



Beyond the Classroom

Educators Dip Toes into Ranger World

While many school teachers dream about becoming a park ranger, few actually get to don the ranger hat. But four teachers did just that this summer at two National Park Service sites in Maine.

As participants in the innovative Teacher-Ranger-Teacher (TRT) program, these individuals spent the summer leading interpretive programs, staffing Acadia's visitor center, shadowing park employees, and, of course, creating lesson plans. This fall, these teachers returned to the classroom armed with firsthand knowledge of the National Park Service and, more importantly, how to share that knowledge with their students. They will also wear their ranger uniform to school and present programs during National Park Week in April as a way of introducing students and staff to the National Park Service.

One of Acadia's overarching goals with the TRT program is attracting teachers working with underserved youth. Consequently, many of the students in the teacher-rangers' school districts have never experienced a national park—or even nature—for themselves. This program, however, enables teachers to provide kids with a national park experience inside the classroom.

Acadia is proud to be the first park in the Northeast to participate in the



Acadia Teacher-Rangers Renay, Dwight, and Nancy (above) and Saint Croix Island Teacher-Ranger Jim (below). NPS photos by Ginny Reams and Karen Lanier.

TRT program. The park increased the number of teacher-rangers from one in the 2007 pilot program to four this year, thanks to funding from a Parks as Classroom Grant, the National Park Service Northeast Region, and Acadia Partners for Science and Learning (through the Engage Youth Centennial Challenge project). Three of those teachers worked at Acadia, while the fourth spent his summer at Saint Croix Island International Historic Site outside of Calais, Maine.

Teacher-Ranger Nancy Philbrick says that her summer at Acadia will help her incorporate experiential learning into her curriculum: "I will definitely provide my students more opportunities to 'do' science just as I have done this summer. The



opportunity to learn and engage becomes so much greater when the students are actively involved. [TRT] provided me with new teaching strategies to use across the curriculum....This experience has been professionally refreshing."

Explore the pages of this newsletter to learn more about the experiences of this year's teacher-rangers.

NPS Websites

www.nps.gov/acad

The official website of Acadia National Park. Includes information on park resources, trip planning, and more.

www.nps.gov/acad/forteachers

The home of Acadia National Park's education program. Offers links to the Teacher-Ranger-Teacher program; teacher, parent, and student resources; the Junior Ranger program; and more.

www.nps.gov/learn

National Park Service curriculum-based learning tools, teaching resources, and online activities.

www.efieldtrips.org

Includes interactive virtual national park visits, trip journal worksheets, "ask an expert," and live web chats.



National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

Acadia National Park protects more than 47,000 acres of granite-domed mountains, woodlands, lakes and ponds, and ocean shoreline, creating striking scenery and diverse habitats. This diverse environment combines with a rich cultural history to create unparalleled scientific, educational, and recreational opportunities in a spectacular setting.

Education Office
Acadia National Park
P.O. Box 177
Bar Harbor, ME 04609

Phone
Cynthia Ocel 207-288-8822
Kate Petrie 207-288-8808/1312
Michael Marion 207-288-8823
Donna Healy 207-288-8824

Fax
207-288-8831

E-mail
acad_education_office@nps.gov

The National Park Service cares for the special places saved by the American people so that all may experience our heritage.

Teacher-Ranger-Teacher Fact Sheet

What would I do in the park?

Teacher-rangers at Acadia National Park become part of the park's education division. Participant duties vary, but each teacher-ranger is given the opportunity to present at least one formal interpretive program during their time at the park. Teacher-rangers also staff Hulls Cove Visitor Center, work with Junior Rangers, and provide informal interpretation.

During their time at the park, teacher-rangers are encouraged to shadow employees from other park divisions. This year's staff, for example, spent time with trail construction crews, resource management staff, and protection rangers.

Teacher-rangers are given time during the day to prepare lesson plans for the upcoming school year.

What is the time commitment?

Given varying school schedules across the country, start and end dates are flexible, but teacher-rangers are expected to commit to at least eight weeks of service between June and August. Park administrators will make exceptions on a case-by-case basis.

How can I afford to do this?

The government provides free, shared housing for teacher-rangers during their time at the park. In addition, they receive a stipend of \$300 per week.

Who is eligible?

The park accepts applications from all public or private teachers working

with students in grades K–12. Teachers from all disciplines are encouraged to apply.

Priority is given to teachers who work in underserved districts or whose students have limited exposure to the National Park Service. The park also gives preference to Maine-based applicants to help reach our 2016 goal of introducing all kids in Acadia's home state to the National Park Service.

What is expected of me after completing this program?

Teacher-rangers should leave Acadia National Park with enough information to develop tailored, curriculum-based programs that help students better understand both the work and mission of the National Park Service, as well as specific natural and cultural history topics related to the Northeast.

In April, during National Park Week, teacher-rangers wear their National Park Service uniform to school and present programs to introduce students and staff to the National Park Service.

How do I apply?

More information about the program is available on Acadia National Park's website, listed below. This link will direct you to a downloadable application form. You can also reach Education Coordinator Cynthia Ocel at 207-288-8822 or e-mail her at cynthia_ocel@nps.gov.

www.nps.gov/acad/forteachers/teacher-ranger-teacher.htm

Dwight Warnke: From Missouri to Maine

What made you decide to apply to Acadia's teacher-ranger program?

"I really enjoy personal development. I've done different types of personal development since '91 . . . It keeps me fresh in the classroom, it keeps me excited about what I teach, [and] it allows me to network with people."

"I've never been to Acadia National Park. I thought what a great opportunity to learn about this area."

What is your student body like?

"The town is around 16,000 and there's only one public high school . . . [It's] an engineering town with a lot of students whose parents work at the university . . . With that you have a group of students, probably 30 to 40 percent, who [are] really diversified [and] have lots of opportunity, but you also have that 30 to 40 percent who are from the true Ozark background where they may not have traveled very far from home. So we really have the two extremes."

What is a specific behavior you would like to change when you return home?

"I would think [stopping students from] blazing new trails with four wheelers. Because their idea to use the . . . Forest Service [land] is to go four wheeling and, if there's no trail there, they'll create their own new trail. They don't realize the damage it creates or the ruts, the erosion. "

"A lot of their values is what they got from their mom and dad and a lot of times it's positive, but the idea of leave no trace . . . a lot of those concepts would be foreign to them. It's the

same type of camping philosophy they may have had in the '30s, '40s, and '50s: "The bigger the fire the better sometimes."

"I see a big difference when you have kids go out and pick up trash in the stream. They behave totally different toward cigarettes and Styrofoam after they've picked up bags full of trash . . . They realize, "We can make a difference if we don't litter or we pick up in the stream."

Has your time as a park ranger helped your teaching ability?

"A skill I would like to perfect is teaching through interpretive methods. I think that's a technique that students would enjoy . . . because

it ties in that emotional connection . . . For example, [one interpreter I shadowed] compared the plumbing in the home to plants needing plumbing to grow taller. Little things like that make a big difference . . . We teachers sometimes just want to get to the guts of the matter."



Teacher-Ranger Dwight talks about stream ecology at his Stream Team program for children nine and older. NPS photos by Cynthia Ocel.

At a Glance: Dwight Warnke

School:	Rolla High School
Location:	Rolla, Missouri
Type of school district:	Rural
Subject:	Science (typically 10th-grade biology)
Grades:	10 to 12
Years of teaching:	24

Nancy Philbrick: A “Local” Perspective



What made you decide to become a Teacher-Ranger-Teacher?

“I was looking for a new opportunity to get some personal development. My focus has been mostly on math in the last few years. I’ve kind of switched directions. I like the idea of hands-on experience of learning and bringing that back to the classroom.”

Can you describe your town and student population?

“It’s a very small town, small community, and maybe 5,000 people live there. The school itself is part of an eight-town school district . . . It’s the largest geographic school district

in the state . . . It’s a challenging socioeconomic community.

“I would say the average student has not been to a national park [or national forest] . . . The White Mountain National Forest is pretty close by, but it’s not ranger patrolled so they may have gone hiking or fishing somewhere without realizing they’re in a national [forest].”

What is the benefit of introducing these students to the National Park System?

“[T]wo of my science units have to do with what we’re learning here in the park. One is marine animals, and another one is watersheds. In social studies, one of the themes is citizenship so being good stewards of the earth is something we incorporate in science and social studies.

“I [also] hope they understand and learn that there are places out there that they can visit, that people are working hard to preserve the National Park System. I hope through the study of the national parks . . . they’ll understand that this could be an opportunity for them to travel, create some desire for them to get out of Maine or get out of Oxford.”

What has been particularly challenging for you as a teacher-ranger?

“I don’t have a strong science background. The geology aspect of the park is quite extensive, more than I get to teaching sixth-grade geology, so I’m trying to understand all of that. The history is a little more detail than I get [at school]. I already knew about some. I wouldn’t say that’s necessarily a challenge to learn, but it is in-depth information.”



Teacher-Ranger Nancy met with Secretary of Education Margaret Spellings (above) and assisted fellow teachers at a teacher workshop in the park (below). NPS photos by Cynthia Ocel.

At a Glance: Nancy Philbrick

School:	Oxford Elementary School
Location:	Oxford, Maine
Type of school district:	Rural
Grade:	6
Years of teaching:	10

Renay Moran-Kurklen: An Urban View

How would you describe your school?

“It’s very diverse—different cultures, different socioeconomic [backgrounds] . . . I think that was one of the reasons why they chose me as a teacher-ranger-teacher. I’ve been trying to figure out different ways that I can reach out . . . to culturally diverse populations.”

What is your average student’s exposure to the outdoors?

“We do have a nature field trip every year for fourth, fifth and sixth graders. It’s a four-to-five day field trip with a program called Nature’s Classroom, and we go to the Adirondacks by Lake George . . . Some students you can tell their parents are very active with them and some have very little activity. Some go camping or go away for the summer and some probably sit home and play video games.”

How do you think your experience here at Acadia can help your students in New York City?

“I think it’s important to bring children back to nature. Being in natural environments is therapeutic, physically, mentally and emotionally . . . [For example] students who have difficulty in class excel when they’re at Nature’s Classroom. They show independence, self control; they’re active and on task.”

Can you describe something that surprised you here at Acadia?

“I didn’t expect all the career opportunities [here]. I didn’t even know that there were different types of rangers. I had no idea that there was a law enforcement ranger or that there was an interpretive ranger . . . That’s

definitely knowledge that I’ll bring back to . . . the high school students. I’ll tell them about the Student Conservation Association and the different types of volunteer work that they can do and the jobs that are out there for people who love nature and science.”

What purpose do you think it serves to wear the park uniform during National Park Week?

“When I do my Westward movement unit, I put on a cowboy hat and all of a sudden it changes the whole feeling of the room . . . The students even started dressing in that time period. So just something simple like putting on a hat can command so much attention.”

Can you describe one of your job responsibilities here at the park?

“I’ve been working at the Carroll Homestead this year. I have been assisting Donna [an education park ranger] in explaining the life of a typical coastal Maine person living in the 1800s. As part of that people do a guided tour of the homestead and they also play games of the time period.”

What has been particularly challenging for you as a TRT?

“Entertaining adults is a completely different universe than entertaining 10 and 11 year olds!”

How do you like living inside the park?

“I feel fortunate in my placement of living because we’re surrounded by interpretive rangers, law enforcement rangers, lifeguards, trail crew . . . It’s like I’m having an interview process with people at night when we’re socializing.”

What has been your favorite part about being here?

“Making my own experiences at the park, going on programs, enjoying interpretive ranger programs, entertainment, seeing animals, exercising, walking on the carriage roads, just taking in the beauty that is Acadia National Park.”



Renay discusses turtle adaptations during the Animals of Acadia program for park visitors. NPS photo by Sujata Gupta.

At a Glance: Renay Moran-Kurklen

School:	The Renaissance Charter School, K-12
Location:	New York City (Queens)
Type of school district:	Urban
Grades:	4 and 5
Years of teaching:	10

Lessons from Acadia's First Teacher-Ranger

In 2007, the first teacher-ranger in the Northeast Region of the National Park Service came to Acadia as part of the park's pilot program. Connie Shaw, a 7th-grade language arts teacher, traveled a long way to get here—all the way from Calhoun Middle School in Denton, Texas.

Like the 2008 teacher-rangers, Connie worked alongside all divisions in the park, attending training, presenting programs, and helping out on research projects. Connie wrote about her time in the park: "I felt fortunate to have a wide variety of activities and experiences . . . I will find multiple uses for the numerous resources and knowledge that I have gained . . . I know that my students' learning and lives will be enhanced."

Connie has indeed found uses for her new-found knowledge. She and a fellow teacher received a grant for a project to enhance the sense of stewardship among school staff, students, and parents for the school campus and environment. Part of the project included the creation of outdoor teaching spaces. Connie shared a note to her fellow teachers about the

outdoor classroom: "If you have not discovered this area of our campus, I encourage you to have a 'walkabout' on the new flagstone trail. A whole class can sit at the freshly assembled tables. New benches hug the pond. Tomatoes, squash, and peppers are hiding in the vegetable bed."

In addition to her special projects, Connie gave nine presentations to students and fellow teachers during National Park Week 2008. She is helping her students discover the wonders of the natural world and writes, "The stewardship concept

is now at CMS [Calhoun Middle School]!"

For teachers considering applying to the Teacher-Ranger-Teacher program at Acadia, Connie has some recommendations:

- Be enthusiastic, love nature and the outdoors, show courage, and display problem-solving skills.
- Be content with being alone and away from friends and family, be healthy, and be ready to be a student.
- Creature comforts will be out. Hiking shoes are in. This will be your entire summer (lucky you!).



Connie discusses wildlife with her students in Denton, Texas, during National Park Week 2008.

TRT Tech: Blogs

Still wondering exactly what summer is like in Acadia or looking for more detail about the teacher-rangers' experiences here?

Check out the blog section of the Acadia website for the real scoop, written by the 2008 teacher-rangers. Dwight, Nancy, and Renay shared their Maine adventures in this weekly blog from summer 2008.

Learn about Dwight's foray into lobstering with a local lobsterman, Nancy's trip with resource management to monitor bacteria

levels in the park's lakes, and Renay's visit to Saint Croix Island International Historic Site.

Throughout the year, they will be updating the blogs to keep us posted about how they are using the knowledge and experience they gained this summer to benefit their students.

You can read the blogs online at www.nps.gov/acad/forteachers/trtblog.htm.





National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

Acadia National Park

P.O. Box 177
 Bar Harbor, ME 04609

207 288-3338 phone
 207 288-8813 fax
 www.nps.gov/acad

Acadia National Park 2009 Teacher-Ranger-Teacher Application

Send completed application and support letter to:

Cynthia Ocel	207/288-8822
Education Coordinator	207/288-8813 fax
Acadia National Park	cynthia_ocel@nps.gov
P.O. Box 177	
Bar Harbor, ME 04609	

Teacher's Name: _____

Home Address: _____

Home Phone: _____ Cell Phone: _____

School: _____

School Address: _____

School Phone Number: _____

E-mail (most frequently used): _____

Best method and time to contact you: _____

Grade level and courses taught this year and in the coming year: _____

1. How many weeks of employment can you commit to between June 1, and August 28, 2009? (Note: Starting/ending dates are flexible within this time frame; short leave requests can be considered.) What is the earliest date you can start? _____

2. Are you agreeable to living in park housing and possibly having 1 or 2 housemates? If you have any special needs, write them here (please note: pets are not permitted in park housing). Yes No

3. Are you willing to wear the National Park Service uniform to school during National Park Week (April 2010), or another similar time period, and give presentations about the National Park Service for your school and in other district schools? Yes No

4. What kinds of park resources or activities would be of interest to your students and how would you incorporate them into your classroom?

5. A) Why are you interested in this position and working in a national park this summer?

B) Are there certain natural or cultural resources and park departments (Interpretation, Protection, Maintenance, Administration, Resource Management) at Acadia National Park that interest you more than others?

C) What experience do you have regarding national parks?

D) How will you share information and ideas gained from this experience with your school colleagues?

Please also submit:

- Principal approval page (following)
- Names and telephone numbers of three (3) references
- A letter of support from a colleague

Application deadline is January 16, 2009.

In applying for this position, I verify all the information I have supplied is correct.

Teacher's Signature

Date

**Teacher-Ranger-Teacher Program
Acadia National Park, Maine**

Approval of the Principal

I support _____ (name of teacher) in participating in the Teacher-Ranger-Teacher program at Acadia National Park. I understand there will need to be an Intergovernmental Agreement between the school district and the National Park Service. This agreement supports teachers working in national parks during the summer as park rangers, while developing activities that support the curricula of this school. I will allow this teacher to implement these activities in the classroom with my review and approval.

I will also allow this teacher to participate in the spring 2010 National Park Week. During that week, this teacher is allowed to wear the National Park Service uniform and give presentations about the summer experience in the national parks to the student body of this school. If funding is available for substitute teachers, this teacher is permitted to visit other schools during National Park Week.

Principal

School

Date