

## TEN INTERPRETIVE TIPS FOR EXCELLENT ELEPHANT SEAL INTERPRETATION

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1. **Have fun! Share your passion** for the elephant seals and the coast. Use personal stories and tell them what you find fascinating or your favorite things to observe. **Get sensory** by having people touch, smell, listen and observe.
2. **Be animated and get people moving if appropriate. Have them imagine things you cannot have them see or do.** Use your hands and voice to full effect when describing things. Have the right number of people stretch out to simulate the length of a bull or calf. Have them imagine the changes in pressure and lighting as an elephant seal descends on a deep dive.
3. **Listen** as much as you talk. Allow people to share their thoughts and stories.
4. **Use visuals** of things you cannot see including laminated postcards, photos on handheld device, your E-Seal photo book and interpretive panels along the viewing area.
5. **Relate to your audience.** Use comparisons that work for adults and separate ones for children. Compare to things that they would know such as the length of a school bus or a large family vehicle. Use comparisons to popular culture such as Justin Bieber, Tom Cruise, or Frank Sinatra depending on their age.
6. **Give great interpretive information**, answer questions, but don't give full lectures unless asked! Not every visitor needs to know the full extent of your knowledge. As Anatole France wrote "Awaken people's curiosity. It is enough to open minds, do not overload them. Put there just a spark. If there is some good inflammable stuff it will catch fire."
7. **Use questioning** to draw out ideas and observations from the visitors instead of always telling. Try telling stories, appropriate jokes, poems, and riddles that help highlight special features and relationships of the colony.
8. **If you don't know, just say so** and either look it up in your reference books in your pack, on a smart phone if you have internet, or later and email them an answer. After your shift, look up the answers to any questions you could not answer, check things you were unsure of, and enjoy expanding your knowledge and appreciation for all the different resources at the elephant seal viewing area.
9. **Engage people and inspire them** to learn more. Let them know of other visitor centers to learn more about marine mammals and the ocean. Give them ideas of books, websites, lectures, etc...
10. **Leave the visitors with tips** for how they can protect elephant seals and the ocean. Ask them for ideas of how they can help protect elephant seals even when they are at home.

**"Until one has loved an animal, a part of one's soul remains unawakened."**

*Anatole France, French Novelist with a Nobel Prize for Literature in 1921*

## **INTERPRETIVE RESOURCES**

Found at [http://www.parks.ca.gov/?page\\_id=21700](http://www.parks.ca.gov/?page_id=21700)

### **Aiming for Excellence: An Evaluation Handbook for Interpretive Services in California State Parks (2000, rev. 2006)**

This [handbook](#) provides measures and measurement tools for assessing the quality of educational and interpretive services. It can help parks professionals facilitate qualitative improvements in interpretive services for the benefit of all visitors.

### **All Visitors Welcome: Accessibility in State Park Interpretive Programs and Facilities (1994, rev. 2009)**

This [publication](#) provides State Parks staff with information that can guide them in developing accessible interpretive programs and facilities. It has been designed as a handy reference for planning programs and delivering them to the general public, many of whom have some type of disability.

### **Basic Interpretation Learning System--Making Connections: The Essence of Interpretation (2003)**

This [publication](#) represents a major milestone in interpretive training. It provides our Department's first-ever comprehensive, standardized resource for introductory interpretation training. It is a valuable guide for any interpreter who provides programs and services directly to the public. BILS serves as both a stand-alone resource and as part of a training package that includes student workbooks.

### **The Catalyst: The Newsletter for Interpretation in California State Parks**

The [Catalyst](#), a newsletter published two to four times per year, provides useful and entertaining information, with everything from news stories to reflections from interpreters, from ideas for programs to guidance and advice on issues related to interpretation. Back issues of the Catalyst are available at this site.

## **A BASIC BOOKSHELF FOR INTERPRETATION:**

### ***Environmental Interpretation: A Practical Guide for People with Big Ideas and Small Budgets***

By Sam H. Ham. Fulcrum Publishing, 1992. 456 pages; \$49.95 paperback.

### ***Interpretation for the 21st Century: Fifteen Guiding Principles for Interpreting Nature and Culture***

By Larry Beck and Ted Cable. Sagamore Publishing, 2002 (2nd edition). 204 pages; \$24.95, paperback.

### ***Interpreting Our Heritage***

By Freeman Tilden (foreword by Russell E. Dickenson, introduction by R. Bruce Craig). University of North Carolina Press, 2008 (4th edition). 224 pages; index; \$15.95, paperback.

### ***Interpreting for Park Visitors***

By William J. Lewis. Eastern Acorn Press, 2001. 159 pages; \$5.00, paperback (available only through National Association for Interpretation online store).

### ***Sharing Nature with Children***

By Joseph Bharat Cornell. Dawn Publications, 1998 (20th anniversary edition). 176 pages; \$9.95, paperback.

# **WORKSHEET TO CREATE YOUR OWN INTERPRETIVE MINI-PROGRAM**

Professional Interpreter's Association  
National Association for Interpretation  
<http://www.interpnet.com/>

What is the topic that you are choosing? \_\_\_\_\_

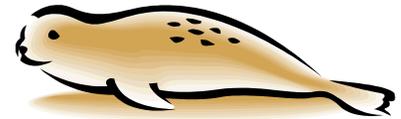
What is the main message that you want the visitor to know? \_\_\_\_\_

What 3 points can you use to convey the main message?

1. \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_



What can the visitor touch, smell, hear, remember or imagine to support your 3 points?

1. \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_

What questions can you ask the visitor to guide them to their own discoveries about the topic?

\_\_\_\_\_?

\_\_\_\_\_?

\_\_\_\_\_?

What take away ideas or actions can you suggest to the visitor to support the main message?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_



Restate your theme (the main message) at the close of your mini-program.

Ask the visitor if they have any questions. Thank them for their time. When you have a moment fill out your RAPPORT self-evaluation form and get answers to any questions that came up during the program.

## **TIPS FOR FOCUSING AND RE-ENGAGING CHILDREN ON NATURE PROGRAMS**

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- 🦋 Be animated, remember to use your hands or lift your eyebrows or make a yucky face, if appropriate, while talking about something like scat! Your funny faces used appropriately with what you show will be appreciated and enjoyed by this audience! They will be hanging on your every funny face!
- 🦋 Use your hands to demonstrate ideas and have them use theirs (for a Monarch butterfly program I have them make a fist for the egg, use a waving pinky finger for the little caterpillar, a waving thumb for the fat caterpillar, a hooked index finger for the chrysalis, and hooked thumbs and flapping fingers for the butterfly!)
- 🦋 When the group is drifting either refocus them by having them point or do some type of hand activity (on a tidepool program I say "Everyone show me your sea stars!")
- 🦋 Sit them down or if they are sitting, stand them up!
- 🦋 Have them walk like the animal you are describing.
- 🦋 Have them scoot closer "Take three bunny hops closer!"
- 🦋 Lower the volume of your voice to draw them to you.
- 🦋 Have them cup their ears like deer.
- 🦋 Use a game or hands-on activity instead of talking.
- 🦋 Go with their energy, if half your group is looking at a bird instead of at the rock you are holding, slither up to it on your bellies all together to get a closer look!
- 🦋 Burst out in song or a birdcall or jump up and do a funny dance and get them all involved! The only limitation to your fun and imagination is keeping it thematic. Example: When I have 10 confused faces looking at me as I try to describe something, I run around and act it out, for example I'll say "let's all do the kelp dance" in order to describe what it looks like in the kelp forest.

## **TIPS FOR HAVING FUN WITH CHILDREN WHILE INTERPRETING YOUR THEME**

**Get down** to their eye-level while planning your activities and during your program, children are really close to the ground and have a very different perspective according to that! Make sure you know what they can and can't see beforehand! You might be surprised at what you **can** see from their level that you don't normally see, example: undersides of leaves...

**Play** instead of telling your themes. Create or find **games** based upon your main message. You will find they respond to this and retain it as opposed to lecturing to them. Have them act like the animals, plants, or geology etc... you are describing, don't be afraid to do it too and to be caught acting silly! Remember to children silly means just plain fun, not ridiculous!

Always **engage** as many of their **senses** as possible. Also remember to **stimulate** their sense of **imagination**. What other group can you take on a SCUBA dive through the kelp forest or a soaring flight over the treetops without leaving the land! And don't be surprised if they even out do you!

**Share stories and listen to theirs!** Don't be afraid to share yourself with this audience. Also be prepared to listen to them, this is one of the most important developmental processes you can understand and support in this age group. This group needs to be heard and accepted by their peers and the adults around them. Encourage their questions and stories. Make time to really hear them.

**Have fun** while interpreting your theme and you will have a great program for children!

