

RANGER REFLECTIONS

CITY OF AUSTIN PARK RANGERS NEWSLETTER

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Learning from the Masters

As the second safest sport next to bowling, archery makes the perfect activity to teach adults and children of all ages. The sport has also boomed in popularity due to Hollywood blockbusters such as *The Hunger Games* and *Brave*. To accommodate this growing interest, City of Austin Park Rangers and Parks Recreation Center staff from Camacho and Dove Springs took part in a two-day training to

become certified as Level 2 instructors through USA Archery.

This course taught participants how to safely set up an archery range in both indoor and outdoor conditions, the best equipment for users of all sizes, and how to conduct a class in a way that would keep kids interested in the sport.

Perhaps the most exciting this about the class was the privilege of witnessing Lindsey Carmichael in action. Carmichael won the bronze medal in archery during the 2008 Beijing Paralympics, and continues to coach archery to this day.

Lindsey and her father and coach, Ron Carmichael, are involved in coaching all levels of the

sport, including the University of Texas Archery team, and brought a level of professionalism and prestige to the course that thoroughly prepared City staff for the joy of teaching Austin's youth.

Currently, courses are offered through Camacho Rec Center's "Into the Wild," program and during their summer camp activities. Rangers and rec center staff hope to expand these offering by doing programs with AISD school and by request, as well as creating a Junior Olympic Archery Development (JOAD) league.



Paralympic Bronze Medalist Lindsey Carmichael demonstrates proper form.

UPCOMING EVENTS

- Zilker Garden Festival
April 6-7
- Mayfield Garden Symposium
April 6
- Austin Earth Day
April 20,
- Faerie Homes and Gardens, Zilker Botanical Garden
May 11
- O'Henry Pun-off
May 18



Participants practiced coaching by observing each other shoot at a target and providing pointers

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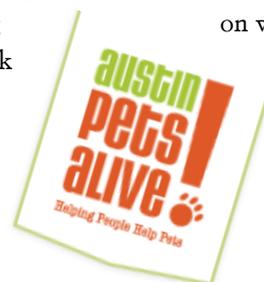
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The Newest Patrol Partners

A park ranger's job does not stop at simply taking care of people and plants. Austin's animal citizens need help as well sometimes, and Rangers have recently partnered with the award-winning nonprofit

Austin Pets Alive to do just that. The Rangers are participating in a five-week training program that teaches

them how to properly handle dogs, including tips on walking them safely, interacting with people and animals, and creating a generalized set of commands so that a



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Snakes in the Parks



Texas Rat Snake: *The only Austin-area native that climbs. This snake is a constrictor, and not venomous. They eat small mammals, such as rats and mice, and therefore compete with rattlesnakes for the same food sources, making them a beneficial reptile to have close to home!*

(Photo by John Rivera)

“SNAKES ARE A COMMON AND IMPORTANT PART OF THE CENTRAL TEXAS ECOSYSTEM.”

With warmer temperatures, all of the wildlife in Austin’s city parks joins park patrons in enjoying the city’s many green spaces. This includes some of the most fascinating residents– snakes. There are many different varieties of snakes that live in the parks, and while some of them are indeed poisonous, all snakes can be harmless as long as they are dealt with in a respectful manner.

Snakes are a common and important part of the Central Texas ecosystem and valued citizens in our parks. If you encounter one, give it plenty of room and continue your activity away from the snake. If you are worried that a snake is too close to people, call 311 and they will connect you with the appropriate help, including trained Park Rangers.

While it is best to treat all snakes as if they are potentially dangerous, it never hurts to be able to identify a few!

For more information, check out www.austinreptileservices.net



Broad Banded Copperhead: *This is the most common type of Copperhead in Central Texas. Although they are poisonous, the bite is seldom fatal due to their short fangs. They feed on small rodents and are only aggressive if provoked*
(Photo by Adam Dawson)



Western Diamondback: *Of 10 species of rattlesnakes, this is the most common in Texas. Reaching up to 7 feet in length, their excellent camouflage leads to bites because victims cannot see them next to logs or under rocks.*
(Photo by Adam Dawson)



Diamondback Water Snake: *The snake held by the Park Ranger here is harmless! It is often confused with the venomous Western Cottonmouth because it is found close to or in the water. They are common to most waterways and feed on fish and frogs. They are not poisonous, but do give off a “fishy” musk if captured and scared!*



Rough Green Snake: *This harmless small snake is found in many gardens and grassy areas where its diet of small insects thrive. These snakes are very shy, and will quickly retreat if uncovered or approached. The Rough Green Snake is an asset to any garden, as they help control pest populations and aid gardeners in protecting plants!*
(Photo by Ed Acuna)

Park Interns

While most kids spent their spring break enjoying a little freedom from their studies, a very special group spent time with the Park Rangers learning how to be job-ready candidates.

A group of six students applied for positions as interns through the Travis County Health and Human Services Department Summer Work Study program. These paid positions exist throughout the city, but

ranger spots are especially exciting because of the variety of projects and experiences for students with an interest in the outdoors.

During their two-day orientation before they start in June, interns learned the basics of resumes, cover letters, interviewing, and how to land their first job. Once this part of the training was complete, they got to hike with rangers and learn more about their jobs, including invasive species removal, wildfire mitigation, trail

construction, interpretive presentations, wildlife management, and many other topics. These students will work for 5 weeks this summer helping with projects that cover many of these areas.

If you have a child who may be interested next year, find more information at:

<http://www.co.travis.tx.us/health-human-services/youth-employment-program.asp>



Ranger Erin Cord discusses native plants with work study students.

Wetting a Line with Austin's Kids

Thanks to the hard work of the patrol rangers, the great kids at all of Austin's recreation centers, and an awesome partnership with Travis County's rangers, the Austin Park Rangers have had a wonderful time exposing city youth to the sport of fishing.

Although many of the programs took place over AISD's spring break, Rangers have been taking kids on fishing trips for quite some time. Rec centers or school groups meet rangers

at various city parks, such as Commons Ford or Lady Bird Lake, or at Travis County parks, such as East Metro. From there, children are taught about fish ecology – what they eat, where they live, and why they look the way they do. Once the science of why they are there is covered, safety glasses are on, and lines safely baited, kids are ready to get to the fun part– wetting a line in the water and fishing!

Each child is given a fishing pole baited with a

worm, and observed closely while they try—and many times succeed– to catch a fish! These programs are wonderful for getting kids outdoors and introducing them to wildlife they may have never seen before.

For more information on fishing programs, or to schedule one, contact Ranger Landon Dobbs

(landon.dobbs@austintexas.gov)



Dove Springs Rec Center children displaying their catch

Hiking Safely with Dogs in the Parks

There are many benefits for both you and your pooch in using the city's many parks as a way to explore the outdoors and exercise. However, if you are not doing it safely, those benefits disappear, so it is important to know what to bring, how to act, and how to react to some important health situations.

First, always check the park's rules to see if your dog must be on a leash. If so, make sure your leash is no longer than six feet, and that you watch your dog at all times to make sure he does not create a tripping hazard for himself or others using the trail. While traditional collars are just fine, if you are going on a longer hike, a harness or gentle leader may be a better choice.

Although very uncommon, encountering snakes on the trail could



Check your dog for ticks to avoid the diseases these common insects carry. But don't worry, removal is easy!

Photo courtesy of dogguide.net

happen. If your dog is bitten by a snake, *loosely* bandage the area and carry your dog to the car and go to the vet immediately. If your dog is too big to carry, allow him to slowly walk with you, taking your time to decrease the amount of circulation the poison gets through the system. Snake bites are dangerous and must be treated immediately, but survival is common if the proper steps are taken.

Also, to avoid dehydration, make sure you offer your dog plenty of fresh, brought-from-home water, as drinking from streams can possibly lead to illness, just as with humans. If your dog becomes sluggish, check the gums by pressing them, and ensuring that they return to a normal pink color in 1-2 seconds.

When you finish your hike, make sure to use your fingers to check the skin of your dog from head to tail for small bumps. If you discover that this bump is a tick, carefully remove the full insect with clean tweezers and wipe the spot with alcohol.

By following these guidelines, you should have a safe and enjoyable hike! For more information, visit a site such as www.peteducation.com or check the Red Cross for their pet First Aid classes.

"TO AVOID DEHYDRATION, OFFER YOUR DOG WATER EVERY 15-30 MINUTES AND REST IN THE SHADE WHEN NECESSARY."



Capillary refill time, or CRT, is a good indicator of your dogs hydration levels. Photo courtesy of peteducation.com

Austin Pets Alive (continued)

dog behaves the same for any handler, not just its favorite.

According to Mike Kaviani, the Behavior Manager for APA, this is the only partnership of its kind in the country between a Ranger unit and a shelter program.

After Rangers are trained on dog handling, they will be able to stop by the shelter while patrolling the Butler Hike and Bike Trail and check out specific dogs to take with them on the trail. These “Official Ranger Patrol Partners” will be outfitted with “adopt me” vests and Jr. Ranger badges and ready to hit the beat with their partners. While out on their walk, Rangers can not only advertise the dogs for

adoption by showcasing their behavior and manners, but also utilize the dogs as teaching tools.

Some topics the dogs can help cover include walking a dog safely on the trail, interacting with new dogs in dog parks, scooping the poop, watershed issues, heat safety, and caring for plants and other wildlife. Rangers conduct programs on these topics daily, and having a furry friend to attract more attention and gain more interest is nothing but a win-win for both organizations involved.

The dogs used for the Ranger Jog-a-dog program are used to being among people and other dogs. Austin Pets Alive is gaining accolades for their canine



Mike Kaviani demonstrates to Rangers the proper way to correct a dog who is pulling on his leash.

Play Group programs. These programs allow the dogs in the shelter to play in groups of around 25 dogs in a controlled environment, where they can run and sniff and explore as normal dogs do. This allows the dogs to get exercise, become more socialized, and release shelter-induced stress. By doing so, the dogs become more well-balanced, and therefore more adoptable. By taking these dogs out on the town, the Rangers and Austin Pets Alive are not only making new friends and teaching trail-goers, they are also saving lives. For more information, visit the Ranger website, or APA at www.austinpetsalive.org.

Park Rangers
Austin Parks and Recreation



Phone: 512-978-2600
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WWW.AUSTINTEXAS.GOV/PARKRANGERS

The City of Austin Park Ranger program was created to provide educational services, safety and security in Austin’s parks and recreational facilities. Equally important is our aim to protect and foster stewardship of the natural world. To accomplish this, the park rangers have been trained with a focus on emergency medical response, education and public safety.

The mission of the City of Austin park Rangers is to act as ambassadors for the Parks and Recreation Department to the community through protecting visitors’ well-being, preserving park lands, and promoting environmental stewardship for the City of Austin’s natural spaces.

“Like” [Austin Parks and Recreation](#) on Facebook and look for the Park Ranger posts!



The City of Austin is proud to comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act. If you require assistance for participation in our programs or use of our facilities, please call (512) 974-6700.