

The Ranger Hat on Park Patches

By M.G. "Mike" Lynch

The park ranger hat has become an almost universally recognized symbol in the United States. The hat is variously known in park circles as the flat hat, the Stetson (named after the original maker), the campaign hat or the Smokey



Bear hat. The modern park ranger hat is a stiff-brim version of the campaign hat that was standardized in the 1930's by the Stetson Company. It was at this time that the hat was adopted for ranger uniform wear by the National Park Service and California State Parks. For all its clear and ready recognition, the park ranger hat has been very rarely used on official uniform patches and then only recently.

On a similar note, the Association of National Park Rangers (ANPR) also produced a patch of their logo which prominently featured the ranger hat. The ANPR was formed in 1977 and their association patch probably dates from the early 1980's.



Patch of the Association of National Park Rangers was produced in the 1980's.

The park ranger hat had its beginnings in national and state parks in the west. However, as a symbol, it has migrated back to the east coast and even into urban cities. Examples of this are New York City and Philadelphia, both of which have had patches featuring the ranger hat.

A few local park agencies have also adopted uniform patches with a ranger hat as an element of the patch. These include the Orange County CA Park Ranger Academy patch, City of Moreno Valley CA Park Ranger patch, Riverside County CA Park Ranger patch and Hennepin County Parks MN Ranger patch.

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First known patch with a ranger hat was produced by the California State Park Rangers Association in the early 1970's.

The earliest example that I could find of a patch featuring a ranger hat was a patch produced by the California State Park Rangers Association (CSPRA) in the early 1970's. CSPRA was formed in 1964 and adopted the ranger hat as part of their official logo. This design was made into a patch for members in the early 1970's or earlier.

I can find only one official state park agency patch containing a ranger hat and that is from the South Carolina State Park Service. This patch features a stylized park ranger pointing out some important feature. The reason we know it is a ranger is because of the hat he/she is wearing! This is the current style patch worn by SC park personnel today.



This is the current SC state park patch with a ranger hat.



The largest group of patches incorporating the ranger hat are those for junior ranger programs in the National Park Service (NPS). There are at least 10 of these patches. The 2007 Junior Ranger Day patch probably has the best depiction of a ranger hat on a patch.

The Bryce Canyon Junior Ranger patch is the most unique with a funny little stickman wearing only a ranger hat.



For pure humor, the Alaska State Parks Haines District patch wins the prize. It shows a mean-looking bear with its arm around a sweating ranger, complete with his hat. And finally on the humorous side, there is the Ranger Smith patch from Yogi Bear's Jellystone Park. "Hey Boo Boo, look at the hat".



I have only covered park patches in this article and thus have left out the many Smokey Bear patches, except one. Smokey is the most famous forest wildfire prevention symbol around. There are a large number of Smokey patches, more than enough to fill a book let alone an article. The one patch I've including here is a Smokey Bear patch which jointly promotes forest protection in the National Park Service (NPS) and the US Forest Service.



For a look at all the known patches with a ranger hat see:

<http://www.parkanniversary.org/hatpatches/>

If you have or know of other examples of park patches with a ranger hat, I would appreciate hearing from you. I can be contacted at:
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More Park Patches Featuring a Ranger Hat



Thanks to NPS Ranger Jeff Ohlfs for providing many of the NPS junior ranger patch pictures.

Even More Park Patches Featuring a Ranger Hat

