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WISCONSIN'S WILDLIFE CONSTITUENCY STUDY: WHO ARE THE NONCONSUMPTIVE WILDLIFE USERS OF WISCONSIN?

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According to a 1985 study done by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, 18% of Wisconsin's adult population were hunters, while 86% took part in some type of nonconsumptive wildlife activity—that is, a wildlife activity in which wildlife is not removed from its habitat. Despite this clear majority of nonconsumptive wildlife users, relatively little is known about them. Research on the characteristics, behaviors, and needs of nonconsumptive users is far behind research on consumptive wildlife users such as hunters, anglers, and trappers. In recent years, however, a sense of change has pervaded the wildlife management field. Wildlife management agencies, which have traditionally served consumptive wildlife users, are facing a challenge to realign their philosophies, priorities, and programs to address the needs of nonconsumptive wildlife users.

In order to plan an effective nonconsumptive wildlife program, Wisconsin wildlife managers first needed to know their clientele. For example: Who are the nonconsumptive wildlife users in Wisconsin? Do nonconsumptive and consumptive wildlife users comprise two separate and distinct groups? Should the concept of nonconsumptive wildlife use be synonymous with bird watching and other nongame activities, or are nonconsumptive users also interested in game animals?

To find out what both consumptive and nonconsumptive wildlife users want from a nonconsumptive wildlife program, the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (DNR) Bureau of Wildlife Management initiated a wildlife constituency study in January 1987. The study was conducted by the Recreation Resources Center (RRC) of the University of Wisconsin-Extension in association with the DNR Bureau of Research. The main research tool was a mail survey, which gathered responses from Wisconsin residents on five major wildlife recreation topics: (1) participation in selected activities, (2) opinions and attitudes on key management issues, (3) alternative funding sources, (4) educational programming, and (5) basic demographics of constituency groups.

This Findings article uses survey results to present a profile of nonconsumptive wildlife users. First, demographics and wildlife preferences for all respondents are compared. Then, survey results on participation in nonconsumptive wildlife activities are highlighted and, in some cases, compared with information on hunting. Future Findings will report on other results of the survey, and in-depth technical reports on various aspects of the study are forthcoming.

Survey Design

We determined the issues to be investigated by the survey through consultation with DNR Bureau of Wildlife Management personnel and a series of five

citizen participation workshops conducted at key locations throughout the state. The resulting 26-page questionnaire was pretested and mailed in May 1987 to a sample of 2,002 Wisconsin residents, 16 years and older. Names and addresses for the sample were randomly drawn from Wisconsin Department of Transportation driver registration records. The sample was selected so that it could statistically represent all six DNR management districts as well as the entire state population. Responses for each district were then weighted according to the response rate within that district and the district's known population. The weighted sample for the entire state totalled 12,000. Each person was contacted five times by mail. The questionnaires were returned by 76% of the sample, and a usable response rate of 65% was achieved.

Responses were divided into four mutually exclusive groups (constituency groups), based on the type of wildlife activity respondents participated in during 1987. For the purpose of the survey, consumptive wildlife activities included hunting, fishing, and trapping. Nonconsumptive wildlife activities included bird watching, observation of wildlife other than birds, wildlife photography, feeding wild birds, feeding wildlife other than birds, wildlife landscaping around home, and wildlife sketching or painting. The four constituency groups were: (1) dual users (those who participated in both consumptive and nonconsumptive activities), (2) pure nonconsumptive users (those who participated in only nonconsumptive activities), (3) pure consumptive users (those who participated in only consumptive wildlife activities), and (4) non-wildlife-users (those who did not participate in any wildlife activity).

Data were disaggregated according to the four constituency groups and then analyzed using SPSS/PC+ (a data software package for social sciences) on RRC's Zenith Data Systems computer. Results on demographics and favorite wildlife for all four groups are summarized below, followed by a profile of nonconsumptive wildlife users—both the dual and pure nonconsumptive users.

The Four Constituency Groups: Demographics

- 8 out of 10 Wisconsin adults participated in nonconsumptive wildlife recreations (Table 1).

- The largest group of wildlife users was dual users, followed by pure nonconsumptive users, non-wildlife-users, and pure consumptive users.

- Dual and pure consumptive users were more likely to be male than pure nonconsumptive users.

- Pure nonconsumptive users were slightly older than other wildlife users.

- Pure nonconsumptive users were upscale on social class variables, having more education and higher incomes than other groups.

- All but pure consumptive users exhibited a migration pattern toward urban areas.

TABLE 1. Characteristics of constituency groups.

Characteristic	Constituency Group			
	Dual	Non-consump.	Consump.	Non-user
% Sample pop.	50	33	6	11
Mean age	42	45	40	46
% Male	72	30	69	25
% BA or more	18	30	22	24
% Income > $45,000	15	24	21	19
% Rural as youth	64	58	36	60
% Currently rural	60	49	43	37

Favorite Wildlife

• Wildlife in greatest favor were deer, eagles, and songbirds.

• However, pure consumptive users were less interested than other groups in songbirds, choosing bears over songbirds as a favorite wildlife.

• Most important reasons for interest in favorite wildlife for all groups were:
- it's interesting to watch
- it's a beautiful animal
- I see it regularly around my home.

Nonconsumptive Wildlife Users: Motivations and Favorite Activities

• Over 90% of both dual and pure nonconsumptive users said that observing beauty in nature was their most important reason for participation in nonconsumptive wildlife activities.

• Other primary motivations for participation included:
- seeing any wildlife
- relaxing from daily pressures
- fascination with wild animals
- getting fresh air and exercise
- getting away from home to walk in the outdoors.

• Skill and challenge activities such as finding wildlife sign, tracking wildlife, and working with specialized equipment were relatively unimportant reasons for participation in nonconsumptive activities.

• Dual and pure nonconsumptive users participated in bird watching and general wildlife observation more than any other nonconsumptive activity. For the one nonconsumptive activity they most enjoyed, 44% of dual users selected wildlife observation other than birds, while pure nonconsumptive users equally favored bird watching (33%) and other wildlife observation (32%).

Social Aspects of Participation

• Unlike hunters, who are typically initiated to hunting by a family member (Heberlein and Laybourne 1978), over 50% of both dual users and pure nonconsumptive users were self-initiated: they began their favorite nonconsumptive activity on their own.

• The mean initiation age for pure nonconsumptive users was older (19 years) than for dual users (15 years).

• 26% of dual users, compared with 13% of pure nonconsumptive users, indicated that most or all of their friends also enjoyed the same nonconsumptive activity.

• Nonconsumptive wildlife activities were not socially oriented: 85% of both dual and pure nonconsumptive users said they usually participated alone or, at most, with one or two other people (usually family members). In comparison, hunting activities have been found to be more socially oriented (Heberlein and Laybourne 1978).

Participation at Home and Away from Home

• Participation in nonconsumptive activities took place most often around the home: 48% of dual users and 72% of pure nonconsumptive users participated at home.

• 22% of dual users and 7% of pure nonconsumptive users also participated on private land owned by others.

• 82% of dual users and 69% of pure nonconsumptive users made at least one outing during the past year specifically to participate in their favorite nonconsumptive activity.

• When dual and pure nonconsumptive users made specific nonconsumptive wildlife trips, dual users were more likely to travel further.

• 21% of dual users, compared with 8% of pure nonconsumptive users, took trips over 50 miles from home.

• 31% of dual users, compared with about 50% of pure nonconsumptive users, travelled less than one mile for their outings.

Commitment, Crowding, and Satisfaction

- 53% of dual users and 37% of pure nonconsumptive users said they would miss their favorite nonconsumptive activity more than most or all of their other activities.

- Only about 13% of both dual and pure nonconsumptive users indicated feelings of crowding during a typical outing.

- Both dual and pure nonconsumptive users were satisfied with their most recent outing. Less than 10% of both groups indicated satisfaction ratings of poor or fair, while 30% of the dual and 32% of the pure nonconsumptive users rated their most recent outing as excellent or perfect.

Factors Limiting Participation

- 50% of both dual and pure nonconsumptive users said that not having enough time was the most severe limiting factor to their participation. However, approximately one quarter of both groups had no limitations on their amount of participation.

- Finding a place to participate was not a problem. Only 10% of both user groups said not knowing where to participate was a limiting factor.

Management Implications

Three important management implications are suggested by these results. First, the most relevant finding for wildlife managers is that nonconsumptive users were interested in the same wildlife for recreation as consumptive users. Game animals, such as deer, were nonconsumptive users' favorite wildlife. Second, since degree of commitment is an indication of willingness to support wildlife management in terms of policy acceptance and financial support, it is also noteworthy that a sizeable percentage of both pure nonconsumptive and dual users were highly committed to their nonconsumptive activities. Finally, given that time was the key limiting factor to be reconciled, educating the public on what they can do at specified lands within short distances from their homes might increase user participation and public support for management programs.

Reference

Heberlein, T.A. and B. Laybourne. 1978. The Wisconsin deer hunter: social characteristics, attitudes and preferences for proposed hunting season changes. Sch. of Nat. Resour., Univ. of Wis.-Madison. Work. Pap. No. 10. 96 pp.

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