

Thoughts From An Angry Park Ranger

“Folks - yesterday ended the regular summer season. I am in the West roughly between the Wasatch and the Tetons. I went home and drank a martini. I made it a double. Yes, there will still be more happy campers. But for the most part, Labor Day signals an end to the onslaught of humanity. Yes, we'll still have to put up with rude French Canadians for a little while but for the most part, we've made it through the storm.

It used to be that camping meant pitching a tent and hiking. Or maybe bringing the horses and doing some trail riding. But lately it seems like people are bringing their homes with them. The generators I can live with so long as they are quiet and used within reason. It's the late night music and drinking that kept us running this summer. I saw more domestics, more of what we classify as "disorderly conduct" offenses, and generally more people being rude and obnoxious to neighboring campers than in years past. And what's with the big screen TV's out in the forest? Can't you cut the umbilical cord with your TV for just three or four days? I went through one campground last night and felt like I was at the freaking drive in.

Listen folks, most people go camping to get away from it all. Who wants to here you screaming at your kids or berating your wife? No one wants to hear your stereo with the Bass cranked up to where my windows are vibrating before I even arrive. No one wants to here your drunken tirades and fights.

Saturday I handled 4 public urination (for the record, I don't care if your taking a leak behind a bush but what's up with you idiots that don't even try to conceal yourself?) 6 disorderly conduct, 2 domestics, 7 loud music complaints, and one “possession” arrest. Holy sh*t people! This is supposed to be camping, not the hood. Your Lincoln Navigator vehicle might have a premium sound system with a CD changer but does that mean we all have to enjoy your music? The answer is no. And to you people that cannot understand why the speed limit is 15 MPH,,,,it's because a lot of people bring little kids camping with them and these kids tend to run around. To the chick in the Dodge Neon with the Raiders Sticker, “Yes, you do get a ticket for going 50 in a 15 zone” and -“No, I don't care that you called my supervisor” (neither does my supervisor).

Being a park ranger used to mean a lot of PR, giving directions, occasional search and rescue, first aid, and a periodic encounter with some idiot who drank too much. But now it means responding to the same calls any department handles in an urban area. Instead of smiling at people and letting kids turn our overhead lights on, or petting our horse or sitting on our ATV and handing out junior ranger badges, we have to be on guard all the time looking for tweekers and gun totting survivalists who hate the government or want to use the wilderness as a place to stash sh*t for the Armageddon. And since when did it become popular to use the great outdoors to kill yourself? What happened to committing suicide in town? Now we have people coming out looking for the "natural way" to commit suicide and frankly, some of the places you are choosing make body recovery an all day ordeal. To the moron from Salt Lake that just had to take the 500 foot high dive, do you have any idea what it takes to stage a deep canyon body recovery when our only access is the river? I had plans that weekend!

Here are some of my summer favorites from this year:

To the peckerhead from Denver standing out the side of the road skinning out a dead Coyote. I understand that it was road kill and that you didn't shoot it. My problem is your lack of common sense. Everyone driving by sees you standing there with your buck knife gutting this damn thing. Do you think they know it was road kill? Every widow from Cheyenne to San Francisco that drove by and saw you standing there with your prize had their cell phones in hand faster than Wyatt Earp could pull a six iron.

And to the Californian who stopped to help the deer that had been hit. You're mad at me because I wouldn't call a vet? Are you nuts lady? This is the wilderness not Walmart. We do not call veterinarians for road kill.

To the kid that pointed the airsoft M-16 BB gun out of your car window at me as we passed on the highway,, I'm sorry I made your dad wet his pants when I pulled you all from the car at gunpoint but hey, your the one who took the orange top off of your toy and don't you think that you being 16 means your old enough to know better? Hell, I damn near had my own private heart attack because of you. What am I supposed to think when I see a Cadillac with California plates and a big black gun barrel pointed at me?

To the Hispanic guy who tossed the empty Busch Lite beer case out the window, how is me pulling you over racial intimidation? I would have pulled you over no matter what color you are. You paid how much for those wheel rims? - and yet you drink the cheapest beer on the shelf and you can't afford a littering ticket? I don't think so. I hate writing tickets but you're the kind that makes it fun.

To the guy taking a crap on the side of the road, do you think that just because your on the passengers side of your RV doesn't mean we can't see you squatting there on the asphalt? There's a whole forest ten feet away! When I came around the corner and saw that I almost crashed into a tree!

To the guy doing the horizontal rumba with your girlfriend on top of the picnic table, yes, I'm sure it was cool and yes, she is hot but can't you at least wait until its dark???? Not everyone is a voyeur. Someone must NOT have enjoyed seeing your naked butt or they wouldn't have bothered to call it in.

To the guy who stole one of our ATV's. Don't you think you should have painted it a different color or did something to change its appearance before you start riding it around the same area you stole it from?

To the rest of you real outdoorsmen and women who respect the land and enjoy the outdoors for what it is, more power to you. But I'll never contact you unless we are passing on the trail and then it's only a mutual hello or maybe answering your questions about weather or terrain. To the weekend warriors who bring your hate and discontent with you, stay home.

Realistically, 90% of the people who visit the outdoors are great. You make the job fun. It's the 10% who seek to work overtime to put everyone else out that makes it bad.

The summer is over! Now I can concentrate on a little work around the house and maybe some fishing. Winter will be here soon and life will be good.

Attributed to Don Oneppo (some doubt as to actual author)
1264 words

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