powers of observation." In Walden, his observation of the ways of nature—through his own diligently applied perceptions, brought awareness of nature to the rest of humankind. Thoreau ends his life at Walden Pond in the fall of 1847 as he states "I left the woods for as good a reason as I went there. Perhaps it seemed to me I had several more lives to live, and could not spare any more time for that one." Indeed, Thoreau was to live many more lives but was never to forget this keystone in his bridge of life. Until his death, Thoreau continued to

visit Walden Pond to gain inspiration; "We need the tonic of wildness..." and to plant trees around it's shores so that it would always remain the way he liked it, a "pond in the woods" from which it gets it's name.

Steve Carlin, NEPRA Board and Conference Committee Member is the Visitor Services Supervisor at Walden Pond State Reservation. Steve can be contact at Walden Pond at 978-369-3254 or thoreau1862@hotmail.com

Get the Scoop on Poop!

Angi Bates, Ranger/Director of Interpretive Programs Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority

As a ranger, I am fortunate to live in agency housing as a caretaker. This means I have a wonderful 605-acre front yard in Franklin Canyon, located between Beverly Hills and Studio City. While walking one of our trails before I started my day, I noticed that dog owners were not removing their dogs' waste and it was creating a real eye (and nose!) sore on the trail. As I walked up the trail, I devised a plan that used interpretation to help reduce the problem and I am sharing it with you, my fellow rangers, in the hope that you may use parts of it or start your own **Poop Patrol Program** using this as an inspiration.

Phase 1: Research

I went online and found several sites (some hosted by people who provide a yard cleanup business for busy dog owners) that detailed the problems with leaving dog defecation. While I knew it was ruining the beauty and interfering with the beautiful aroma of sagebrush the trail, I didn't realize the impact it had on the other resources. Did you know that a 1997 segmentation research study conducted for the county of Los Angeles discovered that more than 125,000 county dog owners regularly walked their dogs and left the waste laying on the ground? Water quality issues were of the greatest concern with the non-removal of pet feces ranking anywhere from first to third largest threat to water quality. According to recent research, non-human waste represents a significant source of bacterial contamination in urban watersheds. Genetic studies by Alderiso *et al.* (1996) and Trial *et al.* (1993) both concluded that 95 percent of the fecal coliform found in urban stormwater was of non-human origin. Bacterial source tracking studies in a watershed in the Seattle, Washington area also found that nearly 20% of the bacteria isolates that could be matched with host animals were matched with dogs. This bacteria can pose health risks to humans and other animals, and result in the spread of disease. It has been estimated that for watersheds of up to twenty-square miles draining to small coastal bays, two to three days of droppings from a population of about 100 dogs would contribute enough bacteria and nutrients to temporarily close a bay to swimming and shellfishing (US EPA, 1993). A study conducted in Baltimore, Maryland discovered that dog feces were the single greatest contributor of fecal coliform and fecal bacterial (Lim and Olivieri, 1982).

Pet waste can also be a factor in eutrophication of lakes. The release of nutrients from the decay of pet waste promotes weed and algae growth, limiting light penetration and the growth of aquatic vegetation. This in turn can reduce oxygen levels in the water, affecting fish and other aquatic organisms.

Another concern raised is soil quality. One of the reasons people don't remove the waste is that they believe it is biodegradable or, as they say, "It's out in the woods." Apparently, the fecal matter contains roundworm, hook-

worm and other parasites worms that remain in the soil for many years. This affects the health of all people, but especially children. Hookworms may be transmitted from contaminated soil and/or infected feces to people walking barefoot. When having a picnic or playing Frisbee on the grass, people are exposed to the bacteria. Sitting or playing on the ground is common in parks, so this is a relevant point to bring up in a place of recreation.

The waste of domestic animals can also affect the health of wild animals who, attracted to it as a source of protein, will eat the feces. It is common in our park to find the waste bagged, but not removed. Often I will find the bags opened and the contents removed by wild animals. Because they don't carry a natural immunity to the Parvo larvae that is carried in the waste of dogs even if they have been immunized, they can easily get sick and die from the contact. And, the reason everyone already is aware of: **It stinks!** Just think of how tolerant you are of having it in your own front or backyard. I imagine that neighborhood wars of inconsiderate dog walkers are waged for a very good reason.

The research also revealed that dog walkers only remove the waste 60 percent of the time. This helped to inspire my goal—to raise that number to at least 75 percent through a mixture of signage, flagging (see below) and contact with staff and volunteers.

Phase 2: Create the plan

Armed with some information, my challenge was to communicate my message in a way that inspired voluntary compliance. There is a kiosk conveniently located at the head of the trail where I would post the main reasons with facts to support the reasons to remove dog waste along with photos of the unsightly waste left behind. I observed that most of the dog droppings were left at the head of the trail, very near where we provide biodegradable bags and a trash can. This has been true in my experience with my own dog—she tends to relieve herself before the walk begins, shortly after she gets out of the car. But how would I get the point across to people who were less than conscientious? I thought of the small orange flags on 12-inch wires used to mark plants. I would post a flag at each pile left by a dog so people could easily see the flags clustered near the head of the trail. This would also serve as a way for me to measure my objectives later by counting how many flags I used each month I monitored the progress. Next, I would remove the dog waste that I had marked, take the bags and weigh them. According to Vand der Wel (1995) a single gram of dog feces can contain 23 million fecal coliform bacteria. Again, this is a quantifiable way to determine if the plan works in later months when measured each following month. This would also offer an opportunity to calculate, using the statistics I found online, the amount of bacteria contained in my one day's findings. This information would be included in my sign.

Story Continues on page 7.

Get the Scoop on Poop!

Continued from page 6.

Phase 3: Implementation

With the research done, the feces weighed, marked and removed, it would now be time to offer the necessary support in the form of uniformed people. I introduced my **Scoop on Poop** plan to our volunteers in our quarterly meeting and in the newsletter. I enlisted help from people who were available during the heavy dog walking hours of 7 am–9 am and 4 pm–7 p.m. While this is not everyone's forte, I did have about 10 people interested in helping us work on a solution to the problem. Most volunteers are with us because they are attracted to the park, which provides a 605-acre respite in the middle of the city. I defined their role as spreading the word through education by talking to dog owners in a friendly manner and handing out doggie bags and small cards that highlight the dangers of feces that hasn't been removed. My plan also included giving the cards and printed information similar to what was on the sign to the nature center staff to hand out and the patrolling rangers in the park. It was crucial to have as much support as possible, with people spreading the message and the signage and flag display backing up the people.

Phase 4: Measuring the plan's success

Per my extensive training for certifications at the National Association of Interpretation (Thanks Lisa and Tim!), I needed to create a plan with objectives that were measurable. If my goal was to increase an awareness of the hazards of leaving dog defecation and my objective was to reduce the amount of dog droppings left on the trail, I needed a way to determine if I was meeting my objective. At the beginning of each month, flags would be removed or replaced by each new pile of droppings and counted. Any feces would be removed and weighed. Results would be recorded and graphed, then posted on the sign so visitors would feel good about the progress. A monthly report would be generated on the progress. Operations, interpretive staff and volunteers would log their time spent on the project to get an idea of what the cost was to the agency.

We are just entering Phase 2 of this project currently. I hope you get some idea to use the **Scoop on Poop** project in your park. Please share what works and doesn't work for you on the PRAC user group. I will let you know when the signs are posted at the trailhead and work with staff to keep you updated. Getting the **Scoop on Poop** can help you to create a healthier, more beautiful and more fragrant experience for your park visitors.

References:

www.stormwatercenter.net/Pollution_Prevention/Factsheet

www.purelypets.com/healthalert/creekpollution.htm

www.coastkeeper.org/pollution_sources.htm

www.usatoday.com/news/science/2002-06-07-dog-usat.htm

Updates

By Lee Hickinbotham Jr.

Conference

Well, as usual I am excited. I am bursting with joy thinking of the free breakfast. I am falling down with sheer image of the free drinks that will be offered during happy hour and I am excited that all of this is included in the room rates of just \$119 a night. Most of all I am filled with enthusiasm that the 2003 PRAC conference is just about here.

Everything is in place and we are ready to go. I have even put in an order for snow leading up to the conference then glorious sunshine the week of the conference. If you have not signed up yet, don't worry. We will be accepting registration leading up to the day of the conference, however it would be more economical to sign up now. Also be sure to call the Embassy Suites and reserve a room at the special rate of \$119 a night. That wonderful price includes free breakfast each day and free, yes free, drinks during happy hour.

As promised, we will be offering PRAC learning domains that will help you achieve the steps in becoming a PRAC *Certified Generalist Ranger*. So start reviewing the program of sessions to see which suits your needs.

Standards and Training

We are now, after 3 years of planning, meeting, organizing and now accepting documentation for the PRAC *Certified Generalist Ranger Certificate*. A review committee made up of members will meet each quarter to review all submitted information. We ask that you send only copies of your documentation. We will not return any documents after they have been submitted. After the committee reviews the information they will mail out certificates for each domain in which the candidates have met the minimum qualifications. After meeting all domains, the final certificate stating that you are a "PRAC *Certified Generalist Ranger*" will be presented once a year at the conference. If you are interested in being on the review committee please contact me at <lee_hickinbothamjr@yahoo.com>.

I look forward to seeing all of you at the conference.

You can send your information to Park Rangers Association of California P.O. Box 153, Stewarts Point, CA 95480.

www.orangecounty.net/html/biz_articles2.htm

www.DirtyWork.org

www.entre-manure.com

If you write to The Dog's Best Friend at: 3463 State St. #279, Santa Barbara, CA 93105-2603, they will send you five posters that encourage dog walkers to bag and remove their waste for free (donations are welcome, of course).

The Art of Stealth, Part 2; Stakeouts

By John Havicon

Now let's look at another scenario. You are receiving a series of visitor complaints of an area about an ongoing violation. You would like to catch the perpetrators but random patrol is just not working. Your superiors tell you to stake the area out and catch the suspect in the act. You stakeout the area for days and nothing happens. The day you give up the stakeout is, of course, the day the bad guy returns. I have been on several of these with my department and have had some luck and some disappointments. Stakeouts tend to be a last resort effort to solving a problem. They can take a long time, can be boring and uncomfortable. You may have to stand still for long periods of time, in extreme temperatures and to make matters worse, you are now the perfect victim of biting and stinging insects. The following are some thoughts that have helped me develop better stakeouts. I have found that a little planning definitely increases the chances of a successful stakeout.

Gather information

- Review all connected reports to the incident or crime. Look at what makes each crime similar to the others.
- Interview witnesses about specifics. Suspect descriptions; vehicle descriptions; entrance and exit points, time of day; which days are the incidents are occurring.
- Look at the evidence collected. Types of property damaged or missing; How the damage occurred; What tools were used.

Develop a plan

- Walk the crime scene. Think about what makes this area so vulnerable to the crime. How traffic flows through the scene.

How the victims arrive and from what direction.

How do the suspects arrive and from what direction,
How do suspects exit?

- Plan your stakeout location.

Check possible locations for you to observe without being seen, (by the suspect and other park users). Walk in your target area and look back at your hide-out location. Is the bad guy going to see you?

Where can you park your vehicle without it standing out. Can you get to it quickly?

Try to find a location that you can observe the elements of the crime.

Try to make your area as comfortable as possible, Those umbrella chairs work pretty good, but be careful of bright colors.

Plan ahead on what you are going to do if you see the violation. Are you going to confront the violator or call for additional help.

While staking out:

- Arrive at least 1/2 hour prior to the time the incidents are occurring.
- Use the bathroom prior to staking out. It's inevitable, 20 minutes of stakeout and you gotta go.
- Let your dispatcher, other rangers, and park staff know of your stakeout. It's frustrating to almost catch someone, when a maintenance vehicle comes flying in and starts to empty the trash.
- Contact other local law enforcement and let them know what you are doing. You may need them later.
- Try to minimize movement. Remember the bad guys are looking for you too.
- Wear clothing for the situation, Stay warm and comfortable. Ranger uniforms do a good job of natural camouflage. Sunglasses, shiny badges and the lenses of binoculars cause reflections that can make you stand out like a sore thumb.
- Resist the temptation of enforcing other violations. Your going to see leash law violations, litterbugs, bike riding in restricted areas and other minor violations. If you go after them, you blow your cover and distract you from your stakeout. Your target area should not be perfect. If the bad guy sees all the dogs leashed up, it looks unnatural and he may learn something is up.
- Document everything you see. Write down descriptions of persons and vehicles, license plates and the times that you see them.
- If a park user spots you, put your non-verbal communication skills to work. Let them see that you are watching something. Pull out your binoculars and look. It is okay to acknowledge them by a light hand wave or a tip of your head but get back to your work. Most figure out that you are observing something and don't want to be disturbed. If they blow your cover or "rat you out," you probably will have to break down you surveillance and try another time and location.
- Watch for suspicious persons or events:
 - Persons loitering around the premises.
 - Automobiles that drive by the establishment slowly and frequently.
 - Persons wearing inappropriate, out-of-season clothing such as overcoats, raincoats and ski caps.
 - Suspicious persons carrying shopping bags, duffel bags or coats.

A Book to Report On

By Lee Hickinbotham Jr.

Spring is in the air. The flowers are blooming, the sun is shining and the economy is still in a deficit. The gas prices are up, the stock market is down and a lot of people are still looking for jobs. I know what most of you are thinking right now and no, I am not trying to bring you down. I am facing reality. However there is always a silver lining in every cloud.

If you are like me, your idea of going on vacation is going to a park in another city or state. That is how my family and I recreate. However, not all of you are like me unless you shave your head and drive a 1970 VW bus, but that's a whole different story. If you don't spend your vacation or days off in other parks, let me suggest a book to help you and your families find a fun place to recreate.

The book is titled "*Fun with the Family*." It is written by Karen Misuraca and costs around \$14.00. This book offers information on "family-friendly fun" in both Northern and Southern California. It offers fun places to visit from parks to bowling allies. It also lists hotels and restaurants that are inexpensive and kid friendly. It has something to do for just about anyone. Don't let the title fool you. This book is not only for families. There are also fun and exciting things to do for the single adult.

So take the time to read and enjoy the book but most of all don't let the economy get you down. Go out and have some fun.

More Dumpster Talk By Don Pearson

I read Ken Miller's article in last month's signpost titled "Dumpsters Corner" and how "Dumpsters Corner" may have caught someone dumping illegally at his park. This is nothing new to us who operate parks, but Ken is right! We seldom catch the culprit in the act of committing the crime. With the increase in garbage disposal fees this unwanted park activity will increase causing park professionals yet another headache to deal with.

At our facility, Sly Park Recreation Area we have witnessed the building of a new home through the unwanted building supplies that were deposited in our dumpsters over a six month period. From foundation blocks, to sheet rock, to roofing materials each morning gave us a new stage of the construction. After awhile staff hoped that an open house invitation might appear, after all we had played a very important part in the construction of this home. Although this person has never caught in the act, park staff has come up with an innovative way to get back at those who use our dumpsters for household garbage.

We have developed a packet that includes; a form letter humiliating their actions and a handful of personal garbage taken from the dumpsters; which has information on it (including their address); which is then mailed back to them. We're not sure just how effective this action is in curtailing this activity however; it has given staff great satisfaction knowing that the culprit has been given back some of their garbage courtesy of the U.S. mail. If any of you out there have found a successful way of dealing with this problem I am, sure Ken as well as I would like they are from you.

Thankyou PRAC!

After serving several years in the US Army followed by employment in the private sector, I have finally found a career that I love. To work in nature is an awesome experience. Those who are in this field already know that.

I am currently a student at West Valley College in Saratoga, CA. I am working on my Associates degree in Park Management. I started the program in August 2001. I truly enjoy this program and what it has to offer to students who want to become park rangers and land stewards, students need to have phenomenal instructors and an excellent program. There are both in this school.

This school is extremely fortunate to have Kim Aufhauser and Christopher Cruz. Both of them were National Park Rangers. They teach through experience and knowledge and encourages the students to strive for and achieve great goals. The students in this program are extremely fortunate to have this caliber of instructors along with other great instructors in the park management program.

Park rangers and land stewards benefit from having PRAC. The Association gives its members the opportunity to learn and exchange knowledge and techniques. I am grateful to receive the PRAC Academic Scholarship for 2002. I consider it a blessing and will use these funds to further my educational goals.

Thank you PRAC for the good work you are doing and for the opportunity your scholarship will give me.

Sincerely,

James J. Oliveri

**Park Rangers Association of California
Board Officers 2003**

President

Mike Chiesa
(707) 847-3245
FAX: (707) 847-3325
E-Mail: president@CalRanger.org

Region 1 Director

Denise Edwards
(707) 847-3245
FAX: (707) 847-3325
E-Mail: region1@CalRanger.org

Region 2 Director

Lee Hickinbotham Jr.
(650) 617-3156 EXT. 1633
FAX: (650) 858-2659
E-Mail: region2@CalRanger.org

Region 3 Director

Don Pearson
(530) 644-2545 EXT. 307
FAX: (530) 644-1003
E-Mail: region3@CalRanger.org

Region 4 Director

Walt Young
(310) 858-7272 EXT. 102
FAX: (310) 858-7212
E-Mail: region4@CalRanger.org

Region 5 Director

Don Web
(760) 244-1007
FAX: (760) 244-2744
E-Mail: region5@CalRanger.org

Past President

John Havicon
(916) 875-6672
FAX: (916) 875-6632
E-Mail: pastpres@CalRanger.org

The Signpost Editor

David Brooks
(831) 336-2948
FAX: (831) 335-1178
E-Mail: newsletter@CalRanger.org

Scholarship

Bill Hendricks
(805) 756-1246
FAX: (805) 756-1402

Executive Manager

Todd Kellog
Office: (707) 847-3077
FAX: (707) 847-3077
E-Mail: execmanager@CalRanger.org

WebMaster: Jeff Price

(805) 278-9201
E-Mail: webmaster@CalRanger.org

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Park Rangers Association of California
P O Box 153
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Park Rangers Association of California
P. O. Box 153
STEWARTS POINT, CA 95480-0153

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