

Protecting the Site

Rock Art Conservation Practices

Removal of graffiti

The removal of graffiti should be of highest priority, as it is a given that it attracts more of the same. Professionals have tried various treatments in the past and a few are cited here, but please be aware that these practices should be done by trained personnel. In particular, the attempted removal of *old* graffiti should never be done by anyone without previous experience (Lambert 1989:48). Names of qualified conservationists with special skills for the removal of graffiti can be obtained from the Getty Conservation Institute in Marina del Rey, CA, the American Rock Art Research Association (P.O. Box 65, San Miguel, CA 93451), or the Rock Art Archive at UCLA (University of California, Los Angeles CA 90024).

It is not always possible to wait until adequate funds and a professional conservationist can be brought together to clean up a site. **The key elements in attempting to remove the marks of vandalism are *expert advice* and *careful testing*, for the wrong substance can do irreparable damage** (Silver 1989). Spray paint has been removed from petroglyphs with oven cleaner (Ritter 1978), which was then washed off with water. Some graffiti have been cleaned by means of paint removers; most of these products, however, contain caustic soda and should not be used. Alcohol is the least destructive, followed by strippers containing methyl dichloride. All must be carefully washed from the rock; this presents another problem in that residue washed into the soil can skew future archaeological testing of any associated midden, and problems arise if there is insufficient water available for removal of chemicals. Rather than applying chemicals over a large area, poulticing is the method of choice for professional conservationists (Thorne 1989).

Before attempting any such treatments, diagnose the prob-

Assisting and Managing Visitors

Survey of Visitor Use

Before making a plan for management of visitors and development of interpretive material, it is advisable to make an assessment of visitor behavior. Information on the number of visitors that come to a site and their behavior while there is vital. It can be a commissioned, in-house survey, or information gathered from a visitors' book. Obviously, observation is the best way to record the behavior of visitors (Gale and Jacobs, 1987). Most management plans are based on what we think tourists do, not actual knowledge of their behavior. The most direct impact is not how many persons are present, but what they do there. One vandal can cause more damage than hundreds of well-behaved visitors (Gale and Jacobs 1987:44). Knowing what visitors think about a site and how they will impact it can help in planning for its protection.

The more popular the site, the more subject it becomes to crowding, unequal use patterns, general wear and tear, and individual collecting of souvenirs. Plans must deal with these problems by controlling visitor behavior (Gale and Jacobs 1987:61).

The survey is to determine information on the numbers of tourists, the intensity of site use, the characteristics of tourists (age, gender, residence), their behavior at the site (what they did vs. what they said they did), and the attitudes and opinions of the visitors (Gale and Jacobs 1987:18). Studies of visitor behavior are expensive but the savings in preventing wasted construction outweigh the initial cost. The Australian study on visitor impacts identified several "high risk" groups. Those most likely to cause damage are children, those in large tour groups, and local residents who live within reach of a site (*ibid*).

Visitor counts can be either mechanical (such as gates with automatic counters), or by human observation. Mechanical counts