

# Letters to the Editor

**This issue of 'RANGER' sees the return of the 'letters' slot. We would like to see a letters column in every edition of 'RANGER' and hope that this one will open the floodgates. We welcome letters on any subject related to countryside management. Please try to limit letters to fewer than 500 words and include your name, job title and contact details.**

Dear Editor,

I read with great interest the article 'Born in the USA/US National Park Service' by Ken Mabery in issue 74 of Ranger magazine Autumn 2005.

My interest stems from having worked with the United States National Park Service (USNPS) during the late 1980's and mid 1990s. I was fortunate to be able to work in the Everglades National Park in Florida, in Yellowstone National Park and at Salton Sea National Wildlife Refuge in California. In 1994 I worked the summer season in Acadia National Park in Maine. During each season I had specialist duties as described by Ken, as well as having a multi-skilled/multi-tasking role as part of a larger team. Many years on and I am still in regular contact with many friends I made whilst working in the United States and have enjoyed several holidays to the old and new locations where careers have taken them. This summer I hope to return to Yellowstone for the first time since 1989. My reason for writing is to alert readers to the fact that the same on-going opportunity is still available.

The opportunity is made available through an organisation called the 'Student Conservation Association' (SCA) [www.thesca.org](http://www.thesca.org) who recruit hundreds of qualified individuals each year to participate in various programmes across the United States, working on behalf of the USNPS and other federal agencies such as the Bureau of Land Management, United States Forest Service and Fish & Wildlife Service. There are also opportunities to work with non-Federal agencies. Opportunities are not employment in the traditional sense, as it is very difficult to obtain a work permit for the United States. It is also illegal for a non-citizen to work for the Federal Government.

Non-US participants receive accommodation, a stipend to cover living expenses, uniform grant and use of vehicles needed to undertake their role. Some years ago a grant to assist with international air travel was also available but not until after arrival in the US.

Students were the original target audience of the SCA, but over the years participants aged 18 – 80 have taken up placements. The SCA operates an extensive equal opportunities policy and an individuals 'qualification' might be their on-the-job or voluntary experience, even their enthusiasm to participate if well conveyed. Qualified does not refer to certification.

If readers are looking for early career experience, a career break or an opportunity to develop a specialist interest, the SCA will almost certainly provide it. Generally speaking, summer time placements are taken up by United States college students, keen to gain their first steps on the career ladder. However the opportunity to add an international dimension to their team is often welcomed by senior park staff, who may even have started their own careers through the SCA. Participants from outside the United States can greatly increase their chance of selection by making themselves available outside the main summer season when the majority of US participants have returned to college and there is an increased need for staff.

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