

2014
San Marcos Texas
RANGERS
SERVICES, SAFETY & SECURITY

Defibrillator and
Trauma Kits for
Emergency
Situations



Swift water
rescue
Equipment

Lewis Garcia
Park Ranger

KAWASAKI BRUTE
FORCE 750

As soon as your bare feet bend those first blades of grass, they're watching. Amidst a collection of eclectic harmony in San Marcos, the vitality of these men and women's roles go far beyond their drive between the outdoors and keeping the peace. Their duty, their authority, their most objective truism is to protect the people from the park and the park from the people.



**“YOU ARE IN NATURE,
WE’VE GOT ALL
KINDS OF CRITTERS,
BE CAREFUL AND
USE COMMON SENSE.
THEY’RE IN THEIR
NATURAL HABITAT,
WE’RE NOT.”**

Scott Raven ▶
Chief Park Ranger
and his team patrol
and take care of 246
acres of park land
in San Marcos. The
San Marcos River
winds through 150
acres of this park-
land that includes
miles of jogging
trails, playscape
equipment, picnic
tables, blacktop
basketball courts,
volleyball set-ups,
and a vast array of
unique and interest-
ing river wildlife. The
river offers canoeing,
snorkeling, scuba
diving, swimming,
fishing, and tubing in
crystal clear spring
fed waters.

With the right kind of eyes, along the 13 acres of Rio Vista Park, you can see how the soul underneath our city really shines this time of year. You can smell the authentic fajitas sizzling from a nearby grill, teasing you to test your broken Spanish just to ask for a bite. You can feel the cold, wet nose of a dog sniff up your leg as you lay down your towel to sunbathe. You can hear the dog's owner apologize as she sets her hula hoop down to grab the pooch's leash. And you start to wonder, who's friendlier—the dogs or the people?

On this plot of land, quaintly nestled in the heart of Texas, there's a sense of balance being kept. Whether you find them on foot, bikes or ATVs, the San Marcos Park Rangers are always close by to keep an eye on park visitors. Long gone are their occupation's clichés where irritable cartoon characters chase Yogi Bear and Boo-Boo around Jellystone Park. Instead, this collection of highly trained individuals—some of whom are former firefighters, medical staff and sheriff's deputies—dedicate their professional livelihood to preserving our local sanctuary as an enjoyable and safe place for all.

It takes a learned skill set and an inclined perspective to juggle all of the tasks expected of them. But helping people, as well as animals, has always come natural to these men and women. Out of 20 staff members in the San Marcos Park Ranger Program, the majority are trained emergency medical technicians (EMTs) or paramedics. On top of that, even though the rangers are primarily focused on safety and rescue efforts, half of the staff are also police officers who are capable of making arrests, if needed.

For Scott Raven, San Marcos Chief Park Ranger, his inclination towards the traits required of his profession are no exception either. A graduate of Pike's Peak Community College in Colorado, where he studied fire science technology, Raven began his career in San Marcos a little more than three years ago. However, it was not until this past February that he began his mornings by dressing in the iconic khaki and green park ranger uniform.

Before making the move to Central Texas, though, Raven formerly spent most of his professional life as a firefighter and paramedic in the Dallas-Fort Worth area. The change of scenery, as well as the opportunity to make new furry and scaly friends, was a first for his resume. Deer, raccoons, large-teeth gar, nutria rats and the consistently beautiful surroundings of the San Marcos River were a long shot from saving one of the country's largest cities each flame at a time. Still, like most of us, his decision to relocate was not a hard one to be made.

Sometime later, after Raven's virgin experience of seasonal tourists swarming through local parks and rivers, he found himself going through the drawl of sorting old paperwork one afternoon in their Cheatham Street office. But what he found in an aged, yellowing file was a document dating back to the 1970s. The memo, which was written by former Fire Marshall Ken Bell to the City Council, outlined plans for the station to move from its original two-story building to where they reside today. Apparently, the local hotspot of present, Rio Vista Park, was once a private subdivision, he learned. "This was somebody's home," Raven says.



The current ranger station is the last of a subdivision of homes that at one time were along the river



Last year there were 12 injuries at Rio Vista Park, down from 40 injuries the year prior

PARK RULES

- Park curfew (when parks are closed) is from 11 p.m. to 6 a.m. every night.
- Prohibit the public display and consumption of alcohol in city parks.
- Prohibit alcohol on city owned dams, spillways and bridges.
- Ban the use of Styrofoam type products in parks and the river, including coolers, ice chests, cups, plates, toys, floats, kick boards, rings or swim gear. Styrofoam liners used in floatation devices or dock supports are exempt if they are encapsulated by a water-based acrylic or latex coating or within a boat.
- Create tobacco free zones in play areas and athletic fields.
- Require container lids to be secured in the San Marcos River.
- Allow the use of barbecue pits and pop-up tents in designated areas.
- Regulate the use of spear guns and gigs in the San Marcos River for wildlife management purposes.
- Park rules apply in natural areas.
- Minimum fines for littering are \$250.00 in the river and parks

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What was once a single family's dwelling, though, is now a natural playground for our amusement. In the same manner as people and the world around us change, the atmosphere around the San Marcos River has evolved, too. ATVs have replaced the horses that rangers would mount for their daily patrol; glass containers and potential hazards to the environment have been banned; and those who are provided for by the river have sought above implied ignorance in order to preserve it for generations to come. Yet, the city's park rangers still comb through more than 2,000 acres each year to maintain the peace already instilled.

Their days are long sometimes. The environment can be on the verge of harsh, but hours upon hours of their time are spent outside of the park ranger's station walking the trails along the 100 acres of river in our backyard. To keep them sharp, the ranger's conduct regular swift water training below where the station sits, even though there were no rescues during last year's flooding, according to Raven. It's the practice in case that moment were to come that counts, he says, while admitting how there is enough park and responsibilities to keep their crew busy.

Every season park rangers are typically needed to rescue those unfamiliar with the area and inexperienced navigating the river's falls. Since Raven has worked in San Marcos, there have been two canoes with passengers who have gone over the falls. One canoe split in half and a portion got stuck.

At the end of the day, as well as at the beginning, the job behind our local park rangers exceeds far beyond the task of writing citations for everyday occurrences. Tickets for parking, alcohol, smoking and animal ordinance violations seem petty upon first thought but are ultimately necessary to maintain the balance our city and its dwellers have worked so hard to find. As long as there are no chinks in the chain, San Marcos may stay just as beautiful as always. Because there's a single interests involved above all when it comes to our area's natural landscape, Raven realizes it too, "Of course the rules are for a lot of reasons. Everyone wants to enjoy the river for years to come."

To contact a Park Ranger call the Ranger Station at (512) 393-8427 or stop by their headquarters in Rio Vista Park.



"OF COURSE THE RULES ARE FOR A LOT OF REASONS, BUT I THINK THEY'RE MAKING AN IMPACT."

◀ **David Ybarra**
Park Rangers patrol on foot, bikes, and ATVs.

Most of the city's 20 park rangers are trained EMTs or paramedics.

Portable Defibrillators

Emergency Trauma Kit