
The Catalyst



The Newsletter for Interpretation in California State Parks
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Outdoor Recreation Interpretation





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The Catalyst welcomes your original articles up to two pages in length. We prefer unpublished material, but we will occasionally reprint items published elsewhere. Be sure to include information about the publication, so we can get permission to use the material. If you have an article relating to one of the topics listed below, please submit it to the publisher or guest editor. Please include a photograph whenever possible.

We really appreciate items submitted on CD or by email in a PDF format. Please send photographs as separate files, not inserted into your document. You may also submit original photographs or other illustrations to The Catalyst. All photos and artwork submitted will be returned promptly. We reserve the right to edit all material. Items are selected for publication solely at the discretion of the editor and publisher. We appreciate your suggestions.

Guest Editors Wanted!

Are you looking for an opportunity to work with other writers on engaging interpretive topics? Would you like to develop and challenge your creative and technical skills? Then consider becoming a Guest Editor for an upcoming issue of The Catalyst. Among the topics we're planning for future issues are:

Interpretation and Technology
Interpreting to Diverse Audiences

Please contact Brian Cahill with your ideas, Brian.Cahill@parks.ca.gov.

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From the Guest Editors

Many people see parks as a refuge, a place to visit with family and friends, participate in activities, and unwind from the stresses of daily life. The Survey on Public Opinions and Attitudes on Outdoor Recreation 2012 found that a majority of Californians who visited parks did so with family and friends. Walking, hiking, and picnicking were the most popular activities for adults, while sports and playing topped the list for youth under age 18. The list of other activities were very diverse; they ranged from camping, water sports, bicycling, wildlife viewing, and off-highway vehicle recreation, to attending farmer's markets.

As park employees, we work hard to ensure visitors have access to high-quality recreation. At the same time, we work to conserve and protect our precious cultural and natural resources. While these ideas seem like a constant paradox, interpretation plays a vital role in making it all work.

As a management tool, interpretation can effectively communicate safety and regulatory information, responsible recreation, and conservation messaging. Interpretation enhances the visitors' recreation experience and connects them to the site's cultural and natural stories. Offering interpretive recreation programs can inspire people to try new activities and attract new visitors to the park. Interpreters use a variety of time-tested methods to reach visitors who camp, walk, hike, and play sports. Campfire programs, roving interpretation, panels, brochures, and exhibits in visitor centers are a few that come to mind. This issue of *The Catalyst* explores the many innovative ways interpretation connects with visitors in recreational settings. ❖

Sincerely,

Guest Editors Katie Metraux, Debbie Burgeson, Donna McGuire, Natalie Lohi, and Dan Canfield
Off-Highway Motor Vehicle Recreation Division

In This Issue:

- The **Resources for Interpreters** and **Dear Master Interpreter** sections highlight many free and low-cost activities to promote safe and responsible recreation.
- The **Interpretive Geocaching** article describes how geocaching can be transformed into an interpretive opportunity.
- The **Out of this World Astronomy Programs** article discusses Ocotillo Wells SVRA's solar viewing and stargazing programs.
- **Earthsnoorkeling Adventures** explores the urban ecological island, Baldwin Hills Scenic Overlook.
- Ocotillo Wells SVRA interpreters explain how they integrate Children's Outdoor Bill of Rights into their **Annual Kids Adventure Day** program.
- The OHMVR Division Education and Outreach Program teaches kids about safe and responsible OHV recreation through its **RIDE SAFE Computer Kiosk Game**.
- Hollister Hills SVRA's roving interpretation is explained in **Bringing the Roving Ranger Back**.
- Science and ecology are major themes at the annual **Hollister Hills SVRA Science Camp**.
- The **Interpreting the Storm Water Management Plan at Carnegie SVRA** describes how interpretive panels spread the word about preventing pollution and conserving habitats.
- The **Partnerships at Work** section discusses how organizations help further the goal of creating access to high-quality recreation.
- The **California's Tapestry** article focuses on Prairie City SVRA's participation in the Wounded Warriors Project.

What's Up?



Interpreters' Resources

Research Resources

Several resources are available to learn about outdoor recreation trends in California. These resources provide information about how people are recreating, what interests them, age groups, and attitudes towards outdoor recreation. Find out what people in your region are doing to help you develop interpretive programs to meet their needs.

- Survey on Public Opinions and Attitudes on Outdoor Recreation in California (SPOA), 2012, Complete Findings (January 2014).
[www.parks.ca.gov/pages/795/files/2012%20spoa.pdf]
- Outdoor Recreation in California's Regions 2013, California State Parks' report on outdoor recreation at the regional level in California.
[www.parks.ca.gov/pages/795/files/2013%20regions.pdf]
- The California State Parks' Office of Grants and Local Services (OGALS) prepares the Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP). This report is a master plan for state and local parks and outdoor open-space areas. OGALS expects the SCORP will be posted in Spring/Summer 2015.
[www.parks.ca.gov/?page_id=27894]
- The California Department of Finance prepares annual reports on demographics and trends by state, region, and county. You can find the reports at www.dof.ca.gov/research/demographic/reports/view.php.

Training

State Parks offers a 36-hour course entitled "Interpreting in Recreation Areas." This class is a great opportunity to learn about trends, program planning, presentation skills, evaluation methods, and ways to reach visitors and the

many recreation types. Look on ETMS for the class schedule and ask your District Training Coordinator for more information.

Junior Rangers

The Junior Ranger program handbook has activities that cover general safety and survival tips, hiking, and water safety. The handbook can be found at www.parks.ca.gov/jrprogram. A link to the English and Spanish versions of the Junior Ranger Adventure Guide can be found at www.parks.ca.gov/juniorrangers.

Tread Lightly!®

The Tread Lightly!® campaign promotes responsible recreation and environmental stewardship. The organization provides both teaching and education materials such as guidebooks, brochures, online courses, how-to videos, and children's activity books at treadlightly.org.

California Roundtable on Recreation, Parks and Tourism website: Toolkit Examples

The Children's Outdoor Bill of Rights has new toolkit examples on their website. The manuals on camp-outs and aquatic camps are provided as a courtesy from the California Department of Water Resources and Cameron Park Community



Interpreting in Recreation Areas Class

Services District for your own Children's Outdoor Bill of Rights toolkit: calroundtable.org/cobor_toolkit.html. The website highlights Angel Island State Park's Outdoor Children's Bill of Rights Day and provides a link to their brochure: calroundtable.org/cobor_Angel_Island.html.

Boating Safety

The Division of Boating and Waterways offers a variety of fun safety and education resources on their website and through their partners: dbw.ca.gov/BoaterInfo/Education.aspx.

Water Safety

The Department of Water Resources (DWR) provides information on water safety and conservation. Find their Water Safety Program at www.water.ca.gov/recreation/safety. Their website also has Education and the Environment Initiative curriculum, materials, and teachers' guides www.water.ca.gov/water_education_materials.cfm.

Wildlife Discovery Kits for Roving Interpretation

The OHMVR Division uses wildlife discovery kits at outreach programs and events. Kits contain



Skulls, Tracks, and Scat Samples

replica skulls, tracks, and scat, as well as real pelts, mounted specimens, and activities. While replica scat and skulls may seem like unusual items, interpreters know these are effective hands-on tools for demonstrating the differences between herbivores, omnivores, and carnivores. As

kids examine the skulls, teeth and replica scat, they are quick to see the similarities between the omnivores on display and themselves. Wildlife discovery cards, mounted specimens, and cast



The OHMVR Division's Wildlife Discovery Kit is a popular attraction at special events

tracks provide additional hands-on opportunities to learn about the animals. These items are very portable and fit into a plastic box (except the mounted specimens).

Replica skulls, tracks, scat and fur swatches can be purchased through Acorn Naturalists: www.acornnaturalists.com/store/Replicas-Models-C9.aspx. Or, make your own kits from the real thing (scat goes in a glass jar, of course). The California Education and the Environment Initiative (EEI) Curriculum units include several student workbooks that complement the discovery kits, www.californiaeei.org/curriculum.

Park Panel Program

Interpretive panels are an efficient way to communicate information to park visitors when placed at orientation kiosks, campgrounds, restrooms, and trailheads. The Park Panel Program has interpretive panels on a variety of topics, including safety education. Some panels are available in Spanish and English/Spanish. Panels cost around \$300 to \$450. Safety education topics include camping, boating, hiking, beach play, swimming safety, earthquake and tsunami awareness, and protection from poison oak and mosquitoes. For more information, visit www.parks.ca.gov/parkpanels or contact the Interpretation and Education Division. ❖

Dear Master Interpreter



Dear Master Interpreter,

I work at a State Historic Park that focuses on house museum tours. How do I create opportunities for combining interpretation and recreation in this setting?

-Break the Mold

Dear Break the Mold,

The idea is to get people outside and moving. Many visitors to our parks are from the local community. Find out what activities are happening in your area and see what your park could offer to complement what people are already doing. Many state historic parks have formal gardens, interpretive gardens, and trails. Consider offering interpretive tours of these spaces or develop self-guided walking tours and interpretive panels. Contact your chamber of commerce and historical societies and find out what they offer. You may be able to collaborate with them to develop a walking tour that includes your park. If your park has an inviting green space, invite groups to hold activities there, such as the Plein Air Watercolor class offered at San Onofre State Beach.

Dear Master Interpreter,

Many of our parks border other agencies, whose rules are very different from our own. This makes it confusing for our park visitors who may not know that they can't walk dogs on trails and beaches, or go rock hounding. How can we explain the different rules succinctly?

-Sign of the Times

Dear Sign,

Explaining the differences between the agencies is confusing. The first thing you can do is make sure the state park rules and regulations are clearly posted in the park, are available on the park website, and at the entrance kiosks. Using

social media is also a way to get the word out regarding what's allowed on California State Parks property. Place interpretive panels and regulatory signage at trailheads and at locations where people cross into park property. Consider partnering with agencies that are adjacent to the park to develop consistent messaging. Joint regulatory signs are another method that has worked well at Topanga State Park and the Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area.

Dear Master Interpreter,

We want to add new programs to our existing interpretation schedule. How can we use technology to appeal to our high-tech visitors?

-Plugged In

Dear Plugged In,

Use technology as much as possible and keep current with what is new and relevant. Many of our visitors only use smart phones and the internet to get trail conditions and information. Use QR codes and current website information on brochures and orientation kiosks that link them to the desired information. Social media is another popular way to reach people. Use Facebook to have contests and trivia challenges. Tweet about upcoming events.



"Know When You Are on State Park Lands"

Are you a science nerd? Develop programs that appeal to those interested in science, technology, or engineering (e.g., How does a train engine work? How does a Pelton wheel work?). Interpretive geocaching is another way to get people out in the park using technology.



Facebook



Twitter



QR Code

Dear Master Interpreter,

What are some free or low-cost ways to develop roving interpretive kits that I can take to campgrounds, trailheads, and other areas where people recreate?

-Limited Resources

Dear LR,

You may already have everything you need. First, determine your audience and the location you will be working. Think small and simple. Debra Cable, Guide I at Hollister Hills SVRA, recommends taking an inventory of what you have and scale your kit to fit into your bag, box, or vehicle of choice. A few animal pelts, wildlife flash cards, field guide, activity books, small games, or a spotting scope does the trick. The Department offers several activities in the Junior Ranger



Debra Cable demonstrates Hollister Hills SVRA's "Interpa-Quad"

handbook, Adventure Guide, and Litter Gitter program. Other agencies such as the Department of Water Resources and the Department of Fish and Wildlife offer free downloadable activities and curriculum. Many nonprofits provide free downloadable activities and curriculum on a variety of subjects like wildlife, water conservation, and safe recreation. Check out the Interpreters' Resources article for more ideas.

Dear Master Interpreter,

It seems like every time I turn around, a new recreational sport crops up. Last month, I saw an entire San Francisco beach taken over by terrasailing enthusiasts. How can I keep up with trends and offer programs to meet new demands?

-Left Behind

Dear Left Behind,

Innovations in equipment and technology constantly create new recreational opportunities, but there are several ways to stay up-to-date without feeling overwhelmed. Get to know your visitors through onsite interaction, visitor surveys, social media postings, and observation. Stay current on research and trends by subscribing to journals and outdoor industry associations, and scanning social media. Get to know your local tourism board and chamber of commerce; they often conduct research on recreation and tourism trends in your area. Visit dealers and shops that specialize in outdoor recreation for information about what people are buying. You may be able to offer safety training and special classes through partnerships with local organizations and sporting goods stores. While it is great to offer new recreational experiences, realize that most visitors stick with traditional sports like jogging, walking, and biking. ❖



Out-of-this-World Astronomy Programs

By Kelly Soltis, Park Interpretive Specialist

Ocotillo Wells SVRA

Ocotillo Wells SVRA is known as an off-roading mecca for OHV enthusiasts. However, the park's location in the open desert, far from any major cities, also provides a great opportunity for a wide variety of astronomy programs that are quickly gaining popularity with our visitors.

Ocotillo Wells SVRA's park interpreters offer a weekly astronomy program, featuring afternoon solar viewing and nighttime stargazing. Visitors are able to peer into a solar telescope to see black sunspots and fiery orange flares on our closest star. They are also given a free pair of solar eclipse glasses to keep for future eclipses and solar events.

The nighttime portion of the program features a powerful 11" telescope that can zoom into the planets, nebulas, and galaxies that fill our night sky. Park interpreters use a combination



The movement of the stars as seen through photography

of telescope viewing, NASA-produced videos, planetarium software, green laser constellation tours, and colorful retellings of classic mythology to improve visitors' understanding and appreciation for the mysteries of the cosmos.

Visitors also enjoy a complimentary cup of hot cocoa while they marvel at the night sky. Giveaways of solar glasses and hot cocoa are becoming financially sustainable through visitor donations at each portion of the astronomy program.

Another astronomy program that has become a regular feature of Ocotillo Wells SVRA's interpretation is the Astrogeology field exhibit. Several geologic features in the park are popular riding destinations, and park interpreters set up exhibits at these locations to engage with visitors. The Astrogeology exhibit allows visitors to learn about the geology of other planets and moons in our solar system and compare them to similar features and processes on Earth, specifically in and around Ocotillo Wells SVRA. Hands-on activities allow visitors of all ages to discover what real moon rocks are like (using Earth rock



analog), and just how far away our natural satellite really is. They can even practice driving a working model of the Curiosity rover across a Martian landscape.

Many parks offer guided walks along their hiking trails, but at Ocotillo Wells, we offer guided off-roading tours along our riding trails, two of which focus exclusively on astronomy themes. Our newest 4x4 tour turns the entire park into a scale model of the solar system, beginning with a 14-foot Sun at the park's Discovery Center. Visitors then drive through the park, stopping at each planet's location and gaining a sense of the truly astronomical distances in our solar system. The full moon 4x4 tour is a crowd pleaser for our more adventurous nightriders. While the full moon rises over the desert mountains, park interpreters discuss everything from lunar geology and exploration to nocturnal animal behavior and human folklore.

Once a year Ocotillo Wells SVRA holds a very special event, the "Hot Stars and Heavenly Bodies" astronomy festival. This two-day event features all-day solar viewing and two nights of stellar stargazing. Guest astronomers are invited to bring huge telescopes up to 30" in diameter, and special presenters from such places as Palomar Observatory and the Jet Propulsion Laboratory give talks on cutting-edge astronomy research and ongoing NASA missions. The Discovery Center stays open extra late, and kids are able to



Telescopes offer amazing nighttime stargazing



Astrogeology field exhibit

participate in astronomy-themed Junior Ranger activities such as games, crafts, and model rockets.

Ocotillo Wells SVRA also does a variety of outreach and education with the surrounding community. Throughout the season, park interpreters periodically load up a truck with telescopes and equipment and take the astronomy show on the road to the town of Borrego Springs and nearby elementary schools. Park interpreters also reach out to our visitors with special astronomy posts on the park's Facebook page, collectible trading cards that feature different astronomical objects, and educational packets with sky maps, viewing guides, and current information about outer space events.

So, while Ocotillo Wells SVRA will always be first and foremost an off-roading park, our unique location and dedicated interpretive staff have created a fantastic place for viewing and learning about the night sky. The park and its programs are always changing and evolving, but whatever happens, you can be sure that Ocotillo Wells is looking up! ❖



Afternoon solar viewing using special glasses

Earthsnoorkeling Adventures!

By Kristen Perry, Regional Interpretive Specialist

Los Angeles Sector

Baldwin Hills Scenic Overlook is an ecological "island" surrounded by a sea of millions of people and dense urbanization. It is one of the only publicly owned, undeveloped wide-open spaces left in Los Angeles, where each week thousands of recreational users seek a heavy cardio climb up 500 feet via the 282 steps or the 1-mile hiking trail.

So—when kids come to recreate and learn in the hot summer, how do we provide an experience that truly interprets this state park and our message of protection and preservation of California's natural resources to its urban youth? We have fun. We get wet with spray bottles. We go earthsnoorkeling.



Exploring California toyon

Why snorkel? Just as one dives down to the depths of the ocean while snorkeling, you "dive" down to the city level and make an ascent. There are lots of snorkel spots for you to encounter the diversity of this ecosystem. Some secret spots popular with the locals—and named best earthsnoorkeling spots in LA—allow you to meet plants (like toyon) and animals (like lizards) that have amazing ways of surviving the dry climate. Others are better for observing the effects of erosion and surveying the landscape for how water collects in the channeled rivers. Don't forget to



Earthsnoorkeling at Baldwin Hills Scenic Overlook

scan the land floor for the Culver City rainbow sculpture!

When you reach the highest point, you feel as if you are floating. Red-tailed hawks and white-tailed kites surf the invisible waves of the wind currents right at your eye level. Cars on freeways look like mice, and houses look like Legos. You can even hold downtown LA in the palm of your hand for a selfie.

Why not snorkel? Water surrounds us, and is in us. It's in the sky as clouds, in the ground, and as air: 2-4% of air is water vapor; water is constantly cycling. It covers about 70% of the planet's surface, but it is one of our most precious natural resources. Since 2010, California has been in a severe drought—the worst in history. Earth snorkeling emphasizes the importance of our precious water resources and allows kids to think, analyze and evaluate the essential role water plays in our lives. Water is life. Earthsnoorkeling is being alive.

When you go hiking next, put on sunglasses (mask), sunscreen (wetsuit), and hiking shoes (fins); why not blow some bubbles for fun, too? Why merely walk this earth when we can snorkel it? ❖

Bringing the Roving Ranger Back

By Debra Cable, Guide I

Hollister Hills SVRA

Off-highway vehicle (OHV) enthusiasts are a fast bunch who are hard to pin down. Hollister Hills SVRA does not have a permanent visitor center, so engaging the riders in interpretive programs or hands-on activities can be challenging. Interpretive staff came up with a creative solution to deliver interpretive programs and activities to this mobile audience: we take the "Visitor Center" out to the riders.

Meet "Interpa-Quad"

Interpa-Quad began in 2010 as an activity table stationed at a turnaround location. We found that no one was stopping, so we took the time to find out where people gathered and rested, such as family trails, campgrounds, and overlooks. There were spots where we wanted to go but could not access with a regular vehicle. An all-terrain vehicle (ATV) was the perfect size to get to these locations.

The Hollister Hills SVRA staff equipped a Honda Rancher ATV with side mirrors and fitted it with a removable metal Tuff box. The back rack serves as the foundation for a tabletop, which was custom-made by one of Hollister Hills SVRA's volunteers. We scaled down the

size of the hands-on activities to fit in a 30" x 12" x 6" box, which is a little under one and a half cubic feet (or slightly larger than a banker's box). It is packed with informational handouts, brochures, park maps, and hands-on activities that engage park visitors.



Interacting with campers

Riders were curious and stopped. Interpretive staff found using Interpa-Quad is a fun way to meet our audience in the same manner in which they recreate. We enjoy another method of delivering interpretive programs among some of the most amazing landscapes of oak woodlands and vistas in San Benito County.

Tips for setting up your own Interpa-Quad:

- Mountain bikes with trailers, trikes, Gators, and other equipment work to replace the ATV. Scale the program to fit the vehicle.
- Use props to get people's attention. I set up a spotting scope at an overlook. People asked what I was looking at, and we had conversations about birds, park history, geology, and other topics of interest.
- Roving interpretation is very informal. People get the information they need and can stay as long as they want. Try to fit into the visitor's "culture." I was more approachable in riding gear than in my uniform. ❖

Interpretive Geocaching

By Jeff Price, State Park Interpreter I

Ocotillo Wells SVRA

As we all know, park visitors are diverse and their preferred type of recreation is ever changing. As visitor interests change, we need to adapt our own skills and strategies to reach as broad a group as possible. Geocaching can be used as an interpretive tool within your park. Even with no prior geocaching experience, you will be able to use this global phenomenon to reach a large, steady, and diverse visitor group who will thank you for your efforts.

The uninitiated may be asking, "What is Geocaching?" In a nutshell, it is a high-tech treasure hunt. Using the Global Positioning System (GPS), a small GPS unit tells you exactly where you are in the world within a few meters. The same technology that helps you navigate your car also allows geocachers to hide a geocache (usually a small box) with a great deal of accuracy, and allows other geocachers to pinpoint the cache, depending on how well it has been hidden. Inside a geocache, there might be a few trinkets to trade, but there is always a logbook to sign. Most geocachers will also log their finds on a website, most likely geocaching.com, and can get very passionate about their hobby.



Interpretive resource cards in geocache

Using Geocaches as an Interpretive Tool:

A properly placed and maintained physical cache will serve as a highly valuable interpretive tool. However if not placed in an appropriate location, a physical cache has the potential to damage sensitive resources. Work with your district's cultural and natural resources staff to determine ideal cache locations.

Geocachers come from around the world—spanning generations, interests, physical abilities, and ethnicities. They are highly dedicated to their sport and many will plan vacations and road trips around specific caches. Geocachers tend to be tech-savvy and have a high comfort level with the technology needed to play the sport. As with any sport, levels of participation vary from casual family outings or the weekend warrior to the fanatic.



Utilizing geocaching as an interpretive tool is fun, easy, and effective, and the opportunities are almost limitless. It all comes down to users having a destination. Once you place a cache, many people will visit the exact location you want them to experience.

Caches

The most common cache type is a physical cache, which requires leaving something behind within the boundaries of your park. Putting a "Welcome to (your park name) State Park" cache outside a visitor center is a great way to welcome geocachers. Stocked with maps, brochures, trail guides, or other interpretive materials, it can be

a great distribution point for park information. If you add in a small sheet listing other interpretive caches within the park, you have effectively planned a geocacher's visit. Visitors post logs of their cache finds and often thank the park for supporting their sport.

Not all cache types require a physical cache container. An earth cache, for example, focuses on earth science themes related to the site, such as faults, tides, soil, or geological features. Because



Recording the geocache

no physical cache box is required, the geocacher must perform an educational task as the logging requirement. Earth caches take time to develop; however, they

have significant interpretive value as a fun way to convey natural resource messages. Geocachers who have an interest in the natural environment often seek them out.

Developing a Geocache Program

Now that you know what geocaching is, there are many ways you can include this type of recreation in your interpretive programs. To get started, find out about the geocaching opportunities in your area. Consult with resource, maintenance, and law enforcement staff to determine cache types, locations, and interpretive themes. Then, develop an interpretive plan for the geocache program and present it to your management team. Once approved and implemented, evaluate the program and make adjustments to keep it fun and engaging.

Geocaching is no passing fad. It has been going on since 2000 and it keeps growing. California State Parks is becoming more tech-savvy, but our visitors are light years ahead. We can use this technology to our advantage. Geocaching engages visitors through their interests, often turning a three-second glance into 30. As a hands-on

and interactive sport, interpretive geocaching provides an educational adventure that people will remember. So fire up that GPS and your imaginations and get to caching—you never know what you will find! ❖



Ocotillo Wells SVRA Geocache Trading Cards

State Parks' Geocache Policies: As with any sport, rules and regulations accompany the fun. Since this is a worldwide sport, several agencies, including California State Parks, have drawn up policies for geocaching on state park property. Become familiar with State Parks' geocaching policy and strictly observe all guidelines. For more information, visit the page at www.parks.ca.gov/geocaching. For information about Ocotillo Wells SVRA's geocache program, visit www.ohv.parks.ca.gov/ocotillowells.

Earth Cache Posting: Requirements for posting an Earth Cache frequently change and are a lot more involved than physical caches. For more information, visit www.earthcache.org.

Roughneck Rendezvous: Ocotillo Wells SVRA puts on a massive, multi-day event around geocaching. Held in January, the "Roughneck Rendezvous" draws hundreds of visitors with geocaching fun, OHV outreach, food vendors, entertainment, and raffle prizes. Over 100 additional caches are created for the event and focus on desert themes and OHV recreation.

For more information, contact Jeff by email: Jeff.Price@parks.ca.gov and/or phone: 760-767-5772.

Interpreting the Storm Water Management Plan at Carnegie SVRA

By Elise McFarland, State Park Interpreter I
Carnegie SVRA

In 2011, Carnegie SVRA, working with the Central Valley Regional Water Quality Control Board, created and adopted a Storm Water Management Plan (SWMP) to reduce or eliminate pollutant discharges and to meet the requirements of the National Pollution Discharge Elimination System and the Clean Water Act.

Public education is mandated by the SWMP. Carnegie SVRA has developed a brochure and interpretive panels to educate park visitors about the importance of protecting and improving water quality by recreating responsibly and to teach about things visitors can do to protect water quality in the park.

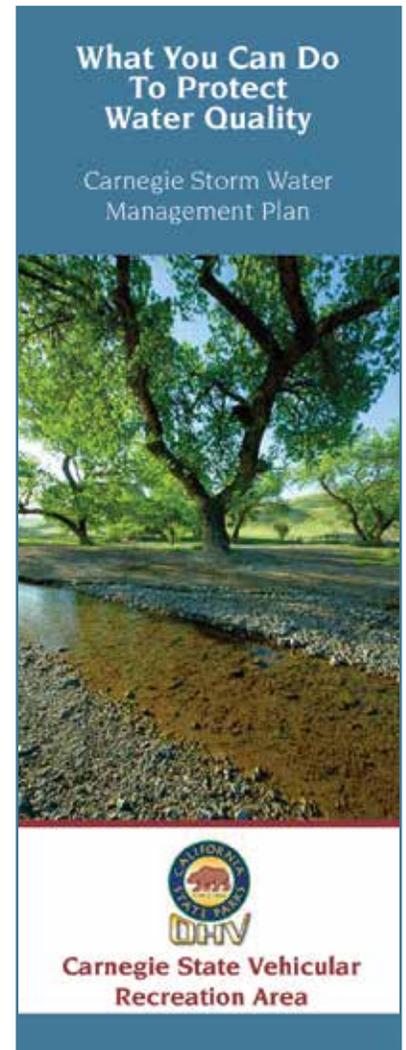
The educational brochure explains potential sources of pollutants in the park and the detrimental impact of those pollutants to the area's wildlife, water quality, and public health. It identifies ways to prevent pollutants from being transported to the creek and stresses the need to comply with the General Permit requirements in order to keep the park open.

Three kinds of interpretive panels have been created to comply with the Storm Water Management Plan: pollution prevention, ecological diversity, and temporary panels on rehabilitation projects.

The goal of the pollution-prevention panels is to provide visitors with information on how to identify pollutants and ways to prevent these pollutants from contacting storm water runoff. One panel specifically addresses pollutants of concern, and the other discusses the prevention of unlawful discharges.

The series of ecological diversity panels includes information on four habitat types found in the park: riparian, coastal scrub, oak woodland, and grassland. The goal of these panels is to educate visitors about how park activities may generate pollutants that can be transported to these habitats via storm water runoff and the associated negative impacts on the habitat.

The main challenge of interpretation for the SWMP is to make these subjects interesting to the public. It's easy to know what to interpret, since it's outlined in the SWMP. Carnegie SVRA's visitors are keenly interested in seeing the park stay open even to expand recreation here. Knitting together the need for clean water, protection of species, and OHV rider education is crucial to the future of off-highway vehicle recreation in California. ❖



Hollister Hills SVRA Science Camp

By Richard Munoz, State Park Interpreter I
Hollister Hills SVRA

Hollister Hills SVRA held its annual science camp in May 2015. Students, their teachers, and parent-chaperones visit the SVRA to participate in curriculum-based outdoor education and interpretation. In addition, we provide the information, introduction, inspiration, and invitations—often necessary to the many first-time visitors—so they will continue to visit and recreate here long into the future.

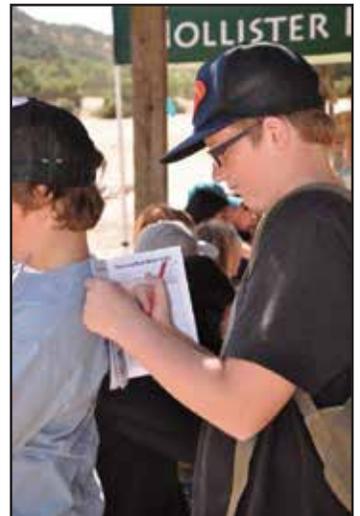


As soon as the clouds of bug spray and spray-on sunblock dissipate, we begin the important process of extinguishing fears of bugs, ticks, snakes, poison oak, mountain lions, etc. Then, students become oriented to the SVRA through geocaching activities, an introduction to local plants and animals, geology, and how the SVRA is managed for off-highway vehicle recreation. Camp-goers participate and assist staff in managing the park through projects like re-vegetation with native plant species, invasive-species removal and habitat monitoring. These programs serve as the spark for students to enjoy the camp and the subject matter and ultimately fan their flames of appreciation and affection for the park.

Teachers allow us to administer pre- and post-tests to their students. Through this, we have

been able to collect useful empirical data that indicate the effectiveness of our programs. The results have been positive. All previous years of the science camp yielded over 60% of all students with a measurable knowledge increase; one-fifth of students exhibited a knowledge increase of at least 20%. In addition, about half of these students demonstrated a knowledge increase of more than 30%!

Effectively breaking down students' fears and barriers, correcting common misconceptions, and staff's professionalism, enthusiasm, passion, joy and hospitality, I believe, have been the keys to the success of our Science Camp. This has proven true in the short term, during the camp. Moreover, we are confident that the effectiveness and excitement engendered by the programs and the camp as a whole will provoke these young millennials and their families to be confident and inspired to recreate at Hollister Hills SVRA, and, hopefully, other state parks for years to come. ❖



Science camp activities

RIDE SAFE Computer Kiosk Game: A Modern Approach to Non-Personal Interpretation

By Donna McGuire, State Park Interpreter III
OHMVR Division

The safety-themed computer game, RIDE SAFE, is installed on two portable kiosks; one kiosk is a desktop version for wheelchair accessibility and the other is freestanding. The OHMVR Division features the interactive computer kiosk games to support outreach goals. The touch screen game teaches safe and environmentally responsible OHV recreation practices. All written content is presented visually and accompanied by narration. The target ages for the learning content are 7-11; however, people of all ages play the game. Based on informal evaluation, players provided very positive comments. The RIDE SAFE game offers five different sub-games. After successfully completing four skill games (Part 1), the Challenge game (Part 2) becomes unlocked.

Part 1: Skill games (players can select in any order)

- **GEAR UP**—Select 10 correct safety gear items to dress the ATV rider. (click and drag)
- **BUILD-A-PACK**—Select 10 correct items to pack a safety bag. (click and drag)
- **SIZE YOUR ATV**—Learn about body size to fit the appropriate size ATV in order to operate safely. Then select the correct size ATV for five riders of different ages and body sizes. (Touch the correct multiple-choice answer.)
- **CHECK YOUR ATV**—Learn the basic ATV parts to check before riding. (Touch the correct answer in a match-up game.)

After each skill game, participants unscramble phrases to reveal a sentence with a safety message. After each safety message appears, a



Computer Kiosk Game: Floor standing model (left), desktop terminal (right)

game character with a cartoon bubble provides a positive comment, such as, "Great Work!" or "Way to go!"

Part 2: Trail Challenge game

Players select a boy or girl as the game rider. As the rider travels with an adult on the trail, 12 situations arise. The rider (player) analyzes the situation and selects the correct multiple-choice answer. The player is allowed three incorrect answers. If an incorrect answer is selected, the correct answer is given and the reason. At the end of the trail, the rider ends back at the campground in a celebratory scene. Other than the intrinsic reward of playing the game successfully, there is not a tangible reward or sticker.

Software and Hardware Development

The OHMVR Division worked with Zivelo, a kiosk manufacturer, to fabricate two computer kiosk terminals and with Intouch Interactive, a software design company, to develop the computer game.



Companion Printed Media: KIDS OHV PLAYBOOK

The OHMVR Division developed content for a 16-page activity booklet that reinforces the learning concepts in the RIDE SAFE kiosk game. The OHMVR Division anticipates the completion of the OHV PLAYBOOK by September 2015. Computer game participants will receive the PLAYBOOK at outreach events as a take-away activity booklet. The KIDS OHV PLAYBOOK will also be available for download on the OHMVR Division website. ❖

Computer Kiosk Company/Vendor: Zivelo

- Website: www.zivelo.com
- Cost of two kiosk terminals in 2012: \$23,618 (included matching desk for tabletop kiosk, 2 travel cases, warranty, taxes, and shipping)
- Kiosk Models
- Floor standing terminal (model #C6 with a 24" sunlight readable screen).
- Desktop terminal (model #C2 with a 24" sunlight readable screen).

Game Software Design Company/Vendor:

Intouch Interactive

- Website: www.intouchinteractive.com
- Cost in 2012: \$84,500
- The OHMVR Division developed the majority of the written content

Project Development Time Frame:

18 to 24 months

Gear Up! Safety Stamping Game

The Gear Up! stamping game is a fast-paced activity to teach about OHV riding gear and provides a take-away message. Safety is #1, and youth start with the Gear Up! stamping game before putting on a helmet, goggles, and gloves to ride the ATV safety simulator.

The game consists of a sheet with eight safety gear riddles and a set of eight self-inking rubber stamps. To introduce the game, the facilitator asks the child if he or she wears a bicycle helmet. Then the facilitator points out the mannequin dressed from head to toe in OHV riding gear and briefly discusses each piece of protective gear and relates it to the child. After the facilitator reads each riddle, the



player selects the rubber stamp with the image that best answers the riddle.

When completed, the facilitator points out that if the answers are correct, they match up in sets from top to bottom on the sheet. For example,

the facilitator asks, "Do a helmet and goggles go together in some way?"... "Gloves and boots?"... "Shirt and pants?"... This element of surprise creates an emotion of delight and a smile. And, for the take-away message, the facilitator asks, "What do you think is the most important piece of safety

gear?" After the child responds, "The helmet," the facilitator says, "That's right; always wear your helmet! Safety is #1!" ❖

Junior Lifeguards

By Michael Cueto, Lifeguard II

Oceano Dunes SVRA

The Junior Lifeguard program at Oceano Dunes SVRA is a fun and challenging aquatic course whose goal is to educate community youth about safe ocean recreation. The four-week program is open to kids age 9-16, and starts its third season in July (www.parks.ca.gov/juniorlifeguards).

Students come from a variety of social and economic backgrounds. The Oceano Dunes Junior Lifeguard program is inexpensive and frequently awards scholarships. Partnerships with local business and donations provide the students with free transportation, supplies, occasional lunches, and a banquet at the close of the program. There is no limit to the class size, and participation doubled in size from the first year to the second. Michael Cueto, Oceano Dunes Junior Lifeguard program coordinator, anticipates the program will continue to grow.



Michael Cueto instructing a junior lifeguard class

Participants learn leadership skills and critical thinking through physical activity and competitive events. Instructors teach self-rescue, first aid, and safety with activities such as open water swimming,



Oceano Dunes SVRA 2013 Junior Lifeguards

paddle boarding, body surfing, surfboarding, and skin diving. In addition, a four-hour ATV safety training class teaches kids to ride responsibly on the dunes.

Throughout the program, interpreters engage students in discussions about the coastal environment. Knowledge of coastal currents, rip tides, swells, and aquatic life helps students make informed decisions about their safety. During lunch breaks, kids learn about cultural history, natural resources, and conservation topics. These sessions broaden the students' knowledge of the area and promote a sense of stewardship for the park and its resources.

What are the results? Kids are excited about going to the park with their families. Parents see their kids gain self-confidence and maturity, as they establish themselves in sports. Students feel empowered to talk to park visitors about safety and responsible recreation. The program is training our next generation of state lifeguards.

Contact your District Interpretive Coordinator for more information on how you can get involved in the program. ❖

Junior Ranger Clubs

Heber Dunes SVRA

By Jaime Mendez, State Park Interpreter I

Heber Dunes SVRA interpretive staff offer an After School Junior Ranger Club program as part of existing After School Education and Safety programs at local schools. This community outreach program is offered to third and fourth graders at five El Centro elementary schools. Junior Ranger Club meetings are 60-90 minutes long and are held weekly throughout the school year.

The After School Junior Ranger Club expands the beloved California State Parks drop-in Junior Ranger Program into a series of meetings that follow the guidelines in the Junior Ranger Handbook. Kids learn the Junior Ranger Promise, play games, make crafts, explore nature, and have the opportunity to earn their Junior Ranger badges and certificates.



The meetings are also mini-lessons tied to state common core and science education standards, which are intended to help introduce or reinforce what is currently being taught in the K-12 classroom through experiential, minds-engaged, and hands-on activities. The format is directed but flexible, which encourages the Junior Rangers to investigate a topic more deeply than originally planned and help keep Mother Nature on her toes! ❖

Editor's Note: Junior Rangers is a trademarked program. Any program or activity called Junior Rangers and/or using any of the awards must follow the guidelines in the Junior Ranger Program Handbook. There is never a fee for a Junior Rangers program or awards.

Hungry Valley SVRA

By Margaret Hurley, State Park Interpreter I
and Mary Leon, Senior Park Aide

The Junior Ranger Club is a new addition to the Junior Ranger programs at Hungry Valley SVRA. Like the Heber Dunes SVRA program, the Junior Ranger Club is held at the local elementary school. Fourth graders take part in the ten-week session as part of the afterschool activity program, which is affiliated with the Boys and Girls Clubs of America. We present different topics each week that include natural and cultural history, Tread Lightly!® principles, and off-highway vehicle safety. Participants recite the Junior Ranger pledge and cheer—"Junior Rangers ROCK!"—at each session.

At the end of the 10-week program, the students go on a field trip to the park and take a hike to the Oak Woodland Natural Preserve, where they work on a yucca cordage project. Parents also attend the field trip and participate in a ceremony where State Park Rangers present Junior Ranger badges to the students.

To get the program started, we worked with the Boys and Girls Club director to determine the most appropriate topics and age groups for the program. The program will evolve over time to include other age groups. This summer, we are expanding the Junior Ranger Club program into the Gorman and Frazier Park elementary schools. We hold the traditional Junior Ranger programs on Sundays. Heber Dunes SVRA also developed a self-guided, OHV-themed activity guide related to the Junior Ranger Activity Guide.

The Junior Ranger Club is an excellent opportunity to invest into the community, build relationships with current and future visitors, and train future park leaders. ❖

Partnerships at Work

Editor's Note: Collaborative relationships can offer innovative programs and education opportunities that enhance existing interpretive services and advance the California State Parks Mission. The following articles highlight partnerships that provide safety classes, educational programs, and access to recreation.

Promoting Safe Off-Highway Vehicle Recreation

By Don Amador

Maybe the single most important factor in modern OHV recreation is the use of diverse partnerships as a synergistic force multiplier when it comes to the management of motorized use on designated roads, trails, and riding areas.

Today, partnerships are a core element of any successful local, state, or federal OHV program. In 2015, OHV management is not just about getting a few riders together to build a trail. Rather, it is a holistic approach on a site level that addresses diverse trail-related projects, including forest health, soil loss, water quality, education, law enforcement, fuel reduction, signing, trail maintenance, trail construction or reconstruction, and habitat restoration.

The Power Sports Industry has stepped up to the plate with grant programs such as the Motorcycle Industry Council's RightRider Access Fund, Yamaha's OHV Access Initiative Grant Program, and the Polaris T.R.A.I.L.S. Grant Program.

Many states have an OHV grant program to help support the efforts of local and federal land agencies to offer the public high-quality and environmentally sound OHV recreational opportunities. For example, California State Park's OHMVR Division has a grant program that supports county and federal OHV recreation programs throughout the state. Those funds go to help with trail maintenance, trail construction, soil loss mitigation, habitat restoration, law enforcement, and safety education.

OHV recreation on public lands has evolved into a highly complex and diverse, partnership-related "systems approach" concept. It is important to highlight those partnerships to illustrate the evolution of managed motorized trail opportunities. Recently, I was privileged to do an area review of just such an effort.

The Western Shasta Resource Conservation District (RCD) and the Bureau of Land Management recently entered into a ten-year stewardship agreement to cooperatively manage the Chappie-Shasta OHV Area. RCD and the BLM are focused on projects related to road and trail maintenance, forest health improvement, fuel reduction, education and outreach and other efforts. For example, trail-armoring projects are being implemented because this partnership.

The aforementioned RCD/BLM agreement acts as a force multiplier when combined with this unit's long-standing partnership with California's OHMVR Division and Commission.

This is a good case study of how a comprehensive "many-hands/partners" approach to OHV trail and resource management is working in a synergistic manner to protect our natural environment while providing high-quality motorized trail opportunities. ❖

Don Amador is president of Quiet Warrior Racing/ Consulting and is a contractor to the Blue Ribbon Coalition. He works out of his office in Oakley, CA. He may be reached via email: damador@cw.com.

Equal Access

By Laurent Roffe, Tapooz Travel

Angel Island State Park undoubtedly deserves its nickname, “the Jewel of the Bay.” A visit to the Bay Area, especially for travelers coming from overseas, would not be complete without an exploration of the unique ecology and fascinating history of this natural wonder. With its commanding views of San Francisco, the Golden Gate, and the San Francisco Bay, a visitor is able to appreciate first-hand the natural features and historical events that have shaped California and the West Coast.

Tapooz Travel recently took a group of 20 travelers from France for a full-day visit. It was one of those gorgeous autumn days. After crossing from San Francisco on the ferry to Angel Island, we took the tram up to the U.S. Immigration Station (USIS). For many in our group, the visit to this unique place was not just a history lesson—it was a deeply moving experience.



Ayala Cove

After the visit to the USIS, we took the tram back to Ayala Cove for a picnic. While we enjoyed the warm sun and played games on the grassy area, some courageous souls in our group went for a dip in the waters of the cove. We even spotted a couple of harbor seals, no doubt curious of our French-speaking daring swimmers. It is hard to imagine a more perfect day.



Picnic at Ayala Cove

Perhaps I forgot to mention that this was a group of travelers with physical disabilities, many of them in wheelchairs with other forms of mobility limitations. Working in close cooperation with the State Parks interpretive staff, the docent guides at the USIS, and the tram operators, the issue of accessibility for people with disabilities became—well, almost a non-issue. They were all dedicated to making our experience seamless, enjoyable, and memorable. In spirit, words, and especially in actions at every step of the way, they define the meaning of true equal access for all to the wonders of our state. Our travelers went back to their country, where they are spreading the message that California welcomes travelers of all abilities.

We are fortunate to work with California State Parks. In particular, our appreciation goes to State Park Interpreters Ben Fenkell and Casey Dexter-Lee and to USIS docents Joe and Eliz. ❖

Tapooz Travel is a travel and adventure company dedicated to providing access to the wonders of California and the West Coast to travelers of all physical abilities.

Annual Kids Adventure Connection

By Sharon Weil, State Park Interpreter I
Ocotillo Wells SVRA

Each winter, Ocotillo Wells SVRA holds its annual Kids' Adventure Connection Weekend. This fun-filled festival is based on the Children's Outdoor Bill of Rights—only with an off-highway recreation twist.



This year, the event kicked off with the kids learning about the Tread Lightly!® principles and trail safety while operating remote-controlled Jeeps to maneuver over obstacles. After learning about safe, responsible recreation, families geared up for an off-road trail ride to discover California's past. Once riders arrived at their



destination, members of the Imperial Gem and Mineral Society were on hand to talk about the history of prospecting in the area. They followed up with a hands-on activity where the kids dry-panned for gold. "Eureka!" one kid exclaimed as he saw gold come into view.

Once back at camp, an interpretive version of the Olympics filled the afternoon with fun. The kids jumped like jack rabbits, did push-ups like an

iguana, howled like coyotes, and identified smells like a kit fox, all in hopes of winning the coveted gold coyote paw medal.

The day's activities were topped off by a hot dog dinner, stargazing, songs and stories around a blazing campfire, and of course, s'mores.



Practicing coyote howls

Following a night in sleeping bags under the stars, families spent the morning exploring the desert around them, playing tug-o-war, participating in a pickup football game, and doing arts and crafts activities. Then, participants assembled for the big awards ceremony where they were presented their coyote paw Olympic medals and Safe Rider t-shirts.

Participants are already looking forward to next year's adventure. We would like to convey a special thank you to our partners, Tierra Del Sol 4-Wheel Drive Club, for their generous support for this event. ❖



Panning for gold

California's Tapestry

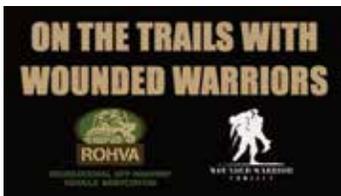
A Diversity Feature Article

Spring/Summer 2015 – Vol. 16, No. 1

Wounded Warriors

By Natalie Lohi, OHMVR Division Outreach Program Manager

California has a strong and undeniable "recreation culture." Surfing, dirt-bike riding, and mountain climbing are, to some, just occasional hobbies. For many Californians, however, these recreational activities are a way of life. Shared by families for generations, they are a connection to our natural world and a pathway to health, inspiration, and continued learning. Too often, we enter public lands and are met with restrictions—signs illustrating various recreational activities with the all-too familiar slash mark through them. Often, the restrictions are placed to protect the environment, but recreation and environmental protection do not have to be mutually exclusive.



Having access to recreational opportunities should be a right enjoyed by all. Our right to choose is something the OHMVR

Division Deputy Director, Colonel Christopher C. Conlin, USMC (Ret.), spent a career protecting. He participates twice yearly in Veterans Leadership Initiative classes led by Dr. Beth Erickson, professor of recreation, parks, and tourism at California State University, Sacramento. She explains that recreation and leisure are critical components to find a sense of self. Erickson says Conlin's lectures set the overall tone for the course. He asks the students three questions: "What are you?" "Who are you?" and "How do you get where you want to be?" Recreational preferences are a key part of the answer to

the "Who are you" question. Conlin explains that in order to preserve California's culture of recreation, we must have three key ingredients: opportunity, access, and ability. "In this position, I can literally provide opportunities for the public to enjoy life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness."

Even with a wide range of opportunities to choose from, individuals with limited mobility may have difficulties getting out into nature.

Such is the case with many of our veterans. A recent collaboration with the Recreational Off-Highway Vehicle Association (ROHVA) and the Wounded Warriors Project helped



Certified OHV Instructor Greg Schumaker trains the Wounded Warriors Project participants

remedy those limitations for a group of veterans. Each participant was custom-fitted to an OHV (provided by ROHVA and State Parks). After passing the full instructional course, the group was able to drive off the training pad and onto the trails.

For those coping with injury and limited mobility, being in the driver's seat can provide a renewed sense of independence and ability. This was a sentiment shared by the group, and one that reinforced our commitment to protect California's extraordinary natural places and the recreational opportunities available within them. ❖

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Interpretation & Education

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