

Gary B. Wetterburg and Robert C. Milne

International Workshop on Environmental Interpretation: Reflection of Trends in Personnel Training

The national park systems of the world have grown dramatically in the past decade. Globally, 2,400 parks and protected areas covering 3.7 million square kilometers now exist in 124 countries. In the past 12 years, approximately twice as many new areas were established as had existed in 1969. This has been accompanied by a corresponding growth and institutionalization of management agencies. The training needs of park and protected areas personnel in those agencies are undergoing continual refinements.

Since 1961, the U.S. National Park Service (USNPS) has maintained an Office of International Affairs to handle the numerous requests for information or technical assistance which are received each year. That office coordinates cooperation with other nations on natural, cultural, and recreational resources management. It also plans and manages orientation and training programs for foreign park and conservation officials, helps U.S. field sites with visitors from other nations, and manages National Park Service responsibilities under international agreements and treaties. Examples of the latter are the Convention on Nature Protection and Wildlife Preservation in the Western Hemisphere and the Convention Concerning the Protection of World Cultural and Natural Heritage. Both of these important treaties encourage interchange of conservation techniques and concepts among countries.

USNPS advice historically has been sought regarding traditional aspects of park planning and management; however, shifts in emphasis are becoming apparent as nations develop self-sufficiency in these aspects. Many countries are now implementing a national plan for conservation units; that is, a national strategy for selecting representative parks and protected areas. Likewise, the agencies are increasingly recognizing the need to prepare general management plans for individual units of their park systems. Multidisciplinary teams have been established in some countries which are actively engaged in this planning work.

In the past few years, requests have increased for technical assistance in specific park-related fields such as environmental interpretation. Well over a decade ago, a course on environmental interpretation/education was instituted, with international assistance, as part of the curriculum at the College of African Wildlife Management at Mweka, Tanzania. In 1980, Dr. Arturo Tarak, Associate Director of the Argentine National Park Service (ANPS) invited USNPS collaboration in designing and executing environmental interpretation training courses for park rangers at the ANPS Training Center in Nahuel Huapi National Park. In 1981, the Center for Tropical Agricultural Research and Training (CATIE) in Costa Rica sponsored a Central American Workshop on Environmental Interpretation and Education. CATIE re-

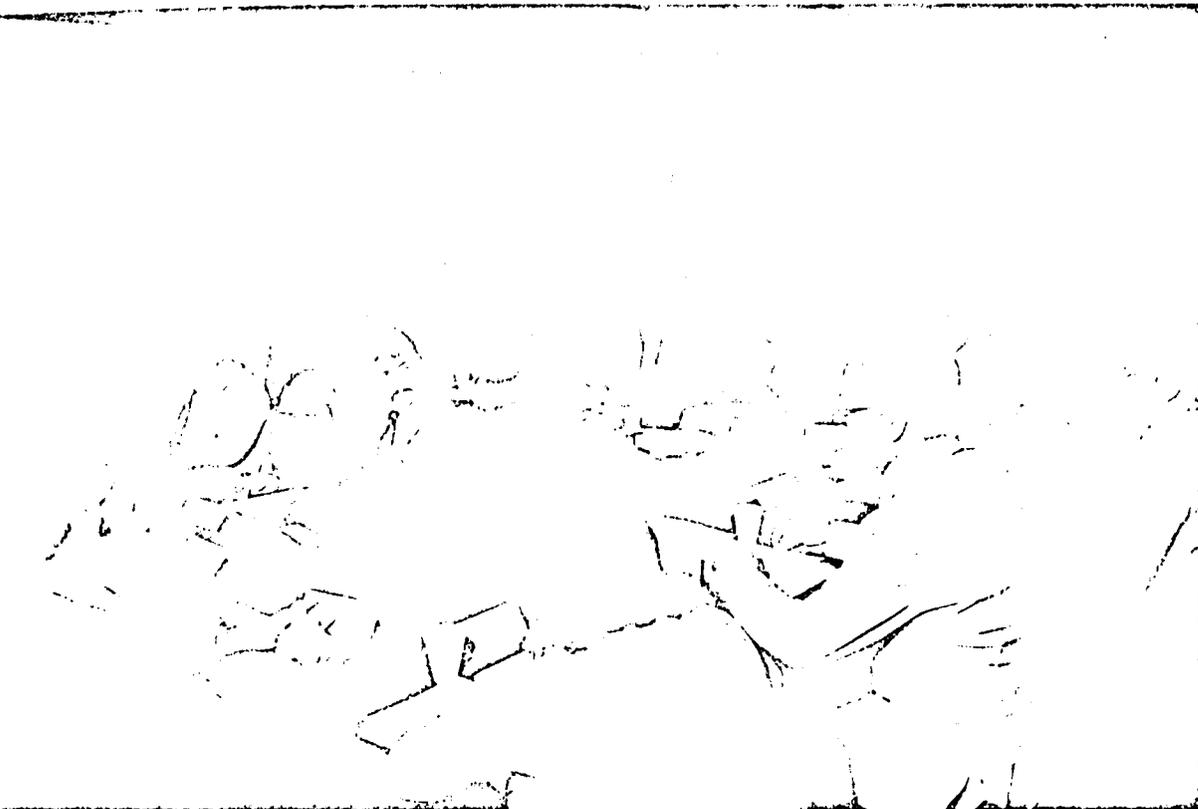
quested a USNPS instructor as part of the Workshop staff. The course attracted participants from five countries and included field work in Costa Rica's Manuel Antonio National Park. In 1983, an environmental interpretation workshop was cosponsored in Paraguay by three government ministries, a national conservation organization (PRONATUR), the Mayor's office of Asuncion, the U.S. Peace Corps, and the USNPS. Thirty-five participants were introduced to interpretive techniques and developed action plans for use in their respective agencies. Such efforts, in a variety of countries, are a result of a combination of factors, particularly a desire to gain public and governmental support as well as to consolidate recent gains in establishing new areas and management agencies.

Other training needs are more subtle but nonetheless expected to grow. These include program topics such as: park resource management and protection, research and monitoring appropriate to national parks, park related tourism and public relations, park maintenance, guidelines for management of World Heritage Sites and Biosphere Reserves, and national parks as a component of economic development. These observations generally agree with training assessments made by IUCN (1983), Miller (1972), and WWF-U.S. (1980).

In 1982, a 2-week Spanish language International Workshop on Environmental Interpretation was initiated at Harpers Ferry, West Virginia to help fill the requests made to the USNPS, and as a complement to the Central American course. It utilized written materials developed by CATIE which were blended together with a training course outline prepared and used by NPS naturalist J. Douglas Cuillard in Argentina the previous year. The Workshop was held in both 1982 and 1983 at the USNPS Mather Training Center in Harpers Ferry on an experimental basis. Participants included 26 individuals from 15 countries.

The Workshop drew upon NPS experience with the highly successful International Seminar on National Parks and Equivalent Reserves which has been conducted for nearly 20 years and is cosponsored with Parks Canada and The University of Michigan. The International Seminar is offered in English only and is designed for those who occupy the senior management positions in their countries' park systems. The Workshop, offered in Spanish, was designed for those either directly involved with environmental interpretation or else with setting up the administrative divisions which would execute these functions.

The International Workshop on Environmental Interpretation was introduced to share NPS experience in this field with the idea that some of the techniques and concepts which have proven successful in the USA may be adaptable to other cultural situa-



David Wright, Associate Director, US National Park Service, (far right) welcomes participants to the opening session of the international seminar. Gary Wetterberg (to Wright's left), NPS Office of International Affairs, translates into Spanish.

tions. This point was stressed continually throughout the sessions. The participants were urged to consider what they observed during the course in relation to their own varied cultural backgrounds. They were also encouraged to exchange information freely among themselves about the environmental interpretation techniques, policies and procedures utilized in their own countries.

The workshop had the goals of providing wildland managers with: (1) an introduction to environmental interpretation consisting of concepts and practical information which could be adapted for use in the parks and protected areas of their respective countries; and (2) an international forum for mutual interchange of environmental interpretation concepts and techniques currently employed.

The objectives of the Workshop were that, upon completion, each participant would be able to:

1. Define environmental interpretation in their own terms and discuss its role in the management of their parks and protected areas.
2. List and discuss principles of interpretation.
3. Write precise, measurable objectives for interpretive programs.
4. Identify benefits of interpretation within the context of their own countries.
5. Distinguish between environmental interpretation and environmental education.
6. Describe a suitable format for an interpretive plan within their own national context and its relation to a general management plan.
7. Identify various interpretive programs, media, and techniques which would be most effective according to the particular characteristics of their own home countries.

The technical content of the course included: definitions and principles of environmental interpretation; analysis of visitor expectations; mechanics of interpretation; personalized and nonpersonalized services; strategies of questioning, structure and re-

sponse; and techniques for effective interpretation. Field trips included visits to Catoctin Mountain Park, Shenandoah National Park, Gettysburg National Military Park, and Harpers Ferry Historical Park. Special tours were also arranged of the Harpers Ferry Center.

Participants gave presentations to introduce their own parks or protected areas to each other and to the staff. Toward the end of the course, two groups were formed, and each was asked to draft a preliminary interpretive plan for a park selected from among those nations represented. The Workshops were then evaluated in relation to their stated objectives and other factors including suggested additions or deletions.

The 1982 Workshop was subsidized by the USNPS on a trial basis. This prototype was highly regarded by participants who suggested that demand would probably be sufficient for the course to achieve financial self-sustainability. In 1983, thanks to the financial support of various national governments, the Organization of American States, the U. S. Agency for International Development, The U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service, FAO, UNESCO, and particularly the World Wildlife Fund-U. S., the USNPS was able to select 14 highly qualified applicants from 14 different countries. Six potential participants, with assured or likely funding, had to be turned down because of lack of available space.

The evaluations of the Workshop praised its content and mix of field work with classroom exercises. One participant noted,

"... having completed the course, I now have tools and new knowledge in interpretation which can be used advantageously in my country. I furthermore can see clearly opportunities which are being lost in some of our parks..."

However, preoccupations were expressed about the comparatively sophisticated level of techniques and materials utilized in the USA, and the lack of time to attain proficiency in basic hands-on skills such as sign making, slide labeling, and brochure layout. Participants suggested that materials and equipment used in the USA often would not be possible within the park budgets of

many developing countries. Furthermore, while experience suggests that funding is not a major problem if the course is planned well enough in advance, expenses could probably be cut in half by holding the Workshop in a site more centrally located for the intended audience. Because of these reasons, the USNPS has decided not to hold the Workshop again in the US, but rather, to encourage and participate in its realization in Latin America. Both CAHE in Costa Rica and the Argentine National Park Service have expressed interest in assuming responsibility for the Workshop in their respective geographical regions.

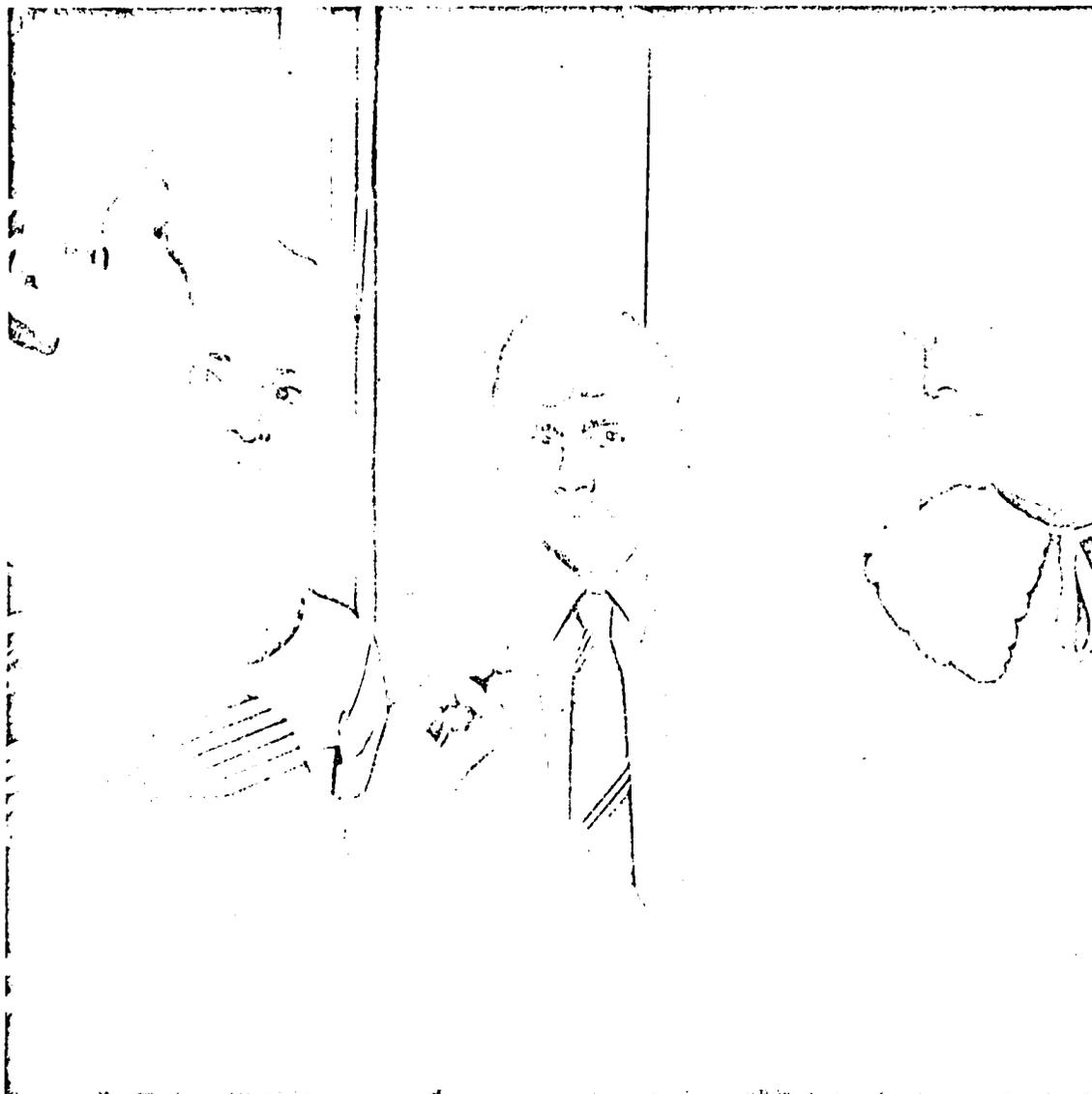
Workshops and courses of this nature, dealing with discrete technical topics which meet the evolving needs of park and protected area personnel in the 1980s, are well worth considering by regional development agencies and academic institutions. They may be used to impart new skills or as refresher courses. They could be taught in whatever language is applicable, and organized on a biogeographical basis. The best available expertise should be utilized to develop the training module which then could be transferred elsewhere with appropriate modifications.

Photos: National Park Service

References

- IUCN, 1983. Training protected area personnel: principles for developing management capacity. Proceedings of workshop held during the 1982 World Congress on National Parks in Bali, Indonesia. (In press.)
- Miller, K. R., 1974. Development and training of personnel: the foundation of national park programs in the future. *Proceedings of the Second World Conference on National Parks*, Ed. Sir Hugh Elliott. IUCN, Gland, Switzerland, pp. 326-347
- World Wildlife Fund-U.S., 1980. Strategy for training in natural resources and environment: a proposal for development of personnel and institutions in Latin America and the Caribbean. Washington, D.C., 208 pages plus appendices.

Robert C. Milne, Chief of International Park Affairs of the National Park Service in Washington, D.C., is Vice Chairman for the Nearctic Realm for the Commission on National Parks and Protected Areas of the IUCN. Dr. Gary B. Weiterberg, worked for FAO for several years in South America and is the Western Hemisphere Program Coordinator for the NPS. He is a Consultant to IUCN's Parks Commission.



(Left to right) Yolanda Maklowski, manager of the NPS Hispanic program, talks with Soledad de Moreno, specialist in environmental education for Soberania National Park, Panama; Silvano Gonzalez, superintendent of Defensores del Chao National Park, Paraguay; and Constanza Casanovas, chief of environmental education for the national park system of the Dominican Republic.

International Workshop on Environmental Interpretation: Reflection of Trends in Personnel Training

The national park systems of the world have grown dramatically in the past decade. Globally, 2,400 parks and protected areas covering 3.7 million square kilometers now exist in 124 countries. In the past 12 years, approximately twice as many new areas were established as had existed in 1969. This has been accompanied by a corresponding growth and institutionalization of management agencies. The training needs of park and protected areas personnel in those agencies are undergoing continual refinements.

Since 1961, the U.S. National Park Service (USNPS) has maintained an Office of International Affairs to handle the numerous requests for information or technical assistance which are received each year. That office coordinates cooperation with other nations on natural, cultural, and recreational resources management. It also plans and manages orientation and training programs for foreign park and conservation officials, helps U.S. field sites with visitors from other nations, and manages National Park Service responsibilities under international agreements and treaties. Examples of the latter are the Convention on Nature Protection and Wildlife Preservation in the Western Hemisphere and the Convention Concerning the Protection of World Cultural and Natural Heritage. Both of these important treaties encourage interchange of conservation techniques and concepts among countries.

USNPS advice historically has been sought regarding traditional aspects of park planning and management; however, shifts in emphasis are becoming apparent as nations develop self-sufficiency in these aspects. Many countries are now implementing a national plan for conservation units; that is, a national strategy for selecting representative parks and protected areas. Likewise, the agencies are increasingly recognizing the need to prepare general management plans for individual units of their park systems. Multidisciplinary teams have been established in some countries which are actively engaged in this planning work.

In the past few years, requests have increased for technical assistance in specific park-related fields such as environmental interpretation. Well over a decade ago, a course on environmental interpretation/education was instituted, with international assistance, as part of the curriculum at the College of African Wildlife Management at Mweka, Tanzania. In 1980, Dr. Arturo Tarak, Associate Director of the Argentine National Park Service (ANPS) invited USNPS collaboration in designing and executing environmental interpretation training courses for park rangers at the ANPS Training Center in Nahuel Huapi National Park. In 1981, the Center for Tropical Agricultural Research and Training (CATIE) in Costa Rica sponsored a Central American Workshop on Environmental Interpretation and Education. CATIE re-

quested a USNPS instructor as part of the Workshop staff. The course attracted participants from five countries and included field work in Costa Rica's Manuel Antonio National Park. In 1983, an environmental interpretation workshop was cosponsored in Paraguay by three government ministries, a national conservation organization (PRONATURA), the Mayor's office of Asuncion, the U.S. Peace Corps, and the USNPS. Thirty-five participants were introduced to interpretive techniques and developed action plans for use in their respective agencies. Such efforts, in a variety of countries, are a result of a combination of factors, particularly a desire to gain public and governmental support as well as to consolidate recent gains in establishing new areas and management agencies.

Other training needs are more subtle but nonetheless expected to grow. These include program topics such as: park resource management and protection, research and monitoring appropriate to national parks, park related tourism and public relations, park maintenance, guidelines for management of World Heritage Sites and Biosphere Reserves, and national parks as a component of economic development. These observations generally agree with training assessments made by IUCN (1983), Miller (1972), and WWF-U.S. (1980).

In 1982, a 2-week Spanish language International Workshop on Environmental Interpretation was initiated at Harpers Ferry, West Virginia to help fill the requests made to the USNPS, and as a complement to the Central American course. It utilized written materials developed by CATIE which were blended together with a training course outline prepared and used by NPS naturalist J. Douglas Cuillard in Argentina the previous year. The Workshop was held in both 1982 and 1983 at the USNPS Mather Training Center in Harpers Ferry on an experimental basis. Participants included 26 individuals from 15 countries.

The Workshop drew upon NPS experience with the highly successful International Seminar on National Parks and Equivalent Reserves which has been conducted for nearly 20 years and is cosponsored with Parks Canada and The University of Michigan. The International Seminar is offered in English only and is designed for those who occupy the senior management positions in their countries' park systems. The Workshop, offered in Spanish, was designed for those either directly involved with environmental interpretation or else with setting up the administrative divisions which would execute these functions.

The International Workshop on Environmental Interpretation was introduced to share NPS experience in this field with the idea that some of the techniques and concepts which have proven successful in the USA may be adaptable to other cultural situa-



David Wright, Associate Director, US National Park Service, (far right) welcomes participants to the opening session of the international seminar. Gary Wetterberg (to Wright's left), NPS Office of International Affairs, translates into Spanish.

tions. This point was stressed continually throughout the sessions. The participants were urged to consider what they observed during the course in relation to their own varied cultural backgrounds. They were also encouraged to exchange information freely among themselves about the environmental interpretation techniques, policies and procedures utilized in their own countries.

The workshop had the goals of providing wildland managers with: (1) an introduction to environmental interpretation consisting of concepts and practical information which could be adapted for use in the parks and protected areas of their respective countries; and (2) an international forum for mutual interchange of environmental interpretation concepts and techniques currently employed.

The objectives of the Workshop were that, upon completion, each participant would be able to:

1. Define environmental interpretation in their own terms and discuss its role in the management of their parks and protected areas.
2. List and discuss principles of interpretation.
3. Write precise, measurable objectives for interpretive programs.
4. Identify benefits of interpretation within the context of their own countries.
5. Distinguish between environmental interpretation and environmental education.
6. Describe a suitable format for an interpretive plan within their own national context and its relation to a general management plan.
7. Identify various interpretive programs, media, and techniques which would be most effective according to the particular characteristics of their own home countries.

The technical content of the course included: definitions and principles of environmental interpretation; analysis of visitor expectations; mechanics of interpretation; personalized and nonpersonalized services; strategies of questioning, structure and re-

sponse; and techniques for effective interpretation. Field trips included visits to Catoctin Mountain Park, Shenandoah National Park, Gettysburg National Military Park, and Harpers Ferry Historical Park. Special tours were also arranged of the Harpers Ferry Center.

Participants gave presentations to introduce their own parks or protected areas to each other and to the staff. Toward the end of the course, two groups were formed, and each was asked to draft a preliminary interpretive plan for a park selected from among those nations represented. The Workshops were then evaluated in relation to their stated objectives and other factors including suggested additions or deletions.

The 1982 Workshop was subsidized by the USNPS on a trial basis. This prototype was highly regarded by participants who suggested that demand would probably be sufficient for the course to achieve financial self-sustainability. In 1983, thanks to the financial support of various national governments, the Organization of American States, the U. S. Agency for International Development, The U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service, FAO, UNESCO, and particularly the World Wildlife Fund-U. S., the USNPS was able to select 14 highly qualified applicants from 14 different countries. Six potential participants, with assured or likely funding, had to be turned down because of lack of available space.

The evaluations of the Workshop praised its content and mix of field work with classroom exercises. One participant noted,

"... having completed the course, I now have tools and new knowledge in interpretation which can be used advantageously in my country. I furthermore can see clearly opportunities which are being lost in some of our parks..."

However, preoccupations were expressed about the comparatively sophisticated level of techniques and materials utilized in the USA, and the lack of time to attain proficiency in basic hands-on skills such as sign making, slide labeling, and brochure layout. Participants suggested that materials and equipment used in the USA often would not be possible within the park budgets of

many developing countries. Furthermore, while experience suggests that funding is not a major problem if the course is planned well enough in advance, expenses could probably be cut in half by holding the Workshop in a site more centrally located for the intended audience. Because of these reasons, the USNPS has decided not to hold the Workshop again in the US, but rather, to encourage and participate in its realization in Latin America. Both CATIE in Costa Rica and the Argentine National Park Service have expressed interest in assuming responsibility for the Workshop in their respective geographical regions.

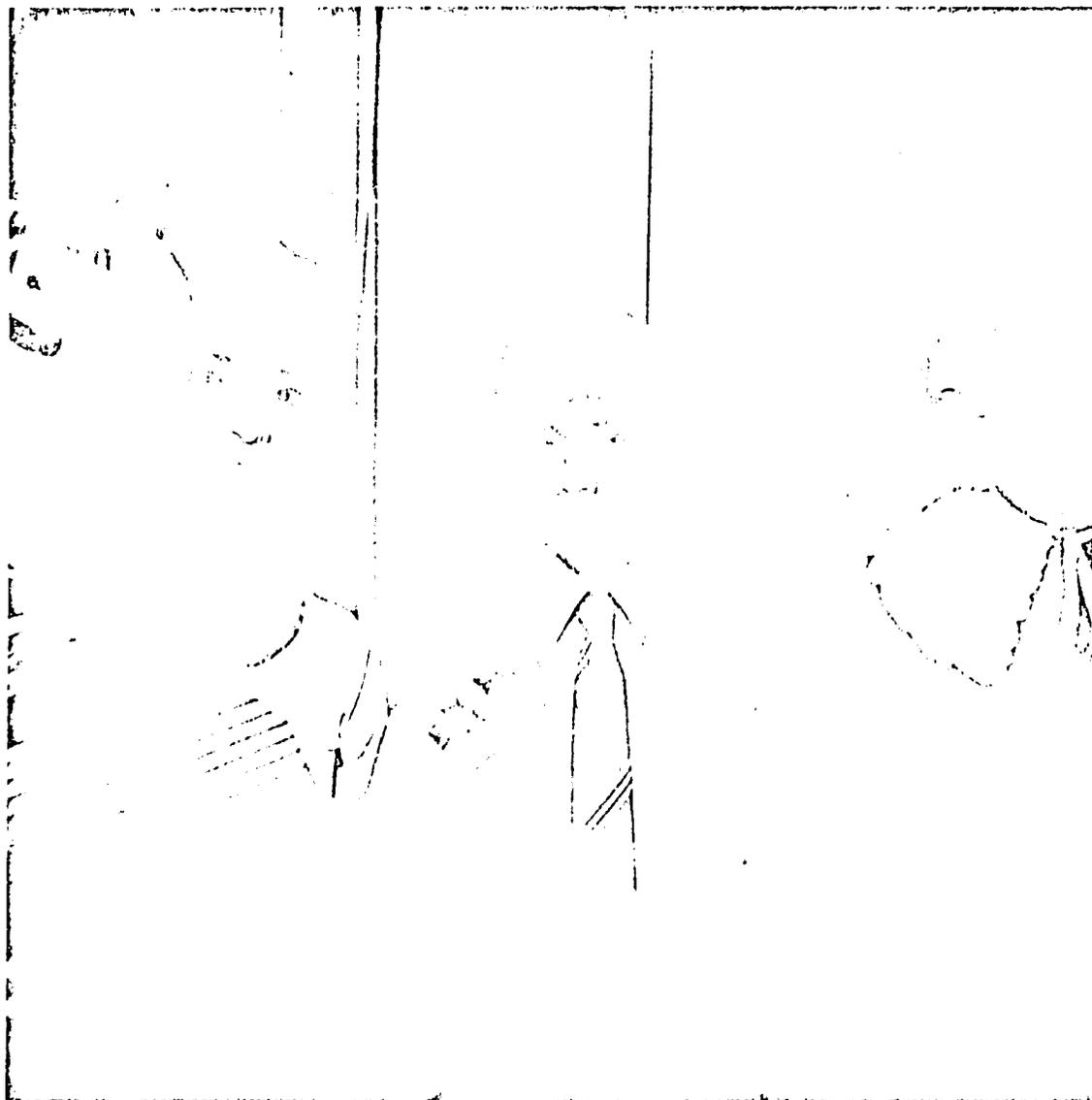
Workshops and courses of this nature, dealing with discrete technical topics which meet the evolving needs of park and protected area personnel in the 1980s, are well worth considering by regional development agencies and academic institutions. They may be used to impart new skills or as refresher courses. They could be taught in whatever language is applicable, and organized on a biogeographical basis. The best available expertise should be utilized to develop the training module which then could be transferred elsewhere with appropriate modifications.

Photos: National Park Service

References

- IUCN, 1983. Training protected area personnel: principles for developing management capacity. Proceedings of workshop held during the 1982 World Congress on National Parks in Bali, Indonesia. (In press.)
- Miller, K. R., 1974. Development and training of personnel: the foundation of national park programs in the future. *Proceedings of the Second World Conference on National Parks*. Ed. Sir Hugh Elliott. IUCN, Gland, Switzerland. pp. 326-347.
- World Wildlife Fund-U.S., 1980. Strategy for training in natural resources and environment: a proposal for development of personnel and institutions in Latin America and the Caribbean. Washington, D.C. 208 pages plus appendices.

Robert C. Milne, Chief of International Park Affairs of the National Park Service in Washington, D.C., is Vice Chairman for the Nearctic Realm for the Commission on National Parks and Protected Areas of the IUCN. Dr. Gary B. Wetterberg, worked for FAO for several years in South America and is the Western Hemisphere Program Coordinator for the NPS. He is a Consultant to IUCN's Parks Commission.



(left to right) Yolanda Maldonado, manager of the NPS Hispanic program, talks with Soledad de Moreno, specialist in environmental education for Soberania National Park, Panama; Silvino Gonzalez, superintendent of Defensores del Chao National Park, Paraguay; and Constanza Casanovas, chief of environmental education for the national park system of the Dominican Republic.