

*Serving the Park Law Enforcement Community for over 26 Years*

## NEWSLETTER

**by D. Fred McCormick, Incoming PLEA President**

Fred McCormick





## Ever wondered what happens at a PLEA Conference?

Here is a letter from Officer Dan Olszewski and his experiences with attending the PLEA 29th Annual Conference and Trade Show in Cleveland, Ohio. Make your plans to attend the 30th Annual PLEA Conference and Trade Show next March in St. Louis. More details are on the next page, and will be on our website as it becomes available. You will be glad you did!

### THE PLEA CONFERENCE FROM A NEW OFFICER'S PERSPECTIVE

Earlier this May, I attended the 29th annual PLEA (Park Law Enforcement Association) conference and trade show in Cleveland, Ohio. PLEA is the only National Park Law Enforcement Association of its kind and offers an assorted perspective on all things conservation.

For example, PLEA brings together Chiefs, Lieutenants, Sergeants, other supervisors, and even front line Officers, like me, from around the Country to meet and discuss issues concerning their parks and departments. Having served only one year, I felt very privileged to sit in, listen, and learn from the many veteran Officers.

Throughout the conference, I spoke with many Officers who had over fifteen years or more of Park Law Enforcement experience. They not only explained how they handled problems and issues in their parks, but they also gave me advice on ways we could solve problems in our own preserves.

In addition, I learned about new illegal drugs that are surfacing and Internet crimes against children. We have been fortunate enough not to have come across any of these problems, but they are important issues that we must address and work towards preventing.

Attending the PLEA conference allowed me to gain invaluable information on many different topics. Learning from and following the various Officers insights and preventive strategies will help keep preserve visitors, employees, and the preserves safe.

I am extremely thankful for being given the opportunity to attend PLEA. It has made me a more knowledgeable, aware, and confident Officer. I look forward to applying my knowledge and sharing it with other Will County Forest Preserve Officers.

*Officer, Dan Olszewski*  
*Forest Preserve District of Will County*

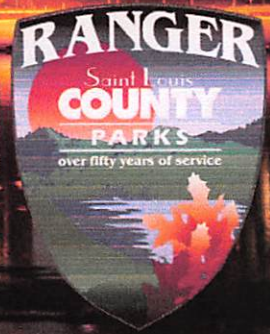


# PLEA 2009 CONFERENCE



## 30th ANNUAL PLEA CONFERENCE & TRADE SHOW St. Louis, Mo. March 23-27, 2009

**KEYNOTE SPEAKER:**  
Dave "Buck Savage" Smith



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## Man In Custody For Allegedly Throwing Rock At Park Ranger

POSTED: 6:06 am PST February 19, 2008

UPDATED: 11:20 pm PST February 19, 2008

SAN DIEGO -- A 36-year-old man was in custody for allegedly throwing a rock at a park ranger at Chollas Lake in Oak Park and trying to run her and a citizen over with his car when they tried to apprehend him.

John Rodriguez was booked on suspicion of assault with a deadly weapon, said San Diego Sgt. Bob Dare.

The incident at 6350 College Grove Drive began around 4 p.m. on Monday when a Chollas Lake park ranger approached Rodriguez because his pit bull was unleashed and running free, he said.

Rodriguez threw a rock at the ranger, who pepper-sprayed him, Dare said. He then got into his car and tried to run over the ranger and a citizen who had stopped to assist her, he said.

A short time later, police received reports that an upset man had punched a parked truck with his fist in the 3700 block of Aragon Drive near Waite Drive, Dare said. On arrival, officers detained the suspect, whom witnesses later identified as the same man who had attacked the park ranger, he said.

## Ginseng poaching makes plant even rarer

Published: Feb 17, 2008 12:30 AM

Modified: Feb 17, 2008 02:04 AM

The Associated Press

BRYSON CITY - Park rangers hope recent jail sentences handed to two men convicted of poaching ginseng in the Great Smoky Mountains National Park will help protect the highly valued root.

Norman D. McCoy, 50, of Cherokee, and Nicholas B. Bryson, 27, of Topton, pleaded guilty to the poaching charges. McCoy was sentenced to 20 days in jail and fined \$125 for possessing 18 wild ginseng roots, and Bryson was sentenced to 15 days in jail and fined \$135 for possessing 77 roots, according to park spokeswoman Nancy Gray.

The men were apprehended on the North Carolina side of the park in separate incidents in October. They were convicted and sentenced last month in federal court in Bryson City.

Gray said illegal harvesting of plants is a serious problem in the park, particularly ginseng, a favorite target of poachers for its high profit margin on the black market. Its roots

have been an ingredient in traditional Chinese medicine for thousands of years.

"Ginseng is now becoming rare in the wild, even in the Smokies, where ginseng collection has been prohibited for almost three quarters of a century," Chief Ranger Bill Wright said in a National Park Service news release.

Coupled with ginseng's growing popularity in the United States and other countries for its medicinal values, illegal harvesting has increased over the years and has put pressure on the plant's survival.

In the international and domestic legal trade market, wild ginseng can bring \$500 to \$800 per pound of dried roots. The larger and older the root, the more profitable it is.

Wright said many areas that used to sustain stands of wild ginseng have been harvested to the point that the more mature plants that would normally reseed the populations are no longer present, and the younger plants are not mature enough to reseed.

"As human demands increase on this species, extinction of wild populations throughout its entire range becomes a real possibility," he said. "The protection of these resources becomes even more critical."

## Meeting To Focus On Ranger Revival

By CARL ORTH, The Suncoast News

Published: February 17, 2008

NEW PORT RICHEY - After an abrupt end to its park ranger program in November, the Pasco County Parks and Recreation Department hopes to revive the volunteer patrols.

Would-be rangers can attend a meeting March 4, said Rick Buckman, the county parks and recreation director. The meeting will take place at 6:30 p.m. at Jay B. Starkey Wilderness Park Environmental Education Center, 10500 Wilderness Park Blvd.

"We will be discussing the community's interest in various potential ranger programs and look at ways we might make this happen," Buckman said.

A few of the 14 original rangers never quit or have returned to assist the department, Buckman said.

"These folks either still had their uniforms or asked for them back, and they are reporting directly to the supervisors of the parks they are patrolling, such as Anclote River Park and the other coastal parks, Jay B. Starkey Wilderness Park and Crews Lake Park," Buckman wrote in a Feb. 11 e-mail.

continued on next page



# RANGER NEWS

The revamped ranger program might focus more on education, public relations and basic patrol, according to Buckman.

The department's volunteer coordinator, Vinny Buscetta, has retired since the end of the earlier ranger program, complicating the task of reorganizing it.

At the March 4 meeting, "We will need to give some thought as to how we will coordinate this program within our department," Buckman said. The former ranger chief, Paul Van Schaick, said he intends to be at next month's meeting.

"Basically I wish them luck and having as good a program as we had," Van Schaick said last week. "It would be great for the community."

But Van Schaick, who has started a government watchdog Web site since ending the ranger program, shared doubts about its revival prospects.

"They county officials never wanted a ranger program in the first place," Van Schaick said. "What they wanted is people in T-shirts giving out directions. That's not a ranger program."

The original mission included providing some measure of safety and protection for park visitors, said Van Schaick, a former Massachusetts State Police officer.

## **Parks' gun ban under fire**

By Michael Collins (Contact)  
Saturday, February 9, 2008

WASHINGTON - Don Barger looks at the current ban on loaded guns in national parks as a perfectly sensible way to keep public lands as the safe, scenic treasures they were intended to be.

"You're not taking anybody's guns away from them, and people can transport guns through a park," Barger, head of a national parks advocacy group, said of the federal rule that has been in place for more than a quarter-century. "All it does is impose a very reasonable regulation that they be unloaded and stored while they are in the park."

But gun-rights advocates in Congress are pushing to overturn the federal ban, arguing that it's confusing and often results in otherwise law-abiding citizens getting charged with a crime for simply transporting or carrying a loaded weapon.

"I believe these provisions infringe on the rights of law-abiding gun owners and that states should have the right to set and enforce their own laws," said U.S. Sen. Bob Corker, R-Tenn., who favors lifting the ban.

Corker was one of 47 senators who signed a letter to Interior Secretary Dirk Kempthorne last December asking the government to repeal the ban. Thirty-nine of the senators who signed the letter were Republicans; eight were Democrats.

U.S. Sen. Tom Coburn, R-Okla., also is pushing legislation that would rescind the ban and allow state laws to govern whether loaded weapons should be permitted in national parks. Coburn's legislation is in the form of an amendment to a broader federal lands bill. It had been expected to come to the Senate floor for a vote next week, but its future was in question late Friday because of a disagreement between Coburn and Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid.

The federal gun regulation, put in place by the Reagan administration in 1983, doesn't outright prohibit firearms in national parks. It does, however, require that guns be unloaded and stored in the trunk of a car or some other place where they are not readily accessible. The regulation also applies to lands managed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, but not to national parks in which hunting is permitted.

Regardless, Coburn and others say the restrictions against loaded weapons are unnecessary, violate the Second Amendment, leave park visitors unable to protect themselves and put park rangers at risk of assault or other crimes.

What's more, many states allow gun owners to carry concealed weapons with a permit. Those laws vary from one state to another, however, and the federal ban on loaded weapons in national parks just adds to the confusion, said Andrew Arulanandam, a spokesman for the National Rifle Association.

"Right now there is a patchwork of gun laws," Arulanandam said. "Within a state, you will have laws and policies governing different lands. And I think it is prudent to have one standard policy across a state."

Supporters of the loaded-gun ban say there would be even more confusion if Congress rescinds the federal rule.

Many federal parks, including the Great Smoky Mountains National Park, straddle more than one state. If there is no federal regulation in place, gun owners could find themselves subject to different laws depending on where they are in the park.

"It's like which side of the Appalachian Trail are you standing on?" said Barger, the Knoxville-based southeast regional director of the National Parks Conservation Association. "One gun law applies over here, and one gun law applies over there."

*continued*



# RANGER NEWS

*continued*

Tennessee and North Carolina both allow gun owners to carry concealed weapons with a permit. Neither allows concealed weapons in state parks, except in areas where hunting is permitted. A bill pending in the Tennessee legislature, however, would allow concealed weapons in state parks.

The Great Smoky Mountains National Park sits in both states, so it's unclear what impact lifting the federal ban would have on the park. Coburn's amendment would mean that state gun laws would apply to national parks if the federal ban were lifted.

But it's questionable whether Tennessee's and North Carolina's bans on concealed weapons in state parks could be extended to a federal park like the Smokies, said Laura Loomis, deputy vice president for government affairs for the National Parks Conservation Association's office in Washington.

It's possible, she said, that state parks in Tennessee and North Carolina could end up under tougher gun-control regulations than the Smokies.

Lifting the federal ban also would increase the possibility of deadly conflicts between competing park users, such as bikers and hikers, and would make it harder to protect treasured icons like Mount Rushmore or Cape Canaveral against terrorism, Loomis said.

The ban also has been an effective weapon against poaching and drug dealing in national parks, Loomis said. If it's lifted, poaching would likely increase, and the number of charges that can be brought against drug dealers will be considerably reduced, she said.

The Great Smoky Mountains National Park hasn't taken a position on removing the ban, spokesman Bob Miller said. He referred further questions to the National Park Service in Washington. A Park Service spokesman said the agency also has taken no position on the legislation. Likewise, U.S. Sen. Lamar Alexander, R-Tenn., a supporter of the parks and gun-owner's rights, has not decided on the ban.

## Artifacts looted from national parks

WASHINGTON, Jan. 25 U.S. National Park Service officials said looters are stealing fossils and archeological artifacts from national parks.

An average of 340 significant looting incidents have been reported annually over the past decade, USA Today reports. Park rangers said that number probably represents less than 25 percent of actual thefts.

Officials said the Internet has expanded the market for Native American artifacts and Civil War relics, with some items ending up in the hands of collectors in Europe and Asia.

Park rangers said a shortage of staff can make it difficult to catch the thieves. Last year, three men dug more than 450 holes at the Fredericksburg-Spotsylvania military park in search of Civil War artifacts. In Colorado, a man admitted to taking 252 relics from Mesa Verde National Park.

It's "a chronic problem that we simply have not even been able to get a grasp on," Mark Gorman, chief ranger at South Dakota's Badlands National Park, told USA Today.

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## Park Ranger Tases Snake, Gets Pooped On

*National Park Service Morning Report - Jan 25 2008*

*Everglades National Park (FL) Rangers Remove Python From Visitor's Car*

On Tuesday, January 15th, visitor Ron DeLong stopped his car on the main park road in order to watch a crawling, six-foot-long, exotic Burmese python. As DeLong stepped out of his Ford Explorer, the python began crawling underneath the vehicle and into its engine compartment. DeLong attempted to grab the python with the curved end of his walking cane, but was unable to stop it. After several failed attempts to remove the snake, DeLong decided to drive 15 miles to the main entrance station for assistance. When ranger Willie Lopez, wildlife biologist Skip Snow, biologist's assistant Alex Wolf and firefighter Henry Delvalle checked the Explorer, they found its hood open, with only the tail end of the python visible – the rest of the snake was coiled around various parts of the engine and undercarriage. Several attempts were made to pull it out through the top of the engine, but failed because the snake tightened its hold on the car.

The four responders then discussed their options. Snow reported that there had been several published articles about the successful use of tasers to loosen the tight grip of constricting snakes, so that was tried. Unfortunately, it resulted in the python contracting and excreting bodily fluids all over the responders. They then decided to disassemble parts of the Explorer's undercarriage in order to get to the python's head, which was then covered with duct tape. The snake's head and body were uncoiled and maneuvered through the engine compartment, then pulled out the top of the engine.



Since Burmese pythons are exotic, prolific and aggressive, the snake was euthanized and taken to a lab to be studied. DeLong's car was then put back together. [Submitted by Willie Lopez, Pine Island District Ranger]

## Park rangers take on relic hunters

Threats of jail used to protect historic battlefields

By David B. Caruso

updated 12:45 p.m. ET, Fri., Jan. 23, 2004

PHILADELPHIA - In just a few hours of digging at Valley Forge National Historical Park, prosecutors say, Alfred Lucien unearthed the kind of finds amateur treasure hunters dream of.

A musket ball. A locket. A pewter button. Studs, buckles and fasteners that may once have adorned the uniforms of soldiers at the turning point of the Revolutionary War. It was the sort of haul park rangers dread to hear about as they try to protect the dwindling number of rare artifacts buried at national parks.

In 2002, the National Park Service recorded nearly 11,000 violations of the Archaeological Resources Protection Act, which prohibits people from destroying or removing rare or valuable objects found on federal land, according to Park Service spokesman Al Nash.

"This is a challenge that we've faced since the parks were created," Nash said. "We struggle with people who want to take a piece of something home with them, whether it is a relic from a battlefield or whether it is a plant, or an antler or a skull, or some stone from a national park."

## Possible jail time

The penalties can be severe.

Federal prosecutors this month charged Lucien, 70, of New York, with illegally unearthing artifacts during his family outing 3½ years ago at Valley Forge, about 15 miles (24 kilometers) west of Philadelphia. He faces fines and possible jail time if convicted. Charged with him was a Pennsylvania man accused of collecting three nails from the site of a former blacksmith's shop.

Lucien's wife objected to the criminal charge in a telephone interview last week, saying it was too harsh for an otherwise law-abiding retiree. But Valley Forge National Historical Park Deputy Superintendent Barbara Pollarine said prosecutors hope the case acts as a deterrent.

"They want to show people that this is a serious offense," she said.

Artifact looting isn't a crisis at Valley Forge, Pollarine said, in part because so little remains of Washington's encampment. The park did not become federally protected until 1976. In the 1950s and 1960s, it was the annual site of enormous Boy Scout jamborees, during which the scouts were encouraged to scavenge for artifacts.

"We still get letters from people offering to return things," Pollarine said. The problems can be worse at Civil War battlefields, where thousands of tourists visit with their eyes peeled for that rare souvenir.

## Weekly encounters

During the summertime at Gettysburg National Military Park, rangers have weekly encounters with casual artifact hunters, said Ranger Rick Pearce. Most are people with good intentions who are unaware of park rules, he said. A few are hard-core scavengers. Pearce recalled two men who were arrested after one was spotted strolling the fields with a metal-detecting wand strapped to his leg and hidden under his pants.

The park has had some success warding off treasure hunters with a force of 120 volunteers who patrol the 6,000-acre (2,400-hectare) battlefield day and night. Artifact looting has dropped considerably since the Park Watch Patrol program began in 1996, Pearce said. Federal authorities also have tried other deterrents.

People who pleaded guilty to trolling for artifacts were required to take out newspaper advertisements describing the hefty fines they had to pay for their misdeeds at the Fredericksburg and Spotsylvania National Military Park and Manassas National Battlefield Park in Virginia.

An Alabama man was sentenced to two years probation after he pleaded guilty in August to relic hunting at Vicksburg National Military Park in Mississippi.

In one of the biggest relic-looting cases to date, several people pleaded guilty last year to being involved in a scheme to steal artifacts, including American Indian remains, from sites including Death Valley National Park. Five were sentenced either to prison or house arrest and ordered to pay hundreds of thousands of dollars in restitution.

"It's fun to go snooping. But if you find something, look at it, enjoy it, and leave it for someone else to find," Nash said.

*U.S. Department of the Interior*



# RANGER NEWS

## 2008 NATIONAL PARK FOUNDATION JUNIOR RANGER ESSAY CONTEST

In honor of Earth Day and National Park Week, the National Park Foundation is putting the spotlight on how citizens can help preserve America's 391 national parks. The 2008 National Park Foundation Junior Ranger Essay Contest asks kids from 9 – 12 years old to answer the question, "What can you do now to turn over a new leaf for the environment and help preserve our National Parks?"

The contest is an opportunity to hear what big ideas kids have to help preserve America's most spectacular outdoor places. The Grand Prize winner will win an exciting trip to Everglades National Park during National Park Week where they will star in a virtual field trip for kids from across the globe. For more information on contest deadlines and rules, please visit [www.nationalparks.org](http://www.nationalparks.org).

### Some Junior Ranger Points

- NPF is the leading private funder of the Junior Ranger program and has contributed nearly \$3M to establish and enhance the program which is now available in close to 300 of our parks.
- Here in South Florida, the Junior Ranger Program connects three national parks in one program—Biscayne National Park, Everglades National Park, and Big Cypress National Park.
- The program was funded by the National Park Foundation and the South Florida National Parks Trust. It is one of the first programs in the country to be offered in different languages—Spanish and Haitian Creole—to help better serve the families and children who visit the park.
- The kids from Florida City who are taking part in the event are in the process of earning their Junior Ranger badges from our South Florida National Parks and will be doing the required "Ranger-led program" when they are with Mrs. Bush.
- 406,000 Junior Rangers were sworn in nationwide in 2007.
- Webrangers offers kids the opportunity to continue learning online when they are outside the park. Millions of children from all 50 states and 86 countries and territories log on to Webrangers to learn about our national parks and how they can help care for them.
- EFTs—The Electronic Field Trips are produced with the National Park Foundation and Ball State University. 30 million children and community members took part in the October EFT to Grand Teton National Park. 37 million kids took place in the EFT to Carlsbad Caverns National Park when Mrs. Bush participated (April 2006).
- The Ranger-led program will focus on native plants and their importance in protecting our environment.
- Native plants are the focus of the National Park Foundation's First Bloom program, a youth program launched with the help of Mrs. Bush in Honor of Lady Bird Johnson's conservation legacy. First Bloom connects children to their national parks and their communities by teaching them how to create and tend native plant gardens.

## PARKRANGER.COM

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# PLEA DISCUSSION BOARD NEWS

Parkranger.com gets 60,000 page requests per month and 40,000 of those are for our discussion board! In order to fully utilize this resource, we have a few suggestions for all of you who use this board, or for PLEA members who haven't yet visited.

We have established some places on the discussion board for PLEA members to share links to pictures of your departments, vehicles, and equipment, or just to inform everyone about your special events or news. Since this area of our website gets so much traffic this is the perfect place to communicate with the park law enforcement community about PLEA and what we do!

When you sign up as a new member, we encourage you to be visible as a PLEA member by using PLEA somewhere in your login name or identify yourself in your posts or signature, so that board users will be able to know of your affiliation with PLEA. We can encourage people to join by letting them see what we do and how we as PLEA members believe in the power of joining together to share our experiences, and knowledge.
















The discussion board is also the place to go for anyone new or old in the park law enforcement field. There is a wide variety of subjects discussed, and a great deal of information is available there. There are also many Rangers interested in sharing patches, setting up photo sharing on sites like Facebook, and many other opportunities for networking.



**Park Ranger Discussion Board**  
A place to discuss Park Law Enforcement Issues

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The time now is Thu Jun 19, 2008 6:35 pm  
Park Ranger Discussion Board Forum Index

Forum	Topics	Posts	Last Post
<b>Park Law Enforcement</b>			
 <b>Park Law Enforcement Issues</b> A General Discussion of Park Law Enforcement	146	1127	Wed Jun 18, 2008 5:39 pm <a href="#">asplar</a> 
 <b>How to Become A Park Ranger</b> Training and Education	182	950	Mon Jun 16, 2008 9:01 am <a href="#">AT102</a> 
 <b>Questions/Suggestions</b> Questions and Suggestions for This Forum- Suggest a Forum or Group, Volunteer to Moderate a Group Discussion, etc.	41	189	Wed May 28, 2008 3:42 pm <a href="#">gully28</a> 
 <b>Legal Issues</b> Legal Issues concerning park law enforcement	4	19	Mon May 21, 2007 4:11 am <a href="#">Rust Far Romance</a> 
 <b>Equipment</b> Equipment used in Park Law Enforcement	46	316	Tue May 27, 2008 8:30 am <a href="#">gRanger</a> 
 <b>Interpretation and Conservation</b> Topics about interpretation and conservation of natural resources	8	47	Thu Jan 17, 2008 1:44 pm <a href="#">Sons</a> 
<b>PLEA Happenings</b>			
 <b>Annual Workshops</b> A place to share ideas for our annual workshops, and discuss workshop topics from previous conferences.	0	0	No Posts
 <b>Agency Photos, Vehicles, Special Events</b> A Place to share links to your photos, vehicles, and inform people about special events.	1	1	Sun Dec 02, 2007 1:28 pm <a href="#">pacoic</a> 

All times are GMT - 6 Hours

**Who is Online**  
Our users have posted a total of **2649** articles  
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**March 23-27, 2009**

**30th ANNUAL CONFERENCE**

**St. Louis, Mo**

**Hosted by the St. Louis County Parks Dept.**

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