



National Wildlife Refuge Visitor Survey 2012: Individual Refuge Results for Bear River Migratory Bird Refuge

By Alia M. Dietsch, Natalie R. Sexton, Lynne Koontz, and Shannon J. Conk

I am impressed with the staff and the volunteers at the Bear River Migratory Bird Refuge. They have done an exceptional job educating and helping my students understand the refuge and the wildlife. We have been frequent visitors and every time we have received extra documentation, time, and they helped us locate additional speakers. Volunteers in the field have stopped and aided us in identifying birds new to the area on that day, or cautioned us on skunk sightings. None of them were required to do those things, but across the board they were helpful, friendly, and happy to provide assistance in any way to make our educational experience better. A huge thank-you goes out to all of them!

— *Survey comment from a visitor to Bear River Migratory Bird Refuge*



Bear River Migratory Bird Refuge. Photo credit: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

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Introduction

The National Wildlife Refuge System (Refuge System), established in 1903 and managed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service), is the leading network of protected lands and waters in the world specifically dedicated to the conservation of fish, wildlife, and their habitats. There are 560 national wildlife refuges (refuges) and 38 wetland management districts nationwide, including possessions and territories in the Pacific and Caribbean, encompassing more than 150 million acres (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, 2013). As stated in the National Wildlife Refuge Improvement Act of 1997, the mission of the Refuge System is “to administer a national network of lands and waters for the conservation, management and, where appropriate, restoration of the fish, wildlife, and plant resources and their habitats within the United States for the benefit of present and future generations of Americans.” Part of achieving this mission is the goal “to foster understanding and instill appreciation of the diversity and interconnectedness of fish, wildlife, and plants, and their habitats” and the goal “to provide and enhance opportunities to participate in compatible wildlife-dependent recreation” (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, 2006, p. 2). The Refuge System attracts nearly 45 million visitors annually, including 34.8 million people who observe and photograph wildlife, 9.6 million who hunt and fish, and nearly 675,000 teachers and students who use refuges as “outdoor classrooms” (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, 2012). Understanding visitor perceptions of refuges and characterizing their experiences on refuges are critical elements of managing these lands and meeting the goals of the Refuge System.

The Service contracted with the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) to conduct a national survey of visitors regarding their experiences on refuges. The purpose of the survey was to better understand visitor experiences and trip characteristics, to gauge visitors’ levels of satisfaction with existing recreational opportunities, and to garner feedback to inform the design of programs and facilities. The survey results will inform performance, planning, budget, and communications goals. Results will also inform Comprehensive Conservation Plans (CCPs), visitor services, and transportation planning processes.

Organization of Results

These results are specific to visitors who were contacted at Bear River Migratory Bird Refuge (this refuge) during the specified sampling periods and are part of USGS Data Series 754. All refuges participating in the 2012 survey effort will receive individual refuge results specific to the visitors to that refuge. Each set of results is organized by the following categories:

- **Introduction:** An overview of the Refuge System and the goals of the national survey effort.
- **Methods:** The procedures for the national survey effort, including selecting refuges, developing the survey instrument, contacting visitors, and guidance for interpreting the results.
- **Refuge Description:** A brief description of the refuge location, acreage, purpose, recreational activities, and visitation statistics, including a map (where available) and refuge website link.
- **Sampling at This Refuge:** The sampling periods, locations, and response rate for this refuge.
- **Selected Survey Results:** Key findings for this refuge, including:
 - Visitor and trip characteristics
 - Visitor spending in the local communities
 - Visitors opinions about this refuge
 - Visitor opinions about Refuge System topics
- **Conclusion**
- **References Cited**
- **Survey Frequencies (Appendix A):** The survey instrument with frequency results for this refuge.
- **Visitor Comments (Appendix B):** The verbatim responses to open-ended survey questions for this refuge.

Methods

Selecting Participating Refuges

The national visitor survey was conducted from January–December 2012 on 25 refuges across the Refuge System (table 1). Each refuge was selected for participation by the Refuge Transportation Program National Coordinator in conjunction with regional office Visitor Services Chiefs. Selection was based on the need to inform transportation planning processes at the national level and to address refuge planning and transportation needs at the individual refuge level.

Developing the Survey Instrument

Researchers at the USGS developed the survey in consultation with the Service Headquarters Office, managers, planners, and visitor services professionals. The survey was peer-reviewed by academic and government researchers and was further pre-tested with eight Refuge System Friends Group representatives (one from each region) to ensure readability and overall clarity. The survey and associated methodology were approved by the Office of Management and Budget (OMB control #: 1018-0145; expiration date: 6/30/2013).

Contacting Visitors

Refuge staff identified two separate 15-day sampling periods, and one or more locations at which to sample, that best reflected the diversity of use and specific visitation patterns of each participating refuge. Sampling periods and locations were identified by refuge staff and submitted to the USGS via an internal website that included a customized mapping tool. A standardized sampling schedule was created for all refuges that included eight randomly selected sampling shifts during each of the two sampling periods. Sampling shifts were 3–5 hour (hr) time bands, stratified across AM and PM as well as weekend and weekdays. In coordination with refuge staff, any necessary customizations were made to the standardized schedule to accommodate the identified sampling locations and to address specific spatial and temporal patterns of visitation.

Twenty visitors (18 years of age or older) per sampling shift were systematically selected, for a total of 320 willing participants per refuge (or 160 per sampling period) to ensure an adequate sample of completed surveys. When necessary, shifts were moved, added, or extended to alleviate logistical limitations (for example, weather or low visitation at a particular site) in an effort to reach target numbers.

Table 1. Refuges participating in the 2012 national wildlife refuge visitor survey.

Pacific Region (R1)
Ridgefield National Wildlife Refuge (WA)
Southwest Region (R2)
Balcones Canyonlands National Wildlife Refuge (TX)
Hagerman National Wildlife Refuge (TX)
Kofa National Wildlife Refuge (AZ)
Santa Ana National Wildlife Refuge (TX)
Tishomingo National Wildlife Refuge (OK)
Great Lakes-Big Rivers Region (R3)
La Crosse District, Upper Mississippi River National Wildlife and Fish Refuge (WI)
Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge (MN)
Southeast Region (R4)
Crystal River National Wildlife Refuge (FL)
Eufaula National Wildlife Refuge (AL)
Felsenthal National Wildlife Refuge (AR)
Lacassine National Wildlife Refuge (LA)
National Key Deer Refuge (FL)
Savannah National Wildlife Refuge (GA/SC)
Northeast Region (R5)
Assabet River National Wildlife Refuge (MA)
Back Bay National Wildlife Refuge (VA)
Chincoteague National Wildlife Refuge (VA)
Edwin B. Forsythe National Wildlife Refuge (NJ)
Rachel Carson National Wildlife Refuge (ME)
Mountain-Prairie Region (R6)
Bear River Migratory Bird Refuge (UT)
Lee Metcalf National Wildlife Refuge (MT)
Rocky Mountain Arsenal National Wildlife Refuge (CO)
National Bison Range (MT)
California and Nevada Region (R8)
Don Edwards San Francisco Bay National Wildlife Refuge (CA)
San Luis National Wildlife Refuge (CA)

Refuge staff and/or volunteers (survey recruiters) contacted visitors onsite following a protocol provided by the USGS that was designed to obtain a representative sample. Instructions included contacting visitors across the entire sampling shift (for example, every n^{th} visitor for dense visitation, as often as possible for sparse visitation) and contacting only one person per group. Visitors were informed of the survey effort, given a token incentive (for example, a small magnet or temporary tattoo), and asked to participate. Willing participants provided their name, mailing address, and preference for language (English or Spanish) and survey mode (mail or online). Survey recruiters were also instructed to record any refusals and then proceed with the sampling protocol.

All visitors that agreed onsite to fill out a survey received the same sequence of correspondence regardless of their preference for survey mode. This approach allowed for an assessment of visitors' likelihood of completing the survey by their preferred survey mode (see Sexton and others, 2011). Researchers at the USGS sent the following materials to all visitors agreeing to participate who had not yet completed a survey at the time of each mailing (Dillman, 2007):

- A postcard mailed within 10 days of the initial onsite contact thanking visitors for agreeing to participate in the survey and inviting them to complete the survey online.
- A packet mailed 9 days later consisting of a cover letter, survey, and postage paid envelope for returning a completed paper survey.
- A reminder postcard mailed 7 days later.
- A second packet mailed 14 days later consisting of another cover letter, survey, and postage paid envelope for returning a completed paper survey.

Each mailing included instructions for completing the survey online, so visitors had an opportunity to complete an online survey with each mailing. Those visitors indicating a preference for Spanish were sent Spanish versions of all correspondence (including the survey). Finally, a short survey of six questions was sent to nonrespondents four weeks after the second survey packet to determine any differences between respondents and nonrespondents at the aggregate level. Online survey data were exported and paper survey data were entered into Microsoft Excel using a standardized survey codebook and data entry procedure. All survey data were analyzed using *Statistical Package for the Social Sciences* (SPSS, v.20) software¹.

Interpreting the Results

The extent to which these results accurately represent the total population of visitors to this refuge is dependent on the number of visitors who completed the survey (sample size) and the ability of the variation resulting from that sample to reflect the beliefs and interests of different visitor user groups (Scheaffer and others, 1996). The composition of the sample is dependent on the ability of the standardized sampling

¹ Any use of trade, firm, or product names is for descriptive purposes only and does not imply endorsement by the U.S. Government.

protocol for this study to account for the spatial and temporal patterns of visitor use unique to each refuge. Spatially, the geographical layout and public-use infrastructure varies widely across refuges. Some refuges can be accessed only through a single entrance, while others have multiple unmonitored access points across large expanses of land and water. As a result, the degree to which sampling locations effectively captured spatial patterns of visitor use will vary from refuge to refuge. Temporally, the two 15-day sampling periods may not have effectively captured all of the predominant visitor uses/activities on some refuges during the course of a year, which may result in certain survey measures such as visitors' self-reported "primary activity during their visit" reflecting a seasonality bias. Results contained within this report may not apply to visitors during all times of the year or to visitors who did not visit the survey locations.

In this report, visitors who responded to the survey are referred to simply as "visitors." However, when interpreting the results for Bear River Migratory Bird Refuge, any potential spatial and temporal sampling limitation specific to this refuge needs to be considered when generalizing the results to the total population of visitors. For example, a refuge that sampled during a special event (for example, birding festival) held during the spring may have contacted a higher percentage of visitors who traveled greater than 50 miles (mi) to get to the refuge than the actual number of these people who would have visited throughout the calendar year (that is, oversampling of nonlocals). Another refuge may not have enough nonlocal visitors in the sample to adequately represent the beliefs and opinions of that group type. If the sample for a specific group type (for example, nonlocals, hunters) is too low ($n < 30$), a warning is included in the text. Finally, the term "this visit" is used to reference the visit during which people were contacted to participate in the survey.

Refuge Description for Bear River Migratory Bird Refuge

Bear River Migratory Bird Refuge is located in northern Utah where the Great Salt Lake and Bear River meet. The refuge contains approximately 74,000 acres of marsh, open water, uplands, and alkali mudflats. The marshes at the mouth of the Bear River are the largest freshwater area of the Great Salt Lake ecosystem, attracting many different species of water birds and wildlife. The refuge was created in 1928 after local individuals and organizations became concerned with the loss of marsh habitat and large bird die-offs from botulism in the area. Since its establishment, the refuge has worked to improve and diversify habitat and has also expanded the size of the refuge by acquiring additional lands. The refuge provides critical habitat in the Pacific Flyway for over 250 species of migrating birds. As part of the Bear River Bay, the refuge is also designated as a Western Hemisphere Shorebird Reserve Network site. Visitors might spot a white-faced ibis, a cinnamon teal, or a tundra swan, among many other unique species. Aside from birding, visitors may also participate in other activities and opportunities such as hunting, fishing, wildlife observation, photography, environmental education, a 12-mi auto tour route and a variety of special programs and events at the modern Visitor Center. Approximately 50,000 people visit the refuge each year (2011 Refuge Annual Performance Plan measures; Rob Miller, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, 2012, written commun.). Figure 1 displays a map of Bear River Migratory Bird Refuge. For more information on this refuge, please visit http://www.fws.gov/refuge/Bear_River_Migratory_Bird_Refuge/.

Sampling at Bear River Migratory Bird Refuge

A total of 269 visitors agreed to participate in the survey during the two sampling periods at the identified locations at Bear River Migratory Bird Refuge (table 2). In all, 201 visitors completed the survey for a 75% response rate, and $\pm 5.5\%$ margin of error at the 95% confidence level.²

Table 2. Sampling and response rate summary for Bear River Migratory Bird Refuge.

Sampling period	Dates	Locations	Total contacts	Undeliverable addresses	Completed surveys	Response rate
1	5/26/2012 to 6/9/2012	Duckville Kiosk Wildlife Education Center				
		SP1 Totals	143	1	114	80%
2	9/29/2012 to 10/13/2012	Duckville Kiosk Wildlife Education Center				
		SP2 Totals	126	0	87	69%
		Combined Totals	269	1	201	75%

² A margin of error of $\pm 5\%$ at a 95% confidence level, for example, means that, if a reported percentage is 55%, then 95 out of 100 times, that sample estimate would fall between 50% and 60% if the same question was asked in the same way. The margin of error is calculated with an 80/20 response distribution, assuming that for a given dichotomous choice question, approximately 80% of respondents would select one choice and 20% would select the other choice (Salant and Dillman, 1994).

Selected Survey Results

Visitor and Trip Characteristics

A solid understanding of visitor characteristics and details about their trips to refuges can inform communication and outreach efforts, inform managers about desired types of visitor services and modes of transportation used on refuges, and help forecast use and gauge demand for services and facilities.

Familiarity with the Refuge System

Many visitors to Bear River Migratory Bird Refuge reported that before participating in the survey, they were aware of the role of the Service in managing refuges (86%) and that the Refuge System has the mission of conserving, managing, and restoring fish, wildlife, plants, and their habitats (88%). It is important to note that we did not ask visitors to identify the mission of the Refuge System or the Service, and positive responses to these questions concerning the management and mission of the Refuge System do not necessarily indicate that these visitors fully understand the day-to-day management practices of individual refuges, only that visitors feel they have a basic knowledge of who manages refuges and why.

Most visitors (91%) feel that refuges, compared to other public lands, provide a unique recreation experience (see Appendix B for visitor comments on “What Makes National Wildlife Refuges Unique?”); however, reasons for why visitors find refuges unique are varied and may not directly correspond to their understanding of the mission of the Refuge System.

More than half of visitors to Bear River Migratory Bird Refuge had been to at least one *other* national wildlife refuge in the past year (55%), with an average of 5 visits to *other* refuges during the past 12 months.

Visiting This Refuge

Almost half of surveyed visitors (48%) had only been to Bear River Migratory Bird Refuge once in the past 12 months, while slightly more than half had been multiple times (52%). These repeat visitors went to the refuge an average of 8 times during that same 12-month period. Visitors used the refuge during only one season (58%), during multiple seasons (31%), and year-round (11%).

Visitors first learned about the refuge from friends/relatives (49%), signs on the highway (32%), or people in the local community (18%; fig. 2). Key information sources used by visitors to find their way to this refuge include their own previous knowledge (63%), signs on the highways (41%), or a road atlas/highway map (16%; fig. 3).

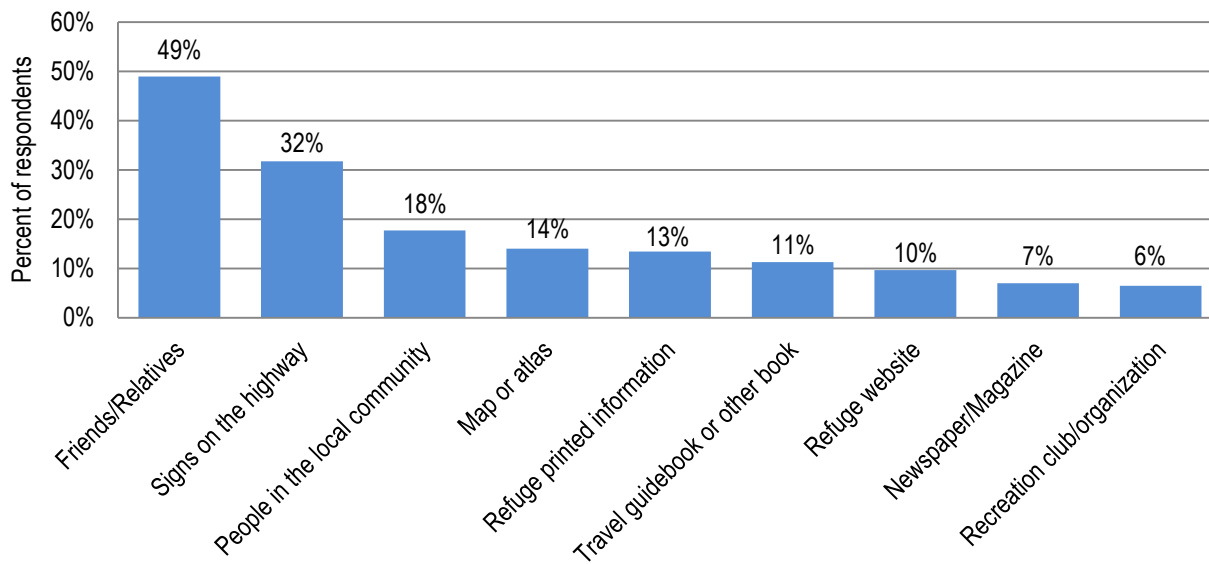


Figure 2. How visitors first learned or heard about Bear River Migratory Bird Refuge (n = 186).

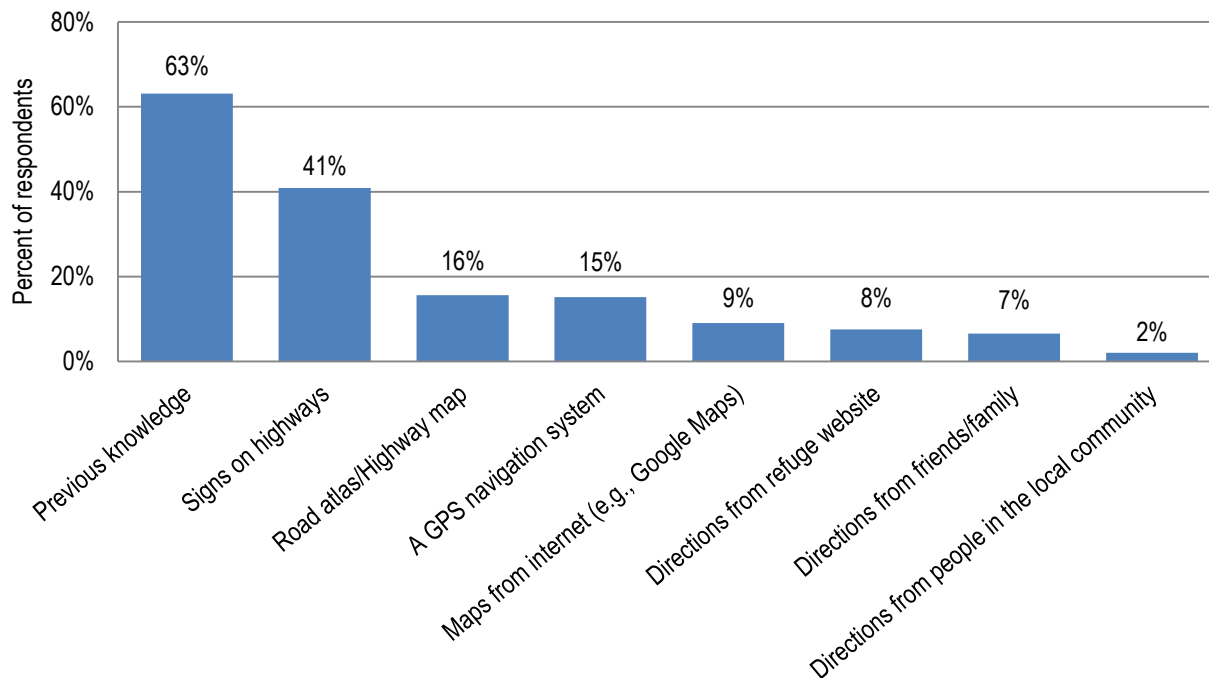


Figure 3. Resources used by visitors to find their way to Bear River Migratory Bird Refuge during this visit (n = 198).

Some visitors (44%) lived in the local area (within 50 mi of the refuge), whereas 56% were nonlocal visitors. For most local visitors, Bear River Migratory Bird Refuge was the primary purpose or sole destination of their trips (87%; table 3). For most nonlocal visitors, the refuge was the primary purpose or sole destination of their trips (37%) or one of many equally important reasons for their trips (33%).

Local visitors reported that they traveled an average of 27 mi to get to the refuge, while nonlocal visitors traveled an average of 456 mi. The average distance traveled for all visitors to this refuge was 238 mi, while the median was 50 mi. Figure 4 shows the residences of visitors traveling to this refuge. About 68% of visitors traveling to Bear River Migratory Bird Refuge were from Utah.

Table 3. Influence of Bear River Migratory Bird Refuge on visitors' decisions to take their trips.

Visitors	Visiting this refuge was...		
	the primary reason for trip	one of many equally important reasons for trip	an incidental stop
Nonlocal	37%	33%	30%
Local	87%	6%	7%
All visitors	59%	21%	20%

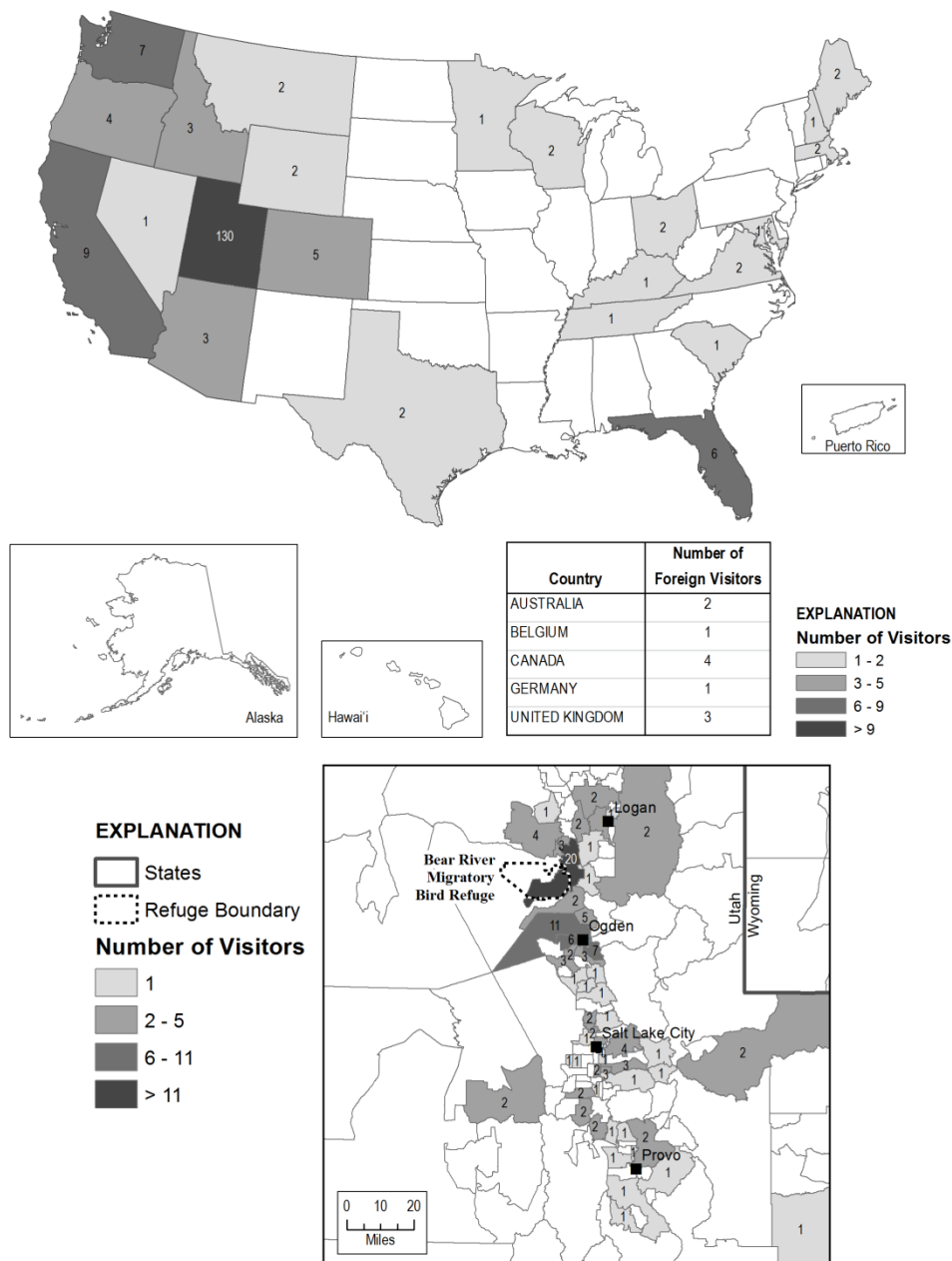


Figure 4. Number of visitors travelling to Bear River Migratory Bird Refuge by place of residence. The top map shows visitors residence by state and the bottom map shows residence by zip codes near the refuge (n = 201).

Surveyed visitors reported that they spent an average of 4 hr at Bear River Migratory Bird Refuge during one day there, while the most frequently reported length of a day visit, the modal response, was 3 hr (25%). Most visitors indicated they were part of a group on their visit to this refuge (88%). Of those people who indicated they traveled with a group, visitors primarily traveled with family/friends (table 4).

Table 4. Type and size of groups visiting Bear River Migratory Bird Refuge (for those who indicated they were part of a group, n = 175).

Group type	Percent (of those traveling in a group)	Average group size		
		Number of adults	Number of children	Total group size
Family/Friends	95%	2	1	3
Commercial tour group	0%	0	0	0
Organized club/School group	3%	24	13	37
Other group type	2%	17	8	25

The key mode of transportation used by visitors to travel around the refuge was private vehicles (91%; fig. 5).

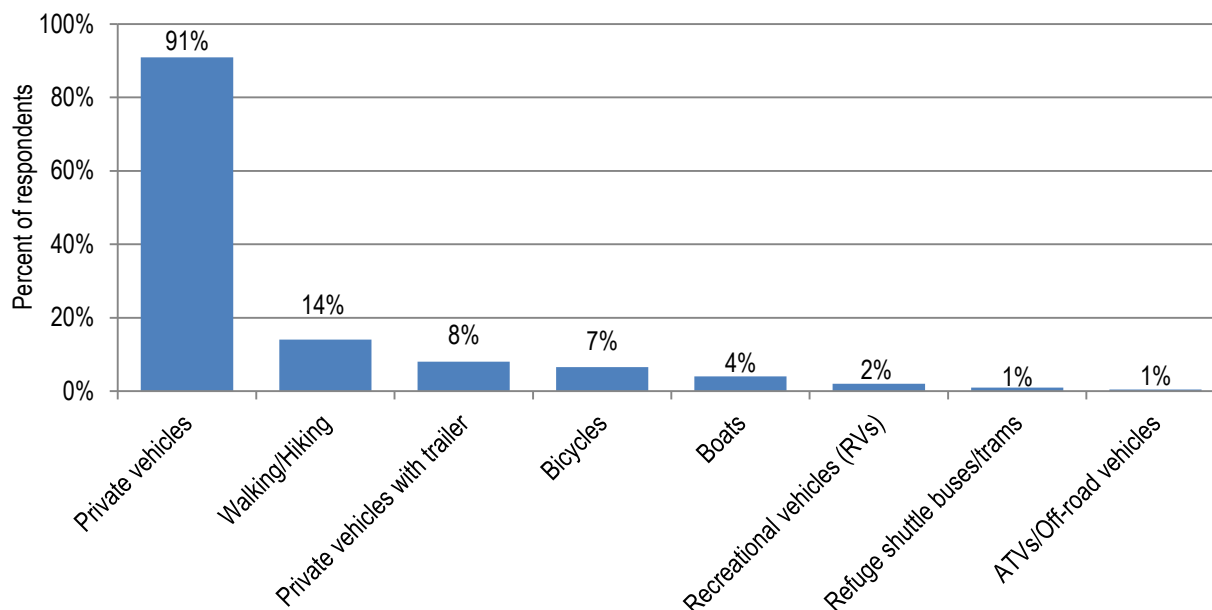


Figure 5. Modes of transportation used by visitors to Bear River Migratory Bird Refuge during this visit (n = 199).

Surveyed visitors participated in a variety of refuge activities during the 12 months prior to completing the survey (fig. 6); the top three activities in which people reported participating were bird watching (78%), wildlife observation (65%), and auto tour route/driving (62%). The primary reasons for visitors' most recent visits included bird watching (46%), photography (12%), and hunting (11%; fig. 7). Many visitors also used the Visitor Center during their trips (72%), mostly to view the exhibits (85%), ask information of staff or volunteers (72%), visit the gift shop/bookstore (64%), or stop to use the facilities (61%; fig. 8).

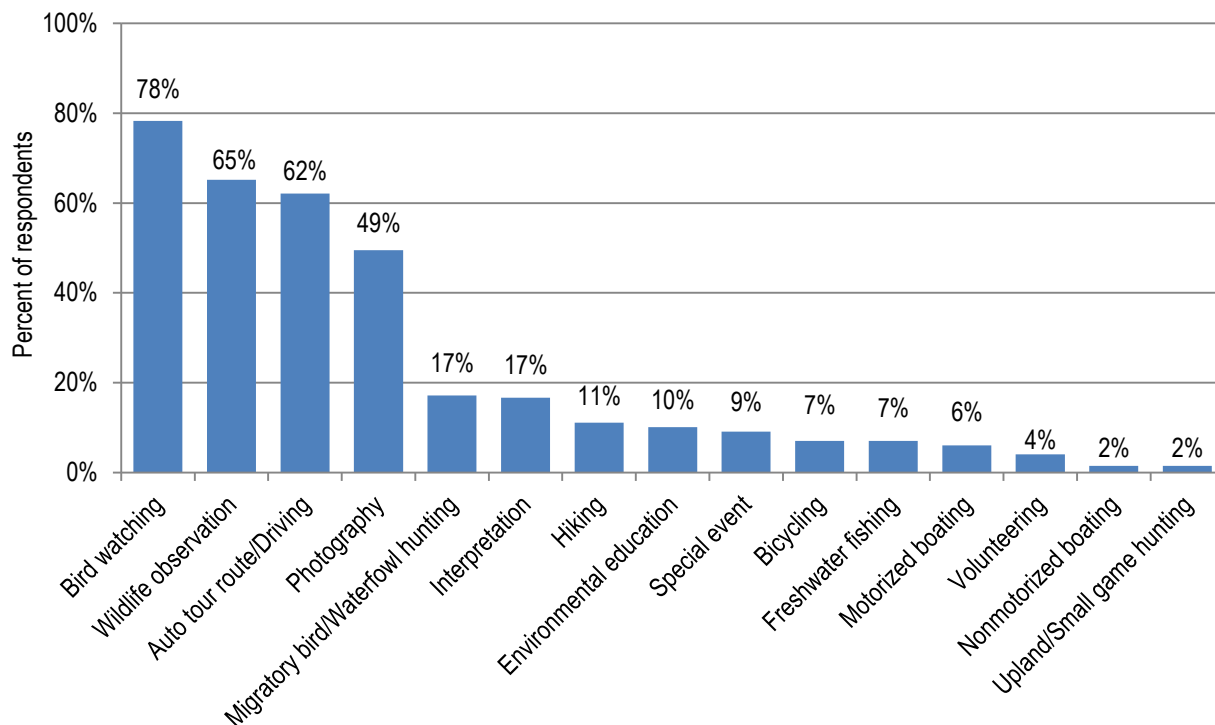


Figure 6. Activities in which visitors participated during the past 12 months at Bear River Migratory Bird Refuge (n = 198). See Appendix B for a listing of “other” activities.

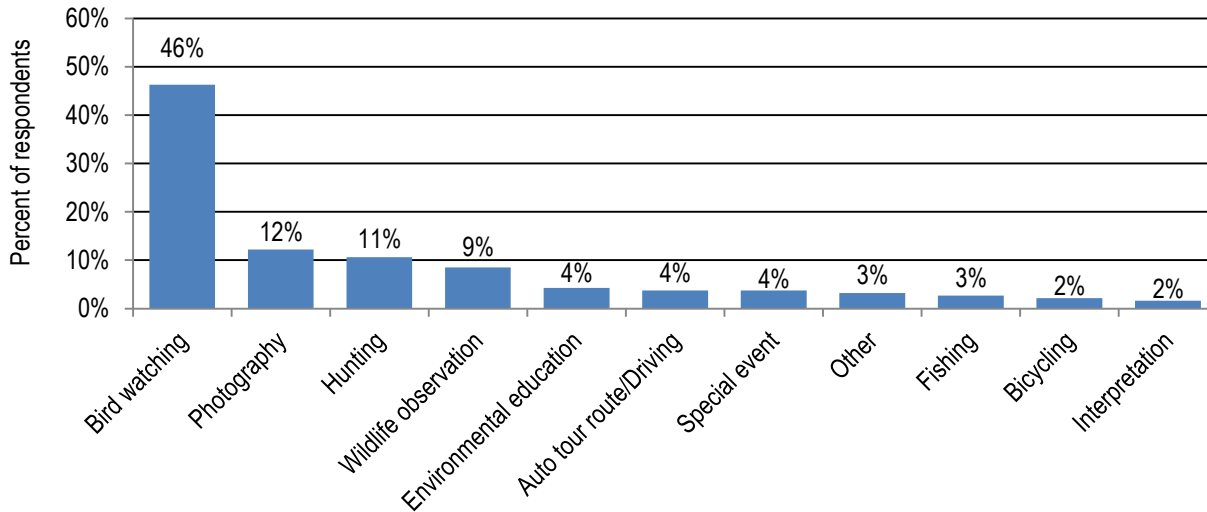


Figure 7. The **primary** activity in which visitors participated during this visit to Bear River Migratory Bird Refuge (n = 188). See Appendix B for a listing of “other” activities.

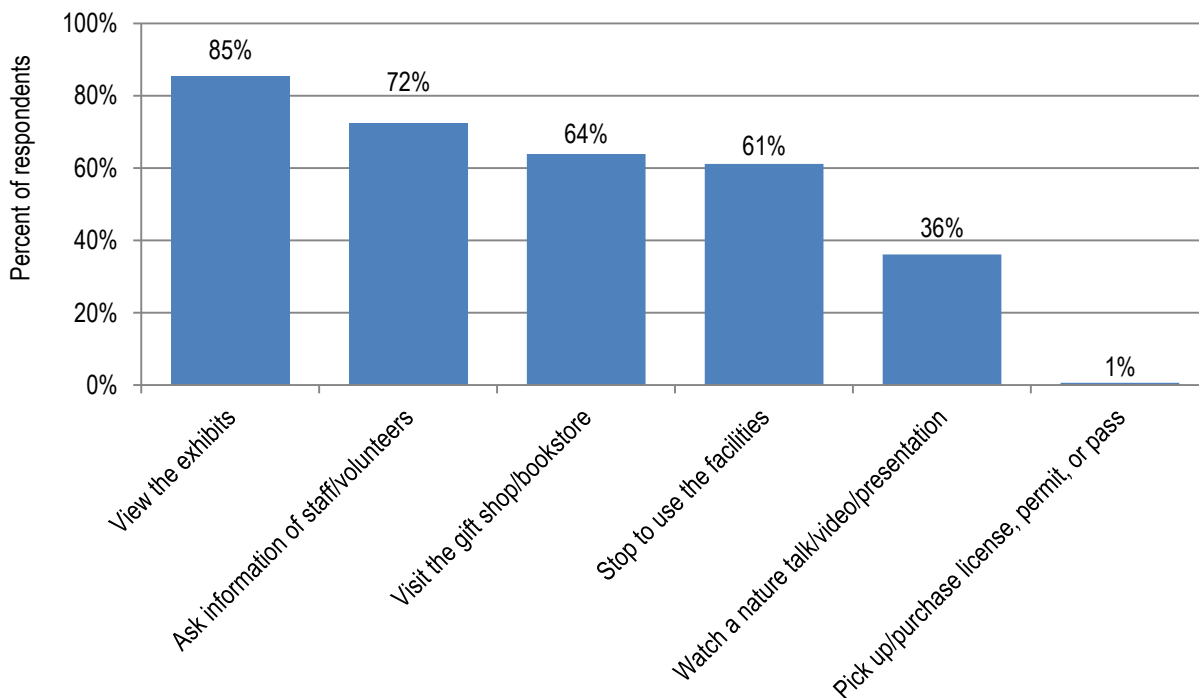


Figure 8. Visitor Center activities in which visitors participated at Bear River Migratory Bird Refuge (n = 144).

Visitor Characteristics

Most (94%) visitors who participated in the survey at Bear River Migratory Bird Refuge indicated that they were citizens or permanent residents of the United States. These visitors were a mix of 58% male (with an average age of 55 years) and 42% female (with an average age of 52 years). Visitors, on average, reported they had 16 years of formal education (equivalent to four years of college or technical school). The median level of income was \$75,000-\$99,000. See Appendix A for more demographic information.

In comparison to these results, the 2006 National Survey of Fishing, Hunting and Wildlife-Associated Recreation (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, 2007) found that participants in wildlife watching and hunting on public lands were 55% male and 45% female with an average age of 46 years, an average level of education of 14 years (equivalent to an associate degree or two years of college), and a median income of \$50,000–74,999 (Anna Harris, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, 2011, written commun.). Compared to the U.S. population, participants in wildlife-related recreation are more likely to be male, and tend to be older with higher education and income levels (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and U.S. Census Bureau, 2007).

Visitor Spending in Local Communities

Tourists usually buy a wide range of goods and services while visiting an area. Major expenditure categories include lodging, food, supplies, and gasoline. Spending associated with refuge visitation can generate considerable economic benefits for the local communities near a refuge. For example, more than 34.8 million visits were made to refuges in fiscal year 2006; these visits generated \$1.7 billion in sales, almost 27,000 jobs, and \$542.8 million in employment income in regional economies (Carver and Caudill, 2007). Information on the amount and types of visitor expenditures can illustrate the economic importance to local communities of visitor activities on refuges. Visitor expenditure information also can be used to analyze the economic impact of proposed refuge management alternatives.

Visitors that live within the local 50-mi area of a refuge typically have different spending patterns than those that travel from longer distances. During the two sampling periods, 44% of surveyed visitors to Bear River Migratory Bird Refuge indicated that they live within the local 50-mi area while nonlocal visitors (56%) stayed in the local area, on average, for 3 days. Table 5 shows summary statistics for local and nonlocal visitor expenditures in the local communities and at the refuge, with expenditures reported on a per person per day basis. During the two sampling periods, nonlocal visitors spent an average of \$55 per person per day and local visitors spent an average of \$31 per person per day in the local area. Several factors should be considered when estimating the economic importance of refuge-visitor spending in the local communities. These factors include the amount of time spent at the refuge, influence of the refuge on the visitors' decision to take this trip, and the representativeness of primary activities of the sample of surveyed visitors compared to the general population. Controlling for these factors is beyond the scope of the summary statistics presented in this report.

Table 5. Total visitor expenditures in local communities and at Bear River Migratory Bird Refuge expressed in dollars per person per day.

Visitors	n ¹	Median	Mean	Standard deviation	Minimum	Maximum
Nonlocal	96	\$42	\$55	\$49	\$0	\$243
Local	75	\$21	\$31	\$34	\$0	\$165

¹n = number of visitors who answered both locality *and* expenditure questions.

Note: For each respondent, reported expenditures were divided by the number of persons in their group that shared expenses in order to determine the spending per person per trip. This number was then divided by the number of days spent in the local area to determine the spending per person per day for each respondent. For respondents who reported spending less than one full day in the local community, trip length was set equal to one day. These visitor spending estimates are appropriate for the sampling periods selected by refuge staff (see table 2 for sampling period dates and figure 7 for the *primary* visitor activities in which people participated), and may not be representative of the total population of visitors to this refuge.

Visitor Opinions about this Refuge

Refuges provide visitors with a variety of services, facilities, and wildlife-dependent recreational opportunities. Understanding visitors' perceptions of refuge offerings is a key component of the Refuge System's mission. In particular, a baseline understanding of visitor experiences provides a framework from which the Refuge System can monitor trends in visitor experiences overtime, which is increasingly useful in the face of changing demographics and wildlife-related interests. Some studies on wildlife-related recreation trends have indicated declines in participation over the latter part of the 20th century in traditional activities such as hunting (for example, U.S. Department of the Interior and others, 2007), while others highlight a need to connect the next generation of people to nature and wildlife (for example, Charles and Louv, 2009). These types of factors highlight a need to better understand visitors' opinions of their refuge experiences and to monitor trends in these opinions over time.

Surveyed visitors' overall satisfaction ratings with the services, facilities, and recreational opportunities provided at Bear River Migratory Bird Refuge were as follows (fig. 9):

- 95% of visitors were satisfied with the recreational activities and opportunities,
- 92% of visitors were satisfied with the information and education about the refuge and its resources,
- 93% of visitors were satisfied with the services provided by employees or volunteers, and
- 93% of visitors were satisfied with the refuge's job of conserving fish, wildlife and their habitats.

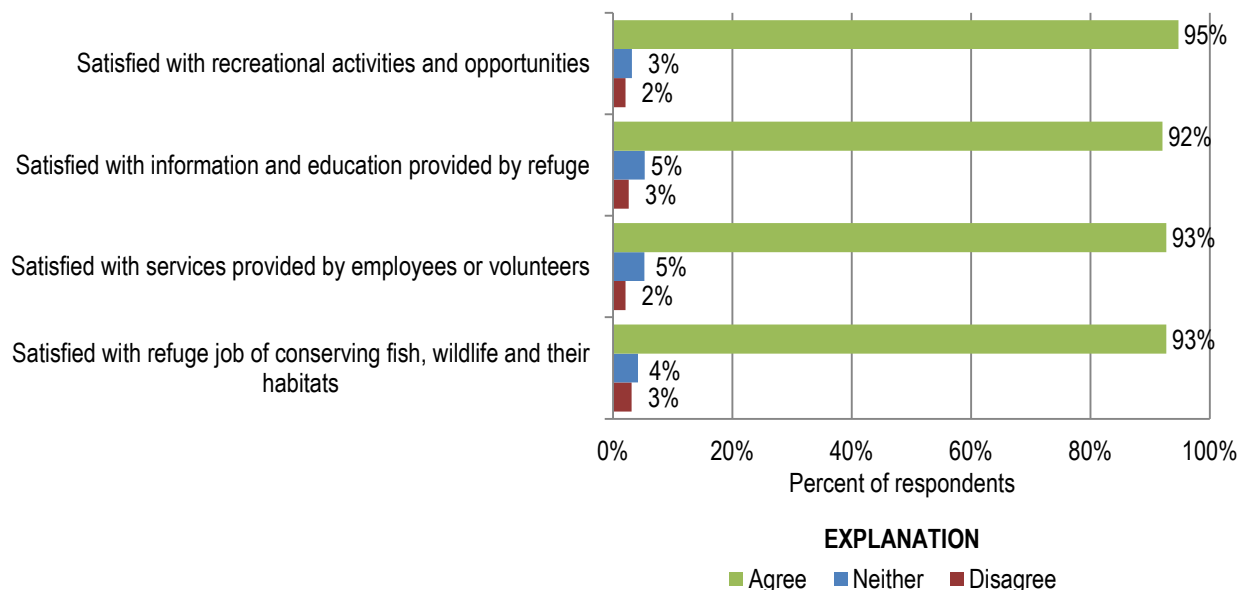


Figure 9. Overall satisfaction with Bear River Migratory Bird Refuge during this visit (n ≥ 189).

Importance/Satisfaction Ratings

Comparing the importance and satisfaction ratings for visitor services provided by refuges can help to identify how well the services are meeting visitor expectations. The importance-performance framework presented in this section is a tool that examines the importance of an attribute to visitors in relation to their satisfaction with that attribute (Martilla and James, 1977). Drawn from marketing research, this tool has been applied to outdoor recreation and visitation settings (for example, Tarrant and Smith, 2002). Results for the attributes of interest are segmented into one of four quadrants (modified slightly for this study):

- Keep Up the Good Work = high importance/high satisfaction;
- Concentrate Here = high importance/low satisfaction;
- Low Priority = low importance/low satisfaction; and
- Look Closer = low importance/high satisfaction.

Graphically plotting visitors' importance and satisfaction ratings for different services, facilities, and recreational opportunities provides a simple and intuitive visualization of these survey measures. However, this tool is not without its drawbacks. One is the potential for variation among different visitor groups regarding their expectations and levels of importance (Vaske and others, 1996; Bruyere and others, 2002; Wade and Eagles, 2003); certain services or recreational opportunities may be more or less important for different segments of the visitor population. For example, hunters may place more importance on hunting opportunities and amenities such as blinds, while school-group leaders may place more importance on educational/informational displays than would other visitors. This potential for highly varied importance ratings needs to be considered when viewing the average results of this analysis. This consideration is especially important when reviewing any attribute that falls into the "Look Closer" quadrant. In some cases, these attributes may represent specialized recreational activities in which a small subset of visitors participate (for example, hunting or kayaking) or facilities and services that only some visitors experience (for example, exhibits about the refuge). For these visitors, the average importance of (and potentially their satisfaction with) the attribute may be much higher than the overall importance (and satisfaction) would be for the sample of visitors summarized in this report.

Figures 10–12 depict surveyed visitors' importance-satisfaction ratings for refuge services and facilities, recreational opportunities, and transportation-related features at Bear River Migratory Bird Refuge. Results are summarized as follows:

- All refuge *services and facilities* fell in the "Keep Up the Good Work" quadrant (fig. 10).
- All refuge *recreational opportunities* fell in the "Keep Up the Good Work" quadrant except hunting and fishing opportunities, which both fell into the "Look Closer" quadrant (fig. 11). The average importance of these activities is likely higher among visitors to Bear River Migratory Bird Refuge who actually participated in the activities during the 12 months prior to taking the survey than the scores reported here. For example, hunters, as part of the 2010-2011 national visitor survey, had an

average importance score of 4.6 for this recreational opportunity, while the average importance score of hunting activities across all visitors was lower.

- All *transportation-related features* fell in the “Keep Up the Good Work” quadrant (fig. 12).

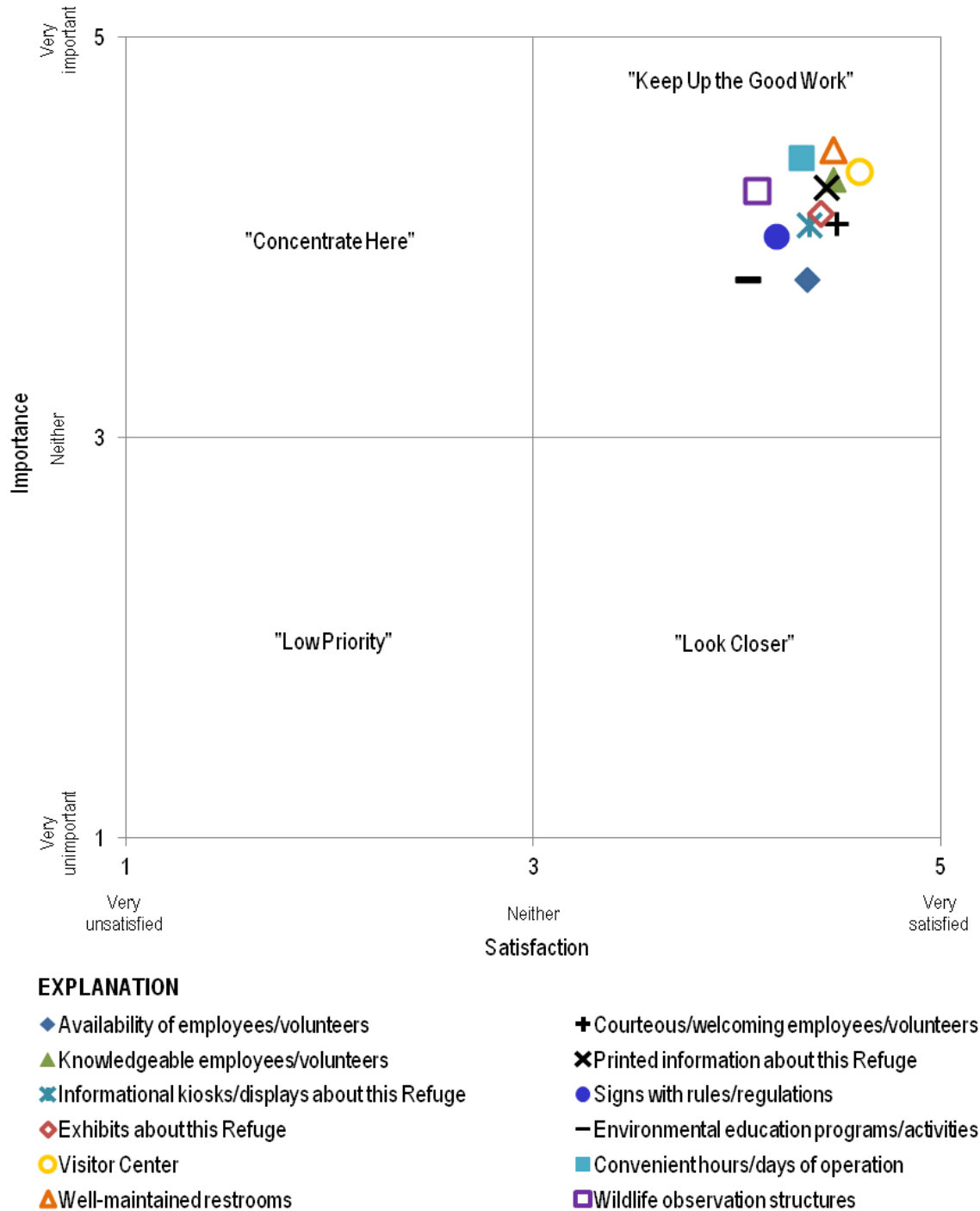


Figure 10. Importance-satisfaction ratings of services and facilities provided at Bear River Migratory Bird Refuge.

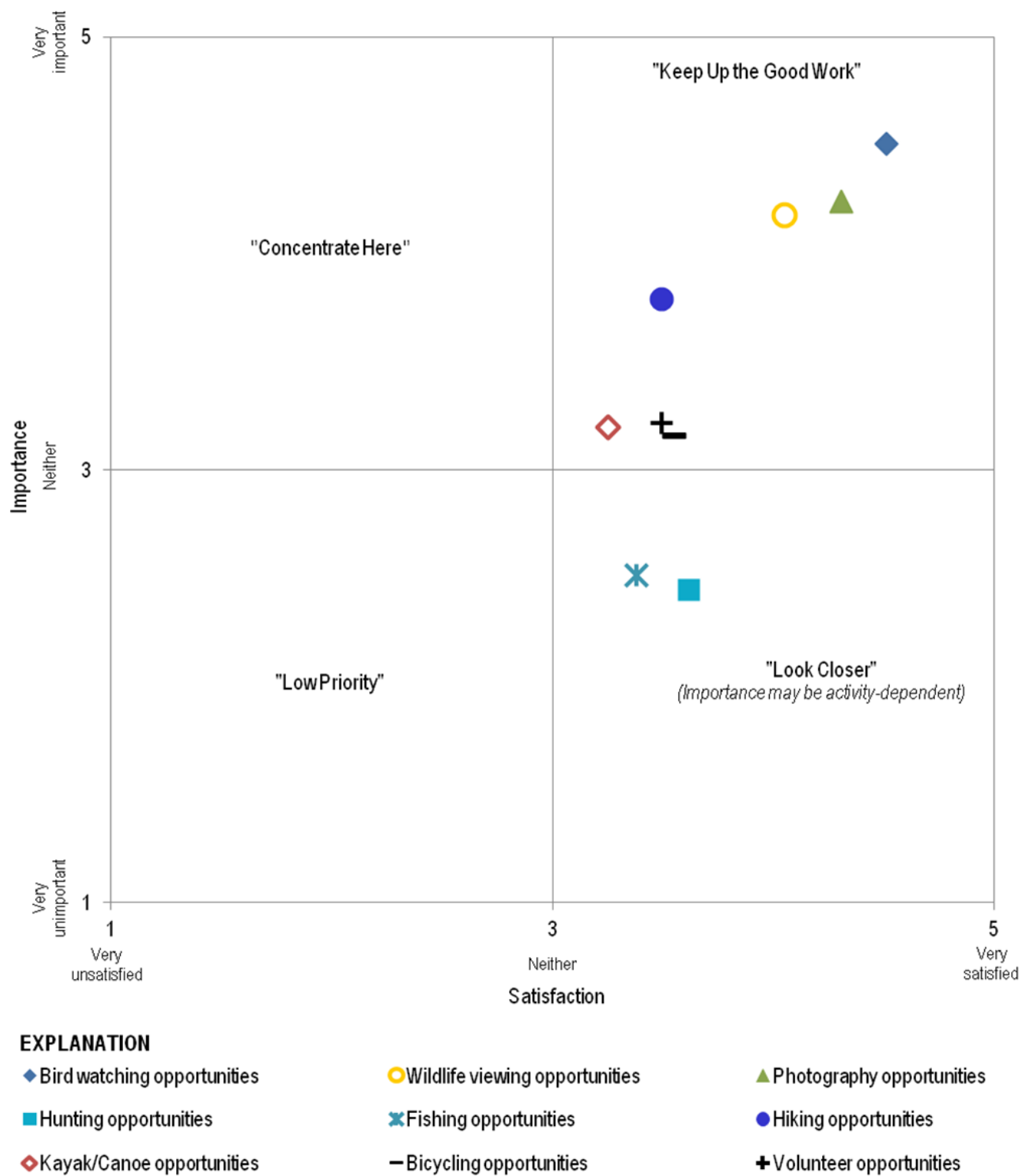
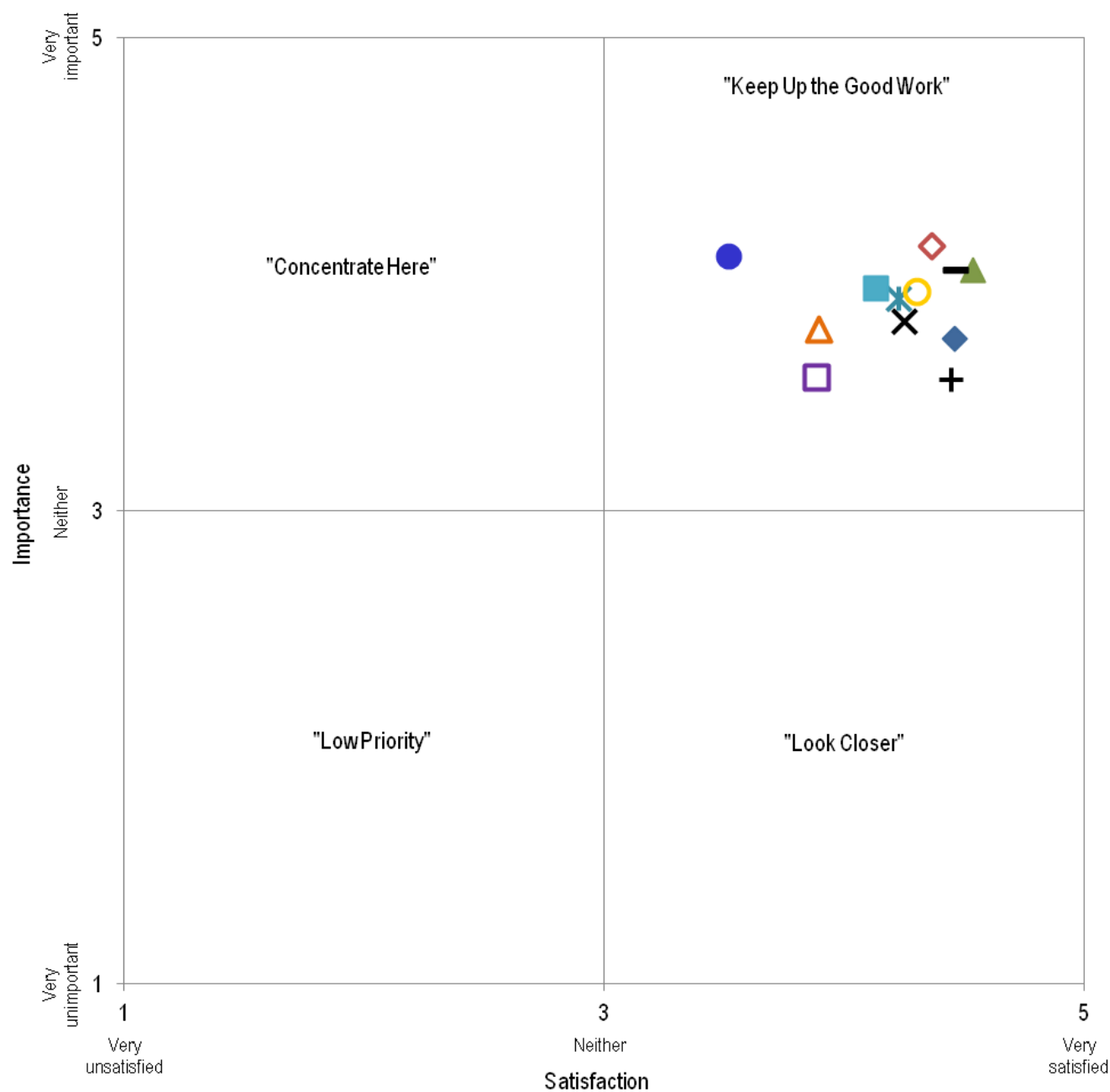


Figure 11. Importance-satisfaction ratings of recreational opportunities provided at Bear River Migratory Bird Refuge.



EXPLANATION

- | | | | |
|---------------------------------|-------------------------------|--------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| ◆ Condition of roads | + Condition of parking areas | ▲ Condition of bridges | ✕ Condition of trails/boardwalks |
| ✕ Number of parking places | ● Number of pullovers | ◇ Safety of driving conditions | — Safety of Refuge entrances |
| ○ Directional signs on highways | ■ Directional signs on Refuge | △ Directional signs on trails | □ Disabled access |

Figure 12. Importance-satisfaction ratings of transportation-related features at Bear River Migratory Bird Refuge.

Visitor Opinions about National Wildlife Refuge System Topics

One goal of this national visitor survey was to identify visitor trends across the Refuge System to more effectively manage refuges and provide visitor services. Two important issues to the Refuge System are transportation on refuges and communicating with visitors about climate change. The results of these questions will be evaluated in aggregate form (data from all participating refuges together) to better address national-level goals. Basic results for Bear River Migratory Bird Refuge are reported here.

Alternative Transportation and the Refuge System

Visitors use various types of transportation to access and enjoy refuges. While many visitors arrive at the refuge in private vehicles, alternatives such as buses, trams, watercraft, and bicycles are increasingly becoming a part of the visitor experience. Previous research has identified a growing need for transportation alternatives within the Refuge System (Krechmer and others, 2001), and recent efforts are beginning to characterize the use of transit and non-motorized transportation modes for visitor access to refuges (Volpe Center, 2010). However, less is known about how visitors perceive these new transportation options. An understanding of visitors' likelihood of using certain alternative transportation options can help in future planning efforts. Visitors were asked their likelihood of using alternative transportation options at refuges in the future.

Of six alternative transportation options listed on the survey, a majority of Bear River Migratory Bird Refuge visitors were likely to use the following at refuges in the future (fig. 13):

- a boat that goes to different points on refuge waterways;
- an offsite parking lot that provides trail access; and
- a bus/tram that runs during a special event.

A majority of visitors indicated they were *not* likely to use a bus/tram that takes passengers to different points on the refuge or a bike share program.

When asked specifically about using alternative transportation at Bear River Migratory Bird Refuge, some visitors thought alternative transportation would enhance their experience (28%) while others thought it would not (36%). An additional 37% of surveyed visitors indicated they were unsure whether alternative transportation would enhance their experiences.

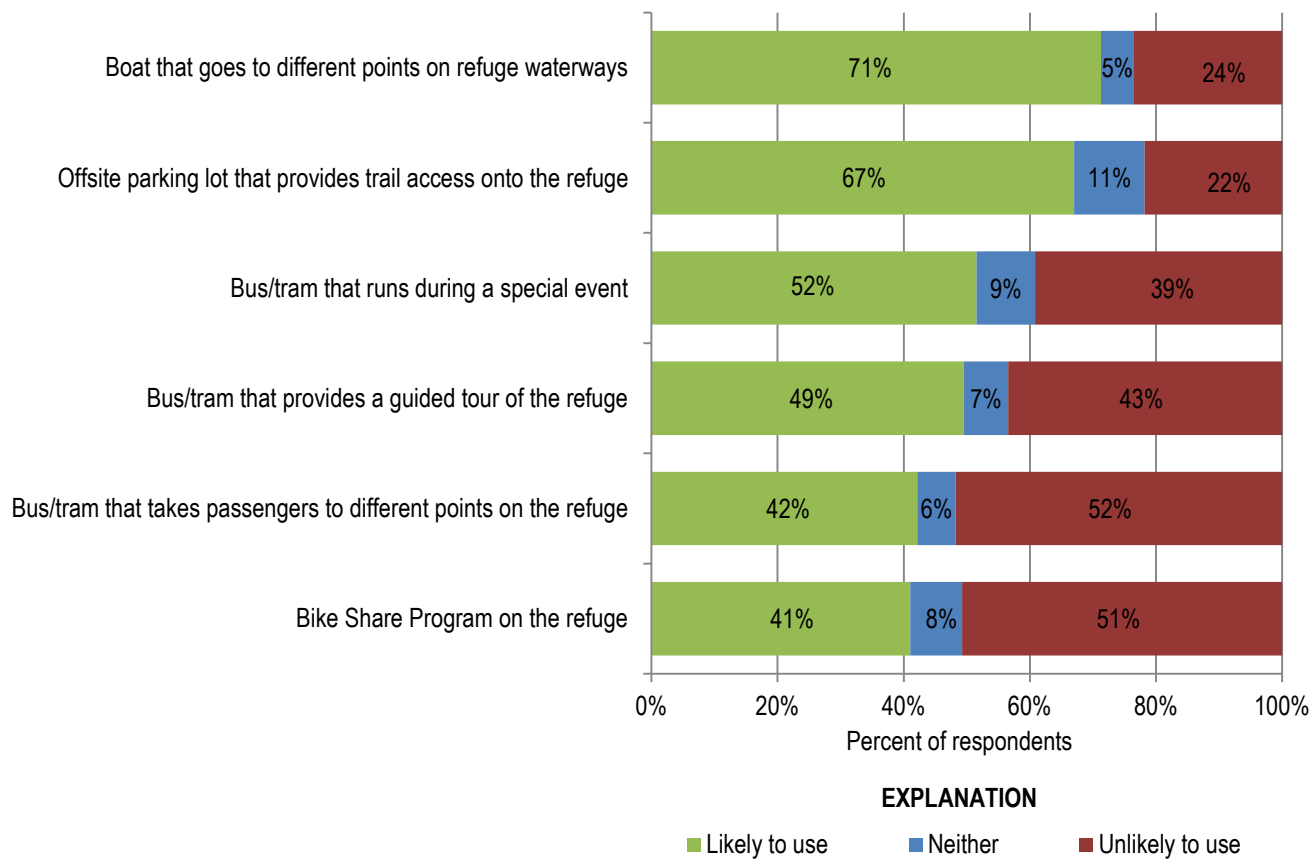


Figure 13. Visitors' likelihood of using alternative transportation options at refuges in the future (n ≥ 194).

Climate Change and the National Wildlife Refuge System

Climate change represents a growing concern for refuge management. The Service's climate-change strategy, titled "Rising to the Urgent Challenge," establishes a basic context for the agency to work within a larger conservation community to ensure wildlife, plant, and habitat sustainability (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, 2010). To support the guiding principles of the strategy, refuges will be exploring options for more effective engagement with visitors on the topic of climate change. Previous research suggests that human thought about climate change is influenced by individuals' levels of concern, levels of involvement, preferences for policies, and associated behaviors (Maibach and others, 2009). The results presented below provide baseline information on these factors in relation to the effects of climate change on fish, wildlife, and their habitats.

These results are most useful when coupled with responses to belief statements, because such beliefs may be used to develop message frames (or ways to communicate) about climate change with a broad coalition of visitors. Framing science-based findings does not alter the overall message, but rather places the issue in a context in which different audience groupings can relate (Nisbet, 2009). The need to mitigate impacts of climate change on refuges could be framed as a quality-of-life issue (for example, preserving the ability to enjoy fish, wildlife, plants, and their habitat) or an economic issue (for example, maintaining tourist revenues or supporting economic growth through new jobs/technology). Framing information in ways that resonate with visitors' beliefs may result in more engaged audiences who support strategies aimed at alleviating climate-change pressures. Data will be analyzed further at the national level to inform the development of a comprehensive climate change communication and engagement strategy.

The majority of visitors to Bear River Migratory Bird Refuge agreed with the following statements related to their own *personal involvement* with the topic of climate change as it relates to fish, wildlife, and habitats (fig. 14):

- I am personally concerned about the effects of climate change on fish, wildlife and habitats;
- I stay well-informed about the effects of climate change; and
- I take actions to alleviate the effects of climate change.

The majority of visitors also agreed with the following *belief statements* regarding climate change effects on fish, wildlife and their habitats (fig. 15):

- Future generations will benefit if we address climate change effects;
- We can improve our quality of life if we address the effects of climate change; and
- It is important to consider the economic costs and benefits to local communities when addressing climate change effects.

Results regarding such beliefs are important to consider when communicating with visitors about this topic, since almost half of visitors (45%) indicated their experiences would be enhanced if Bear River Migratory Bird Refuge provided information about how visitors can help to address climate change impacts on fish, wildlife, and their habitats (fig. 14).

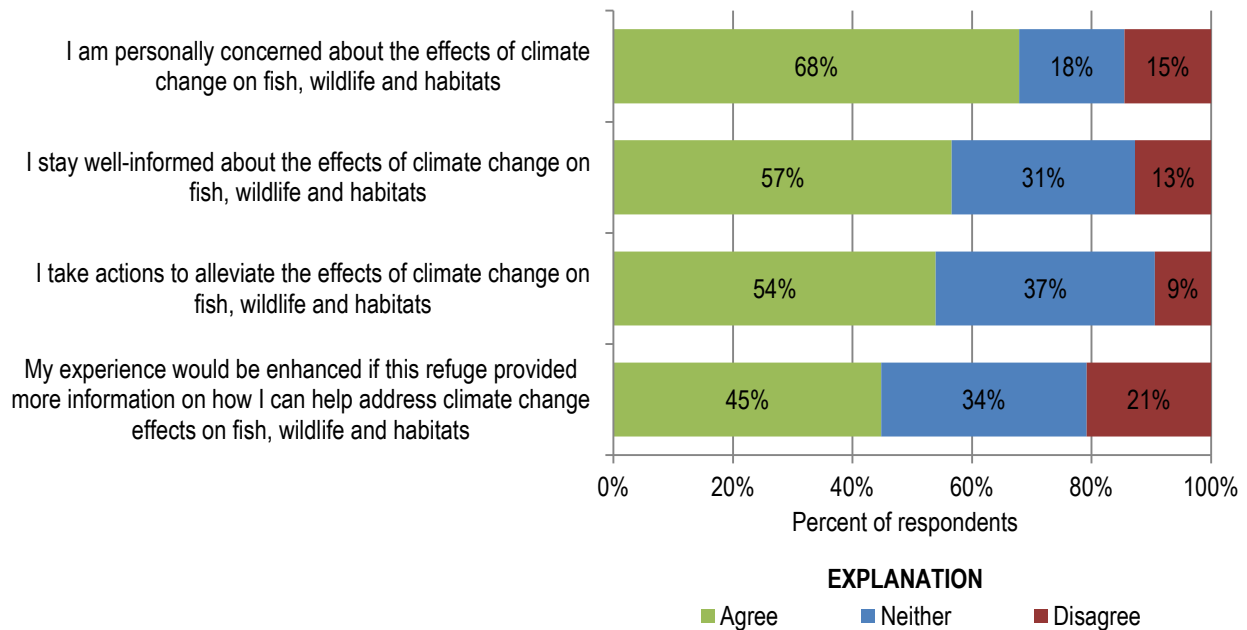


Figure 14. Visitors' personal involvement with climate change related to fish, wildlife and their habitats (n ≥ 189).

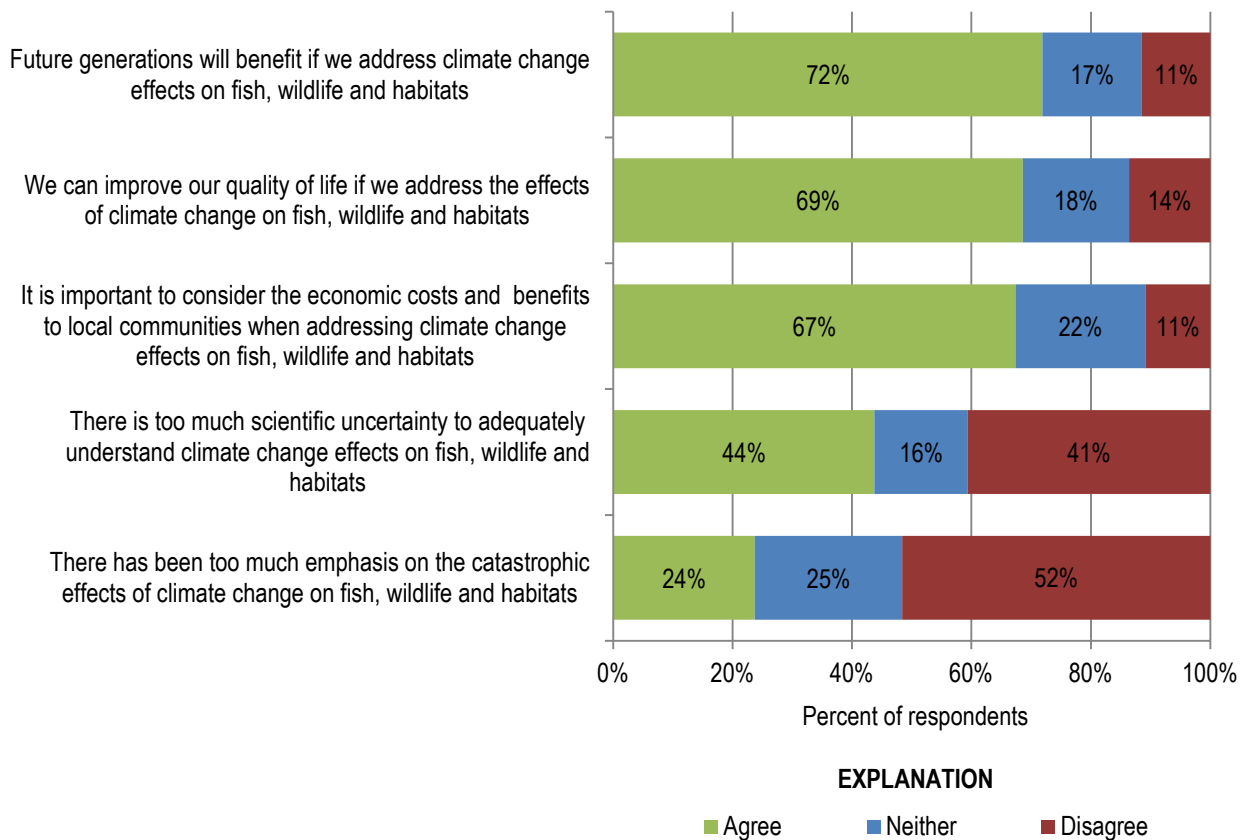


Figure 15. Visitors' beliefs about the effects of climate change on fish, wildlife and their habitats (n ≥ 190).

Conclusion

These individual refuge results provide a summary of trip characteristics and experiences of a sample of visitors to Bear River Migratory Bird Refuge during 2012 and are intended to inform decision-making efforts related to visitor services and transportation at the refuge. Additionally, the results from this survey can be used to inform planning efforts, such as a refuge's Comprehensive Conservation Plan. With an understanding of visitors' trip and activity characteristics, visitor-satisfaction ratings with existing offerings, and opinions regarding fees, refuge managers are able to make informed decisions about possible modifications (whether reducing or enhancing) to visitor facilities, services, or recreational opportunities. This information can help managers gauge demand for refuge opportunities and inform both implementation and communication strategies. Similarly, an awareness of visitors' satisfaction ratings with refuge offerings can help determine if potential areas of concern need to be investigated further. As another example of the utility of these results, community relations may be improved or bolstered through an understanding of the value of the refuge to visitors, whether that value is attributed to an appreciation of the refuge's uniqueness, enjoyment of its recreational opportunities, or spending contributions of nonlocal visitors to the local economy. Such data about visitors and their experiences, in conjunction with an understanding of biophysical data on the refuge and its resources, can ensure that management decisions are consistent with the Refuge System mission while fostering a continued public interest in these special places.

Individual refuge results are available for downloading at <http://pubs.usgs.gov/ds/754/>. For additional information about this project, contact the USGS researchers at national_visitor_survey@usgs.gov or 970.226.9205.

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National Wildlife Refuge Visitor Survey



PLEASE READ THIS FIRST:

Thank you for visiting a National Wildlife Refuge and for agreeing to participate in this study! We hope that you had an enjoyable experience. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the U.S. Geological Survey would like to learn more about National Wildlife Refuge visitors in order to improve the management of the area and enhance visitor opportunities.

Even if you have recently visited more than one National Wildlife Refuge or made more than one visit to the same Refuge, please respond regarding only the Refuge and the visit when you were asked to participate in this survey for any question that uses the phrase “this Refuge.” Please reference the cover letter included with this survey if you are unsure of which refuge you visited.

SECTION 1. Your visit to this Refuge

1. Including your most recent visit, which activities have you participated in during the past 12 months at this Refuge?
(Please mark **all that apply.**)

<input type="checkbox"/> 1% Big game hunting	<input type="checkbox"/> 11% Hiking	<input type="checkbox"/> 10% Environmental education (for example, classrooms or labs)
<input type="checkbox"/> 2% Upland/Small game hunting	<input type="checkbox"/> 7% Bicycling	
<input type="checkbox"/> 17% Migratory bird/Waterfowl hunting	<input type="checkbox"/> 62% Auto tour route/Driving	<input type="checkbox"/> 17% Interpretation (for example, exhibits, kiosks, videos)
<input type="checkbox"/> 65% Wildlife observation	<input type="checkbox"/> 6% Motorized boating	
<input type="checkbox"/> 78% Bird watching	<input type="checkbox"/> 2% Nonmotorized boating (including canoes/kayaks)	<input type="checkbox"/> 9% Refuge special event (<i>please specify</i>) <u>See Appendix B</u>
<input type="checkbox"/> 12% Freshwater fishing		
<input type="checkbox"/> 0% Saltwater fishing	<input type="checkbox"/> 4% Volunteering	<input type="checkbox"/> 3% Other (<i>please specify</i>) <u>See Appendix B</u>
<input type="checkbox"/> 49% Photography		

2. Which of the activities above was the **primary** purpose of your visit to this Refuge?
(Please write **only one activity** on the line.) See report for categorized results; see Appendix B for miscellaneous responses

3. Did you go to a Visitor Center at this Refuge?

<input type="checkbox"/> 28% No	
<input type="checkbox"/> 72% Yes → If yes, what did you do there? (Please mark <u>all that apply.</u>)	
<input type="checkbox"/> 64% Visit the gift shop or bookstore	<input type="checkbox"/> 1% Pick up/purchase a license, permit, or pass
<input type="checkbox"/> 85% View the exhibits	<input type="checkbox"/> 61% Stop to use the facilities (for example, get water, use restroom)
<input type="checkbox"/> 72% Ask information of staff/volunteers	
<input type="checkbox"/> 36% Watch a nature talk/video/presentation	<input type="checkbox"/> 11% Other (<i>please specify</i>) <u>See Appendix B</u>

4. Which of the following best describes your visit to this Refuge? (Please mark **only one.**)

Nonlocal	Local	All visitors	
<input type="checkbox"/> 37%	<input type="checkbox"/> 87%	<input type="checkbox"/> 59%	It was the primary purpose or sole destination of my trip.
<input type="checkbox"/> 33%	<input type="checkbox"/> 6%	<input type="checkbox"/> 21%	It was one of many equally important reasons or destinations for my trip.
<input type="checkbox"/> 30%	<input type="checkbox"/> 7%	<input type="checkbox"/> 20%	It was just an incidental or spur-of-the-moment stop on a trip taken for other purposes or to other destinations.

5. Approximately how many **hours/minutes and miles** (one-way) did you travel from your home to this Refuge?

Nonlocal	<u>7</u> Hours	<u>30</u> Minutes	and	<u>456</u> Miles
Local	<u>0</u> Hours	<u>39</u> Minutes	and	<u>27</u> Miles
All visitors	<u>4</u> Hours	<u>2</u> Minutes	and	<u>23</u> Miles

6. What type of group were you with on your visit to this Refuge?

☐ 12% None, I visited this Refuge alone

(of those visiting with a group)

☐ 95% Family and/or friends

☐ 3% Organized club or school group (for example, Boy/Girl Scouts, hiking club, bird watching group)

☐ 0% Commerical tour group

☐ 2% Other *(please specify)* See Appendix B

7. Including yourself, how many people were in your group? *(Please answer each category.)*

3 number 18 years and over

1 number 17 years and under

8. How did you **first learn or hear about** this Refuge? *(Please mark all that apply.)*

☐ 49% Family and/or friends

☐ 10% Refuge website

☐ 32% Signs on highway

☐ 3% Other website *(please specify)* See Appendix B

☐ 6% Recreation club or organization

☐ 0% Television or radio

☐ 18% People in the local community

☐ 7% Newspaper or magazine

☐ 13% Refuge printed information (brochure, map)

☐ 11% Travel guidebook or other book

☐ 14% Map or atlas

☐ 7% Other *(please specify)* See Appendix B

9. During which seasons have you visited this Refuge in the last 12 months? *(Please mark all that apply.)*

☐ 49% Spring
(March-May)

☐ 48% Summer
(June-August)

☐ 59% Fall
(September-November)

☐ 22% Winter
(December-February)

10. How many times have you visited...

...this Refuge (including this visit) in the last 12 months?

5 number of visits

...other National Wildlife Refuges in the last 12 months?

3 number of visits

SECTION 2. Transportation and access at this Refuge

1. What **forms of transportation** did you use on your visit to this Refuge? (*Please mark **all that apply.***)

<input type="checkbox"/> 91%	Private vehicle without a trailer	<input type="checkbox"/> 1%	Refuge shuttle bus or tram	<input type="checkbox"/> 7%	Bicycle
<input type="checkbox"/> 8%	Private vehicle with a trailer (for boat, camper or other)	<input type="checkbox"/> 0%	Motorcycle	<input type="checkbox"/> 14%	Walk/Hike
<input type="checkbox"/> 0%	Commercial tour bus	<input type="checkbox"/> 1%	ATV or off-road vehicle	<input type="checkbox"/> 2%	Other (<i>please specify below</i>)
<input type="checkbox"/> 2%	Recreational vehicle (RV)	<input type="checkbox"/> 4%	Boat	<u>See Appendix B</u>	
		<input type="checkbox"/> 1%	Wheelchair or other mobility aid		

Which of the following did you use to find your way to this Refuge? (*Please mark **all that apply.***)

<input type="checkbox"/> 63%	Previous knowledge/I have been to this Refuge before	<input type="checkbox"/> 9%	Maps from the Internet (for example, MapQuest or Google Maps)
<input type="checkbox"/> 41%	Signs on highways	<input type="checkbox"/> 8%	Directions from Refuge website
<input type="checkbox"/> 15%	A GPS navigation system	<input type="checkbox"/> 2%	Directions from people in community near this Refuge
<input type="checkbox"/> 16%	A road atlas or highway map	<input type="checkbox"/> 7%	Directions from friends or family
		<input type="checkbox"/> 2%	Other (<i>please specify</i>) <u>See Appendix B</u>

2. Below are different alternative transportation options that could be offered at some National Wildlife Refuges in the future. Considering the different Refuges you may have visited, please tell us **how likely you would be to use each transportation option.** (*Please circle one number for each statement.*)

How likely would you be to use...	Very Unlikely	Somewhat Unlikely	Neither	Somewhat Likely	Very Likely
...a bus or tram that takes passengers to different points on the Refuge (such as the Visitor Center)?	<input type="checkbox"/> 37%	<input type="checkbox"/> 15%	<input type="checkbox"/> 6%	<input type="checkbox"/> 29%	<input type="checkbox"/> 13%
...a bike that was offered through a Bike Share Program for use while on the Refuge?	<input type="checkbox"/> 36%	<input type="checkbox"/> 15%	<input type="checkbox"/> 8%	<input type="checkbox"/> 26%	<input type="checkbox"/> 15%
...a bus or tram that provides a guided tour of the Refuge with information about the Refuge and its resources?	<input type="checkbox"/> 29%	<input type="checkbox"/> 14%	<input type="checkbox"/> 7%	<input type="checkbox"/> 31%	<input type="checkbox"/> 19%
...a boat that goes to different points on Refuge waterways?	<input type="checkbox"/> 16%	<input type="checkbox"/> 7%	<input type="checkbox"/> 5%	<input type="checkbox"/> 41%	<input type="checkbox"/> 30%
...a bus or tram that runs during a special event (such as an evening tour of wildlife or weekend festival)?	<input type="checkbox"/> 29%	<input type="checkbox"/> 10%	<input type="checkbox"/> 9%	<input type="checkbox"/> 34%	<input type="checkbox"/> 18%
...an offsite parking lot that provides trail access for walking/hiking onto the Refuge?	<input type="checkbox"/> 13%	<input type="checkbox"/> 9%	<input type="checkbox"/> 11%	<input type="checkbox"/> 37%	<input type="checkbox"/> 30%
...some other alternative transportation option? (<i>please specify</i>) <u>See Appendix B</u>	<input type="checkbox"/> 4%	<input type="checkbox"/> 8%	<input type="checkbox"/> 4%	<input type="checkbox"/> 13%	<input type="checkbox"/> 71%

3. If alternative transportation were offered at *this* Refuge, would it enhance your experience?

☐ 28% Yes ☐ 36% No ☐ 37% Not Sure

4. For each of the following transportation-related features, first, **rate how important** each feature is to you when visiting this Refuge; then **rate how satisfied** you are with the way this Refuge is managing each feature.
If this Refuge does not offer a specific transportation-related feature, please rate how important it is to you and then circle NA "Not Applicable" under the Satisfaction column.

Importance <i>Circle one for each item.</i>						Satisfaction <i>Circle one for each item.</i>					
Very Unimportant	Somewhat Unimportant	Neither	Somewhat Important	Very Important		Very Unsatisfied	Somewhat Unsatisfied	Neither	Somewhat Satisfied	Very Satisfied	Not Applicable
6%	13%	9%	46%	26%	Surface conditions of roads	4%	5%	2%	19%	70%	NA
8%	13%	12%	51%	17%	Surface conditions of parking areas	5%	2%	6%	16%	70%	NA
3%	9%	8%	42%	37%	Condition of bridges	3%	1%	8%	14%	73%	NA
6%	9%	13%	44%	28%	Condition of trails and boardwalks	2%	4%	17%	18%	58%	NA
5%	8%	10%	48%	30%	Number of places for parking	3%	8%	11%	21%	58%	NA
7%	6%	4%	41%	43%	Number of places to pull over along Refuge roads	6%	24%	9%	32%	29%	NA
6%	5%	7%	38%	45%	Safety of driving conditions on Refuge roads	3%	5%	7%	22%	63%	NA
5%	6%	11%	38%	40%	Safety of Refuge road entrances/exits	3%	3%	8%	16%	70%	NA
6%	8%	11%	40%	36%	Signs on highways directing you to the Refuge	4%	4%	11%	18%	62%	NA
7%	7%	9%	40%	37%	Signs directing you around the Refuge roads	3%	7%	13%	27%	50%	NA
7%	7%	17%	40%	29%	Signs directing you on trails	2%	5%	31%	24%	37%	NA
9%	12%	24%	27%	29%	Access for people with physical disabilities or who have difficulty walking	1%	3%	40%	18%	38%	NA

5. If you have any comments about transportation-related items at this Refuge, please write them on the lines below.

See Appendix B

SECTION 3. Your expenses related to your Refuge visit

1. Do you live in the local area (within approximately 50 miles of this Refuge)?

☐ 44% Yes

☐ 56% No → How much time did you spend **in the local area** on this trip?

Nonlocals If you spent one day or more in the local area, enter the number of days: 4 day(s)

only If you spent less than one day in the local area, enter the number of hours: 4 hour(s)

2. How much time did you spend **at this Refuge** during your most recent visit?

If you spent one day or more at this Refuge, enter the number of days: 2 day(s)

If you spent less than one day at this Refuge, enter the number of hours: 4 hour(s)

3. Please record the amount that **you and other members of your group** with whom you shared expenses (for example, other family members, traveling companions) spent in the local 50-mile area during **your most recent visit** to this Refuge. (*Please enter the amount spent to the nearest dollar in each category below. Enter 0 (zero) if you did not spend any money in a particular category.*)

Categories	Amount Spent in <u>Local Communities & at this Refuge</u> (within 50 miles of this Refuge)
Motel, bed & breakfast, cabin, etc.	
Camping	
Restaurants & bars	
Groceries	
Gasoline and oil	
Local transportation (bus, shuttle, rental car, etc.)	
Refuge entrance fee	
Recreation guide fees (hunting, fishing, wildlife viewing, etc.)	
Equipment rental (canoe, bicycle, kayak, etc.)	
Sporting good purchases	
Souvenirs/clothing and other retail	
Other (<i>please specify</i>) _____	

See Report for Results

4. Including yourself, how many people in your group shared these trip expenses?

2 number of people sharing expenses

5. As you know, some of the costs of travel such as gasoline, hotels, and airline tickets often increase. If your total trip costs were to increase, what is the maximum extra amount you would pay and still visit this Refuge? (*Please circle the highest dollar amount.*)

\$0	\$10	\$20	\$35	\$50	\$75	\$100	\$125	\$150	\$200	\$250
8%	17%	23%	9%	20%	3%	9%	2%	2%	1%	8%

6. If you or a member of your group paid a fee or used a pass to enter this Refuge, how appropriate was the fee? (*Please mark **only one**.*)

☒ 100% Did not pay a fee (*skip to Section 4*)

Bear River Migratory Bird Refuge does not charge an entrance fee. This question does not apply.

7. Please indicate whether you disagree or agree with the following statement. (*Please mark **only one**.*)

The value of the recreation opportunities and services I experienced at this Refuge was at least equal to the fee I paid.

Bear River Migratory Bird Refuge does not charge an entrance fee. This question does not apply.

SECTION 4. Your experience at this Refuge

1. Considering your visit to this Refuge, please indicate the extent to which you disagree or agree with each statement. (*Please circle one number for each statement.*)

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither	Agree	Strongly Agree	Not Applicable
Overall, I am satisfied with the recreational activities and opportunities provided by this Refuge.	<input type="checkbox"/> 0%	<input type="checkbox"/> 2%	<input type="checkbox"/> 3%	<input type="checkbox"/> 38%	<input type="checkbox"/> 56%	NA
Overall, I am satisfied with the information and education provided by this Refuge about its resources.	<input type="checkbox"/> 1%	<input type="checkbox"/> 2%	<input type="checkbox"/> 5%	<input type="checkbox"/> 27%	<input type="checkbox"/> 65%	NA
Overall, I am satisfied with the services provided by employees or volunteers at this Refuge.	<input type="checkbox"/> 1%	<input type="checkbox"/> 2%	<input type="checkbox"/> 5%	<input type="checkbox"/> 22%	<input type="checkbox"/> 71%	NA
This Refuge does a good job of conserving fish, wildlife and their habitats.	<input type="checkbox"/> 2%	<input type="checkbox"/> 1%	<input type="checkbox"/> 4%	<input type="checkbox"/> 29%	<input type="checkbox"/> 64%	NA

2. For each of the following services, facilities, and activities, first, **rate how important** each item is to you when visiting this Refuge; then, **rate how satisfied** you are with the way this Refuge is managing each item.
If this Refuge does not offer a specific service, facility, or activity, please rate how important it is to you and then circle NA "Not Applicable" under the Satisfaction column.

Importance					Refuge Services, Facilities, and Activities	Satisfaction					
Circle one for each item.						Circle one for each item.					
Very Unimportant	Somewhat Unimportant	Neither	Somewhat Important	Very Important		Very Unsatisfied	Somewhat Unsatisfied	Neither	Somewhat Satisfied	Very Satisfied	Not Applicable
7%	8%	13%	43%	29%	Availability of employees or volunteers	4%	3%	13%	16%	64%	NA
4%	6%	12%	34%	44%	Courteous and welcoming employees or volunteers	3%	1%	11%	11%	73%	NA
2%	5%	9%	31%	54%	Knowledgeable employees or volunteers	2%	2%	13%	13%	70%	NA
3%	3%	5%	44%	45%	Printed information about this Refuge and its resources (for example, maps and brochures)	3%	2%	7%	26%	63%	NA
5%	4%	9%	45%	37%	Informational kiosks/displays about this Refuge and its resources	3%	3%	10%	22%	61%	NA
2%	6%	13%	46%	33%	Signs with rules/regulations for this Refuge	2%	4%	18%	26%	50%	NA
3%	4%	9%	44%	39%	Exhibits about this Refuge and its resources	2%	2%	11%	22%	63%	NA
6%	6%	27%	27%	35%	Environmental education programs or activities	2%	1%	34%	14%	49%	NA
2%	2%	11%	34%	52%	Visitor Center	2%	1%	9%	9%	79%	NA
2%	2%	8%	31%	57%	Convenient hours and days of operation	4%	6%	8%	18%	64%	NA
3%	2%	5%	30%	61%	Well-maintained restrooms	3%	3%	8%	15%	71%	NA
2%	3%	9%	44%	43%	Wildlife observation structures (decks, blinds)	1%	11%	10%	32%	46%	NA
3%	2%	4%	23%	68%	Bird-watching opportunities	2%	2%	4%	27%	65%	NA
2%	4%	10%	45%	40%	Opportunities to observe wildlife other than birds	2%	6%	18%	32%	42%	NA
4%	2%	10%	32%	51%	Opportunities to photograph wildlife and scenery	2%	3%	12%	28%	55%	NA
49%	4%	19%	6%	21%	Hunting opportunities	5%	4%	45%	17%	29%	NA
40%	8%	25%	17%	11%	Fishing opportunities	5%	5%	54%	19%	17%	NA
7%	9%	11%	44%	29%	Trail hiking opportunities	5%	13%	30%	32%	20%	NA
18%	9%	25%	31%	17%	Water trail opportunities for canoeing or kayaking	5%	8%	55%	19%	13%	NA
20%	9%	26%	26%	19%	Bicycling opportunities	4%	4%	47%	22%	23%	NA
16%	6%	37%	24%	18%	Volunteer opportunities	3%	2%	61%	10%	24%	NA

3. If you have any comments about the services, facilities, and activities at this Refuge, please write them on the lines below.

See Appendix B

SECTION 5. Your opinions regarding National Wildlife Refuges and the resources they conserve

1. Before you were contacted to participate in this survey, were you aware that National Wildlife Refuges...

...are managed by the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service?

☐ 86% Yes

☐ 14% No

...have the primary mission of conserving, managing, and restoring fish, wildlife, plants and their habitat?

☐ 88% Yes

☐ 12% No

2. Compared to other public lands you have visited, do you think Refuges provide a unique recreation experience?

☐ 91% Yes

☐ 9% No

3. If you answered "Yes" to Question 2, please briefly describe what makes Refuges unique. _____

See Appendix B

There has been a lot of talk about climate change recently. We would like to know what you think about climate change as it relates to fish, wildlife and their habitats. To what extent do you disagree or agree with each statement below? (*Please circle one number for each statement.*)

Statements about climate change	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither	Agree	Strongly Agree
I am personally concerned about the effects of climate change on fish, wildlife and their habitats.	8%	6%	18%	29%	39%
We can improve our quality of life if we address the effects of climate change on fish, wildlife and their habitats.	8%	6%	18%	31%	37%
There is too much scientific uncertainty to adequately understand how climate change will impact fish, wildlife and their habitats.	20%	21%	16%	29%	15%
I stay well-informed about the effects of climate change on fish, wildlife and their habitats.	2%	11%	31%	35%	22%
It is important to consider the economic costs and benefits to local communities when addressing the effects of climate change on fish, wildlife and their habitats.	4%	7%	22%	44%	23%
I take actions to alleviate the effects of climate change on fish, wildlife and their habitats.	4%	5%	37%	37%	17%
There has been too much emphasis on the catastrophic effects of climate change on fish, wildlife and their habitats.	29%	23%	25%	13%	11%
Future generations will benefit if we address the effects of climate change on fish, wildlife and their habitats.	6%	5%	17%	31%	41%
My experience at this Refuge would be enhanced if this Refuge provided more information about how I can help address the effects of climate change on fish, wildlife and their habitats.	10%	11%	34%	29%	16%

SECTION 6. A Little about You

**** Please tell us a little bit about yourself. Your answers to these questions will help further characterize visitors to National Wildlife Refuges. Answers are not linked to any individual taking this survey. ****

1. Are you a citizen or permanent resident of the United States?

94% Yes 6% No → If not, what is your home country? See Figure 2 in Report

2. Are you? 58% Male 42% Female

3. In what year were you born? 1958 (YYYY)

4. What is your highest year of formal schooling? *(Please circle one number.)*

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20+
(elementary)					(junior high or middle school)			(high school)				(college or technical school)				(graduate or professional school)			
					0%			13%				44%				43%			

5. What ethnicity do you consider yourself? ☐ 2% Hispanic or Latino ☐ 98% Not Hispanic or Latino

6. From what racial origin(s) do you consider yourself? *(Please mark **all that apply.**)*

<input type="checkbox"/> 2% American Indian or Alaska Native	<input type="checkbox"/> 0% Black or African American	<input type="checkbox"/> 99% White
<input type="checkbox"/> 2% Asian	<input type="checkbox"/> 0% Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	

7. How many members are in your household? 3 persons

8. How many members of your household contribute to paying the household expenses? 2 persons

9. Including these members, what was your approximate household income from all sources (before taxes) last year?

<input type="checkbox"/> 2% Less than \$10,000	<input type="checkbox"/> 14% \$35,000 - \$49,999	<input type="checkbox"/> 16% \$100,000 - \$149,999
<input type="checkbox"/> 3% \$10,000 - \$24,999	<input type="checkbox"/> 20% \$50,000 - \$74,999	<input type="checkbox"/> 6% \$150,000 - \$199,999
<input type="checkbox"/> 10% \$25,000 - \$34,999	<input type="checkbox"/> 20% \$75,000 - \$99,999	<input type="checkbox"/> 9% \$200,000 or more

10. How many outdoor recreation trips did you take in the last 12 months (for activities such as hunting, fishing, wildlife viewing, etc.)?

20 number of trips

Thank you for completing the survey.

There is space on the next page for any additional comments you may have regarding your visit to this Refuge.

Comments?

See Appendix B for Comments

PAPERWORK REDUCTION ACT STATEMENT: The Paperwork Reduction Act requires us to tell you why we are collecting this information, how we will use it, and whether or not you have to respond. The information that we collect in this survey will help us understand visitor satisfaction with and use of National Wildlife Refuges and to make sound management and policy decisions. Your response is voluntary. An agency may not conduct or sponsor and you are not required to respond to a collection of information unless it displays a valid OMB Control Number. We estimate it will take an average of 25 minutes to complete this survey. You may send comments concerning the burden estimate or any aspect of the survey to the Information Collection Clearance Officer, Fish and Wildlife Service, 4401 North Fairfax Drive, MS 222-ARLSQ, Arlington, VA 22203. OMB CONTROL #1018-0145 EXPIRATION DATE 6/30/2013

Appendix B: Visitor Comments to Open-Ended Survey Questions for Bear River Migratory Bird Refuge

Survey Section 1

Question 1: "Including your most recent visit, which activities have you participated in during the past 12 months at this Refuge?"

Special Event	Frequency
All the ones they had this year	1
Conference	2
Delta Waterfowl	3
Elementary school bird drawing contest	2
Field trip special needs	1
Free fishing day	2
Learning about birds	1
Opening of road	1
USEE Conference	3
Wildlife tour by van on Saturday, May 26, 2012	1
Wolf presentation	1

Other Activity	Frequency
Checked out backpacks for kids to explore pond.	1
I draw and paint here, frequently.	1
Shopping at gift shop	2
Touring the facility	1
Water testing	1

Question 2: “Which of the activities above was the primary purpose of your visit to this Refuge?”
Primary activities are categorized in the main report; the table below lists the “other” miscellaneous primary activities listed by survey respondents.

Other Miscellaneous Primary Activities	Frequency
Accidentally ended up there looking for the Great Salt Lake.	1
Bring the family to the Delta waterfowl youth fair.	1
Conference	1
Family outing	1
Field trip, special needs	1
Just stopped to use restrooms.	1
Paddle boarding	1
USEE Conference	2
Water testing	1

Question 3: “Did you go to a Visitor Center at this Refuge?”; If Yes, “What did you do there?”

Other Visitor Center Activity	Frequency
Check out the bird board.	1
Conduct tour.	1
Conference sessions	1
Did activities for the Delta Waterfowl event.	1
Gift shop was closed, otherwise would have visited.	1
Look at recent sightings list of birds seen in the past few days.	1
None - it was closed! On a VERY busy Memorial Day - DUMB!	1
Nothing, because it was closed for the Memorial holiday.	1
Pick up a tour map.	1
Picked up pamphlets.	1
Purchase book on birds.	1
Purchased bird identification guide.	1
Speak with the Refuge Manager.	1
Take a class.	1
Take the nature walk loop near the Visitor Center.	1
The staff member at the bookstore was rude.	1

Question 6: “Were you part of a group on your visit to this Refuge?; If Yes, “What type of group were you with on your visit?”

Other Group Type	Frequency
Conference	1
Early learning/preschool	1
Hunting group	1

Question 8: “How did you first learn or hear about this Refuge?”

Other Website	Frequency
American Birding Association	1
Birdseye App, which accesses bird hotspots	1
I looked up NWRs in the area when we moved here.	1
Local birding website	1
Photo group blog	1

Other Ways Heard about This Refuge	Frequency
A state wide bird area	1
Field trip	3
Grade school	2
Ogden Nature Center	1
Other people who had visited the refuge	1
Photography	1
Regional Visitor Information Center	1
Tourist information office in Salt Lake City	1
Where to find birds in Utah	1
Worked at refuge 1958-1959.	1

Survey Section 2

Question 1: “What forms of transportation did you use on your visit to this Refuge?”

Other Forms of Transportation	Frequency
Private car to the refuge. Tour bus on refuge.	1
School vans	1
Standup paddle board	1

Question 2: "Which of the following did you use to find your way to this Refuge?"

Other Ways Found This Refuge	Frequency
Directions from Officer Greg Mullin	1
Refuge guide	1

Question 3: "Below are different alternative transportation options that could be offered at some National Wildlife Refuges in the future...please tell us how likely you would be to use each transportation option."

Other Transportation Option Likely to Use	Frequency
Airboats	1
Airboats; would love to get non-hunting access to the big duck club not during the hunting season.	1
Boardwalk	1
Boat rental or share program would be nice-kayak or canoe would be best.	1
Boat tours	1
Bring my own bike	1
Canoe sharing	1
Electric powered bike or other	1
Guided hikes	1
Horseback	2
Human powered anything	1
Hybrid/electric	1
Light rail	1
More hiking trails	1
Personal bike/boat	2
Personal watercraft	1
Private vehicle	5
Self guided tour	1
Use my own bicycle; use my own kayak or canoe for non-hunting paddling.	1
UTA to the refuge.	1

Question 6: "If you have any comments about transportation-related items at this Refuge, please write them on the lines below."

Comments on Transportation-related Items at This Refuge (n = 43)

A few more pull-outs with asphalt for elderly walkers to use.

Additional access to the back portions (closer to the lake) of the refuge would very much increase our enjoyment of the Refuge's wildlife diversity. Particularly birds.

Bear River Bird Refuge one way on loop, at least should be one way on half.

Bear River Refuge is not really a good place for trails and those found at the Visitor Center are okay and the ongoing improvements will be nice when done. More hiking at refuges is desirable and more options should be available where/when ever possible.

Do not like the new "one way" requirement around the tour loop. During hunting season this causes a safety hazard as it requires people to all go one direction, which people will be doing in a hurry to get home. In some cases this will require people to go up to 10 miles around the loop, instead of exiting the quickest route. As they travel to exit going with the one way direction they go past several boat launches where other hunter will be loading up their boats and someone will eventually get hit and injured. I don't believe this decision was made with safety in mind as I have hunted and bird watched on this refuge for 40+ years and have yet to see any issues with two way travel on the tour loop road.

For better photography the route is one way but sometimes the reverse is better for the lighting conditions.

Getting people out of their cars into the marsh on boats would really add to the experience. The car trip is a long one and the birds are occasionally not viewable from the road.

Great place!!!! GPS coordinates (address) is not correct. No big deal as there are signs. Great spot love it see my shots <http://flic.kr/s/aHsjzG7QN5>

I am a senior citizen and have difficulty walking being able to drive or ride a bus around the area is the only way I can see it. My only concern about a bus is getting on and off and if it would stop when a bird is sighted and stay long enough to see it.

I do not like the one way road all the way around the refuge. As a hunter I think we should be able to drive back from unit 1A without having to go around the whole tour route.

I don't know about access for persons with disabilities. I did not keep that in mind when at the refuge. The previous questions does not allow for me to mark "don't know".

I feel that the speed limit has been set a little low for the road going out to the refuge.

I have been to this refuge many times, so signing is unimportant to me. But, for new people, the signing might be more important.

I like to see paved roads and pull-outs to allow traffic to pass.

It was wonderful to have a wheelchair available for elderly arthritic mother.

My friend and I went only to the Visitor Center, since we had little time. Therefore, I know nothing of the road conditions beyond the Visitor Center.

Parking with boat trailer was terrible. One was route inconvenient and silly.

Perhaps posting signs with wildlife observation etiquette. Such as, turn off engines and how to pass others so as to minimize the disturbance of animals.

Please do not chip seal the road, it ruins the road for bikes. Love the smooth pavement.

Refuge needs more spots to get out and observe. Had to pass a truck that was very slow with both of us nearly off the diked road.

Roads to the refuge have been under construction for awhile- we missed the opportunity to visit during times of closure. Recently the auto-tour loop has been made one-way - This makes it difficult for photography because the angle of the sun is wrong at sometimes of the day for good photos.

Signage minimal at Bear River.

Signs were very visible from highway. Exiting was in a good wide area.

The 13-mile scenic loop road would be better for bicyclists if it were paved. Also, the trail options for walking/birding are

extremely limited to nonexistent on the scenic loop. The paved trail from the Visitor Center is nice, but the habitat is limited as it the sight distance across the marsh.

The distance of Bear River Migratory Bird Refuge from I-15 makes my use of any alternative to personal transport unlikely

The one way road around the loop is a pain. This one way restriction costs me time, fuel use, and inconvenience.

The refuge has spent a great deal of money "improving" the road to the car loop. The result is that many more people are going there. That may be their goal, but it is not mine. I have been going for years and I liked the fact that there were a limited number of people. That is what I want. Now, the birds are far away from the roads because the roads have lots more traffic. The auto loop on the refuge once had many places to pull off and photograph wildlife. Now, they have built up a narrow lane with steep margins and it is impossible to pull off to photograph anything. Again, I am sure that must be the goal of the changes, but it has diminished my enjoyment of the refuge area. I often photographed the birds while seated in my car, taking pictures out the window. That approach didn't seem to spook the birds much and I was able to get many wonderful images of the birds' behavior in their environment. Now that option is almost impossible. Please widen and lower the loop road, and allow visitors to pull over slightly and enjoy the area. The only thing you can do now is drive around on a narrow road. Sorry to complain, but that is how I feel. Thanks for listening.

The roads are very well kept. Thank you!

The roads were excellent but could have used more pullouts so we could stop and watch the birds.

The unpaved level road was much better than I expected. Thanks.

There are long stretches of the auto-loop where it was difficult for traffic to pass. We were going slower than many visitors.

There should be more pull-offs for wildlife viewing.

This is such a magical place; I would support alternative means of transport.

This refuge has had closures for prime birding months while roads resurfaced on the one way auto loop. I think traffic could have been routed around the work area and people allowed on the unaffected loop. That was a huge disappointment for me and out-of-town guests.

Visitor Center was closed on Memorial Day. Would have been nice to see it.

Walking would be nice but we like to take pictures so our vehicle serves as a blind and the herds of animals don't take flight in fear and are much more photographable.

We had a difficult time finding the refuge website. My daughter wanted to go back to this place she went on a field trip to because she loved it, but the website doesn't show up well on the Google search.

We have always enjoyed the trails and scenic drives here.

We love the Brigham refuge. It's been fun. Thanks.

We took a wrong turn at the start because the sign was not clear as to which way it was pointing. We then almost turned around before we got to the refuge because we had no idea how far it was and assumed it had all dried out and therefore would not provide us with the purpose of our visit which was bird watching. A sign saying entrance X miles would have helped.

Would like to access the more interesting areas, and could use a bike or other form if necessary. Wish there was not strict enforcement to use pull outs. The road is wide enough that if a person sees a bird... can stop and look. When limited to pull outs, going to miss a lot.

Your bike share program would be a safety problem if vehicles are sharing the narrow one way road. Passing would be difficult for either the bicyclist or vehicle. Trams should be of limited use on certain days and times so everyone can enjoy without congestion.

Survey Section 4

Question 3: "If you have any comments about services, facilities, and activities at this Refuge, please write them on the lines below."

Comments on Services, Facilities, and Activities at This Refuge (n = 65)

Although the restrooms were very clean at the Visitor Center, the restrooms and covered shelters at the start of the 12-mile area were overwhelmed by the birds and poop. I was very pleased with the employees/volunteers' eagerness to answer our questions and depth of knowledge of the refuge. Very, very helpful!!!!

Beautiful, creative, educational displays.

Bought a great sweatshirt at the gift shop at a very good price.

Detailed exhibits maps with USGS details would be useful, historical exhibit is too limited, development of a water trail, though difficult, might allow canoe and kayak observations, we are serious birders, plan use planners and DNR employees, so may not be typical.

During the hunting season you need to limit the total amount of hunters allowed in the refuge at a time.

Everyone was really nice. Wish I could have been there in the spring.

Everything about the facilities noted are A++. We look forward to visiting again.

Great Visitor Center. Friendly staff. Really enjoyed the 12 mile loop road and stopping when we saw a bird. Too bad gift shop wasn't open on day we visited.

I came to photograph Grebes and was not disappointed.

I have always been impressed when I come here. The staff is friendly and offered a variety of activities for the different ages in our group. They run an amazing bird drawing contest that gets many local schools involved. The staff always can answer my questions.

I hope this facility is not considering applying a fee because I feel the waterfowl licenses should cover all necessary activities.

I love the place. Keep it wild and reasonably accessible.

I think the refuge is overly restricted for canoes and kayaks during the spring and summer. I've boated on the Bear River but the put in is tough and we were fighting the current. Perhaps there could be some sections of the bay open in lanes where non-motorized boaters could boat by permit a few days a week. There would need to be volunteer rangers to make sure people didn't disturb the nesting birds. Somewhat handicapped people like me maybe could use an electric motored boat to get around. I can't row much anymore.

I think they should have more services for people (like me) who would love to learn and help with birds such as banding etc.

I visited on Memorial Day, so no employees were at the reserve except for the person requesting the survey.

I was concerned with the amount and distribution of "Salt Cedar" that is growing on this refuge. I called the biologist the next day and found out that they have an eradication program for salt cedar, but I feel they should be moving forward on this issue with great vigor!

I would like to come and band some waterfowl.

I would like to see a long hiking trail for observing wildlife out on the refuge property. Not just the one at the Visitor Center. Also would like to see an area designated for canoeing etc. for observing wildlife from the water.

It seems that hunters have more freedom than do photographers. I appreciate the use of the blind and all the fine employees that work there. Katie is awesome, thanks Katie.

It was Duck Season opening day and so the birds were scarce!

It's great.

Keep it available for the hunters please! There are so few areas that allow for good hunting. We need good areas to hunt.

Kiosks should be colorful, concentrate on birds/animals in pertinent areas, much larger to draw attention (Henderson Reclamation Area in Henderson, NV has excellent ones), also mile markers showing how far you have come and how far you have to go, signs indicating very slow vehicles should pull over into parking areas and let others pass. A refuge is a place for birds and animals to find refuge, not to be hunted.

Maps on the website are very poor and need more work. I often refer to the Google maps or Google earth maps instead, which do not mark the boundaries. Boat ramp is very poor condition, need lights and better dock. Parking lot is poorly designed for a truck and trailer.

Maybe more washrooms on auto trail. Not too keen on hunting in National Wildlife Refuges.

More diverse hunting places.

More pull-outs along the auto tour route are needed for safety and wildlife/bird viewing. Better access to the portions of the refuge that border the lake. More viewing platforms to see birds.

Needs a bike trail, but lots of bugs! (Hopefully, they'd keep their mouths closed.)

Our visit was a very enjoyable experience in all aspects.

Paving the road and parking lot has been a great addition. Thanks.

Perfect refuge as it is. It has a feeling of "being one" with a mostly wild unaltered bird refuge due to its less developed atmosphere. It is an incredible place of solitude that cannot be found anywhere anymore. The refuge is used by millions of migratory birds because of its solitude and relative isolation from human populations. Increasing visitation, developing more roads, paving roads, etc... would ruin the feeling of peace at the refuge and disturb the nesting/rearing birds and their young.

Perhaps grade the road a bit wider so that when cars in front stop, we could get around easier.

Picnic areas were not well kept.

Provide toilet facilities at halfway point on refuge drive.

Restrooms fairly well maintained in the field but could be better. Cleanliness there was fair.

Staff and volunteers have been fabulous to work with. Katie Mcvay has worked tirelessly with us and has provided educational support to all of our endeavors. Please recognize the excellent job she does every day.

Staff was very friendly and helpful. Restrooms at the Visitor Center are wonderful. The restrooms at the entrance to the refuge are scary. Bird poop outside and inside.

The employees and volunteers are always friendly and willing to answer our questions concerning the waterfowl and other migratory birds that are in the refuge during the time of our visits. This helps us enjoy the visit even more!!!!

The refuge was not the primary or even secondary destination in our visit to the area. We just stopped at the refuge because it was there. We did not consider any of the criteria listed above.

The restrooms at the end of the paved road and the beginning of the auto tour route, where covered in bird feces and was almost impossible to use due to the conditions.

The Visitor Center is top notch, and the staff is always welcoming and well informed.

They have a photography contest I enjoy and have entered- mostly we just drive out to the 12 miles loop and our main reason for being there is photo opportunities.

They just paved a new road to the refuge which is very nice but they have acquired thousands of acres and so far have denied access and places that were useable as pull offs for stopping or fishing have been completely eliminated. I've been going there for sixty years and it is slowly going downhill. I hope they will open up some of the closed off areas.

This refuge and Visitor Center are 1st class. Friendly volunteers. Accessibility and observing opportunities are good. Displays and movies are nice and make it interesting to kids.

Very few kiosks and too few about the bird species we were observing.

Very impressed with this area. Great job!

Very nice facility. Volunteers were very friendly.

Very satisfied. Please no hunting!

Volunteers were great, friendly, and fun.

Waterfowl hunting needs to remain a top priority on this refuge.

We came in a back way and missed the Visitor Center. There weren't any signs but our GPS told us we were going in the right direction. Out by the beginning of the trail, there was some information but not a lot. We all wished we had known about the Visitor Center prior to doing the auto tour. We all like the education elements that these centers typically offer.

We arrived the day before the major water allocation so we did not see the refuge at its best.

We really wanted to be able to put our canoe in the water and observe the wildlife but we were disappointed that we were unable to do so.

We visited this refuge on a day when the services, facilities, and most activities were closed. We were impressed with the opportunity to drive through the area and added about 12 new birds to our list - first time sighting. We were greatly impressed with the facilities that were there but not opened.

We went over Memorial Day. The Visitor Center was CLOSED! On a MAJOR holiday with many people wanting info and it was CLOSED. This is ridiculous! Why bother spending money building a center and having it closed on major days people want to visit. ALSO if this is a "refuge" why would you allow killing of wildlife?

We went to the refuge under the impression that kayaking was not allowed at all in the refuge. After paddling the river before it entered the refuge we drove the refuge loop and discovered via some hunters that kayaking was permitted. We wished we had known, but will return again to float.

We were on a tight schedule and didn't have the 2 hours to do the trails. If it took 30 min I would have liked to have gone to the trails.

When areas are off limits, perhaps they could have special days with sign-up opportunities to view wildlife/birds.

When I can go, the Visitor Center is not open.

Wonderful staff. Everyone was incredibly friendly. Facility was clean and well-maintained. We will return.

Would like gift shop open more hours.

Would love a National Wildlife Refuge that accommodated more shorebird habitat....mudflats, shallow water areas etc. Love the hours and accessibility and affordability of Bear River.

Would prefer no hunting and more access to additional areas of the refuge.

You need to pick industry partners from the outdoors who care and are willing to help for the right reasons.

Survey Section 5

Question 3: "If you answered "Yes" to Question 2, please briefly describe what makes Refuges unique."

Comments on What Makes Refuges Unique? (n = 151)

A little gem hidden in Utah.

A great look at our national resources and enjoyed every moment.

A great place to take grandkids to observe wildlife in a natural environment.

A place to hunt waterfowl.

Abundance of wildlife that can be observed combined with the naturalness and quietness of the place.

Access to large areas of concentrated wildlife. Most public lands, especially large areas like National Forest and BLM lands are never harvested and natural resource extraction on too great a level. Often distracts from the wildlife watching experience and abundance of wildlife in general. Refuges do a better job of limiting similar impacts but they could be better, No grazing on refuge land anywhere in the US would be a great start!!! Graze BLM land not refuge land.

Access to wilderness areas without detracting from the habitat makes refuges attractive and unusual.

Allows us to get on the land and see the wildlife. Public lands had not as good of up keep.

Always have great information at the refuges and we like to see the wildlife in natural habitats.

Always safer and better managed.

Availability to see quantities of different species In a somewhat protected area.

Beautiful birds, good education about refuge.

Because it is in a controlled setting to learn and observe.

Being able to learn, up close, about different species of animals and plants.

Birdwatching and hunting.

Birdwatching at the refuges is a wonderful experience. Bird lists provided and open sunrise to sundown allows birders to travel at their own pace to make observations.

Diversity of habitats in a relatively small area. Often provide opportunities to view threatened and endangered species.

Each refuge is unique; however, the employees/volunteers made this visit more enjoyable because of the info and stories they shared of the refuge.

Education signs, viewing platforms, great time.

Educational value of the Visitor Center is unique and important to understand the importance of respecting and preserving wild lands for sporting and other outdoor activities.

Every wildlife refuge is a unique habitat and worth preserving.

Exposes people to animals in their natural habitat.

Few places left that have the wildlife viewing opportunities that USFWS refuges do.

Focus on the wildlife and just the usual recreation.

Focus on wildlife is important.

For us it is the road to drive on that is the most important thing. We could not walk or hike to see the birds. Probably getting in and out of a boat and maybe a bus would not work. A good loop drive is most important.

Gives people a chance to see all kinds of birds and wildlife that they would never have a chance to experience.

Good place to hunt ducks.

Good place.

Great place to get off beaten track to observed birds and wildlife without worrying about traffic on public roads.

I appreciate seeing and learning about wildlife in their natural habitat.

I believe the flora, fauna, and geology including the human history of a National Wildlife Refuge in the United States is very unique and special for people who use them. I enjoy observing the different bird species in each wildlife refuge. Offers like from the Calliope hummingbird to the Golden eagle. Their always a real treat to see the birds in the wild and protected inside the wildlife refuge for future generations.

I enjoyed not being charged a fee and being free to drive the auto tour on our own.

I liked the car tour as I am somewhat physically restricted.

I love NWRs. They embody the greatness of our country, its resources, its management, its public dedication. They are located all over the country so any citizen can visit them. They do a great job of preserving our heritage for generations to come. They are free so just wander in and enjoy!

I really enjoyed the free tour we participated in. The volunteer who was our tour guide knew this stuff.

I was able to observe and photograph some beautiful birds that I would not have seen without this facility. Thanks for providing these wild life viewing opportunities.

In the case of Bear River Bird Refuge, it's the unique place to go to see a large number of birds and bird migrations in Northern Utah.

It appears that the wildlife is abundant at refuges because of all the refuges do to attract them. Our wildlife needs restful places to be and we enjoyed taking pictures of a baby fox when they were out there- we were sorry to see they no longer are.

It is a place to be able to safely see and observe wildlife in its natural habitat.

It is a place where one can carefully observe and study wildlife.

It is a wonderful place to bird watch and hunt as well.

It is an opportunity to view and interact with wildlife in their native habitat. I also appreciate that viewing this wildlife doesn't cost more than what I already pay in taxes. Like it or not money does play a role.

It is the largest area in this state for us to waterfowl hunt.

It is the only federal WMA in the immediate area.

It is the only refuge I have been to for birds.

It provides habitat to many species of animals that can provide birds to rest in their migration courses throughout North America, where the public can view and witness these migration patterns.

It seems to me that it is experiencing active wildlife management. The refuge is not wild but a construct by man to provide essential habitat for wildlife in a world massively altered by human activity. To visit a refuge highlights this altered world where we must protect animals by actions.

It's a wonderful educating experience for self and kids.

It's accessible. There are educational opportunities there.

It's close to home and great place to take the kids.

Just great to go to wild places with a natural balance.

Lack of commercialization. More mature orientated. Safe places for birds.

Less "touristy" than National Parks; however, I do not like hunting on refuges. It makes watching the wildlife/birds more difficult as they are skittish, plus I do not like trying to do photography with hunters around-accidents happen!

Less crowded than National Parks and National Forests.

Like to view birds.

Low visitation with undeveloped wildlife habitat. Minimal fragmentation of habitat and minimal human disturbance. Refuges provide an oasis of the last remaining critical habitat for wildlife reproduction, feeding, and rearing of young. Wildlife are stressed to their limits and need safe, relatively undisturbed areas to try to survive everyday stresses resulting from human domination of the planet and development of the natural areas that they depend upon for their continued survival and the survival of future generations of their offspring.

Migratory birds are of great interest.

More information and concerned with preservation.

Most public lands do not have Visitor Center and people to answer questions.

National Parks and Wildlife Refuges provide opportunities to preserve and observe nature, as a wildlife photographer this is very important to me. A place that makes us smile. Well done.

National Wildlife Refuges are unique because of their locations and opportunities. They know to view very diverse bird populations. We enjoy the intimacy with the birds which allows us to get great photos. Keep up the great work!

Nice areas.

Not all public lands are as protected from vandalism and other abuses. The upkeep in many of them is not as good as it is in these facilities.

NWRs provide public access to public lands and wildlife at little or no cost. In states like Texas where most land is privately owned, bird watching becomes far more expensive.

Offer an excellent high quality waterfowl hunting experience.

Opportunities for wildlife viewing at close quarters.

Opportunities to learn about and see local wildlife or migrating wildlife in a natural setting.

Opportunities to observe wildlife that otherwise might not be easy to see.

Opportunity to get close to wildlife for viewing and photography. Most refuges have met our needs.

Opportunity to view birds and wildlife is much higher in refuges than in most BLM and NPS lands.

Organized and maintained.

Overregulated areas are the worst no matter if they are WMA or BLM land or any other. We just need to keep available areas hunting-friendly so that access to good areas is not prohibited but welcoming to hunters. (That's my opinion, which should matter since I took the time to fill out this survey).

Protecting wildlife habitat.

Provide the habitats that attract & maintain wildlife.

Provides a location for education, recreation and observation.

Public lands are too big and are an unchecked mess. Thank the ATV industry for that and agencies not willing to enforce and elected officials on the take! It's disappointing.

Quality of property.

Refuges allow us to observe wildlife that is protected. Refuges provide migrating and non-migrating wildlife safe places to live, rest, eat, and reproduce.

Sense of discovery.

So large, so many birds, so much open water.

Thankful for the opportunity to be able to hunt on refuges. Hunters are conservationists and respect the environment and its inhabitants more than most.

That it is right at our back door. We always take rides out there to see the wildlife.

The ability to view waterfowl in the wild without it spooking.

The abundance of wildlife and the accessibility of the wildlife is quite exceptional.

The abundance of wildlife in their natural habitat.

The abundance of wildlife, particularly birds.

The amount of different species of birds to watch. The Visitor Center and the movie.

The auto loop.

The Bear River Migratory Bird Refuge is a great opportunity to see the beauty of the birds, up close in their natural habitat. I learned a lot about the Bear River Delta at the VC. I've lived in Utah all my life and never learned about the BR Delta until I visited the BRMBR.

The Bear River Refuge is the gem of waterfowl habitat and viewing opportunities.

The Bear River Migratory Bird Refuge is close to an urban area and very accessible. It seemed to be an oasis, to myself, as it seemed isolated and very much a safe haven for a variety of wildlife and birds despite being a short distance off a major highway. I thoroughly enjoyed myself and the experience was second to none. Congratulations to the staff who maintain this area and I hope to return here in the future.

The chance to view significant waterfowl both in numbers and in variety. Also in general has pretty good waterfowl viewing, but from my perspective it would be entranced.

The condensed amount of wildlife.

The exhibits and roads that can be accessed to watch a variety of birds.

The focus on the wetlands is an important aspect for my interest in bird watching as it allows public access to high wildlife value areas.

The habitat is specialized for wildlife and waterfowl. It's the only place to see some of our favorite winged friends.

The number and variety of birds.

The number of different birds that are there.

The numbers and diversity of the birds is amazing. The marsh is beautiful if you can get out on it in a boat. The car tour is long and tedious and can be hit or miss on birds, especially during a drought year.

The NWR allow visitors to observe wildlife in their "natural" habitat. Our students can study migration patterns instead of reading about them. The low cost guarantees access to everyone willing to take the time to visit.

The opportunity for bird watching and observing other wildlife.

The opportunity for wildlife and especially bird viewing.

The opportunity to see and photograph birds and small animals in a natural setting- no cages!

The opportunity to watch wildlife in their natural habitat.

The overall beauty and the ability to see wildlife and particularly birds in a natural environment is very important to me and my family.

The people at the Visitor Center.

The quality of Visitor Center and the activities that the refuges provide are above what other public lands typically offer, making them more pleasurable to visit.

The refuge teaches you a lot and it's fun to learn.

The salt/fresh water interface is interesting, observations are limited by lack of blinds, your birds also seem more shy than most, still trip to refuge was a highlight of our three day visit to Utah where we visit family

The serenity of basically untouched nature is amazing.

The set up/location of this refuge allows you to see and tour a greater area than others we visit.

The trails and water resources made us all feel 'one with nature'. Having the ability to view the wildlife where they are comfortable.

The variety of animals and experiences of the refuge.

The visit to the NWR was unique, somewhat awe-inspiring and showed off our tax dollars better than most!

The Visitor Center offers exhibits as well as films. There was no fee to enter. You were allowed to spend as much time as you wanted.

The wetlands and the opportunity to see such a high concentration of birds in their natural habitat.

The wildlife is more accessible.

Their mission is different, and adds to the overall protection of wildlife. We particularly like to visit the refuge at Fish Springs, Utah, since it is a place for birds in the middle of the desert.

There are marked roads/trails specifically for the wildlife viewing. There was a higher concentration of wildlife.

There doesn't seem to be enough land where the ecosystem is left alone and preserved! This refuge is an unexpected treasure in our area.

There is wildlife you can see that don't just run off, You can get a closer look at waterfowl here and it's a great way to stay in shape.

They are a good place to go and observe and learn about species unique to the area and how to help in the conservation effort. Local species are maintained and cared for. Great educational experience. This refuge has made it fun to learn.

They are just a great opportunity to view birds and animals in a natural setting.

They do provide a necessary habitat for wildlife that is unique and meets some of their needs for a healthy population.

They inform you a lot better than other public places as far as maps and such.

They make areas available for public use that would otherwise be off limits. Access is very important to me, family, and friends.

They offer some of the best bird watching opportunities, are generally uncrowded, and are maintained in their natural state.

They protect federally important species and habitat (migrants) that must be integrated across state lines to be effective.

They provide an opportunity to observe wildlife more easily.

They provide an opportunity to photograph wildlife in the habitat and watch them.

They tend to be in areas with excellent wildlife viewing opportunities. I like their mission to conserve, manage, and restore.

This bird refuge visitor's center seems to take lots of tax payer's money for the amount of people we saw visiting and compared to other government facilities- not many people.

This is a great place to photo and view wildlife...thank you, for all of your work.

Total area that makes up a refuge is often unique and provides habitat for large number of birds and other wildlife. Accessibility is also important.

Unique use of resource. Beautiful location.....serious concern to making the facilities work.

Usually they have great wildlife viewing opportunities with auto loops that are both quiet and relaxing.

Variety of wildlife and convenient access.

Visiting from Belgium, in our country it also exists but is rather less structured /managed (government).

Visitor Center and location

We enjoy seeing the wildlife that is unique to this area.

We enjoy seeing the wildlife, birds, and animals in their natural habitat.

Well maintained and managed.

Well taken care of.

While I have indicated I would like some better recreation opportunities (kayaking, cycling) at my local refuge, I am glad that it is managed for wildlife first and people second. And I gladly will sacrifice expansion of my desired activities if it means maintaining this stunning habitat in its wild form. It truly provides a wondrous experience the way it is.

Wildlife

Wildlife that it holds.

You are still allowed to hunt.

You have a great opportunity to experience wildlife.

You have the opportunity to learn, as well as teach about wildlife, life cycles of wildlife and enjoy actually being able to see those processes up close and personal.

You see birds you don't see anywhere else and the vastness of the free land. I only saw birds and fish. I don't know that there's any animal to see but I love it.

Additional Comments (n = 52)

Always enjoyable.

As a photographer, it would be nice to have access to the refuge 1 hour before and after sunrise since this is the best light for photography. Overall refuge system is well run. Thanks.

As far as outdoor recreation trips, we regularly visit either our state or national parks.

Bear River is a premier location for bird watching.

Bear River Migratory Bird Refuge was truly awesome.

Enjoyed Antelope Island causeway more. Road had more places to stop and study bird life, bird life was closer to the road. Saw most of the same birds at each place.

Four of us truly enjoyed our experience at the Bear River Refuge. The next time we go back, we'll start at the Visitor Center and we will recommend this to everyone we know. We did not have an opportunity to talk to any volunteers or rangers since we missed the center. Thank you for conducting this survey.

Good refuge. I enjoyed lots.

Great job by all involved, keep it up.

Great staff and volunteers.

Having a CLOSED Visitor Center on a MAJOR weekend is ludicrous!

I am impressed with the staff and the volunteers at the Bear River Migratory Bird Refuge. They have done an exceptional job educating and helping my students understand the refuge and the wildlife. We have been frequent visitors and every time we have received extra documentation, time, and they helped us locate additional speakers. Volunteers in the field have stopped and aided us in identifying birds new to the area on that day, or cautioned us on skunk sightings. None of them were required to do those things, but across the board they were helpful, friendly, and happy to provide assistance in any way to make our educational experience better. A huge thank-you goes out to all of them!

I am learning disabled but really take a lot of interests in birds. Someday I'd like opportunity learning, helping birds and also take pictures for framing.

I and my grandchildren enjoyed the visit.

I live in Maryland but was in Salt Lake for a conference and made a point to go to the refuge while there. In general I don't think there are enough hiking opportunities at the average wildlife refuge. Walking is often the best and least intrusive way of experiencing a refuge and there just aren't enough trails and in particular, long trails that traverse multiple habitat types are common at many refuges like Blackwater or Bombay Hook in the Mid-Atlantic region. And not to be annoying, but a little grazing is not a compatible use on a wildlife refuge. It just should not be allowed. Thanks for the chance to voice my opinion. Overall, great job.

I think the Bear River Bird Refuge has gotten too big to be managed effectively. I don't think the government should be continually buying up the private land and then shutting the hunters out. The management policies seem to be against hunting. There is a huge problem with an invasive plant called phragmitie and it is destroying natural vegetation and very little is being done to control it. There are many people that would volunteer to spray it if the government doesn't have the man power. Donations from the public to buy the spray could be solicited. There seems to be a policy of drying up the marsh to let it rest (?) and in the process it kills the natural vegetation. I think the refuge management should have meetings with the public to let us know what is really going on out there.

I want to do some bird banding!

It was enjoyable all but the bookstore and volunteer...thank you.

Keep up the roads and parking areas and signage.... everything else was just fine.

Lots of small trips birding.

My background in the environmental field where I live in Canada includes the following: -Audubon Christmas bird count - may spring bird count -Harlequin duck studies -Osprey bow valley studies - Banff bow valley wolf studies -survey and clean-up of mountain bluebird nests -Rocky Mountain Eagle Research Foundation: an audit of spring and autumn eagles and raptor migration numbers along the eastern front of the Canadian Rocky Mountains.

Need more viewing areas in the refuge.

Please spend the money and fight the phrag out there.

My kids love the Visitor Center and their naturalist interpretive program. Schools should use it more often, but don't. Maybe could have more knowledgeable biologists and better population studies & information on the status of birds dependent on this unique area.

Thank you for the work you do. Refuges and Visitor Centers are a great way for the public to see the tax dollars they give at work. For sportsmen like myself, the preservation of wildlife is very important and the residual flow of wildlife onto other public hunting and fishing lands from refuges plays an important role.

Thanks for all you do. We enjoy visiting our bird refuge. We like to go on the walks on the trails.

Thanks!

The refuge is quite wonderful. I will come again when I have more time to devote to exploring it.

The rest ponds are too big for the waterfowl; need more hunting areas available to hunters.

The Visitor Center was awesome! Loved the displays; didn't realize that the first airboats were invented by a couple of biologists at this refuge. Trail was flooded and inaccessible unless you wore rubber boots.

The Visitor Center was one of the best that I have ever visited. Beautiful facility, great exhibits, adequate classroom space, simply the best.

This has nothing to do with my visit to the refuge but I think that climate change is much ado about nothing. The "changes" we are seeing are normal cycles the earth has always gone through. It is interesting that using the same junk science 20 years ago we were told that we were headed for a mini ice age.

This refuge is a gem, largely because of the amazing FWS staff and volunteers. All are friendly, knowledgeable and helpful to the public. This refuge is one of the must-see places we take all of our friends and relatives who come to visit us.

Thoroughly enjoyed our visits to the reserve.

Though the auto tour loop is nice, it limits your ability to view what you are able to view on this refuge. I have been to many refuges throughout the U.S. and most have a designated hiking trail on the refuge itself that allows you better and closer access to view wildlife. I would like to see an area on the refuge (main body of refuge) that would allow hiking to get a more close up and personal view of wildlife and allow for better photographic opportunities. If you have vehicles in front of you on the auto tour loop, a lot of wildlife is scared off by the time you can get close enough to view them.

Too many phragmites around visitors loop. Need more perches (dead tree logs, Russian olive trees) --we planted several hundred in the 40s to 60s; but after 50 years of getting a few stands growing for upland roosts and raptor perches, some misguided refuge officials thought it would take over the valley. If they would have left the olive trees alone and concentrated on the phragmites the cost benefit and wildlife benefit would have been 50 times greater. We actually planted the olive trees around water structures because no other tree would grow.

Too much tax payer's money spent on the Visitor Center for the amount of people we encountered. The staff was very friendly and informative as well as the gift shop volunteers. Quite educational for school children. We think the display that includes: "Farmers as a wetlands enemy." was misinformed and uneducated. We disagree with the government condemning/buying land to spend taxpayer's money, where there's spring water runoff only. Also, overspending tax payer's money on wetlands, letting property turn to weeds without cattle, sheep, or horse grazing. Creates community fire hazards and destroys the grasses! Government agencies can manage grasslands better for bird refuges. Being partners with local farmers and ranchers to manage the environment is the answer!

Under used from a hunting perspective. Provide more parking areas to access more areas of the refuge.

Very good experience. I was impressed with how nice the refuge was maintained and the information provided and the volunteer/employee who asked us to take the survey was extremely nice.

Very nice Visitor Center. I wish it would have opened at 9am on Saturday rather than at 10 am. We went into town and return when it opened, but I would have preferred to visit at 9am.

Visitors should know that if it weren't for hunting the marsh would have not originally been bought by the duck club guys from Denver long ago and the marsh would have been filled in for farming. The relationship between hunting and wildlife protection is not self-evident to non-hunters. Non-hunters should really buy duck stamps and hunting licenses if they really want to conserve the marsh.

We are hikers.

We are more or less eco-tourists and take an interest in environmental engineering and land use planning, so not typical, but we can compare to hundred of areas we have viewed and see the significant value of your refuge. Here's to Ding Darling and all who have followed him over the decades!

We didn't have a reservation for the van tour, but there was room for us, so off we went. We were glad to have a guide. Brian was great. It's so much easier than driving ourselves and we see so much more, like a muskrat sitting in a tree, and more birds than we would have alone. We'll be back! Thanks.

We frequently travel for birding opportunities locally and nationally. We found the interpretive center at Bear River to be exceptional.

We live full time in our RV and are volunteers at several parks and wildlife refuges. I feel the attitude that the refuges can get by on less money each year is VERY SHORTSIGHTED. Their budgets should be increasing by many fold. The volunteer program needs to be given more importance as they can do so much for the facilities. This applies to all the field refuges, not necessarily to administration at regional headquarters.

We make a point of walking or hiking in areas where wildlife are likely to be present on a regular basis, 2-3x per week; we also drive away from our home(s) for similar activities about 6 times per year.

We thoroughly enjoyed our day at the refuge and were given a very warm welcome from all of the staff. I would certainly recommend any friends to visit if they were in Utah.

We very much enjoyed our visit. We enjoy being in nature more than anything else. It was sad to see so many areas dried up, but realize that it was a dry year this year and as usual that will change in time.

Well done. Thanks for it all.

Wildlife photographer, I try to get out twice a week.

You need to aggressively work on reducing the phragmites that are destroying the refuge and surrounding areas.
