Interpretation Tips – top ten ways to connect with visitors

1. Tell who you are – and find out who they are.
   - Give your name and your title.
   - Wear your nametag and “official” shirt (if applicable).

2. Make them feel welcome.
   - Incorporate everyone - Ask for their names, ask if they are from this area or visiting.
   - Avoid saying ‘no’ if someone takes a guess at one of your questions.
   - Use humor.
   - Avoid mentioning religion, politics.

3. Make sure your audience can hear you.
   - Speak as if talking to the farthest person in the group.
   - Move to the middle of the group.

4. Make sure your audience can see the object you are pointing out.
   - Hold objects up high, or pass around objects if possible.

5. Use friendly body language.
   - Use occasional eye contact.
   - Smile occasionally.
   - Try to face everyone when talking if possible.
   - “Lose the sunglasses” – (Dr. Jay Barnhart)

6. Make sure they are physically comfortable.
   - Point out bathrooms, water fountains. If mosquitos are numerous, tell them ahead of time.
   - Stop the group in the shade when possible.

7. Use information that your audience can understand.
   - People can easily relate to topics such as food, medicine, water, shelter, work, young animals, harmful, and things that are colorful, fragrant, soft to the touch, etc.
   - Use storytelling tools (relate personal experience, convey emotion, use metaphors/analogies, etc.)

8. If you don’t know the answer to a question, say so! (It is OK to say ‘I don’t know’)
   - Offer to look up the answer when you return.

9. Use props NOT NOTES
   - (Use an ID sheet to show pictures of the lizard they just saw, pick up a seed, a stick with lichen, a fallen airplant, etc. off the ground and let them pass it around).

10. Know the main idea you want to get across.
    - Humans and nature have been forces of change throughout history; Nature sanctuaries benefit humans too; Native plants can help turn your yard into a miniature nature sanctuary; The Florida Scrub-Jay is the sentinel of the scrub; The bald eagle is the symbol of our nation; etc.)