



THE SIGNPOST

Fourth Quarter 2023

President's Message:

It's hard to believe that 2023 is nearly over. Our conference in Oxnard is just around the corner, March 4-7th, 2024. Learn more about in in Director Norma Saldana's article in this issue. We've also included the conference registration form in this issue.

Here's the link to Courtyard by Marriott reservations: To get the reduced \$145 rate (King) or \$155 (2 Queens)

Click here to book: <https://bit.ly/parkrangersassociation>

Our election is coming up too, if you are a voting member look for your electronic ballot in early December. I will be running for re-election for President. Having served as president since 2016 I've decided if re-elected it will be my final term in office. As my time as president members I have accomplished the goals I set out to do such as updating our Ranger Certification Program, updating our Ranger Directory, modernizing The Signpost and allowing PRAC to be flexible for challenging times. My final goal is to build the next generation of park rangers and to hand over the reins to them.

President,
Matt Cerkel



2024 California Parks Training Conference

Norma Saldana, Southern California Regional Director 2

Your PRAC Directors are excited to announce “Inspiration through Unity” for the 2024 PRAC Conference. **The Conference will take place in Oxnard, March 4-7, 2024 at the Marriott Courtyard.** The nightly room rate will be starting at \$145. To book your reservation, visit <https://bit.ly/parkrangersassociation>. We are continuing to work on compiling a list of speakers and topics on one of three tracks: Resource Management, Public Safety, and Interpretation. A few of the topics include:

- Verbal Judo De-escalation
- Tactical Communication
- Missing Person / Suspicious Activity Reporting Systems (SARS)
- Coastal Issues and Marine Protected Areas (MPAs)
- Rattlesnake Identification and Safety
- Legal Liability in Parks

Approximately 30 classes are offered. Additionally, the conference will include presentations from Ventura County Sheriff's Department. They are one of the main sponsors who will supply speakers and a special training on Monday afternoon, March 4 on Public Safety. The presentation on Monday afternoon will demonstrate different types of accelerants and how to handle them.

If your organization has individuals who would like to present a topic, please let our committee know.

PRAC 2024 Conference Committee:
Candice Huber candi@calranger.org
Norma Saldana norma@calranger.org
Richard Weiner richard@calranger.org





Call for Award Nominations **Mike Warner, Northern California Regional Director 2**



Please submit any nominations for Medal of Valor, Medal of Honor, or Life Saving Medal to Mike Warner at michael.warner@cityofpaloalto.org and Matt Cerkel at matt@calranger.org by January 15th, 2024 so that the nominees may be honored at the Training Conference in March.

For those that may not be aware, the committee meets once a year (except in the case of a lockdown or pandemic) to review applications submitted by fellow Rangers. Nominations must be submitted to the Award Review Committee no later than January 1 of each year.

The nominee must be a park professional, employed by any California, Nevada, Oregon or Washington municipal, county, state, regional or federal park agency, open space district or special park district. The nominee is not required to be a member of the Park Rangers Association of California or the California State Park Rangers Association.

The Awards

Medal of Valor

Valor is defined as "performing an act above and beyond the call of duty; and, exhibiting exceptional courage, extraordinary decisiveness and remarkable presence of mind, with unusual swiftness of action, without regard for personal safety, in an attempt to save or protect human life."

Public safety personnel are routinely charged with handling emergency situations



and may be called upon at any time to put their own personal safety at risk. Park Rangers and other park professionals fight wild land fires, conduct search and rescue operations, apprehend criminals, provide emergency medical services, and perform other duties to ensure the safety and welfare of the public they serve.

Periodically, park professionals will face emergency situations that are so extreme that they not only jeopardize their personal safety but risk their own lives. There is nothing more precious than human life, and there is nothing more noble than saving human life.

The Park Rangers Association of California Medal of Valor may be presented to any park professional who risks his or her own life to an extraordinary degree in saving or attempting to save the life of another person or sacrifices him or herself in a heroic manner for the benefit of others.

This award recognizes the recipient's demonstration of unusual courage involving a high degree of personal risk in the face of danger. The heroic act does not have to be related to the recipient's official duties nor occur at their official duty station.

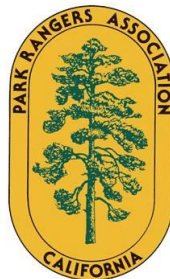
Award of Honor

The Award of Honor may be presented by the Association to individuals whose actions are admirable or heroic, but do not rise to the level required for the Medal of Valor.

Life Saving Award

The Life Saving Award may be presented by the Association to individuals whose actions are an exceptional act under emergency conditions, not involving bravery, wherein a service is rendered that results directly in sustaining a human life.

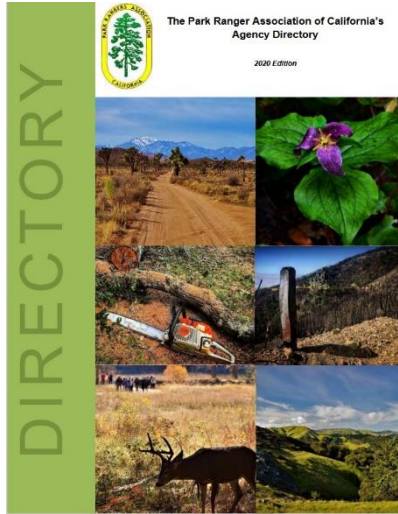
To nominate one of your colleagues, please go to <https://www.calranger.org/honors.html>





Help with updating the Ranger Directory for 2024

Mike Warner, Northern California Regional Director 2



We are in the process of starting the update to the Ranger Directory that came out in 2020. If you have not already done so, please contact Mike Warner at michael.warner@cityofpaloalto.org if you see information needing to be corrected or to add a new agency.

Fraser, the Forest Ranger: A Book Review

Jennifer Molidor, Signpost Editor

“Fraser loved living alone in the forest, but what he realized he was missing was a friend.”

A new book, “Fraser, The Forest Ranger” by Matthew Schufman, is a good fit for the Forest Ranger in your life (also a holiday gift for the kids in your life). Fraser is a Forest Ranger, living deep in the woods on a hill called Pine Peak. Although he enjoys checking on the trees and the animals in the forest, he begins to grow lonely.

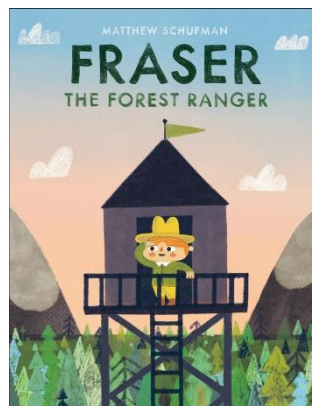
He travels in search of a friend, through city neighborhoods, a zoo, and a beach, but finds only greater loneliness. It’s only when he returns to the woods and finds a



friend in a fellow ranger that he feels at ease again.

This picture book is a great way to talk to children about life as a forest ranger, and encourage a love of nature, especially for those who aspire to be a ranger someday. With adorable illustrations and easy to follow sentences, it's sure to be a hit for kids, as it was for my son (age 5), who wanted it read to him three times in a row. It's most suited for children ages 3-8 years old. You can find copies at your nearest bookseller and online at every major outlet.

Matthew Schufman is an illustrator, art educator and musician who loves hiking and camping.



Under the Flat Hat

Matt Cerkel, President





Recently, my wife and I were channel surfing, and we briefly watched a low-quality film, with an officer making a vehicle stop on a car full of very young adults. I noticed the officer was missing his badge. As the scene continued, the officer released the vehicle and they discussed how the “ranger” had stopped them and “wasn’t law enforcement.” My wife and I looked at each other and shook our heads. It shouldn’t have been a surprise because nearly all depictions of park rangers in entertainment perpetuate the myth that park rangers aren’t law enforcement.

Myths like these suggest park rangers aren’t really law enforcement and the law enforcement role is something new. The National Park Service perpetuates this myth and so do many other park agencies. I recently had contact with park visitors where I stopped them for a violation of park rules. One of the visitors repeatedly stated I didn’t have the authority to stop and detain them. I was able to eventually gain compliance, but it is a problem many rangers face.

It certainly doesn’t help that in California there has been a law on the books, Public Resources Code section 4022, that requires ANY ranger program in California established after January 1, 1990, to appoint their rangers as peace officers. Unfortunately, no enforcement mechanism or agency to oversee this law was established and it is routinely violated with no repercussions.

This all ties in nicely with the new edition of Paul D. Berkowitz’s “U.S. Rangers The Law of the Land.” Paul is the expert on the history of law enforcement within federal land management



agencies and he presented at our 2020 conference in Reno. In the next *Signpost*, I will give a full review of the book, but right now it's his introduction that grabbed my attention:

“Ranger. Few titles of office and authority are so confusing to the American public.

Among the first recorded references to the term "ranger" is found in the old English Rolls of Parliament, dated 1455. This usage referred to a royal forest officer or gamekeeper appointed by the King to patrol the royal forests and prevent trespassing and poaching...

The contemporary soldier may think of the Airborne Rangers of the U.S. Army; that elite and highly trained group of warriors, expert in the use of modern personal armaments and filtration behind enemy lines.

For others, the term ranger may bring to mind the uniformed guardians of our parks and forestlands. Still, most people would probably not even consider that there is a difference between a park ranger and a forest ranger, not to mention rangers now working for the Bureau of Land Management. And few people would be able to tell you just what job these rangers really perform, unclear as to whether they are some sort of police officers or just overgrown boy and girl scouts leading nature walks and sing-a-longs around a campfire. Worse yet and adding to the confusion are the embarrassing images created for children watching Saturday morning cartoons, as they see fat little men with warbly voices, in funny green uniforms and hats, scolding bears and tourists for their misdeeds.



The federal land management agencies have, themselves, contributed to this confusion, none more so than the NPS. In addition to deliberately downplaying and even concealing the levels of crime that occurs in parks and the levels of violence that U.S. Rangers have experienced in combating that crime, NPS policy crafted on September 29, 1987, actually declared that

The Service would expect all uniformed personnel to use the working title of "Park Ranger" even if their official classification title is in some other series. This allows the Service to maintain a common public stance vis-a-vis the uniform but still take advantage of the built-in flexibilities of the entire Civil Service Classification System in establishing and managing our positions and personnel.

And so, from clerical staff to maintenance personnel, scientists, and resource managers to interpreters (e.g., "naturalists," historians, etc.), the NPS considers all of its employees to be "rangers," without distinction.

Not surprisingly, this leaves the public confused as to where to turn for help in a law enforcement situation, while simultaneously exposing law enforcement officers -i.e., U.S. Park Rangers - to challenges about their actual authority. It has also on more than one occasion left non-law enforcement personnel exposed to violent attack. This sort of confusion was one of the reasons the USFS in the 1980s abandoned the title of "ranger" for its law enforcement personnel, instead choosing to



identify them simply and more plainly as "law enforcement officers," or "LEOs," with their own distinctive uniform, patch, and vehicle markings.

Turning to Webster's Dictionary, the confusion is only perpetuated, as the following definitions are provided: "l a: the keeper of a British royal park or forest b: FOREST RANGER 2: One that ranges 3 a: one of a body or organized men who range over a region esp. to enforce the law b: a soldier specially trained in close-range fighting and in raiding tactics."

This book is about the very real rangers of America's federal land management agencies. More specifically, it is about the federal law enforcement officers generally known as "rangers" who work for the National Park Service, the U.S. Forest Service and, more recently, the Bureau of Land Management. Also discussed in Chapters 1 and 7 are refuge officers and special agents of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Also discussed in Chapters 1 and 7 are refuge officers and special agents of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. It is about their history and evolution; their authority and jurisdiction; their firearms, holsters, and other defensive equipment; and it is about their frequent but little-recognized exploits in the dangerous and sometimes violent and deadly world of enforcing the law on our public lands.

Sub-titled "The History of Law Enforcement in The Federal Land Management Agencies," this book is an attempt to explain how the today's U.S. Rangers are in many respects a blend and product of the various real images related above. Starting out as scouts or soldiers for the U.S. Cavalry on the



western frontier, many of these army troops and scouts stayed on as civilians with the newly formed Department of the Interior (DOI) that took over the responsibility for protecting and patrolling the vast wilderness jewels of the American West. Others had backgrounds as cowboys or mountain men, drawn to the pay and stability of a government job. Later, the responsibility for managing nation's public lands was split up between several distinct agencies respectively under the administration of the Department of the Interior and the Department of Agriculture. Some of these same first rangers, in fact, at other times and places, wore the badges of other law enforcement agencies in the newly settled western United States.

From those early times to the present, a lot of things have changed. Politics led to the establishment of various bureaus within the two departments. Uniforms changed and became more formalized. Motorized cars replaced most of the horses. America, itself, changed, as the nation's population exploded and life became far more complicated. And America's public lands changed right along with it all, as the parks, forests, and other public areas and resources became ever more heavily impacted by the literally hundreds of millions of people that visited them, settled on them, used them, abused them, and just came to see and wonder at them. And like the rest of American society, among the people who come to see and use the nation's public lands are both law-abiding citizens and criminals.

Through it all, it has been the rangers of the various land management agencies who have borne the responsibility for protecting both the lands themselves, as well as the people who



come to visit and use these areas. It is this dual people and resource protection role, performed by individual or small groups of self-sufficient law enforcement officers, who "range" over vast tracts of public lands and the communities therein, that defines and distinguishes the rangers of the federal land management agencies.

I recall very early in my career viewing a large, hand-carved wooden sign prominently displayed on a wall at the South Rim Ranger Station at Grand Canyon National Park. The words eloquently and simply described the duties of the rangers:

*To protect the Park from the People.
To protect the People from the Park.
To protect the People from the People.*

These same things can accurately be said about the U.S. Rangers who patrol and enforce the laws in most of America's public lands, today.

*It is my hope that this book will help others more fully understand and appreciate the usually unrecognized, often violent, and dangerous, and sometimes deadly work performed by the men and women who assume these duties as U.S. Rangers, *The Law of The Land.*"*

Much of the introduction could also apply to park rangers at all levels across California and Nevada. We face the same problems and face the same confusion on what a ranger is and what type of authority they have. I don't have an answer for the problem and how to address the myths around rangers and their roles in



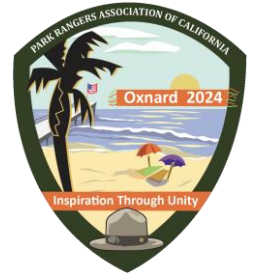
protecting our parks and open spaces. But knowing the actual history of the ranger profession is a good place to start.

Look for my full review in the 1st quarter of 2024 issue of *the Signpost*.

If you wish to get a copy of “U.S. Rangers: The Law of the Land” you can find it here.

<https://www.amazon.com/dp/BoCDJWZWWP>

We will also have a copy as a raffle prize at the 2024 California Parks Training Conference.



2024 Parks Training Conference Registration

March 4 - March 7, 2024, Ventura Courtyard by Marriot

Name: _____ Guest Name (i.e., spouse): _____
 Membership Status: CSPRA ___ PRAC ___ Student, ___ Retired, ___ None
 Street Address: _____
 City _____ State ___ Zip _____
 Telephone Home: _____ Work: _____, Ext. _____
 E-mail Address: _____ Agency/College/Business: _____

___ I am a Conference Vendor/Exhibitor/Presenter

Advance Conference Apparel Orders:

Crew neck T-Shirt (\$20 each) ___ M ___ L ___ XL ___ XXL
 Free T-shirt included with paid early registrations before Feb 5th
 Apparel Total (Carry to Grand Total back page): \$_____

If you have raffle items, please contact CPTC@calranger.org

Courtyard by Marriott reservations: To get the reduced \$145 rate (King) or \$155 (2 Queens)

Click here to book your room: <https://bit.ly/parkrangersassociation>

Complete both pages of Registration Form

Please send Check or pay via Credit Card/PayPal, and mail this form to
PRAC-CPTC, PO Box 448, Fairfax, CA 94978

Or

Email it to cptc@calranger.org

Although meals are included with Full Registration, I will not be attending
Tuesday Lunch ____, Wednesday Lunch ____. My meal ticket may be given to volunteers

REGISTRATION FEES

Member Full Registration - (Lunch on Tues/Wed & Dinner Wed)	\$300	\$ _____
Non-Member Full Registration - (Lunch on Tues/Wed & Dinner Wed night)	\$350**	\$ _____
Student Full Registration - (Lunch on Tues/Wed & Dinner Wed night)	\$250	\$ _____
Retired Member or Spouses Full Registration - (Lunch on Tues/Wed & Dinner Wed night)	\$250	\$ _____
Single Day Registration (CHECK DAY: Tue ___ Wed ___)	\$175/day	\$ _____
Single Day Full Time Student (CHECK DAY: Tue ___ Wed ___) Lunch Included	\$50/day	\$ _____
Single Day Retired, Guest or Student (CHECK DAY: Tue ___ Wed ___) Lunch Included	\$50/day	\$ _____
Registration Total (Carry to Grand Total back page):		\$ _____

Conference Refund Policy: Prior to Feb 2nd: 100%, After Feb 9th \$50 service fee, After Feb 23rd: No Refunds

** Non-member registration includes 1 free year of PRAC membership, a \$50 value.



Activities/meals noted with * are included with Full Registration. Do not include these fees in the total amount.

MONDAY ACTIVITIES

Monday offsite Activities are included with Full Registration.

Reception (no-host bar)	Free
Ventura County Sheriff's Department Bomb Squad Demonstration	Free

TUESDAY ACTIVITIES

*Lunch Buffet (included in full registration):

Single day registrant fee \$30

Total: \$_____

WEDNESDAY ACTIVITIES

*Lunch Buffet (Included with Full Reg.) Single day registrants may add on \$30 \$_____

*Evening Banquet (Single day registrants may add on \$50) \$_____

THURSDAY ACTIVITIES

King Gillette Ranch, Mountains Recreation & Conservation Authority Free

Activities Total \$_____

Calculate Grand Total:

Basic Registration & Daily Activities (from other side) \$_____

Conference Merchandise (from other side) \$_____

Daily Activities (from above) \$_____

Late Registration Fee - After February 1st, Members & Non-members, add \$40

Late Registration Fee After February 1st, Students, add \$25

Training Conference 2024 Grand Total: \$_____

Method of Payment:

By Check make check out to PRAC-CPTC and mail to:

PRAC-CPTC

PO Box 448

Fairfax CA, 94978

Credit Card:

https://paypal.me/PRACParksConference?country.x=US&locale.x=en_US

OR



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Secretary/Treasurer, Richard Weiner

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Director 2, Kyle Roberson

Chief Ranger, Cosumnes Parks & Recreation Department (916) 247-0279

Southern California Region

Director 3, Richard Weiner

Park Ranger, City of Claremont Parks (909) 952-1520

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Thanks for reading! Please let us know if you have ideas for what you would like to see in future issues of *The Signpost*.