



Big Cypress National Preserve

Visitor Study

Winter 99

Report 109
Visitor Services Project
Cooperative Park Studies Unit



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Visitor Services Project
Report 109

December 1999

Michael Meehan is a Research Project Analyst with the Visitor Services Project (VSP) at the Cooperative Park Studies Unit, University of Idaho. The VSP would like to thank Chris Hoffman, a former research associate with the VSP at the CPSU, University of Idaho, who conducted the planning and fieldwork for this study. I would also like to thank Kelly Lawrence, Rosie Pavlov, Wolfgang Schwanzenweintraub, and the staff of Big Cypress National Preserve for their assistance with this study. The VSP acknowledges the Public Opinion Lab of the Social and Economic Sciences Research Center, Washington State University, for its technical assistance.

**Visitor Services Project
Big Cypress National Preserve
Report Summary**

- This report describes the results of a visitor study at Big Cypress National Preserve (NPres) during January 2-10, 1999. A total of 857 questionnaires were distributed to visitors. Visitors returned 582 questionnaires for a 68% response rate.
- This report profiles Big Cypress NPres visitors. A separate appendix contains visitors' comments about their visit. This report and the appendix include summaries of those comments.
- Over one-half (62%) of the visitor groups were family groups. Sixty percent of visitor groups were groups of two. Fifty-two percent of visitors were over 50 years old.
- Sixty-one percent of visitors were making their first visit to Big Cypress NPres. Most of the visitor groups (81%) spent less than a day at the park. Of those groups that spent less than a day at the park, 71% spent four hours or less.
- United States visitors were from Florida (32%), New York (3%), and 42 other states including Washington D.C. International visitors comprised 21% of Big Cypress NPres visitors. They were from Germany (32%), Canada (21%), England (16%), and 18 other countries.
- The sources of information most used by 390 visitor groups were friends or relatives (29%), previous visits (28%), travel guide/tourbook (27%), and highway information signs (23%).
- On this visit, the most common activities were sightseeing (66%), viewing birds (66%), visiting the visitor center (63%), viewing wildlife other than birds (60%), and driving through to reach another destination (60%).
- On this visit, the most commonly visited sites within Big Cypress NPres were the visitor center (60%) and H.P. Williams Park (28%). The least visited sites include Bear Island Campground (4%) and the Florida National Scenic Trail (4%). The visitor center was the site listed most often as the first site visited within the park (47%), followed by H.P. Williams Park (14%).
- Most of visitor groups (90%) indicated that the issue of wildlife habitat is either "extremely important" or "moderately important" to the future of Big Cypress NPres. Most groups (86%) rated endangered species as an "extremely important" or "very important" issue, and 83% indicated that water quality is "extremely important" or "very important" to the future of Big Cypress NPres.
- With regard to the use, importance, and quality of services and facilities, it is important to note the number of visitor groups that responded to each question. The services and facilities most used by 498 visitor groups were restrooms (71%), visitor center (70%), and roads (61%). According to visitors, the most important services and facilities were campgrounds (97% of 59 respondents), restrooms (89% of 332 respondents), and roads (86% of 280 respondents). The highest quality services and facilities were the visitor center movie (84% of 74 respondents), the visitor center (81% of 315 respondents) and the visitor center exhibits (81% of 199 respondents).
- Many visitor groups (78%) felt that viewing wildlife was either "extremely important" or "moderately important" to their visit. Seventy-three percent felt scenic views were "extremely important" or "moderately important," and 72% felt experiencing wilderness was "extremely important" or "moderately important" to their visit. The highest "not important" ratings were given to hunting (80%), off-road vehicle use (66%), fishing (61%), and airboating (53%). Each of these activities was "extremely important" or "moderately important" to some visitors: 7% for hunting, 16% for fishing, and 15% for airboating.
- Eighty-six percent of visitor groups rated the overall quality of visitor services at Big Cypress NPres as "very good" or "good." Visitors made many additional comments.

<p>For more information about the Visitor Services Project, please contact the University of Idaho Cooperative Park Studies Unit; phone (208) 885-7129 or 885-7863.</p>

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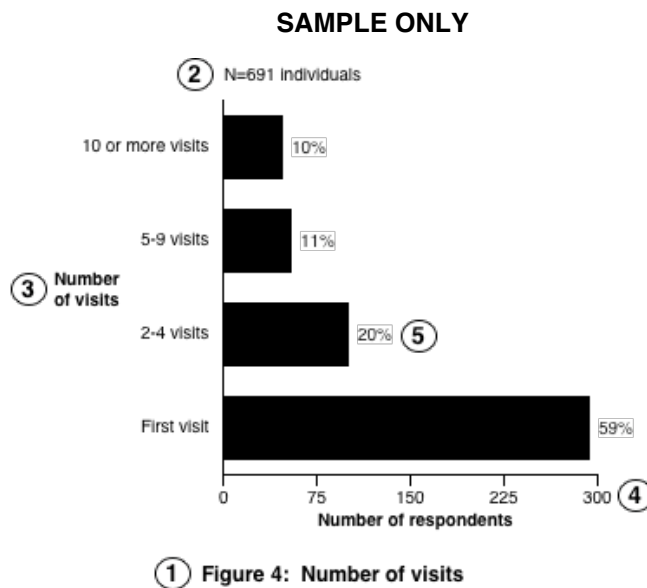
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INTRODUCTION

This report describes the results of a study of visitors at Big Cypress National Preserve (NPRES). This visitor study was conducted January 2-10, 1999 by the National Park Service (NPS) Visitor Services Project (VSP), part of the Cooperative Park Studies Unit at the University of Idaho.

The **Methods** section discusses the procedures and limitations of the study. The **Results** section includes a summary of visitor comments. An **Additional Analysis** page is included which will help managers request additional analyses. The final section includes a copy of the **Questionnaire**. An appendix includes comment summaries and visitors' unedited comments.

Most of this report's graphs resemble the example below. The large numbers refer to explanations following the graph.



- 1: The figure title describes the graph's information.
- 2: Listed above the graph, the 'N' shows the number of visitors responding and a description of the chart's information. Interpret data with an 'N' of less than 30 with **CAUTION!** as the results may be unreliable.
- 3: Vertical information describes categories.
- 4: Horizontal information shows the number or proportions in each category.
- 5: In most graphs, percentages provide additional information.

METHODS

Questionnaire design and administration

The questionnaire for this visitor study was designed using a standard format that has been developed in previous Visitor Services Project studies. A copy of the questionnaire is included at the end of this report.

Interviews were conducted with, and questionnaires distributed to, a sample of visitors who arrived at Big Cypress NP during January 2-10, 1999. Visitors were sampled at a total of nine locations (see Table 1).

Table 1: Questionnaire distribution locations

Percentages do not equal 100 due to rounding.

Location:	Questionnaires distributed	
	Number	%
Oasis Visitor Center	401	47
H.P. Williams/ Wagonwheel	242	28
Monroe Station	74	9
Airboat tours	58	7
Monument Lake	48	6
Tamiami Ranger Station	23	3
Wagonwheel West	8	<1
I-75 Rest Area	2	<1
Sea Grape Drive	1	<1
GRAND TOTAL	857	100+

Visitor groups were greeted, briefly introduced to the purpose of the study, and asked to participate. If visitors agreed, an interview lasting approximately two minutes was used to determine group size, group type, and the age of the adult who would complete the questionnaire. This individual was then given a questionnaire and asked his or her name, address, and telephone number in order to mail them a reminder/thank you postcard. Visitor groups were asked to complete the questionnaire during or after their visit, then return it by mail.

Two weeks following the survey, a reminder/thank you postcard was mailed to all participants. Replacement questionnaires were mailed to participants who had not returned their questionnaires four weeks after the initial interview. Eight weeks after the survey a second replacement questionnaire was mailed to visitors who still had not returned their questionnaires.

**Questionnaire
design and
administration-
continued**

Returned questionnaires were coded and the information entered into a computer using a standard statistical software package. Frequency distributions and cross-tabulations were calculated for the coded data, and responses to open-ended questions were categorized and summarized.

Data analysis

This study collected information on both visitor groups and individual group members. Thus, the sample size ('N'), varies from figure to figure. For example, while Figure 1 shows information for 571 visitor groups, Figure 5 presents data for 1,387 individuals. A note above each graph specifies the information illustrated.

**Sample size,
missing data
and reporting
errors**

Occasionally, a respondent may not have answered all of the questions, or may have answered some incorrectly. Unanswered questions result in missing data and cause the number in the sample to vary from figure to figure. For example, while 582 visitors to Big Cypress NP returned questionnaires, Figure 1 shows data for only 571 respondents.

Questions answered incorrectly due to carelessness, misunderstanding directions, and so forth turn up in the data as reporting errors. These create small data inconsistencies.

Limitations

Like all surveys, this study has limitations, which should be considered when interpreting the results.

1. It is not possible to know whether visitor responses reflect actual behavior. This disadvantage applies to all such studies and is reduced by having visitors fill out the questionnaire soon after they visited the park.

2. The data reflect visitor use patterns of visitors to the selected sites during the study period of January 2-10, 1999. The results do not necessarily apply to visitors during other times of the year.

3. Caution is advised when interpreting any data with a sample size of less than 30, as the results may be unreliable. Whenever the sample size is less than 30, the word "**CAUTION!**" is included in the graph, figure or table.

**Special
Conditions**

During the study week, weather conditions were fairly typical of January with the exception of two abnormally cold days. In addition, an airline strike may have caused lower than normal visitation to Big Cypress NPRES.

RESULTS

At Big Cypress National Preserve, 978 visitor groups were contacted, and 857 of these groups (88%) agreed to participate in the survey. Questionnaires were completed and returned by 582 visitor groups, resulting in a 67.9% response rate for this study.

Visitors contacted

Table 2 compares age and group size information collected from both the total sample of visitors contacted and those who actually returned questionnaires. Based on the variables of respondent age and visitor group size, non-response bias was judged to be insignificant.

Table 2: Comparison of total sample and actual respondents

Variable	Total sample		Actual respondents	
	N	Avg.	N	Avg.
Age of respondents	815	49.6	555	52.3
Group size	839	2.6	571	2.9

Figure 1 shows visitor group sizes, which ranged from one person to 48 people. Sixty percent of visitor groups consisted of two people, while another 12% were people visiting in groups of four.

Demographics

Sixty-two percent of visitor groups were made up of family members, 18% consisted of only friends, 5% were made up of family and friends, and 11% of visitors were alone (see Figure 2). Groups listing themselves as "other" for group type included senior groups, tour groups, and partners. Seven percent of visitors were in a tour group (see Figure 3). One percent of visitors were part of an educational group (see Figure 4).

Fifty-two percent of visitors were over the age of 50. Visitors under the age of 21 comprised 9% of the visitation to Big Cypress NPres (see Figure 5).

Sixty-one percent of visitors were visiting Big Cypress NPres for the first time, while 24% of visitors had visited Big Cypress NPres between two and four times (see Figure 6).

**Demographics-
continued**

Eighty-seven percent of visitors listed English as their primary language (see Figure 7). Other languages reported as primary include German, Dutch, Italian, Spanish, and six others (see Table 3).

International visitors comprised 21% of Big Cypress National Preserve visitors. The largest proportion of international visitors were German, Canadian, and English (see Table 4). The largest proportion of U.S. visitors were from Florida and New York. Smaller proportions came from 42 other states and Washington D.C. (see Map 1 and Table 5).

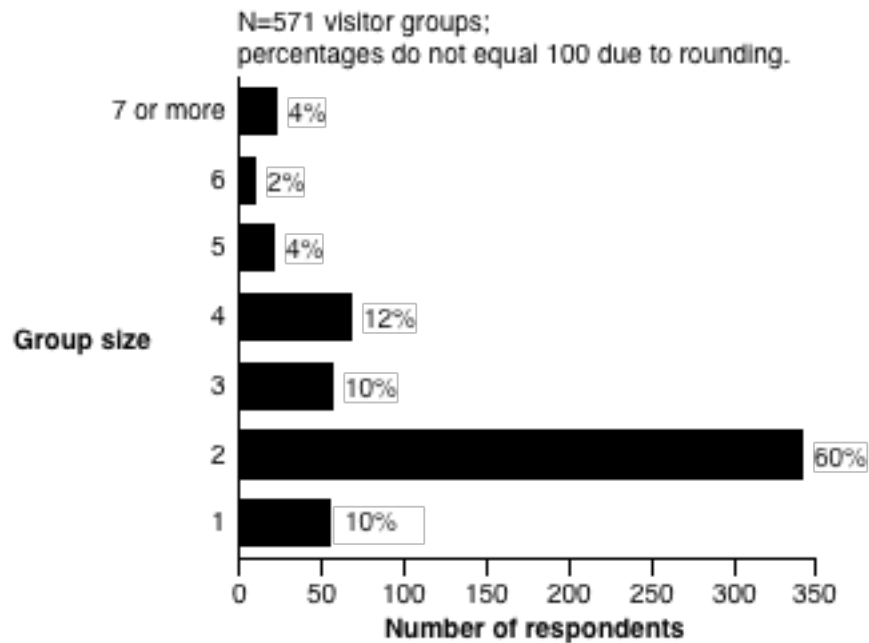


Figure 1: Visitor group sizes

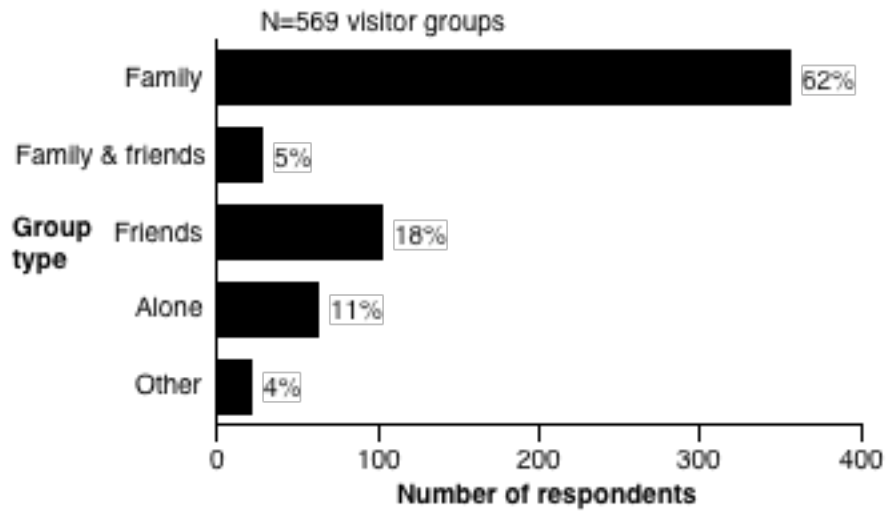


Figure 2: Visitor group types

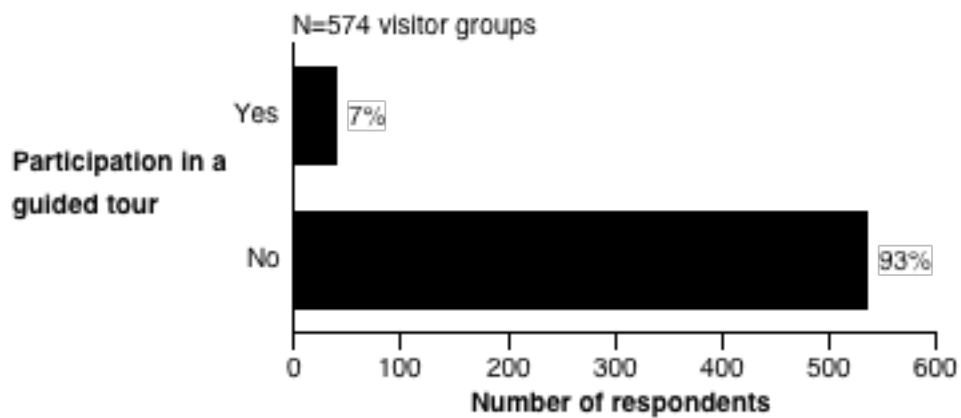


Figure 3: Participation in a guided tour

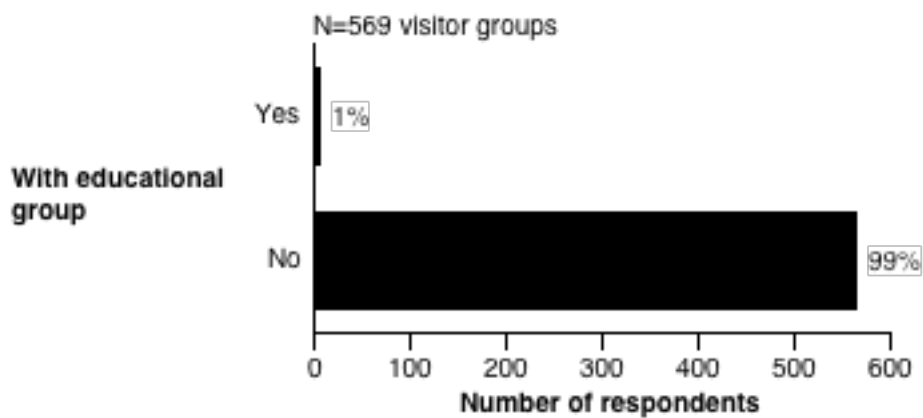
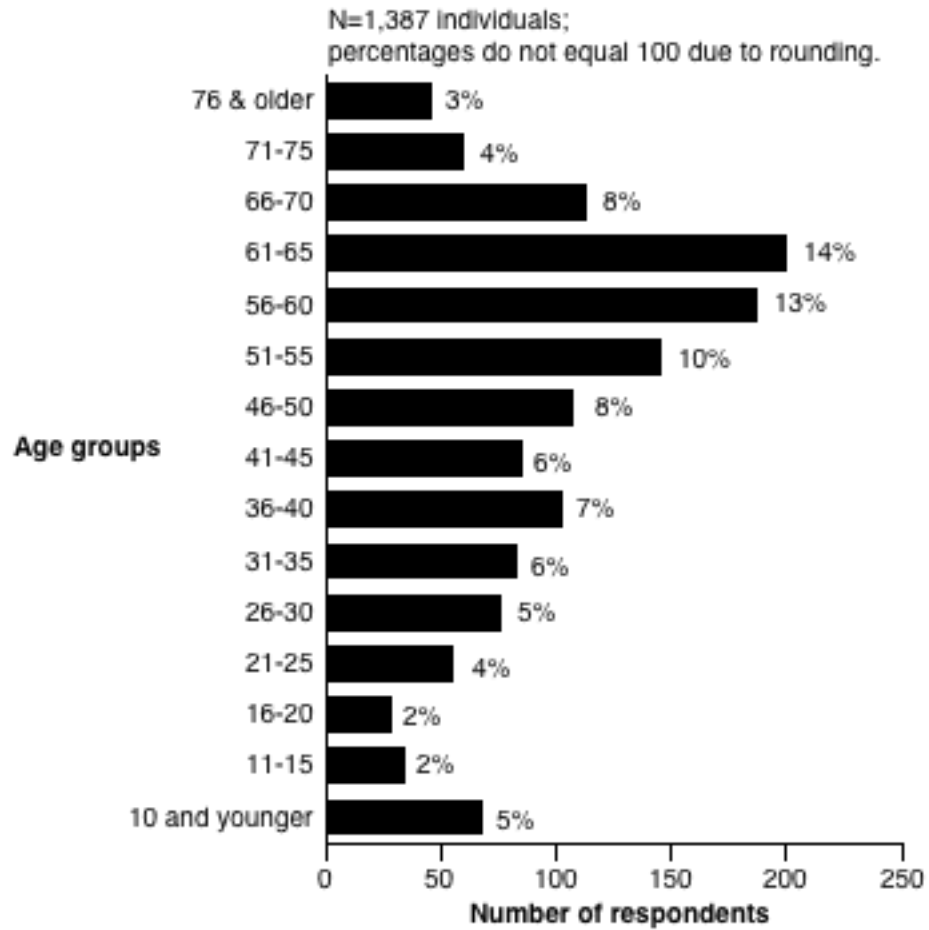
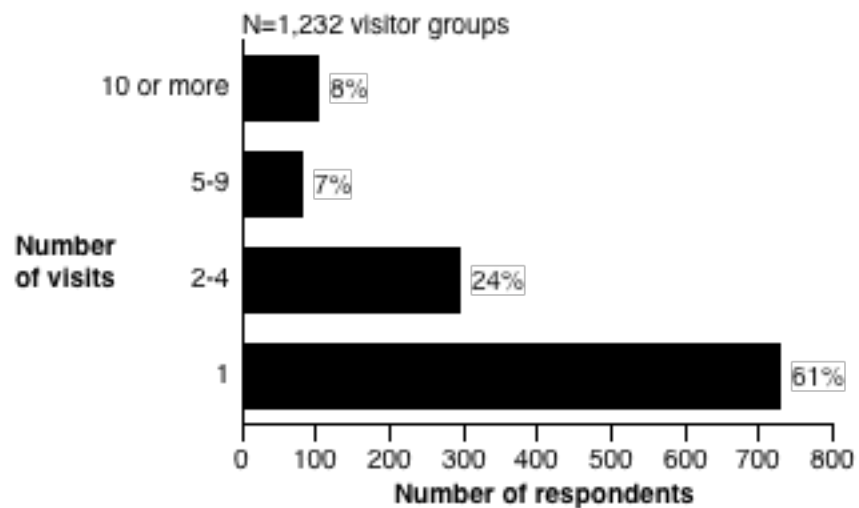


Figure 4: Participation in educational group

**Figure 5: Visitor ages****Figure 6: Number of visits**

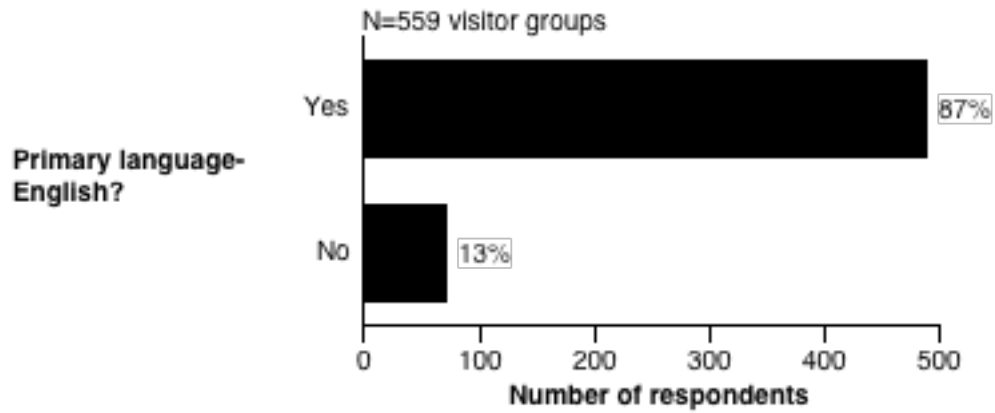


Figure 7: Is English your primary language?

Table 3: Primary languages other than English

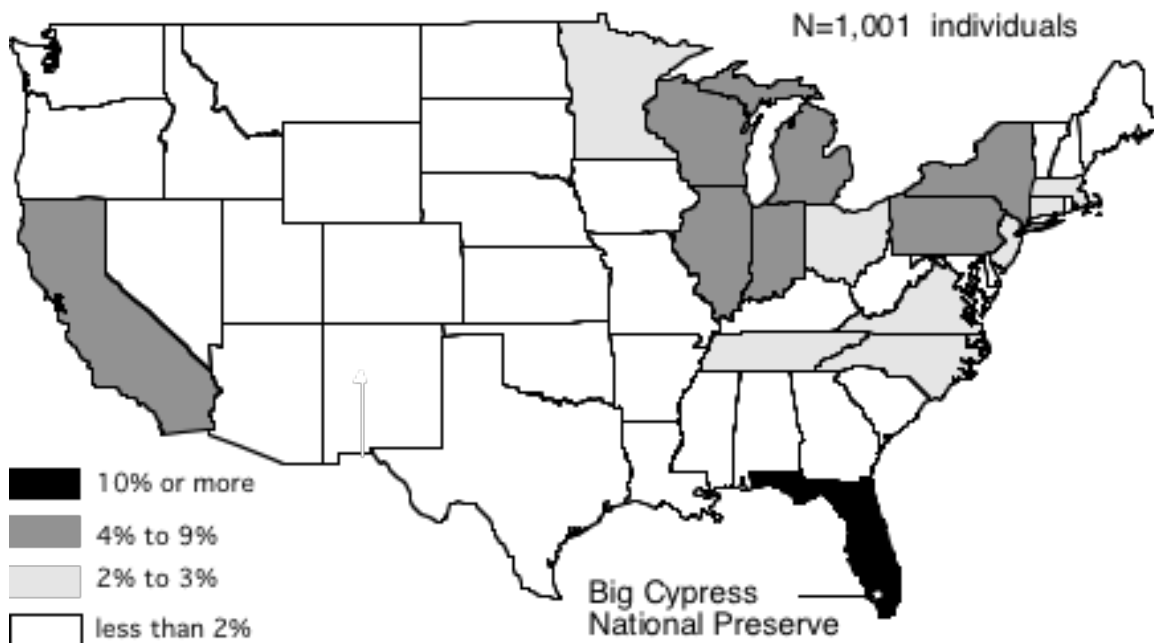
N=75 languages

Language	Number of times mentioned
German	43
Dutch	6
Italian	6
Spanish	6
French	5
Swedish	4
Czech	2
Russian	1
Danish	1
Norwegian	1

Table 4: International visitors by country of residence

N=261 individuals;
percentages do not equal 100 due to rounding.

Country	Number of individuals	Percent of Int'l visitors	Percent of total visitors
Germany	83	32	7
Canada	54	21	4
England	41	16	3
Italy	17	7	1
Sweden	15	6	1
Holland	14	5	1
Switzerland	8	3	1
Austria	6	2	1
France	4	2	<1
Costa Rica	2	1	<1
Honduras	2	1	<1
New Zealand	2	1	<1
Norway	2	1	<1
South Africa	2	1	<1
Venezuela	2	1	<1
Guyana	2	1	<1
Australia	1	<1	<1
Czech Republic	1	<1	<1
Denmark	1	<1	<1
Ireland	1	<1	<1
Poland	1	<1	<1



Map 1: Proportion of United States visitors by state of residence

Table 5: United States visitors by state of residence

N=1,001 individuals;
percentages do not equal 100 due to rounding.

State	Number of individuals	Percent of U.S. visitors	Percent of total visitors
Florida	315	32	25
New York	55	6	4
Indiana	54	5	4
California	51	5	4
Illinois	42	4	3
Wisconsin	42	4	3
Michigan	36	4	3
Pennsylvania	35	4	3
Massachusetts	30	3	2
New Jersey	28	3	2
Ohio	28	3	2
Minnesota	23	2	2
Virginia	21	2	2
Tennessee	19	2	2
North Carolina	16	2	1
Connecticut	15	2	1
28 Other states & Wash D.C. (1% each or less)	191	19	15

Length of visit

Visitor groups were asked how much time they spent at Big Cypress National Preserve. Eighty-one percent of visitor groups spent less than one day at the park (see Figure 8). Of the groups that spent less than a day at the park, 71% spent four hours or less, while 13% spent seven hours or more (see Figure 9).

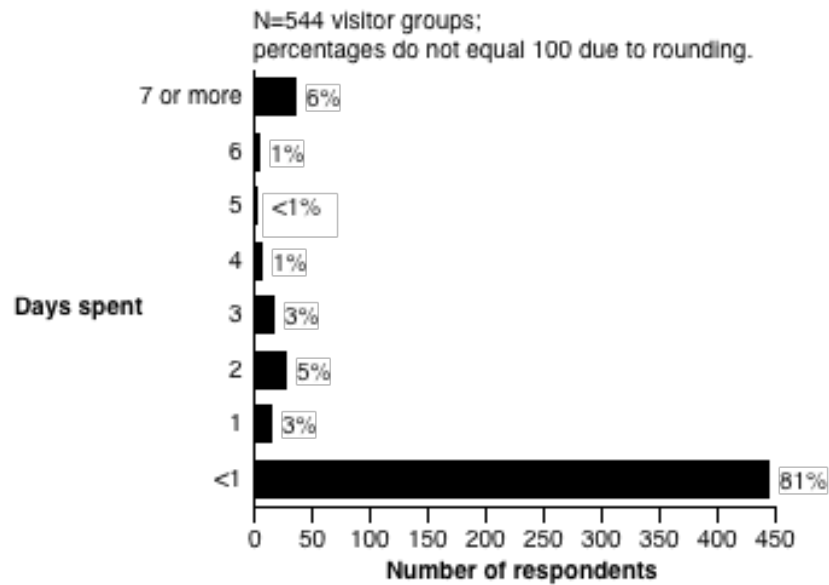


Figure 8: Days spent at Big Cypress National Preserve

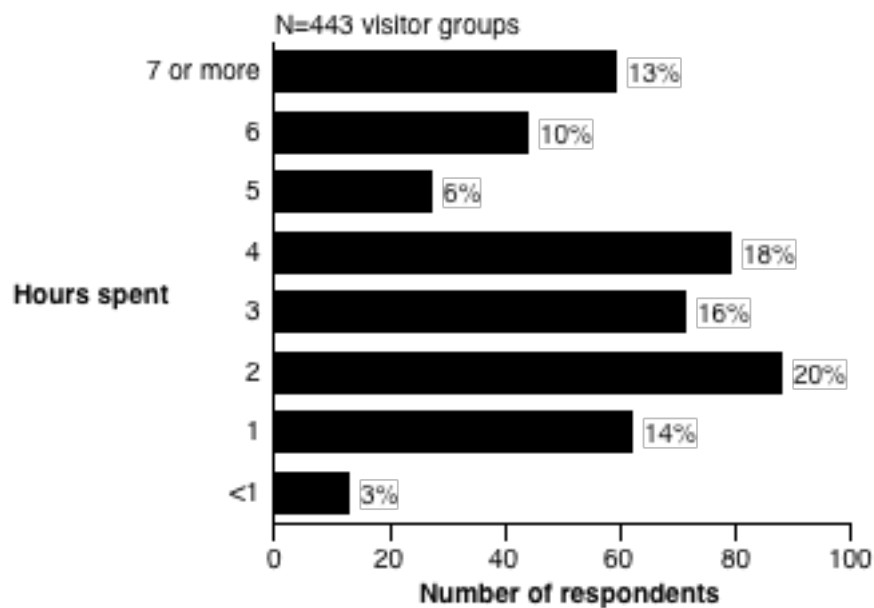


Figure 9: Hours spent at Big Cypress National Preserve

Visitor groups were asked to indicate the sources they used to obtain information about Big Cypress National Preserve prior to their visit. Thirty-one percent of visitors did not obtain any information prior to their visit to Big Cypress NPRES. Figure 10 shows the percentages of visitor groups that used each method of obtaining information prior to their visit to Big Cypress NPRES. The most common sources of information were friends or relatives (29%), previous visits (28%), travel guide/tourbook (27%), and highway informational signs (23%). "Other" sources of information include maps and birding guides.

Source of information

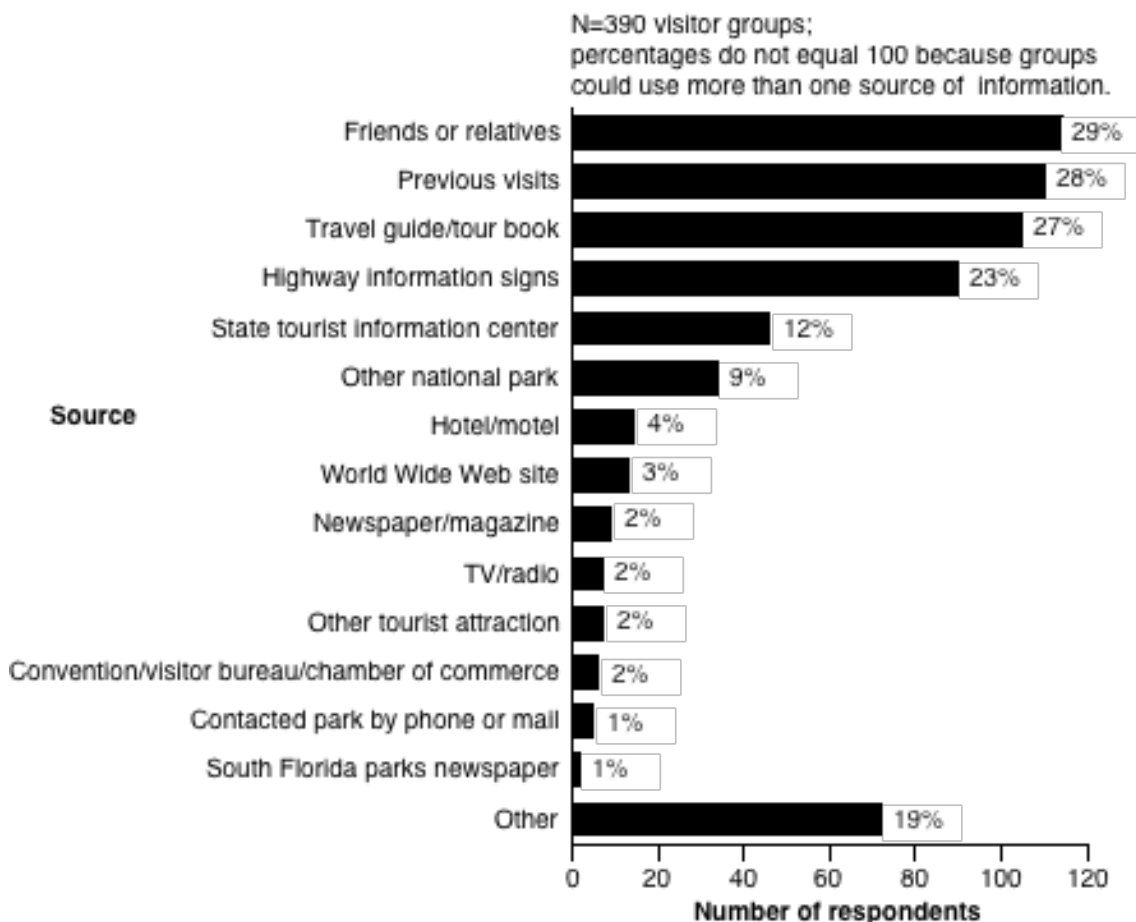


Figure 10: Sources of information

Travel plans

Visitor groups were asked to indicate how their visit to Big Cypress fit into their travel plans. Fifty percent of visitors to Big Cypress NPres were not planning to visit at all (see Figure 11). Eleven percent of visitors intended it to be their primary destination. Thirty-nine percent of visitors reported Big Cypress as “one of several destinations.” In addition to their visit to Big Cypress NPres, many visitors also visited Everglades National Park, Florida Keys, Naples, and Everglades City (see Figure 12). “Other” places visited include Orlando, Sanibel Island, St. Augustine, Disney World, and Sarasota.

Figure 13 shows that 23% of visitors spent the night prior to their visit to Big Cypress at their place of residence. Thirteen percent of visitors stayed in a Naples area hotel/motel, and 9% of visitors stayed in a Miami area hotel/motel. “Other” accommodations included staying with friends/relatives, camping and RV parks, and staying in a Key West area hotel/motel.

Visitor groups were asked if they arrived in Florida by airplane. Thirty-nine percent of visitors reported arriving in Florida by airplane (see Figure 14). Miami International Airport was the most visited airport. Fort Meyers, Orlando, and Tampa airports were also used by visitors (see Table 6). Sixty-one percent of visitor groups used a private vehicle as transportation, 32% used a rental car, and 3% used tour bus/van (see Figure 15). Methods of transportation listed as “other” include RV/motorhome, camper/trailer, and motorcycle. Eighty-two percent of all visitor groups entered Big Cypress NPres on Highway 41 (see Figure 16).

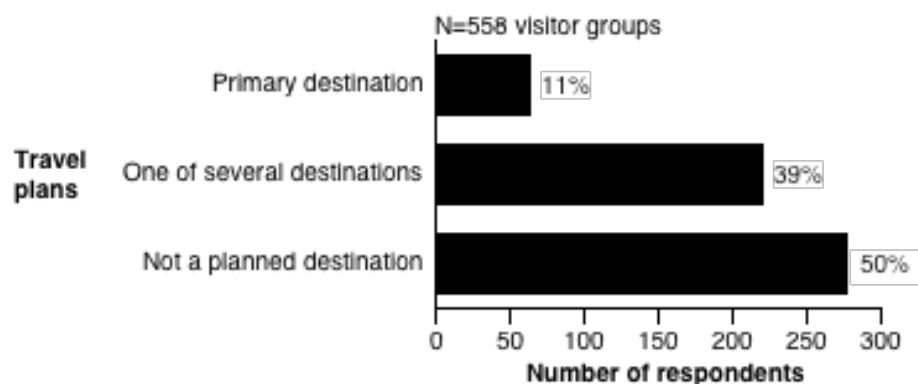


Figure 11: Big Cypress NPres as part of travel plans

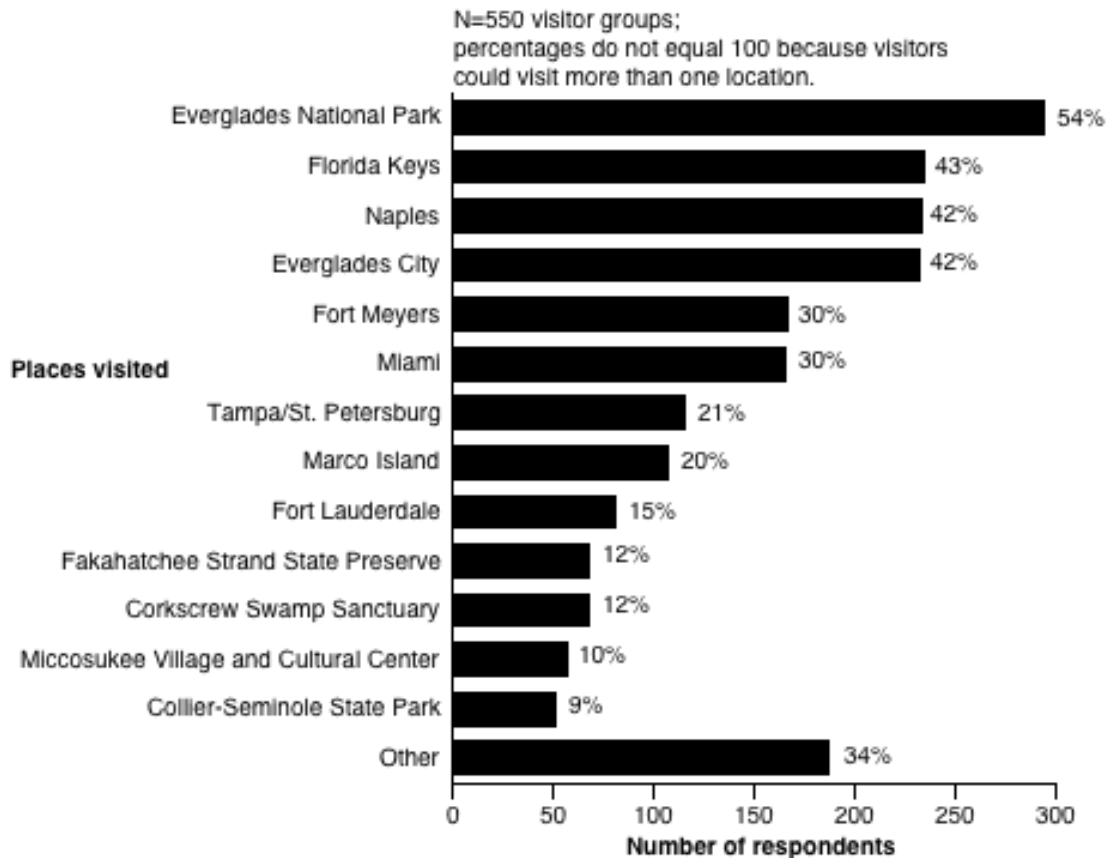


Figure 12: Places visited in addition to Big Cypress National Preserve during this visit

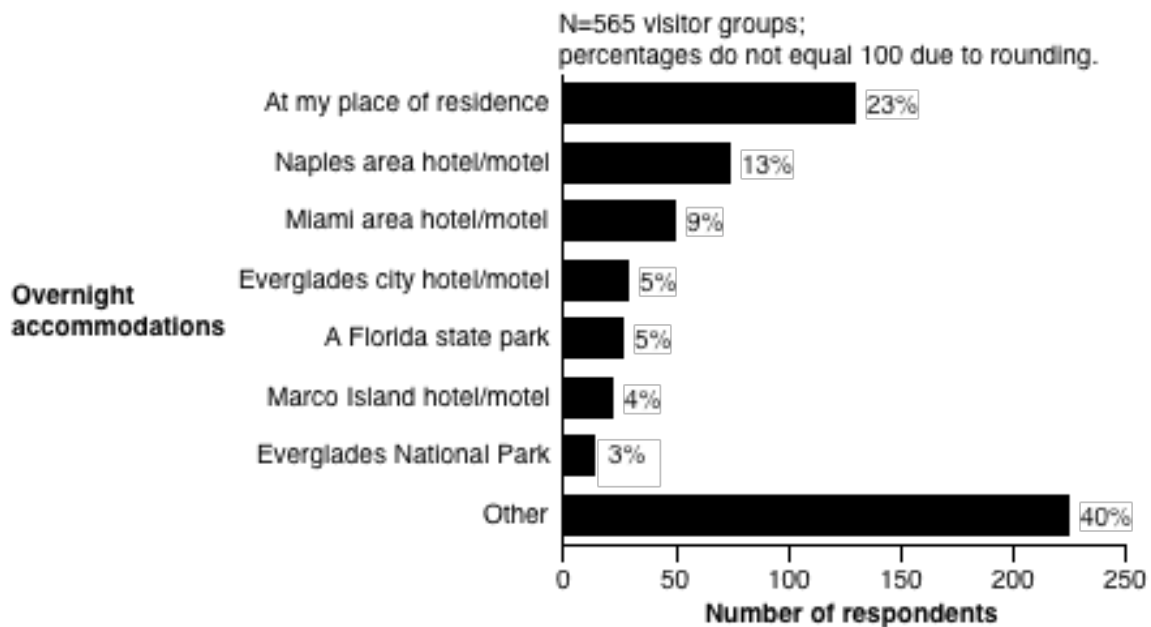


Figure 13: Accommodations prior to visit

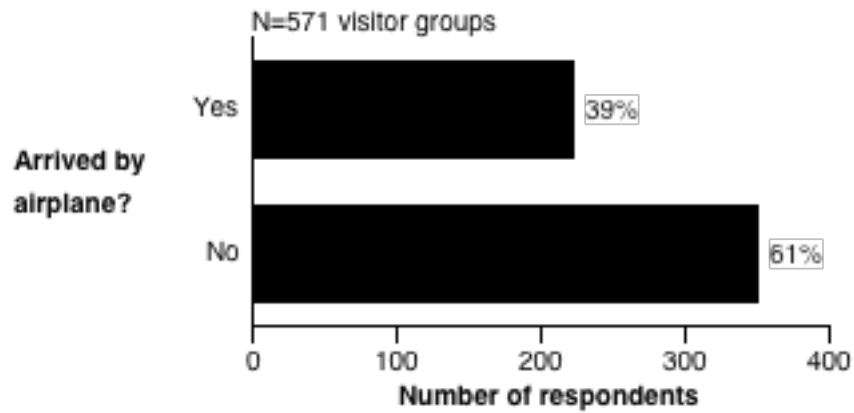


Figure 14: Arrival in Florida by airplane

Table 6: Airports used by visitors to arrive in Florida

N=221 visitor groups

Airport	# of times mentioned
Miami	74
Ft. Meyers	42
Orlando	34
Tampa	33
Fort Lauderdale	15
West Palm Beach	5
St. Petersburg	4
Other	12

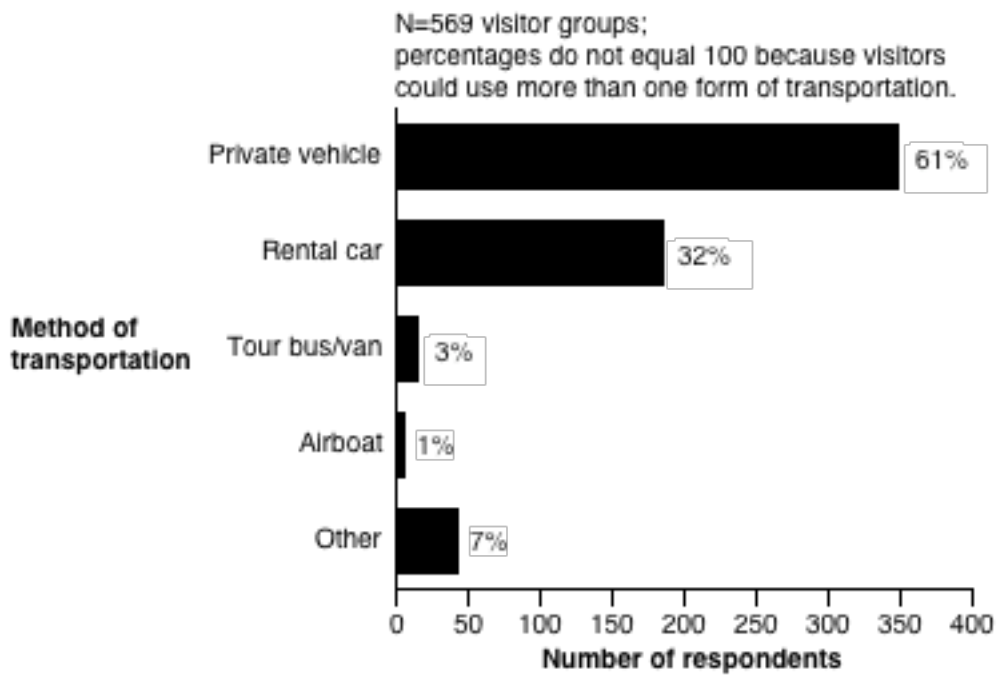


Figure 15: Methods of transportation used to arrive at Big Cypress National Preserve

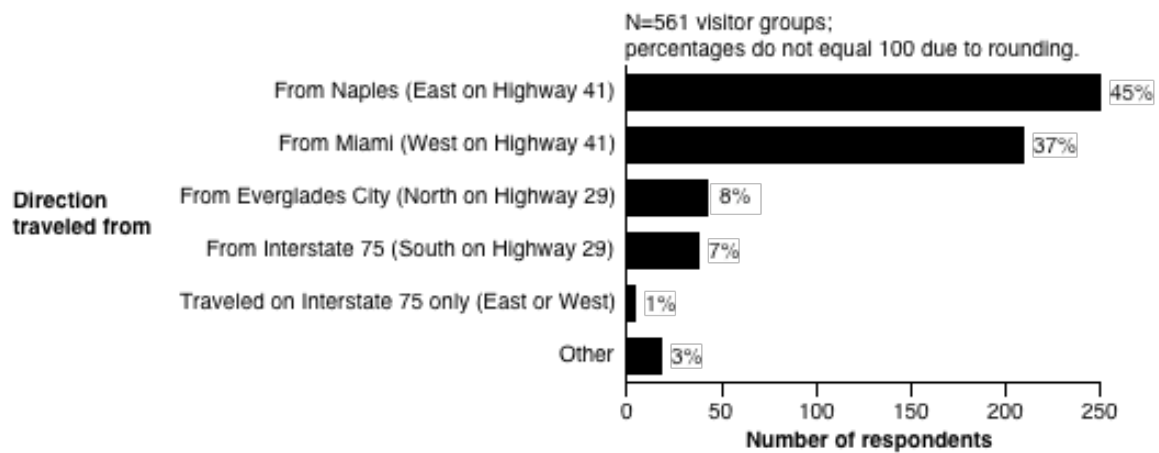


Figure 16: Direction visitors traveled from

Sites visited- this visit

Visitors were asked to list the sites they visited and the order in which they visited them. Figure 17 shows the proportion of visitor groups that visited each site within Big Cypress NPRES during this visit. The most frequently visited sites include the Oasis Visitor Center (60%), H.P. Williams Park (28%), Turner River/Wagonwheel Drive (23%), and the Loop Road Scenic Drive (22%). The least visited sites were Bear Island Campground (4%) and Florida National Scenic Trail (4%).

Figure 18 shows the proportion of visitor groups who visited each site first during their visit. The sites most likely to be visited first include the Oasis Visitor Center (47%) and H.P. Williams Park (14%).

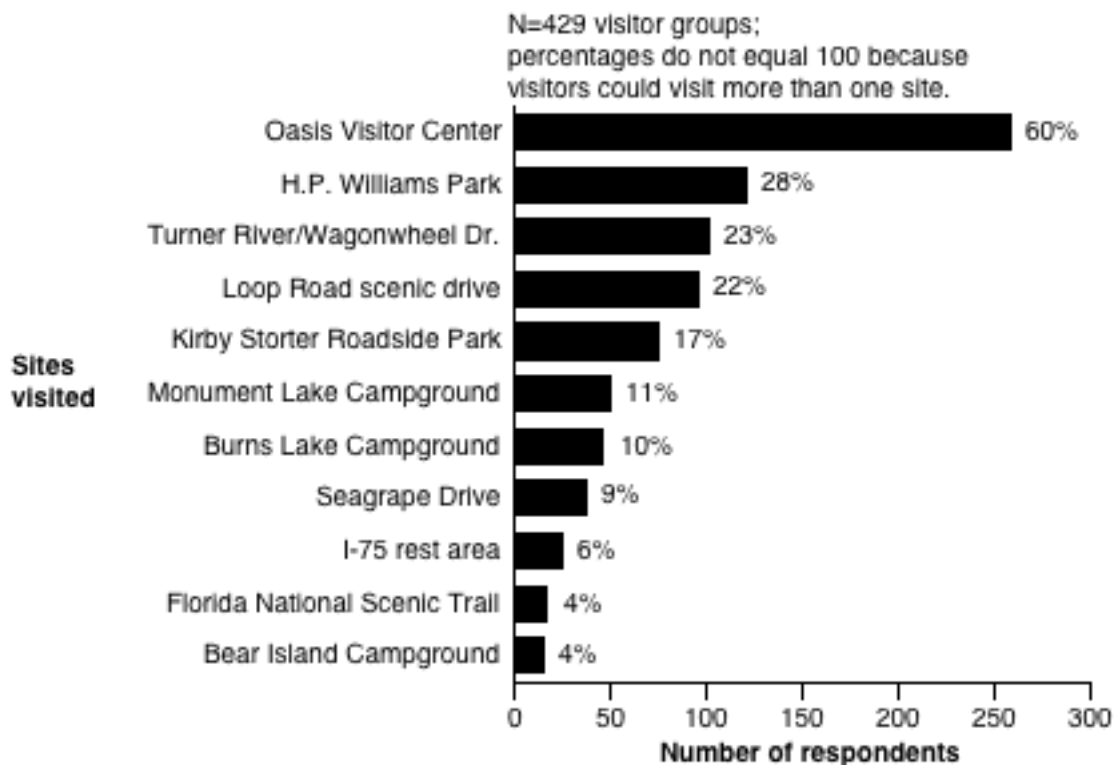


Figure 17: Sites visited this visit

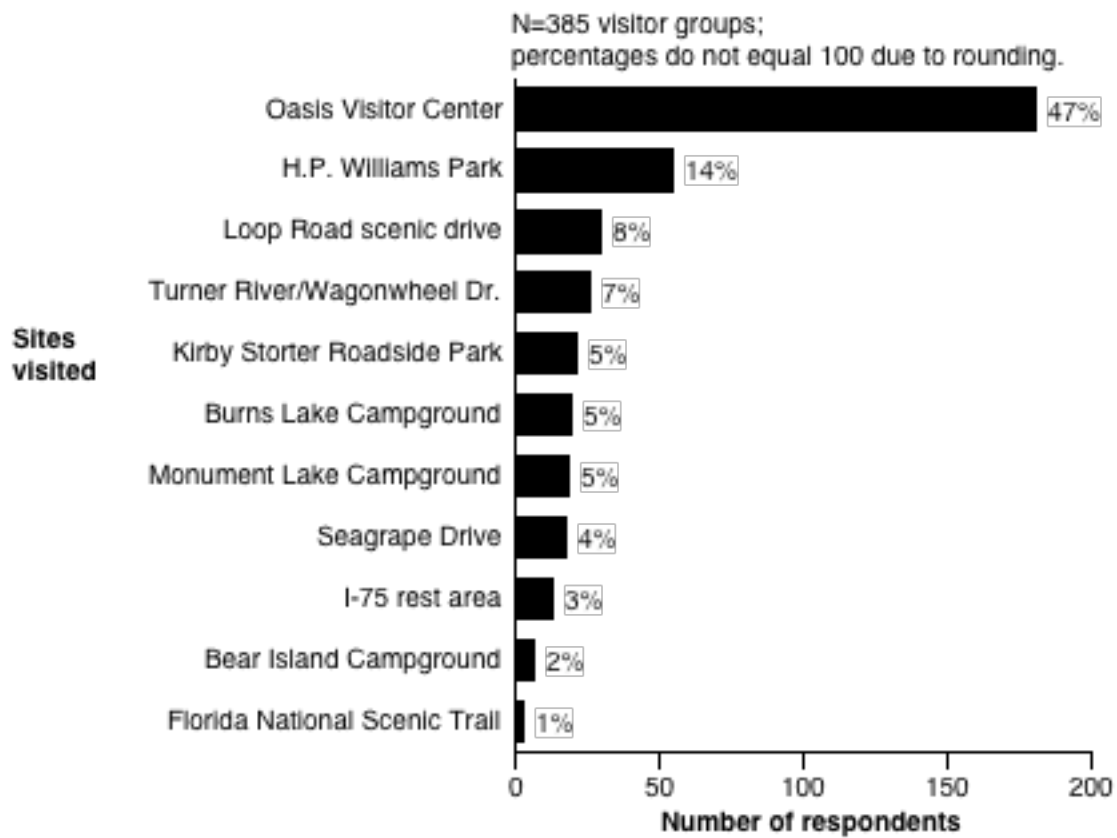


Figure 18: Sites visited first this visit

Visitor activities and use of park resources

Visitors were asked what types of activities members of their group had participated in during their visit to Big Cypress NPres. As shown in Figure 19, the most participated-in activities were: sightseeing (66%), viewing birds (66%), visiting the visitor center (63%), viewing wildlife [other than birds] (60%), and driving through to get to another destination (60%). Activities listed as “other” include photography and biking.

Visitors were also asked if any member of their group used an off-road vehicle during this visit to Big Cypress NPres. Twenty-two percent of visitor groups used an off-road vehicle (see Figure 20). Of those visitor groups who had used an off-road vehicle, 70% reported using an airboat on a commercial tour (see Figure 21).

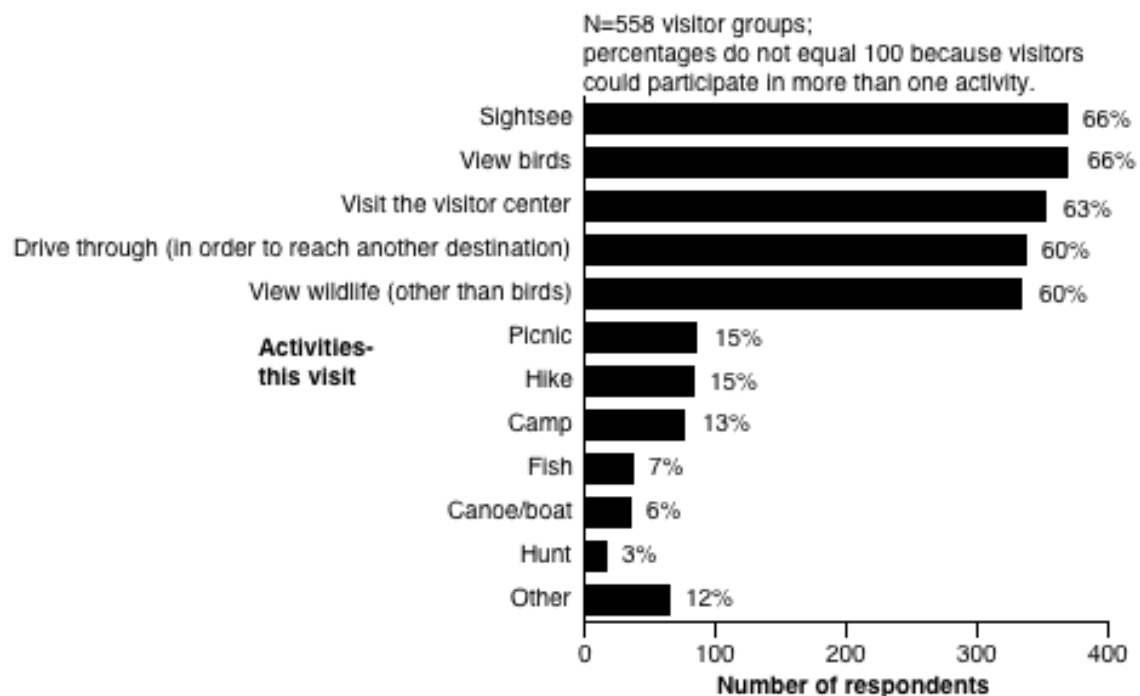


Figure 19: Visitor activities

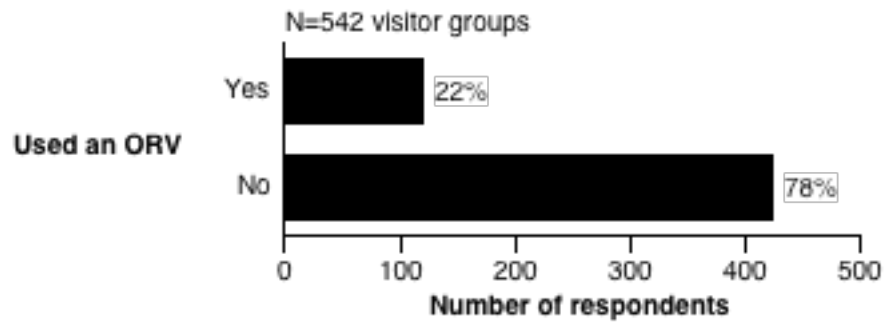


Figure 20: Use of Off-Road Vehicles (ORV)

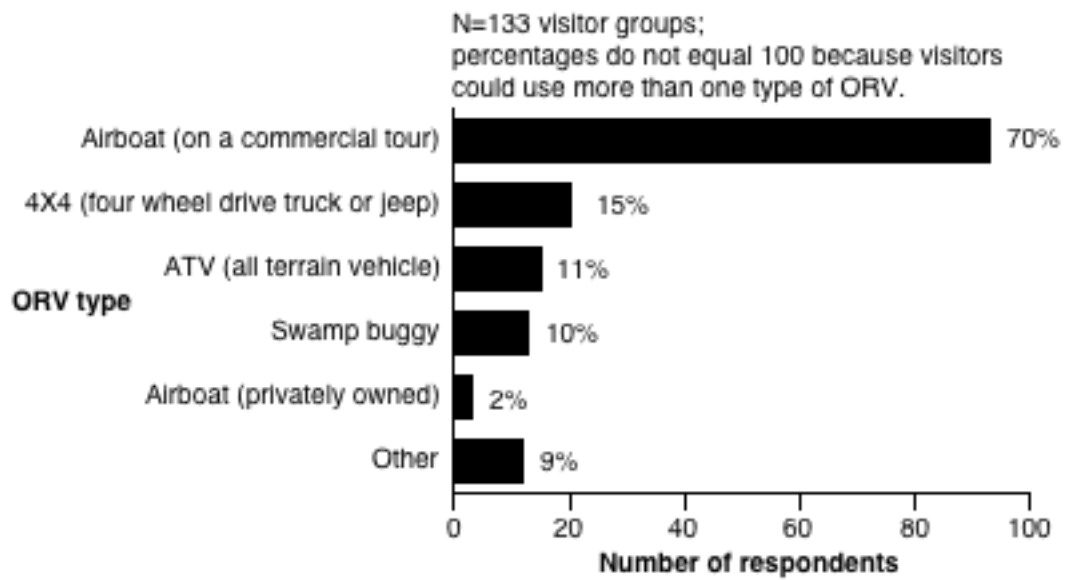


Figure 21: Type of ORV used during visit

**Visitor services
and facilities:
use, importance,
and quality**

Visitor groups were asked to note the services and facilities they used during their visit to Big Cypress NPRES. As shown in Figure 22, the services and facilities most commonly used by visitor groups were restrooms (71%), visitor center (70%), roads (61%), and visitor center exhibits (44%). The least used services were the canoe tour (1%) and the ranger-led walking tour (1%).

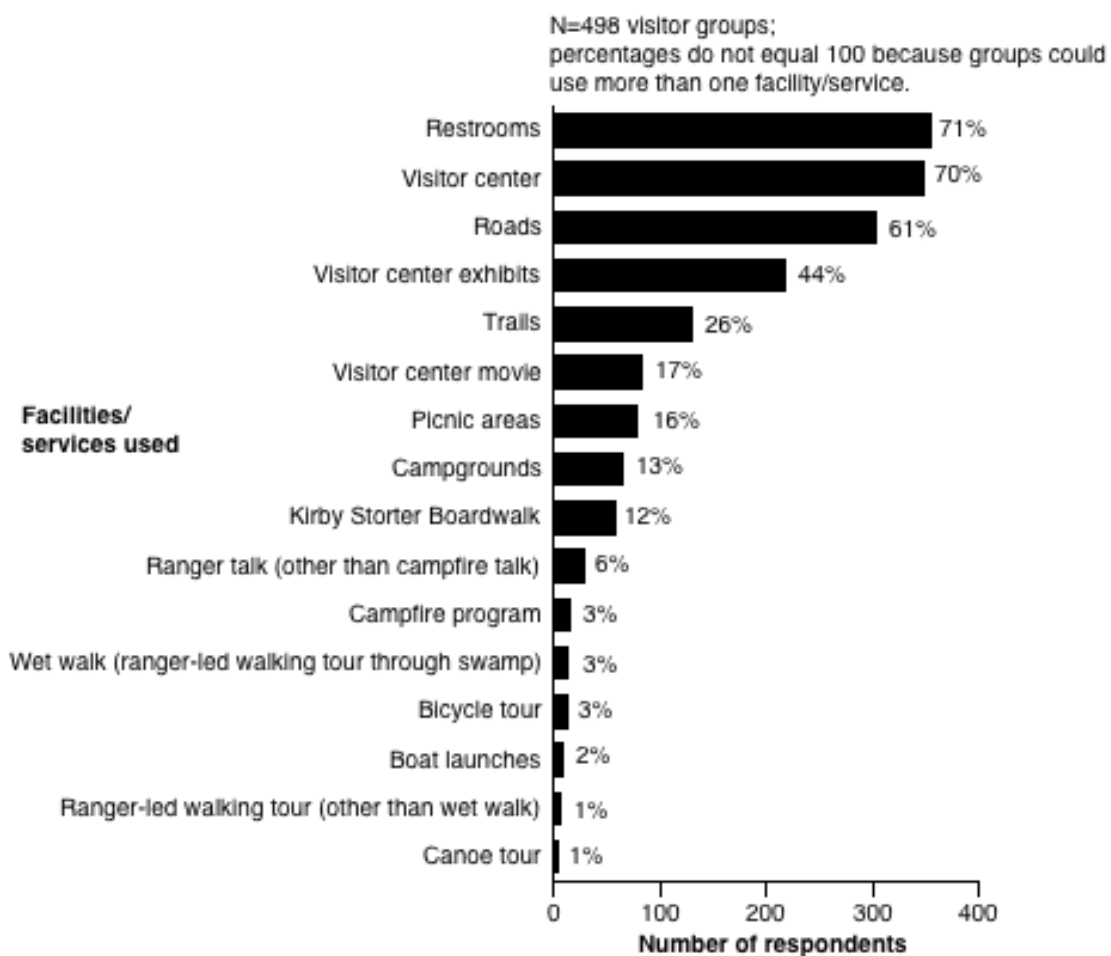


Figure 22: Services and facilities used

Visitor groups rated the importance and quality of each of the services and facilities they used. The following five point scales were used in the questionnaire:

IMPORTANCE
5=extremely important
4=very important
3=moderately important
2=somewhat important
1=not important

QUALITY
5=very good
4=good
3=average
2=poor
1=very poor

The average importance and quality ratings for each service were determined based on ratings provided by visitors who used each service. Figure 23 shows the average importance and quality ratings for each of the visitor services. All services were rated as above "average" both in importance and quality. It should be noted that the boat launches, campfire program, ranger talk (other than campfire program), wet walk (ranger-led walk through the swamp), ranger-led walking tour (other than wet walk), canoe tour, and bicycle tour were not rated by enough visitor groups to provide reliable data.

Figures 24-39 show the importance ratings that visitor groups gave for each of the individual services. Those services receiving the highest combined proportion of "extremely important" and "very important" ratings included campgrounds (97%), restrooms (89%), and roads (86%). The service with the largest proportion of "not important" responses was picnic areas (3%).

Figures 40-55 show the quality ratings that visitor groups gave for each of the individual services. Those services receiving the highest combined proportion of "very good" and "good" ratings included visitor center movie (84%), visitor center and visitor center exhibits (both 81%), and restrooms (75%). The highest proportion of "very poor" ratings was for Kirby Storter Boardwalk (22%).

Figure 56 combines the "very good" and "good" quality ratings and compares those ratings for all of the services.

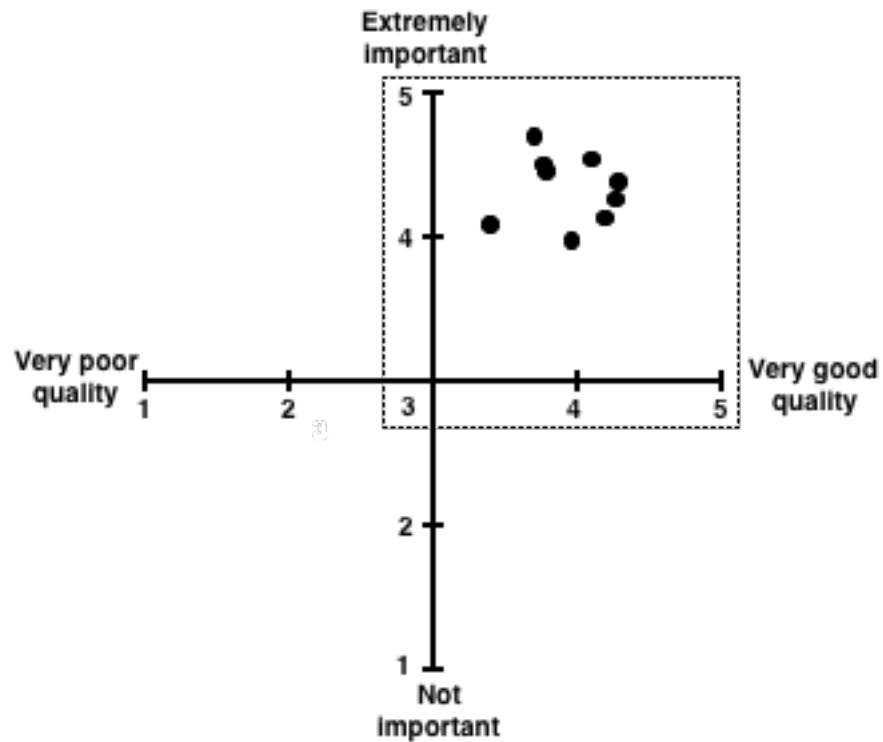


Figure 23: Average ratings of service and facility importance and quality

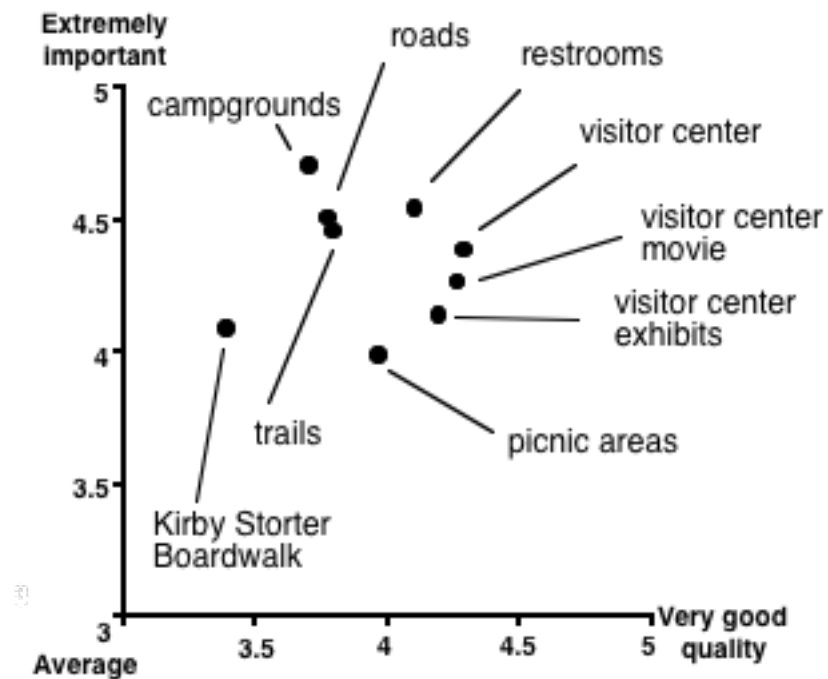


Figure 23: Detail

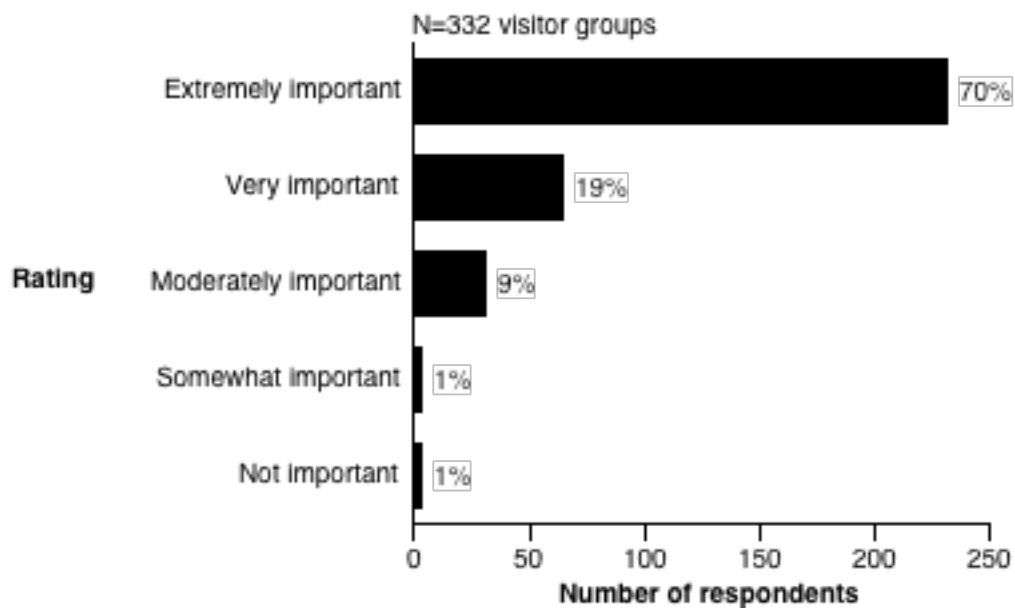


Figure 24: Importance of restrooms

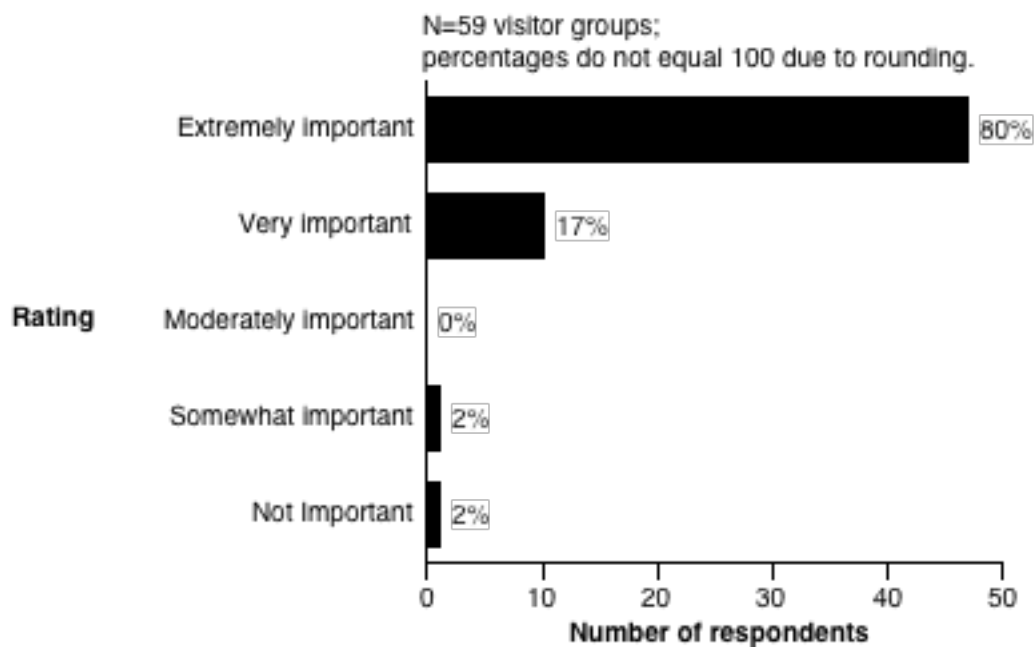


Figure 25: Importance of campgrounds

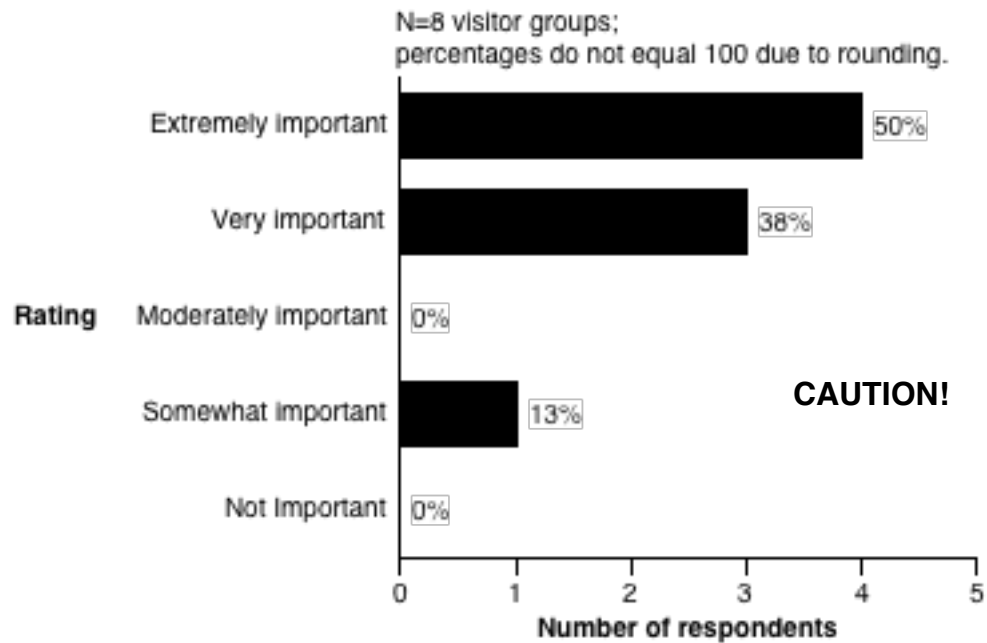


Figure 26: Importance of boat launches

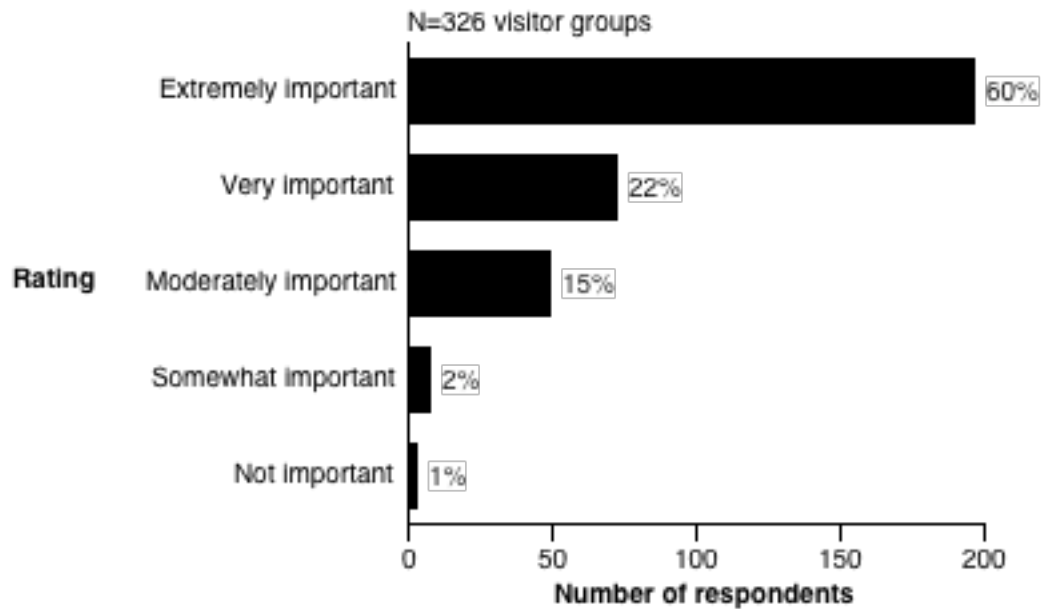


Figure 27: Importance of visitor center

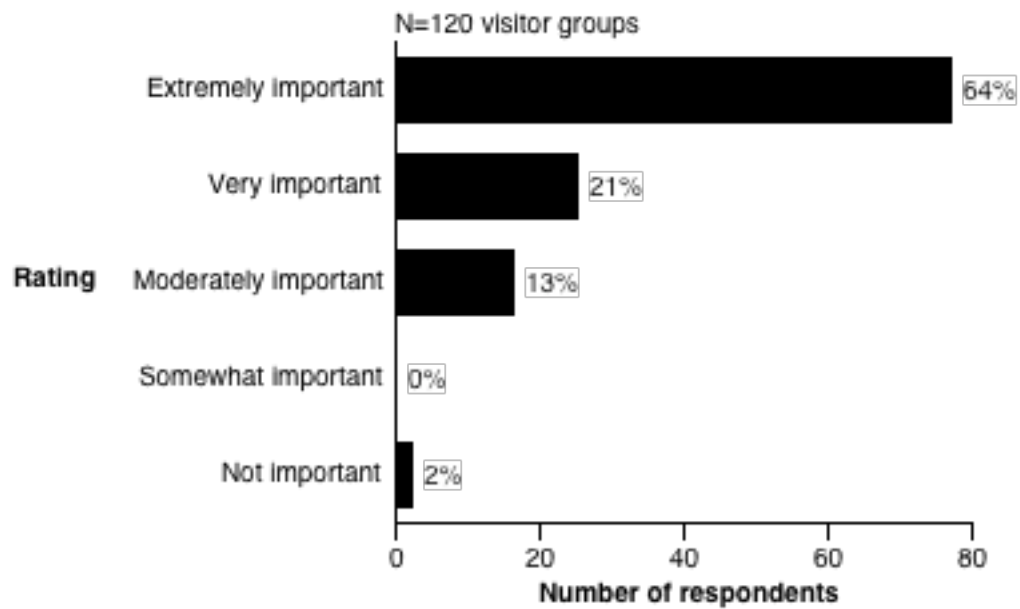


Figure 28: Importance of trails

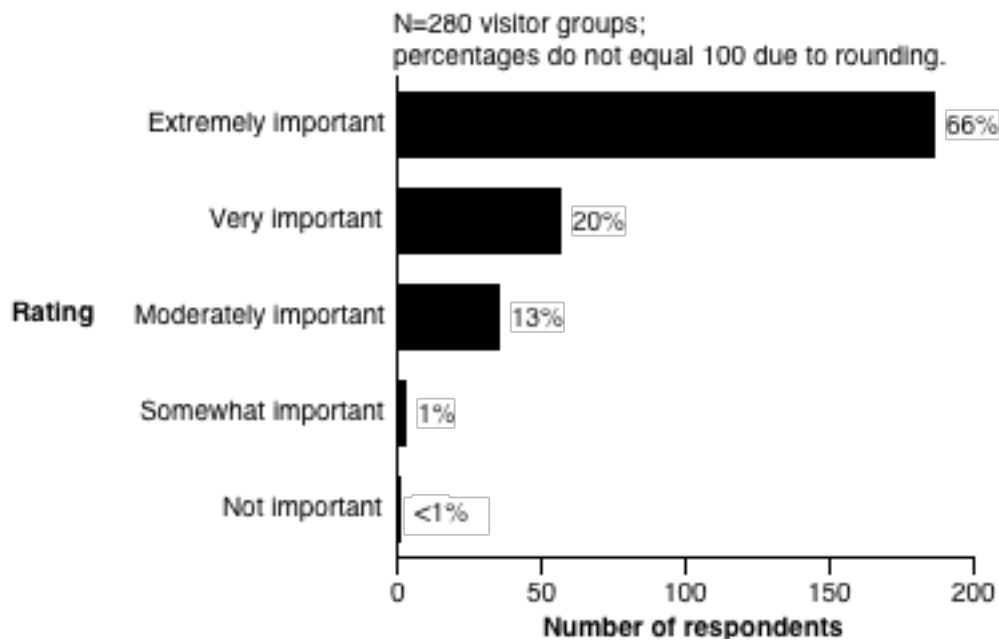


Figure 29: Importance of roads

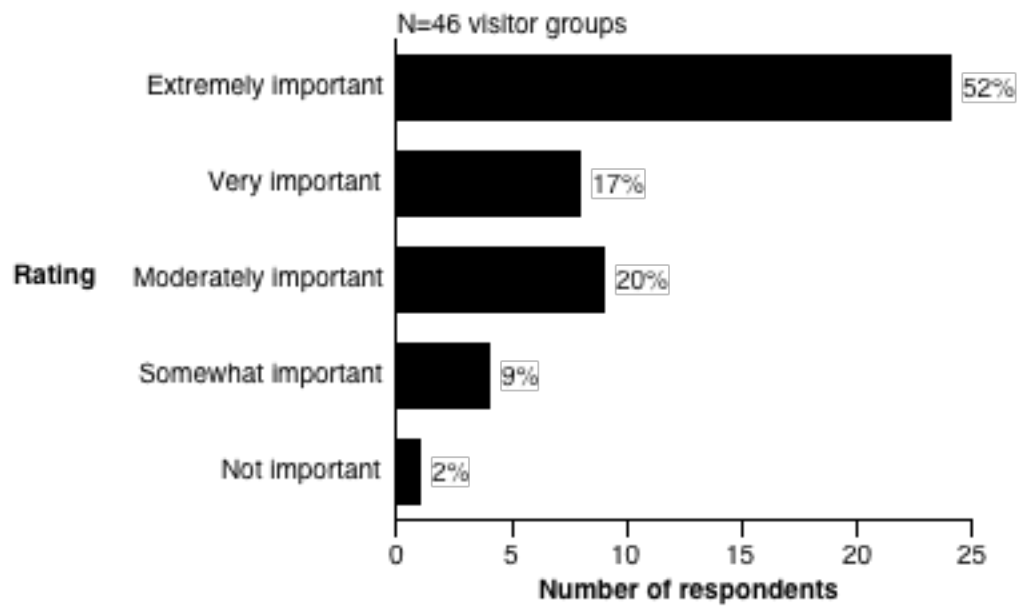


Figure 30: Importance of Kirby Storter Boardwalk

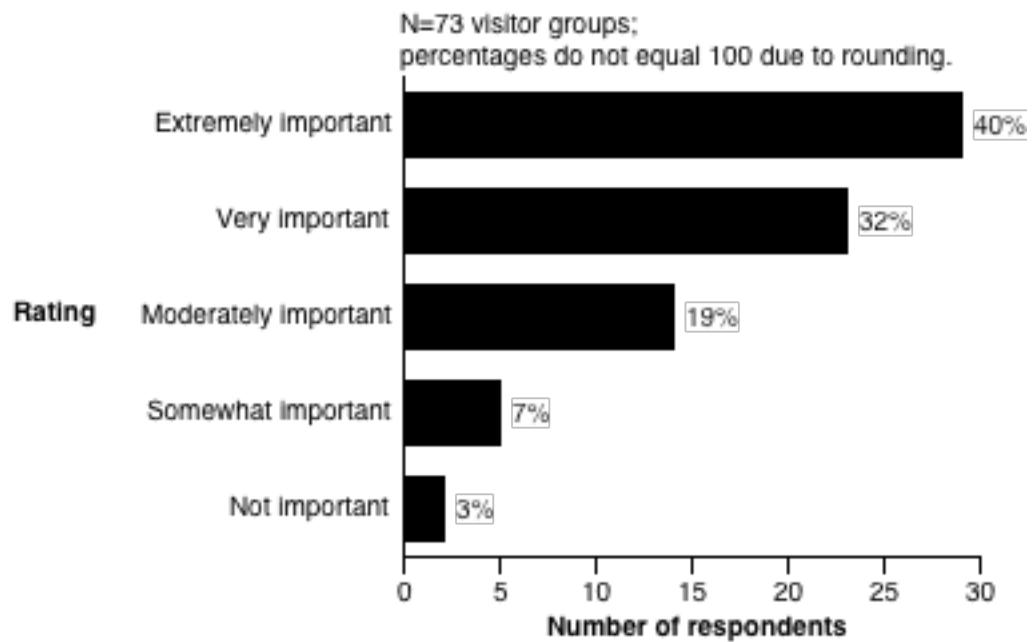


Figure 31: Importance of picnic areas

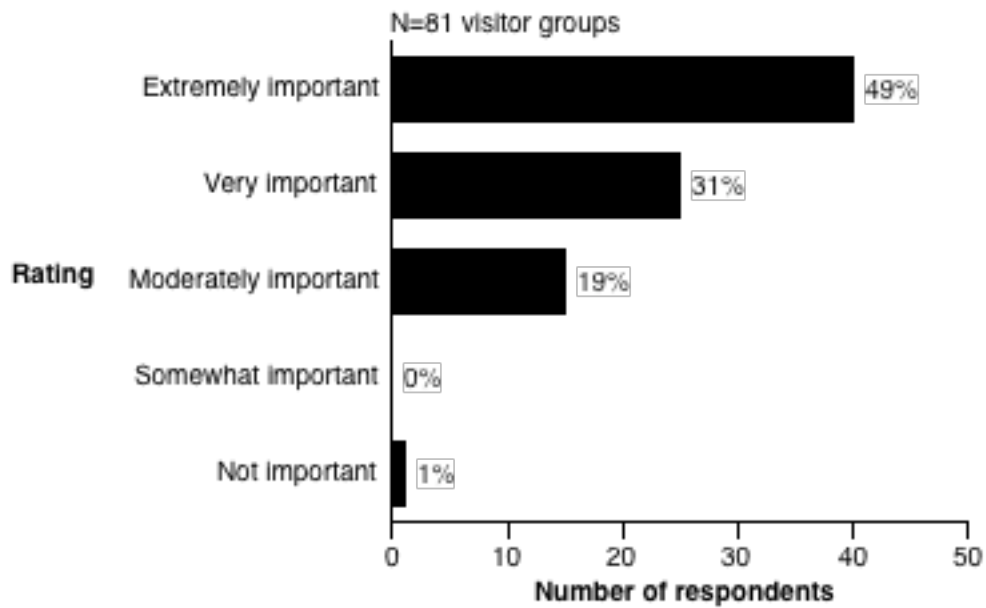


Figure 32: Importance of visitor center movie

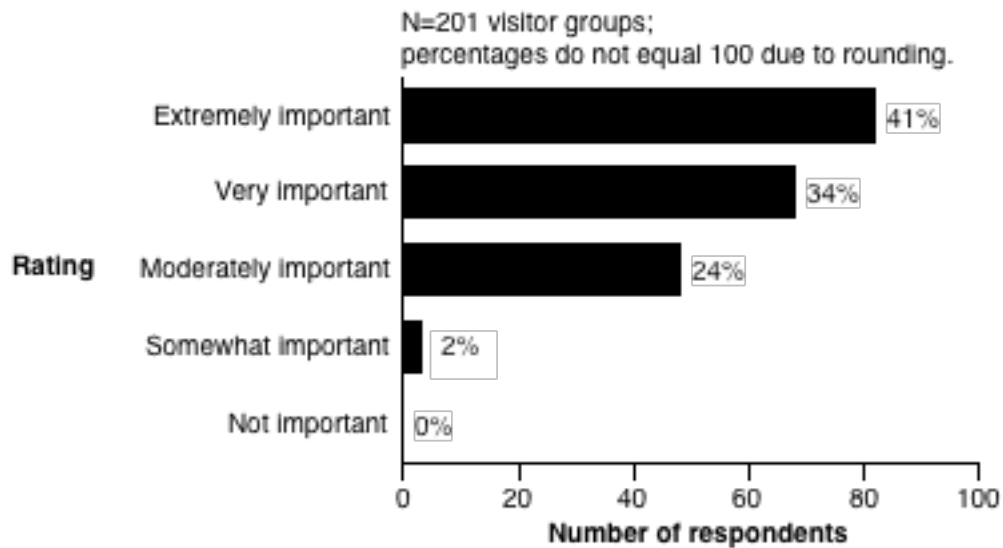


Figure 33: Importance of visitor center exhibits

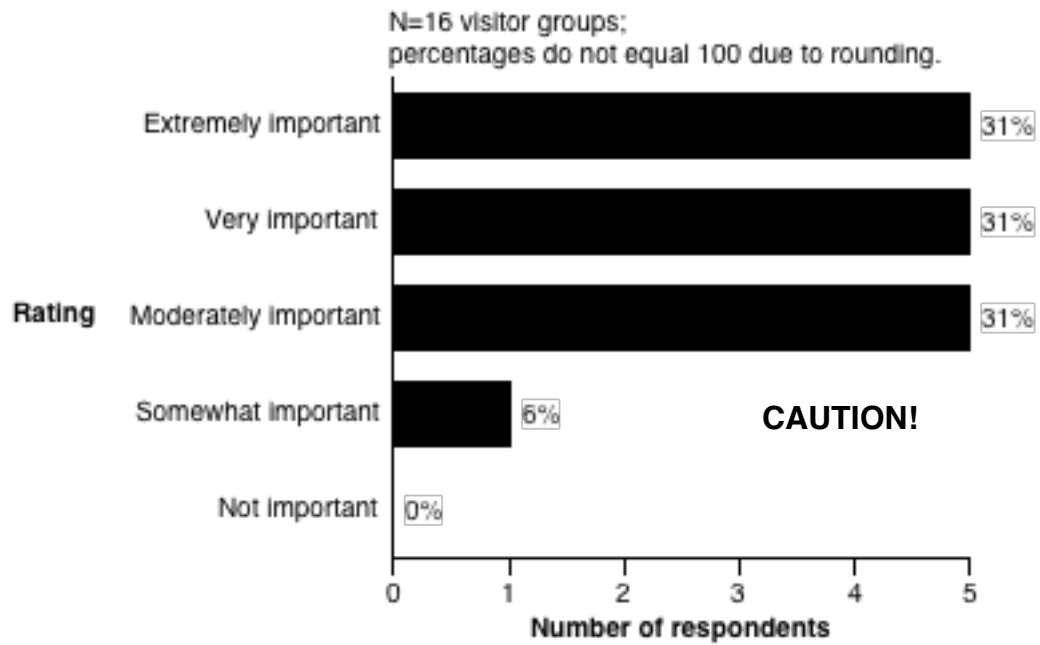


Figure 34: Importance of campfire program

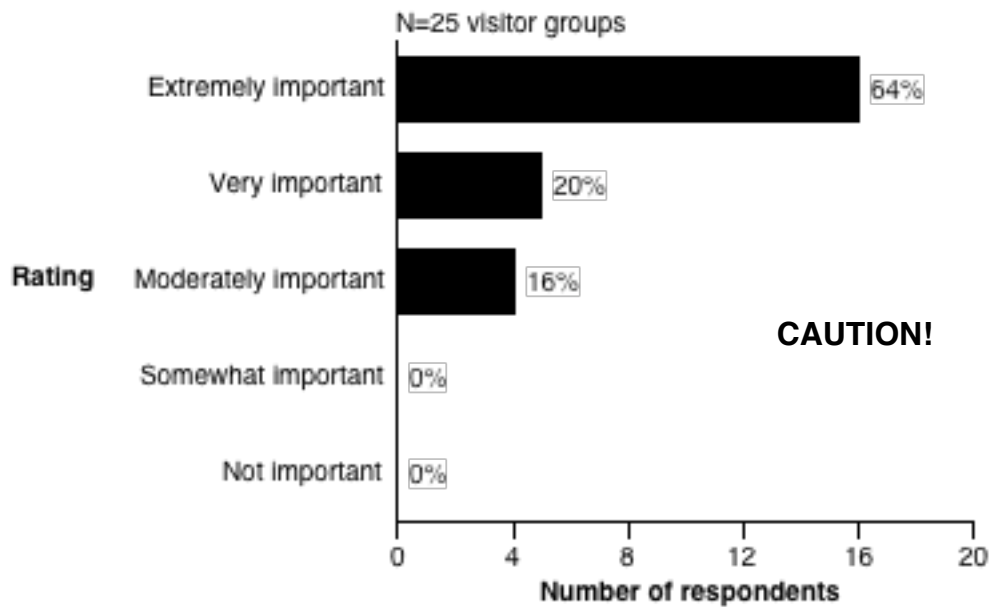


Figure 35: Importance of ranger talk (other than campfire program)

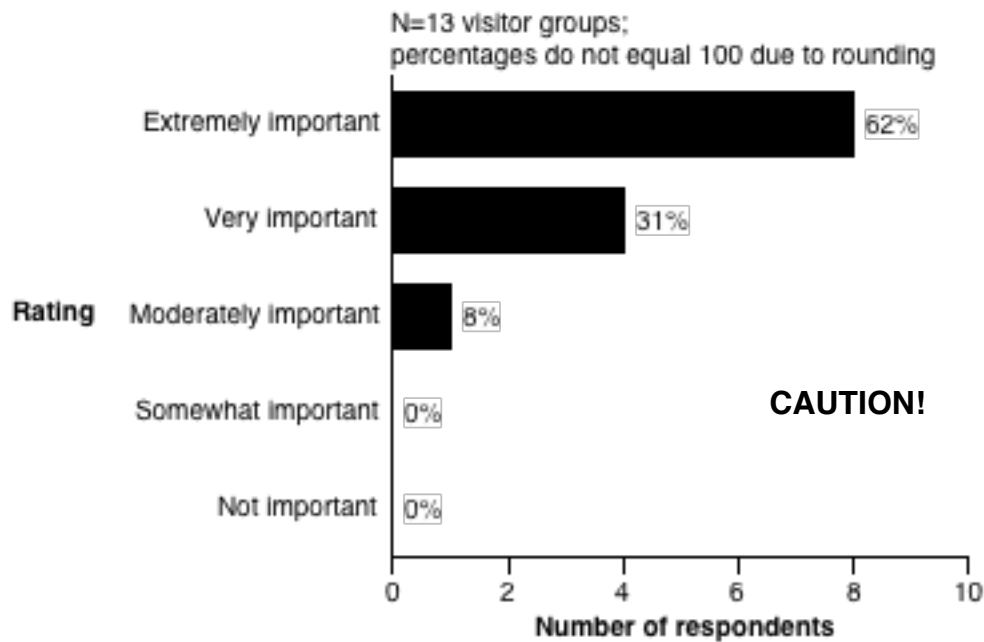


Figure 36: Importance of wet walk (ranger-led walk through the swamp)

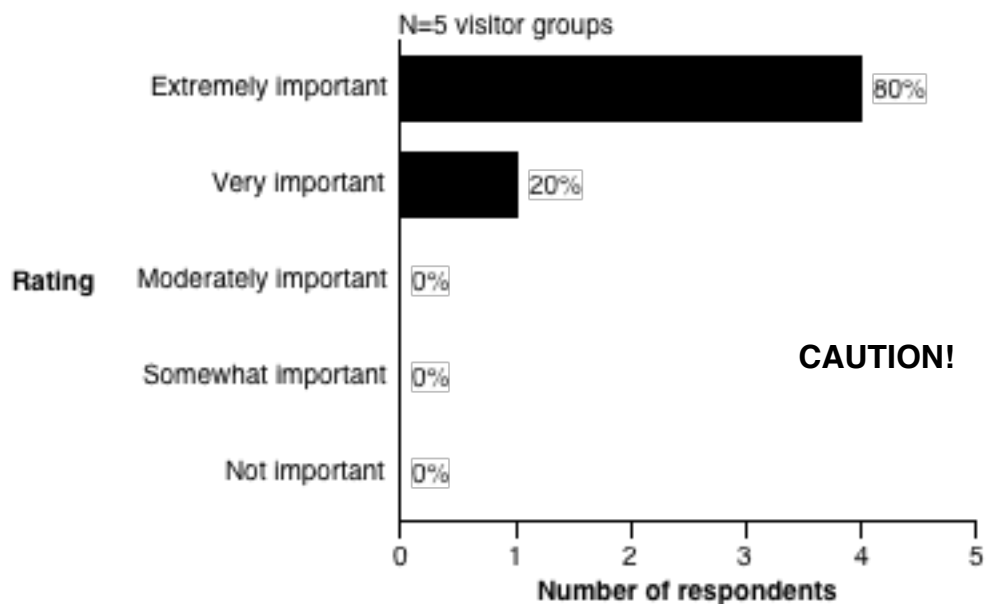


Figure 37: Importance of ranger-led walking tour (other than wet walk)

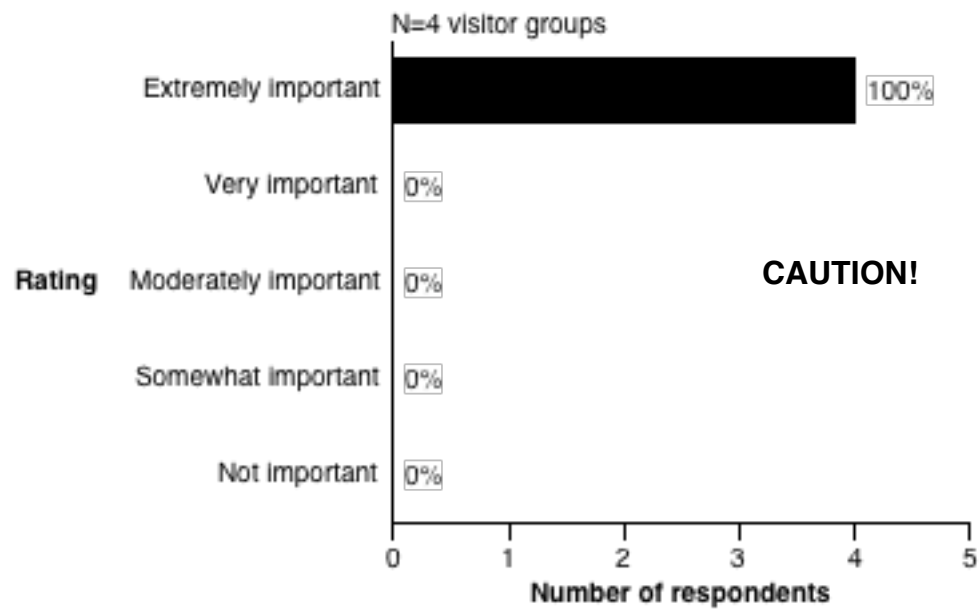


Figure 38: Importance of canoe tour

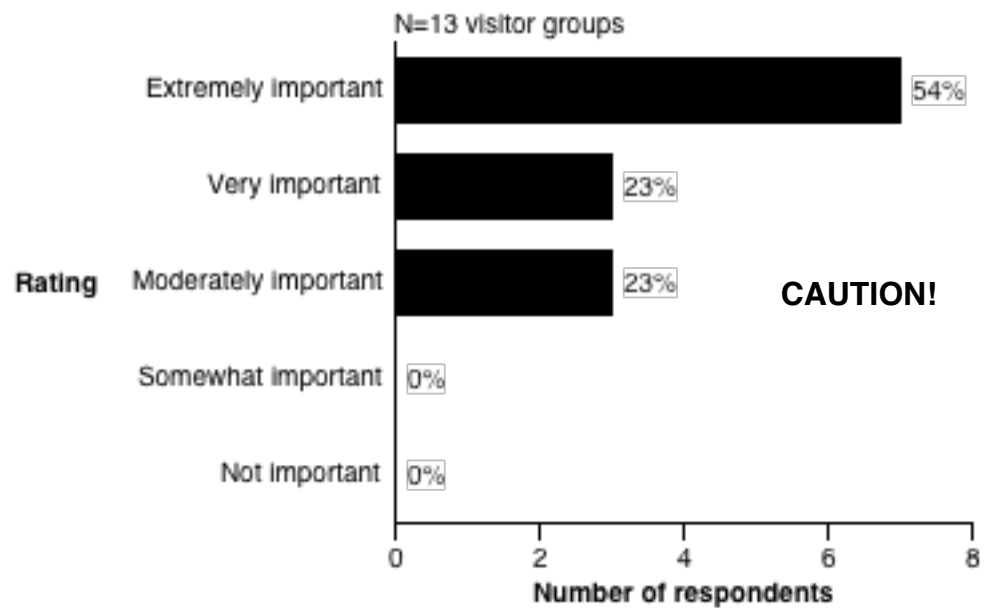


Figure 39: Importance of bicycle tour

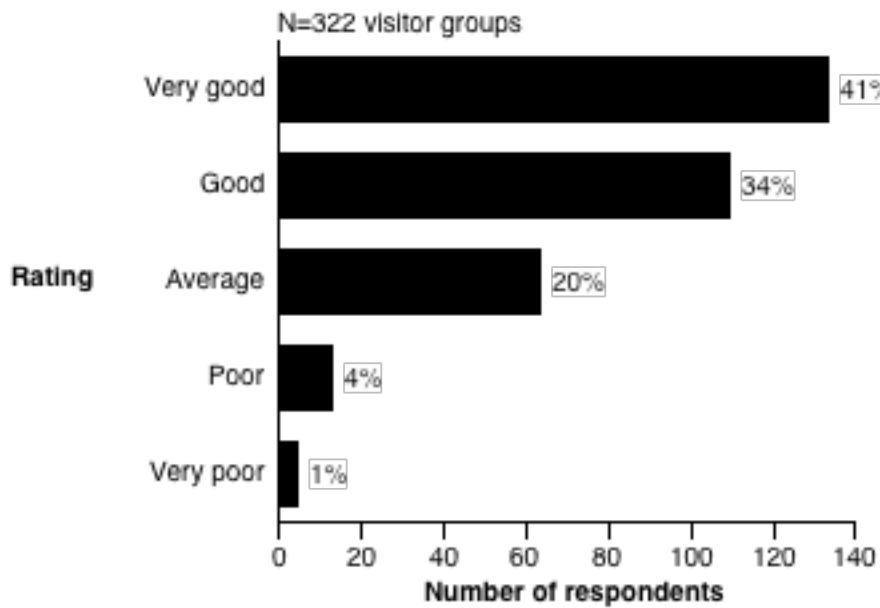


Figure 40: Quality of restrooms

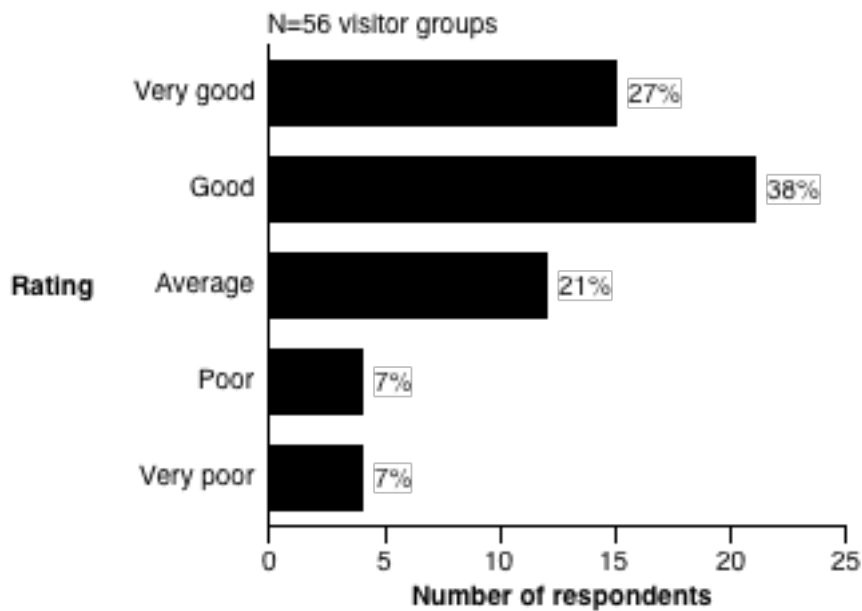


Figure 41: Quality of campgrounds

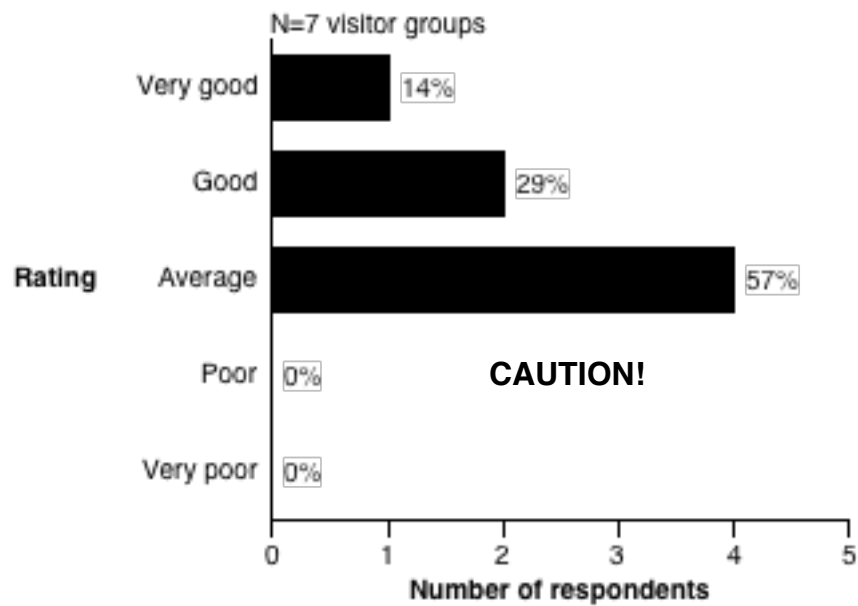


Figure 42: Quality of boat launches

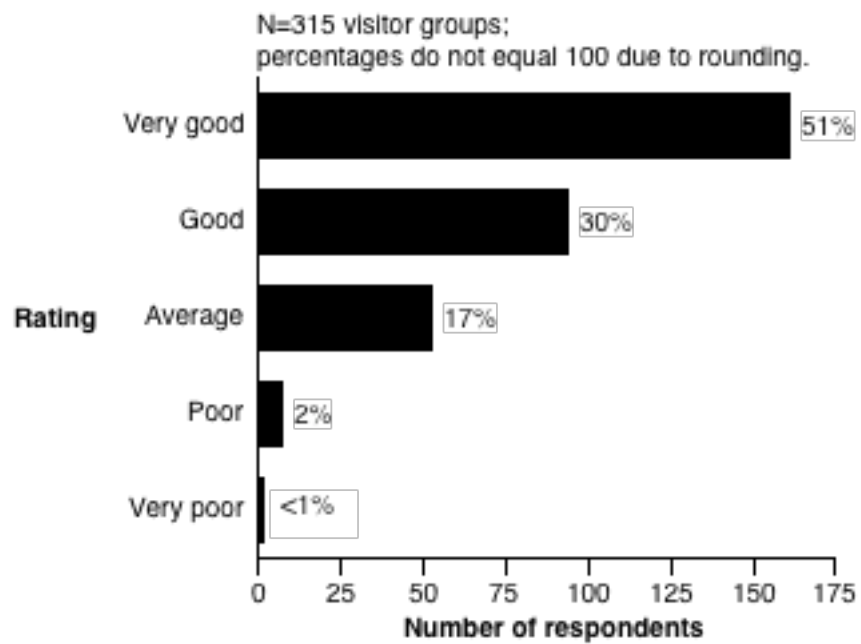


Figure 43: Quality of visitor center

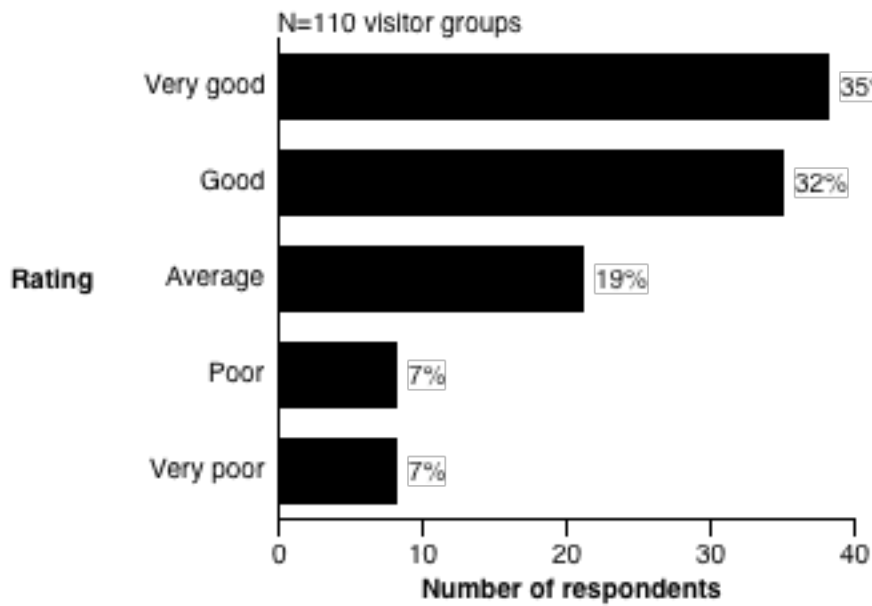


Figure 44: Quality of trails

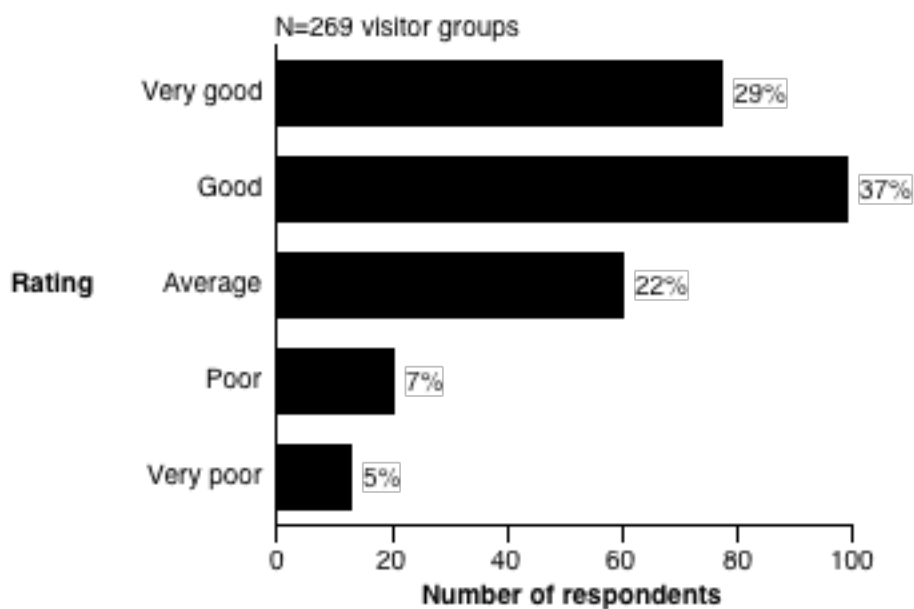


Figure 45: Quality of roads

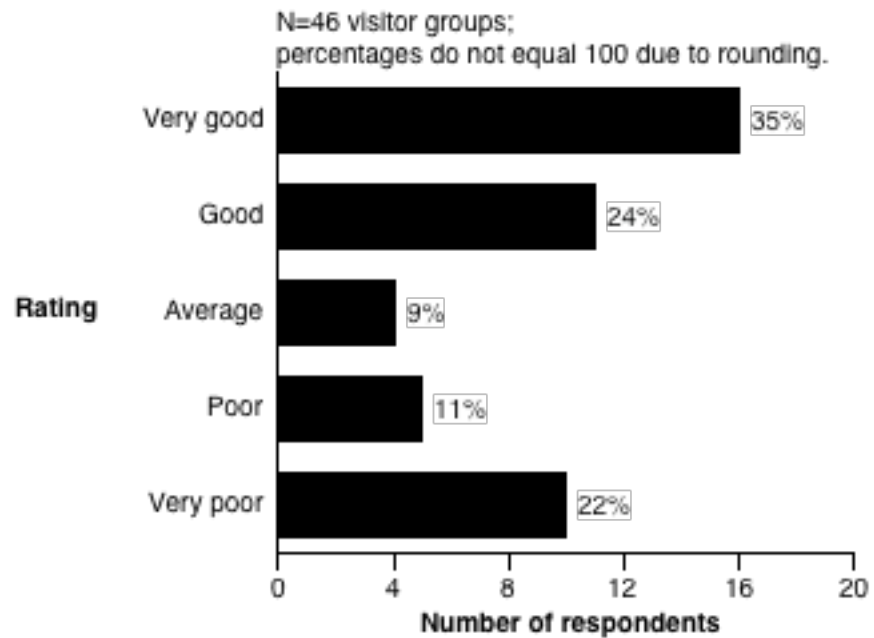


Figure 46: Quality of Kirby Starter Boardwalk

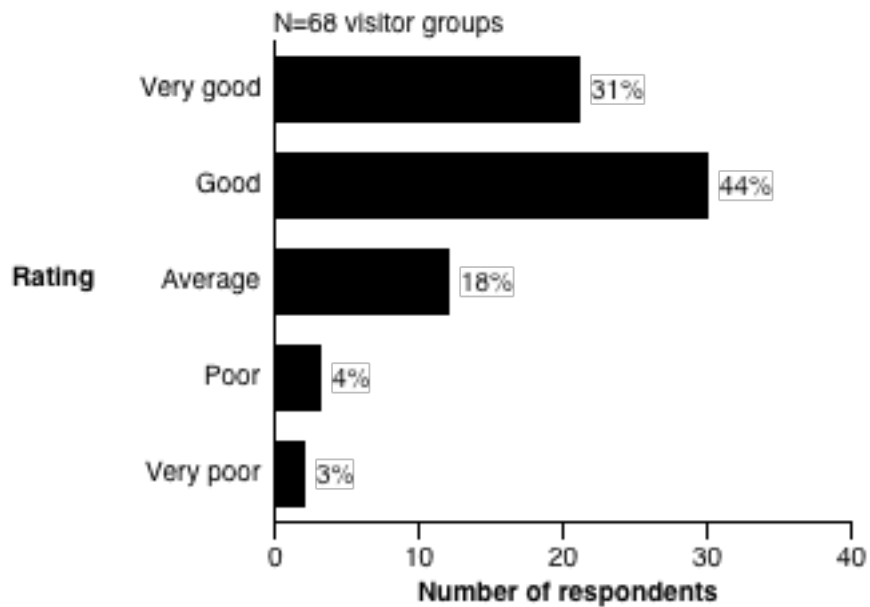


Figure 47: Quality of picnic areas

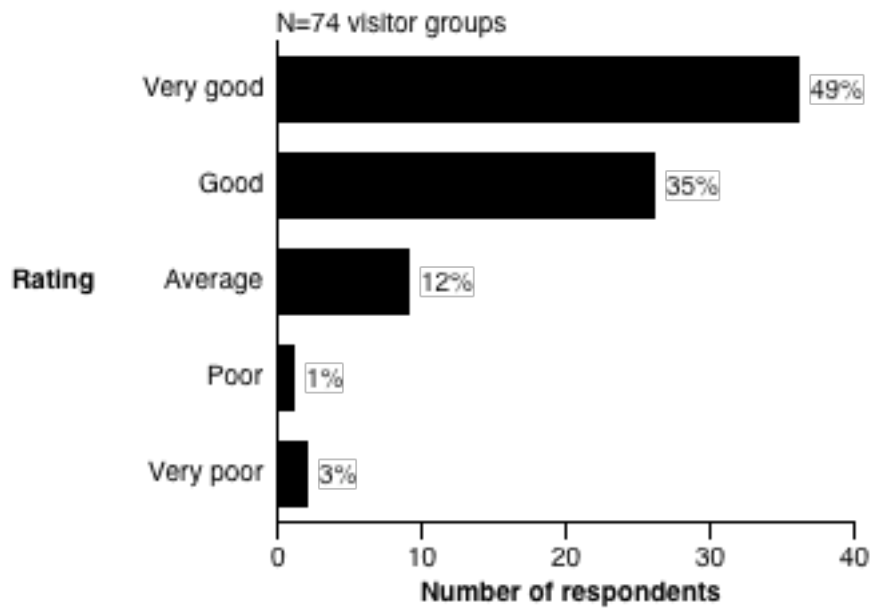


Figure 48: Quality of visitor center movie

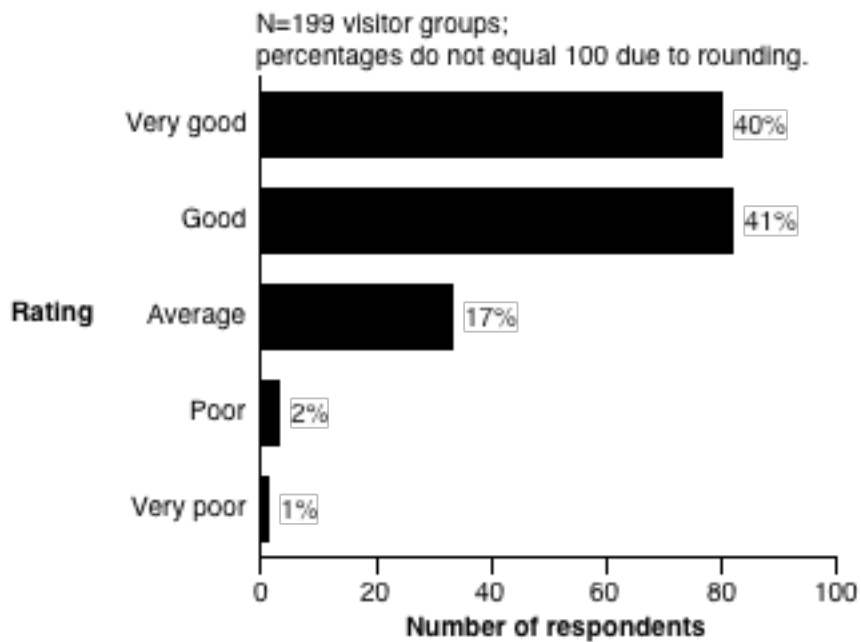


Figure 49: Quality of visitor center exhibits

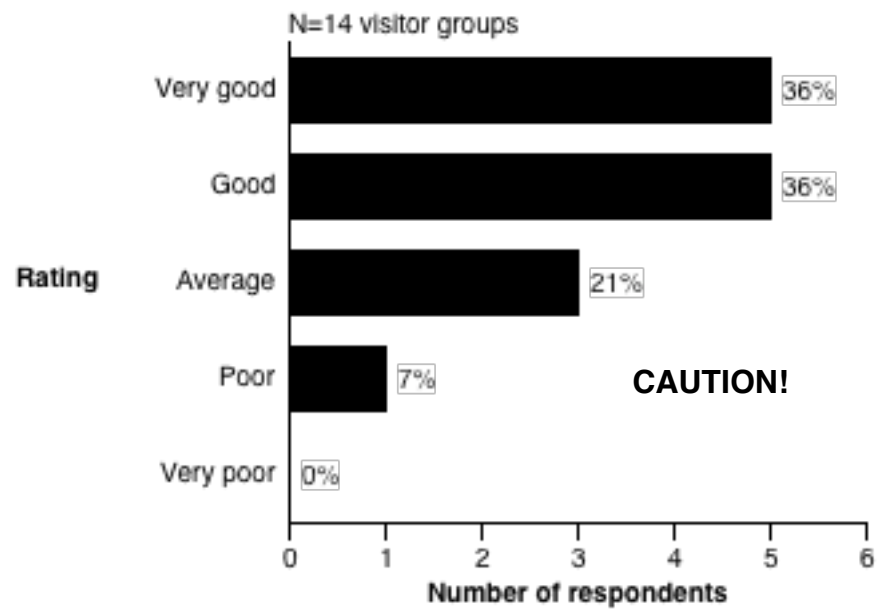


Figure 50: Quality of campfire program

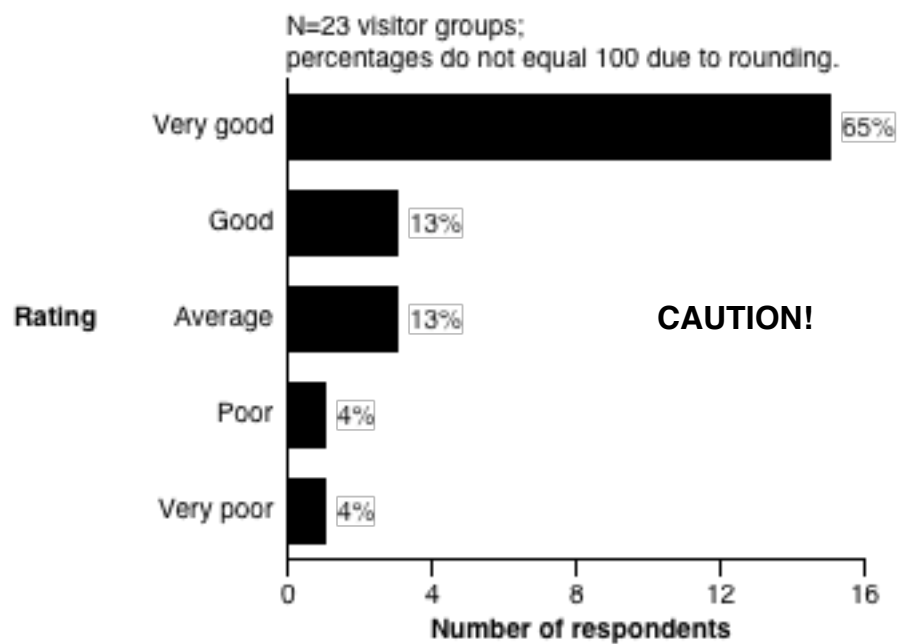


Figure 51: Quality of ranger talk (other than campfire program)

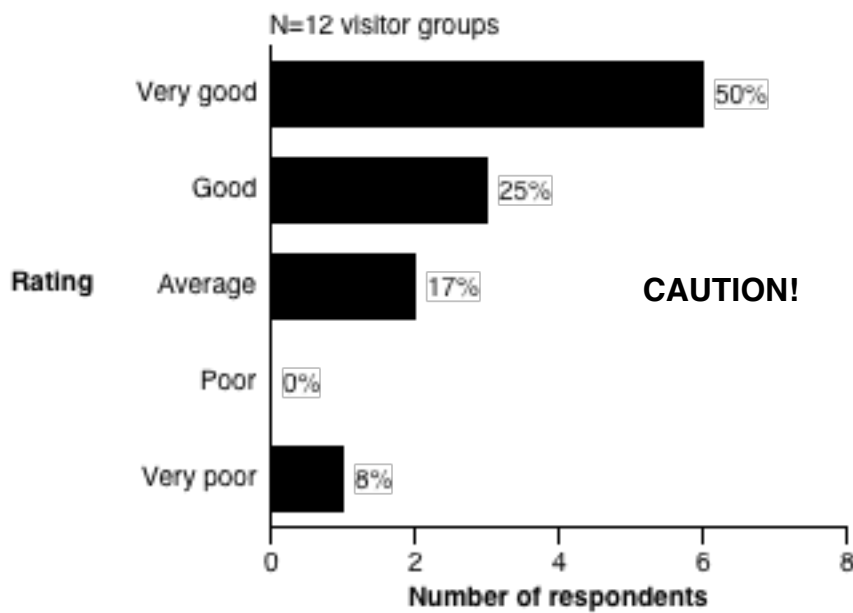


Figure 52: Quality of wet walk (ranger-led walk through the swamp)

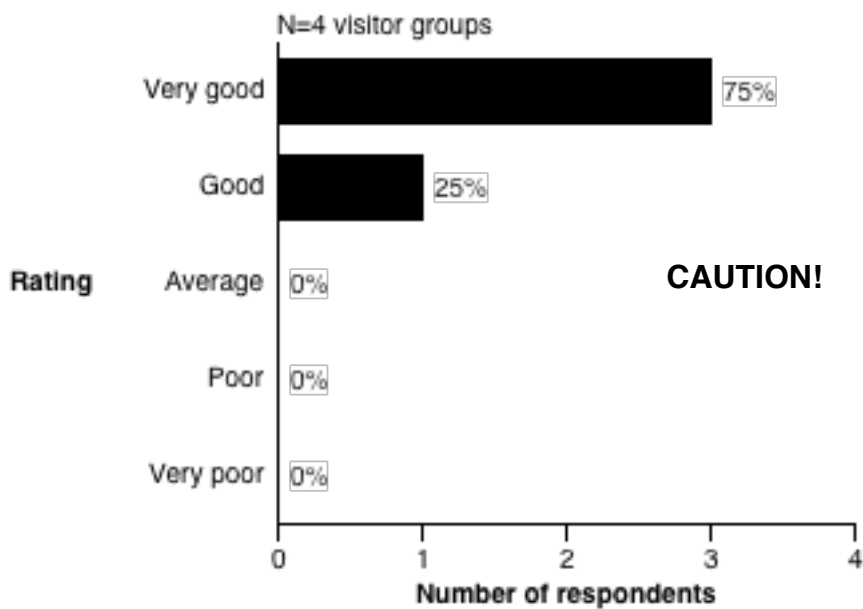


Figure 53: Quality of ranger-led walking tour (other than wet walk)



Figure 54: Quality of canoe tour

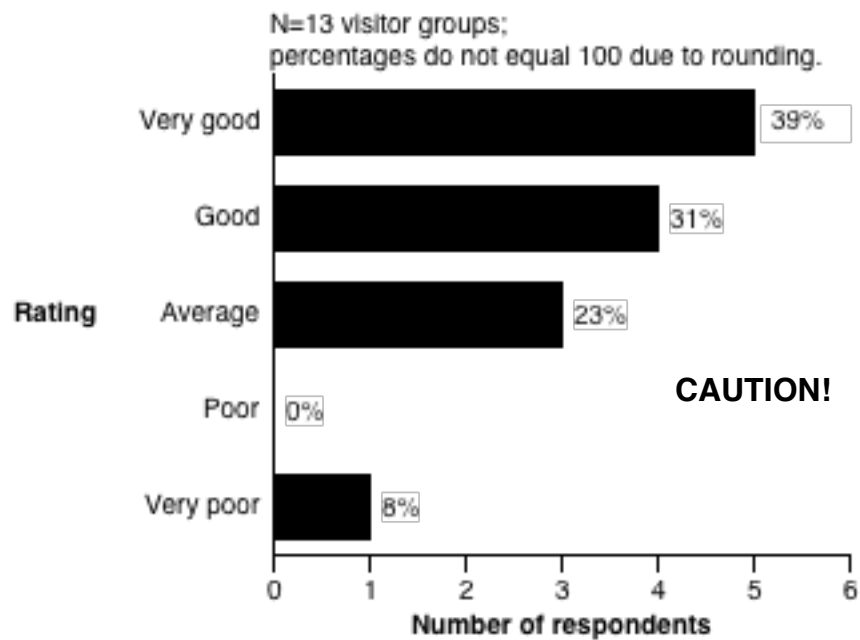


Figure 55: Quality of bicycle tour

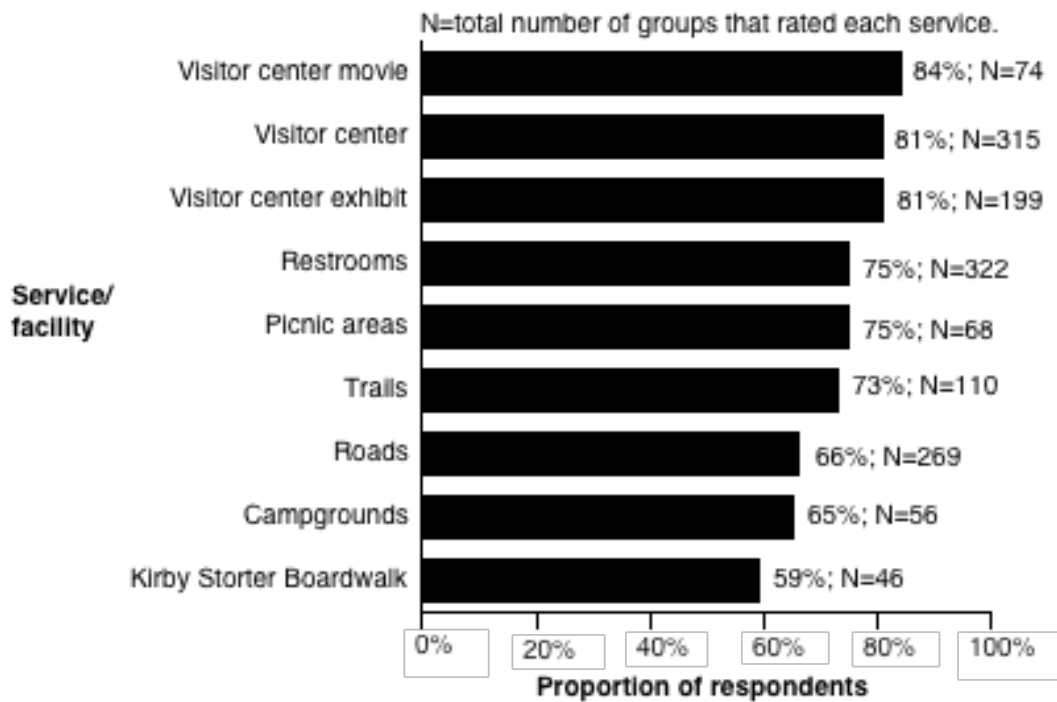


Figure 56: Combined proportions of “very good” and “good” quality ratings for services

**Importance of
features or
activities**

Visitor groups were asked to rate the importance of certain preserve features or activities to their visit to Big Cypress NPres. Figures 57-66 show the importance ratings that visitor groups gave for each of the individual features or activities. The features or activities that received the highest “extremely important” and “moderately important” ratings were: viewing wildlife (78%), scenic views (73%), experiencing wilderness (72%), and bird watching (65%). The highest “not important” ratings were for hunting (80%), off-road vehicle use (66%), fishing (61%), and airboating (53%). Each of these activities were “extremely important” or “moderately important” to some visitors: 7% for hunting, 16% for fishing, and 15% for airboating.

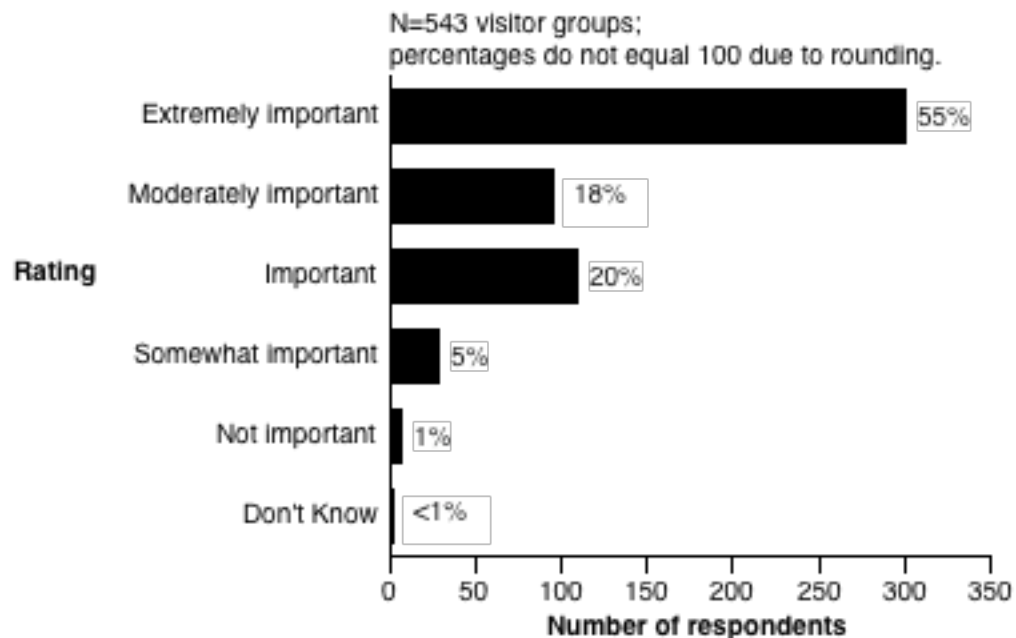


Figure 57: Importance of scenic views

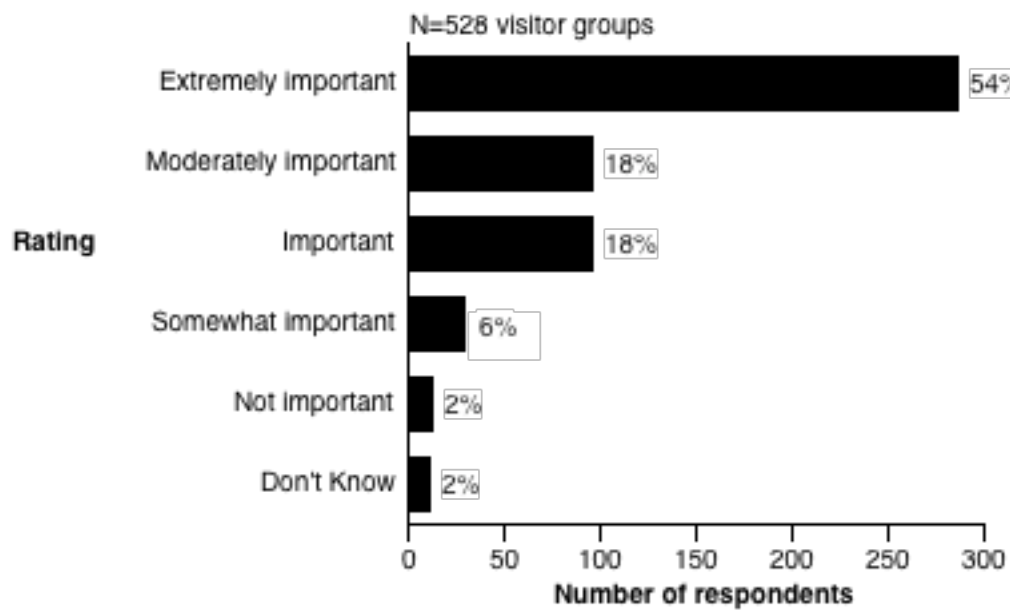


Figure 58: Importance of experiencing wilderness

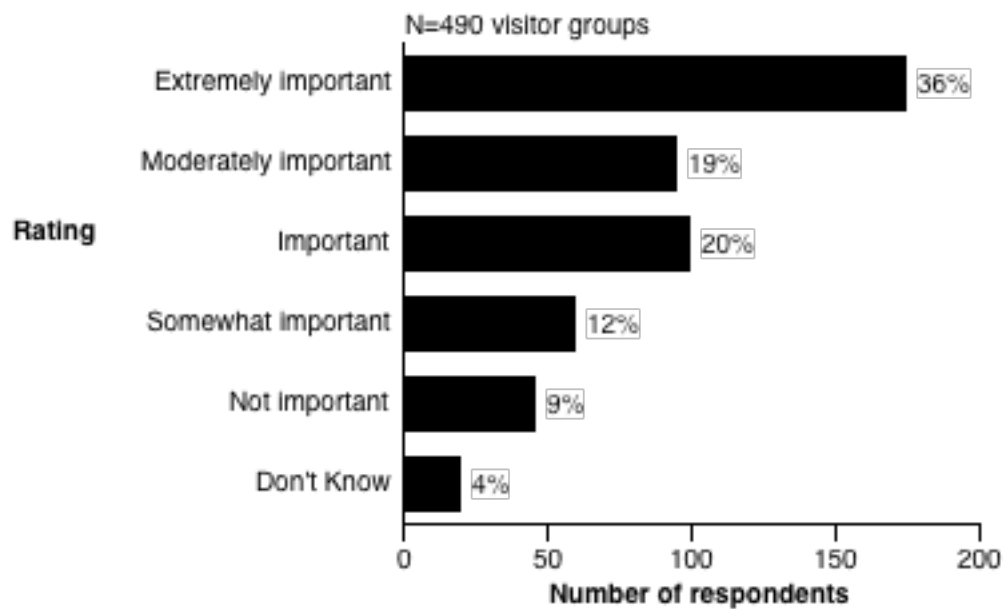


Figure 59: Importance of experiencing solitude

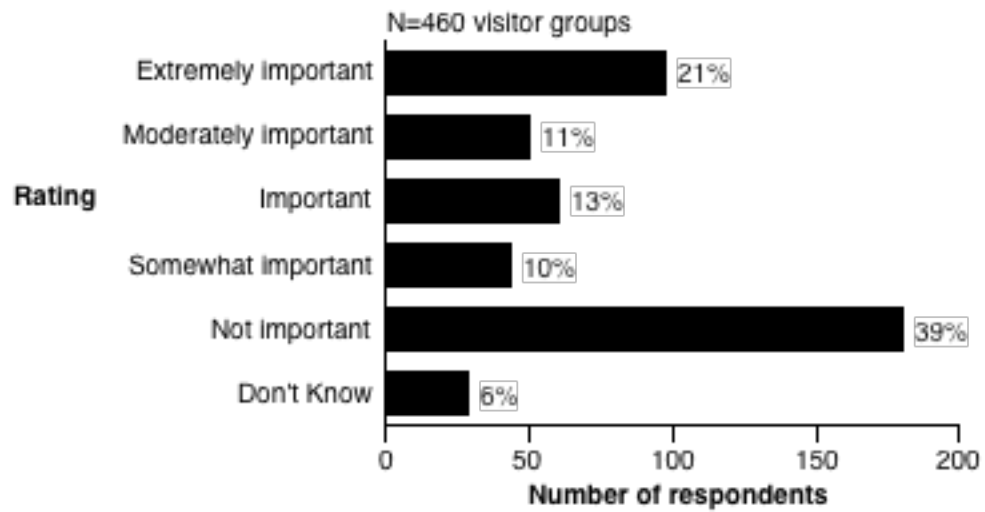


Figure 60: Importance of camping

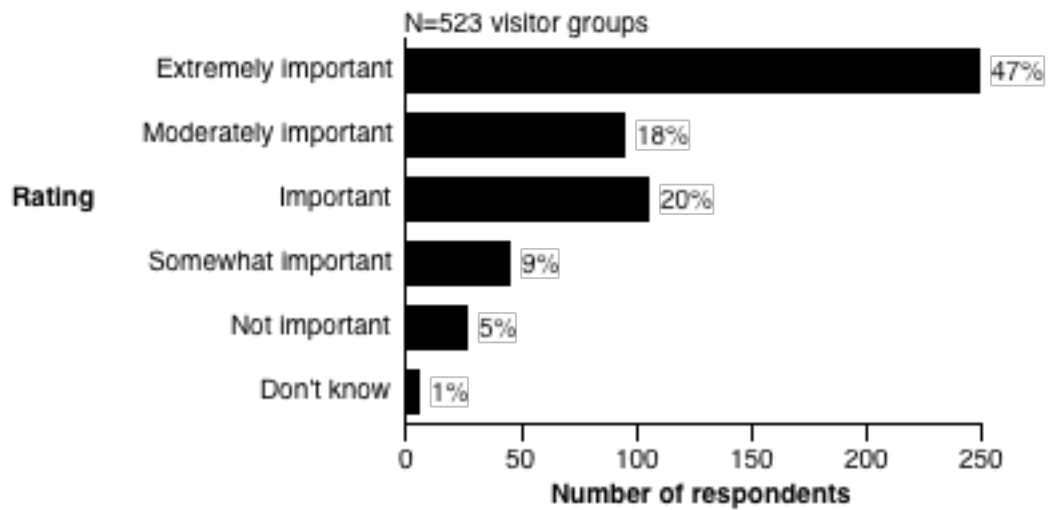


Figure 61: Importance of bird watching

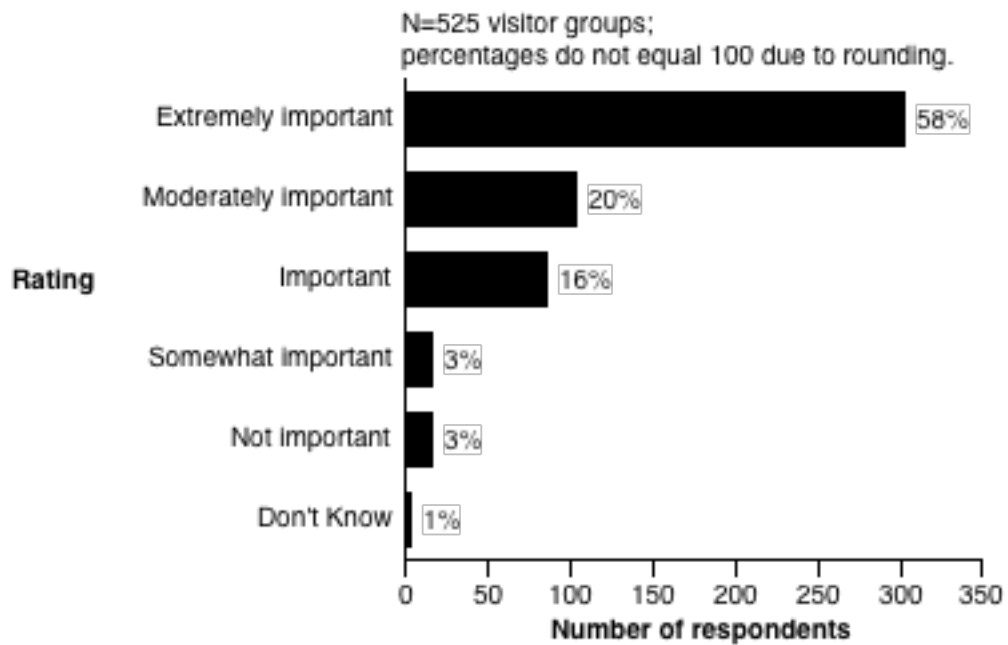


Figure 62: Importance of viewing wildlife

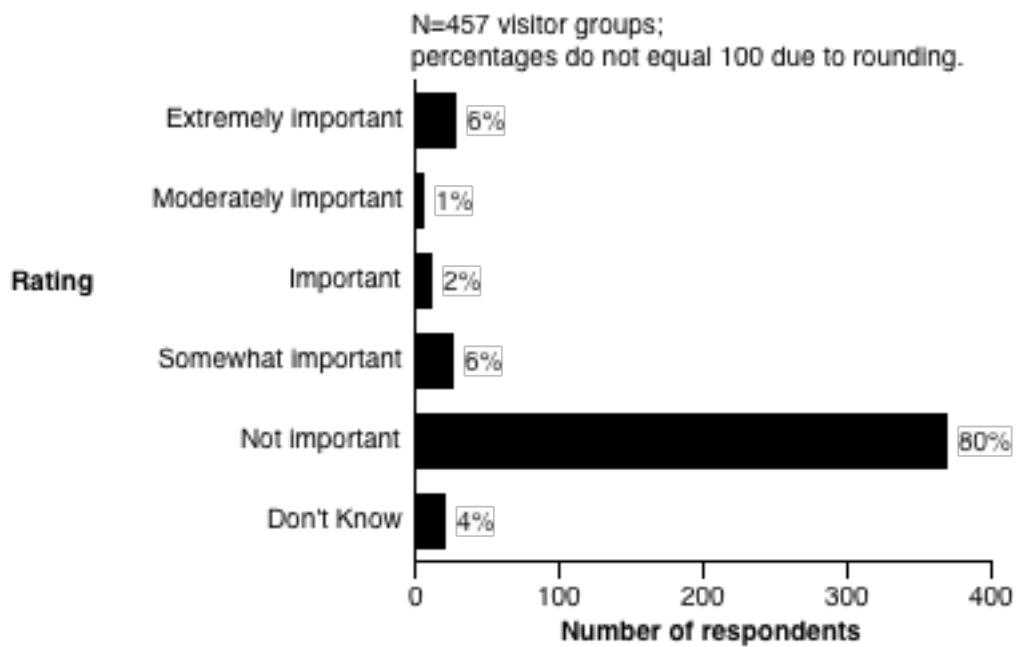


Figure 63: Importance of hunting

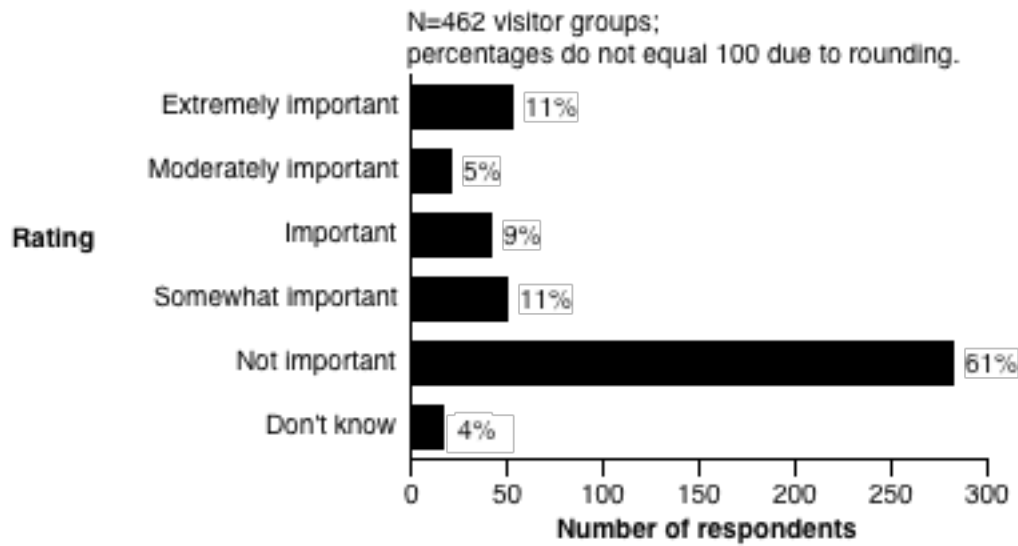


Figure 64: Importance of fishing

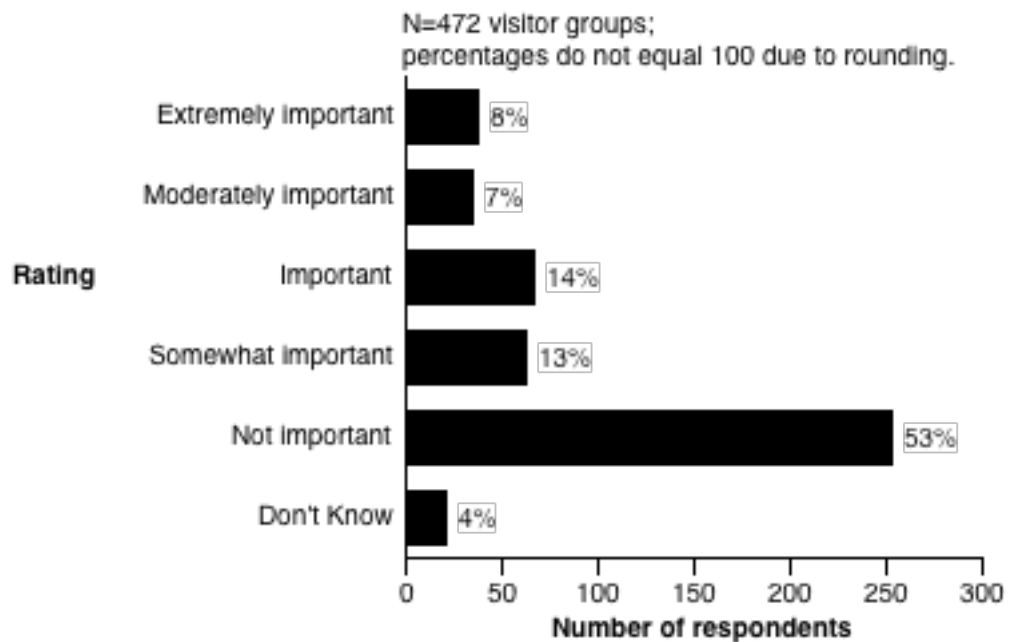


Figure 65: Importance of airboating

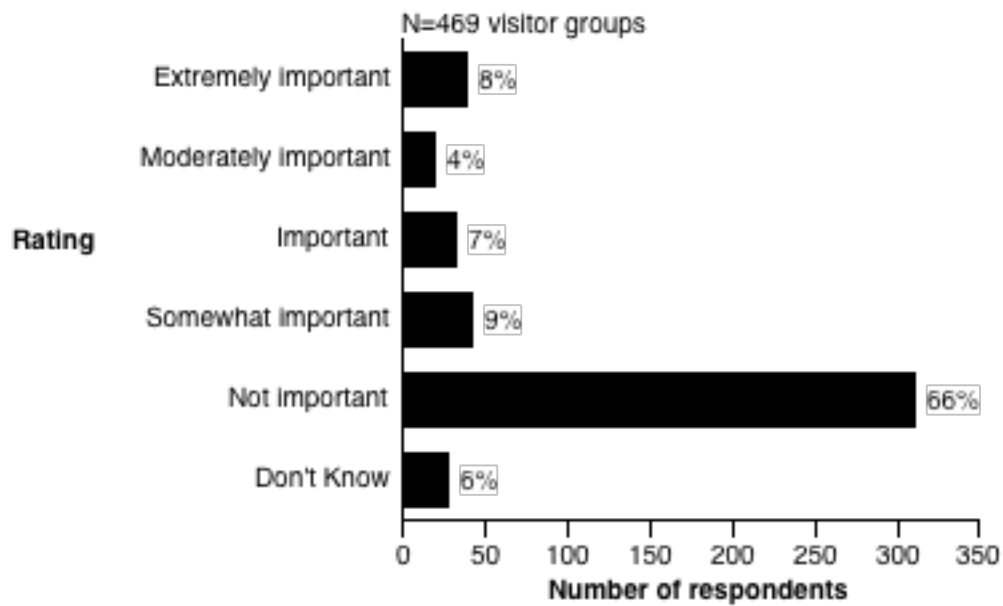


Figure 66: Importance of off-road vehicle use (other than airboating)

Visitor expectations

Visitors were asked to indicate if there was anything they expected to see or do but were not able to while visiting Big Cypress NPRES. Twenty-one percent of visitors responded “yes” (see Figure 67). The most common topics mentioned were view wildlife, hike/walk trails, view flora, and airboat tours (see Table 7). The most commonly mentioned reasons visitors did not get to see or do what they expected include weather, not seeing wildlife, and lack of time (see Table 8).

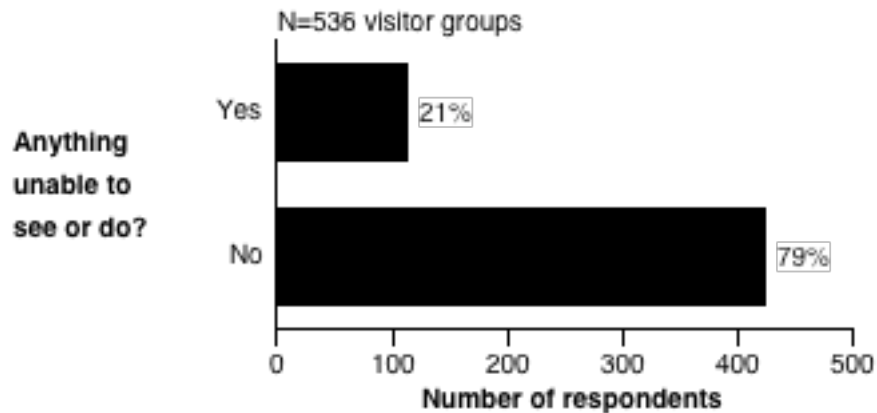


Figure 67: Was there anything you or your group expected to see or do, but were not able?

Table 7: Expected to see or do

N=140 comments;
many visitors made more than one comment.

Comment	Number of times mentioned
View wildlife	71
Hike trails	12
View flora	6
Airboat tours	6
Go on walking tours	5
Use camping facilities	3
Hunt deer	2
Other comments	35

**Table 8: What prevented you from seeing or doing
what you expected**

N=100 comments;
many visitors made more than one comment.

Comment	Number of times mentioned
Weather	22
Lack of animals	20
Lack of time	17
Lack of trails/boardwalks	7
Poor condition of roads	6
Poor signage	4
Lack of wildlife viewing areas	2
Other comments	22

Number of signs

Visitors to Big Cypress NPRES were asked if the current number of signs in the preserve were adequate to direct them. Eighty-seven percent of visitor groups reported that the number of signs at Big Cypress NPRES was adequate (see Figure 68). Of the 13% who felt the signage was not adequate, Table 9 lists the visitors' comments. The most frequently mentioned included "needing better marked/more informative signs," "not enough signs," and "too many signs."

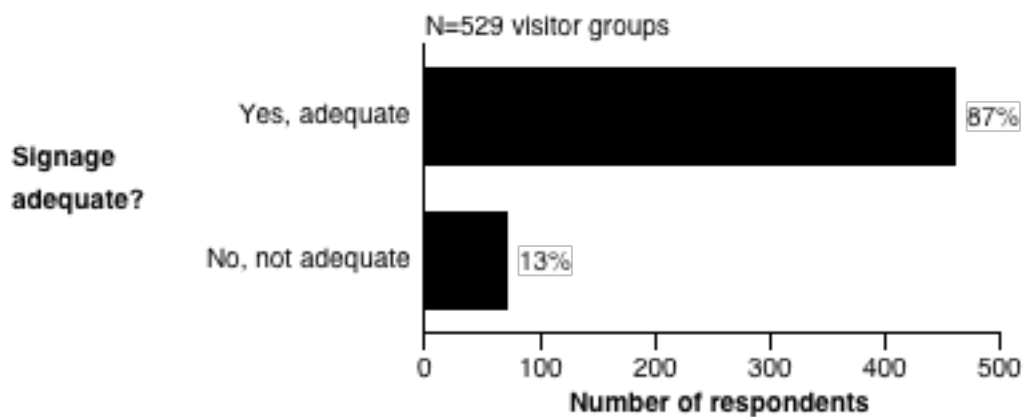


Figure 68: Adequate number of signs?

Table 9: Why signs were not adequate

N=85 comments;
many visitors made more than one comment.

Comment	Number of times mentioned
Signs should be better marked/more informative	34
Not enough signs	36
Too many signs	2
Other comments	13

Visitors were asked a series of questions about the management of Big Cypress NPres. Thirty-eight percent of the visitors to Big Cypress knew it was a national preserve and not a national park prior to their visit (see Figure 69). Many visitor groups (74%) were not aware that hunting, oil exploration, and off-road vehicle use were allowed in Big Cypress National Preserve (see Figure 70). Seventy percent of visitor groups were not aware that national preserves, including Big Cypress, were managed differently than national parks (see Figure 71). Eighty-four percent of visitor groups, however, felt as a result of their visit to Big Cypress NPres they had a better understanding of why it is nationally significant (see Figure 72).

Visitors' perceptions of park management

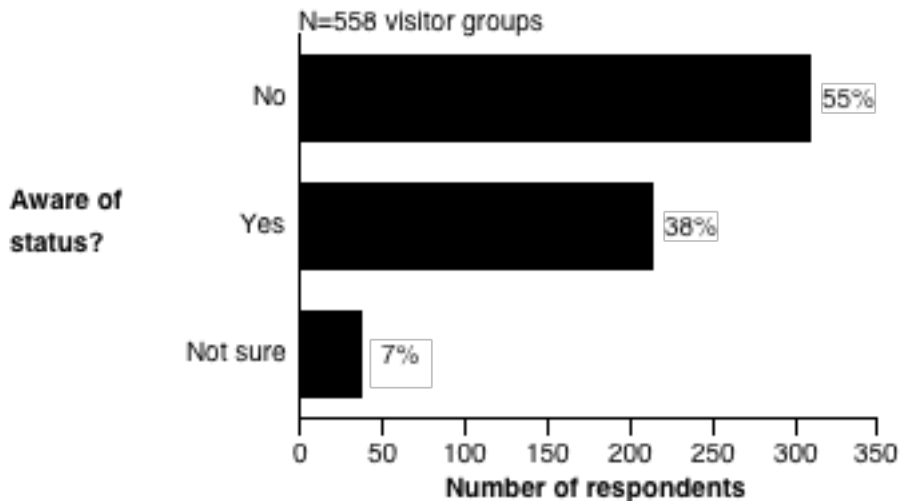


Figure 69: Aware of national preserve status?

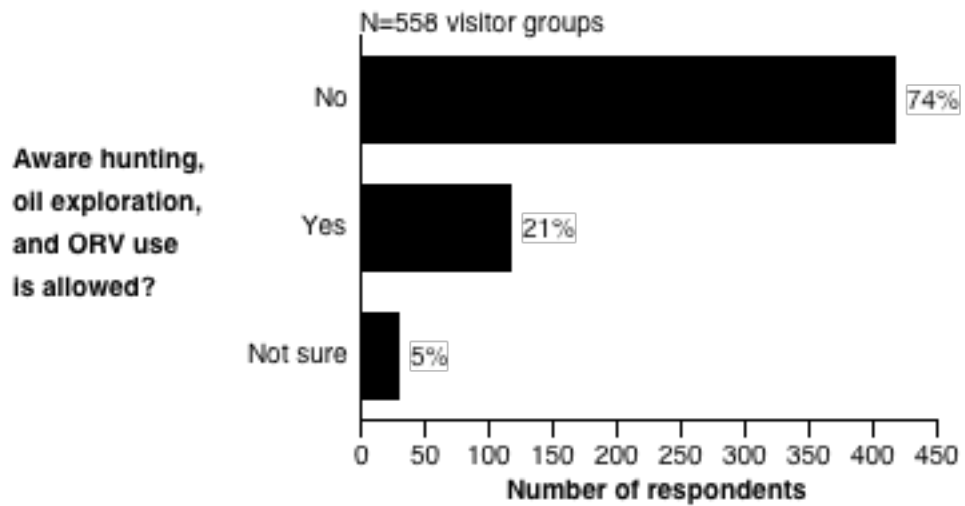


Figure 70: Aware that hunting, oil exploration, and off-road vehicle use is allowed in Big Cypress National Preserve?

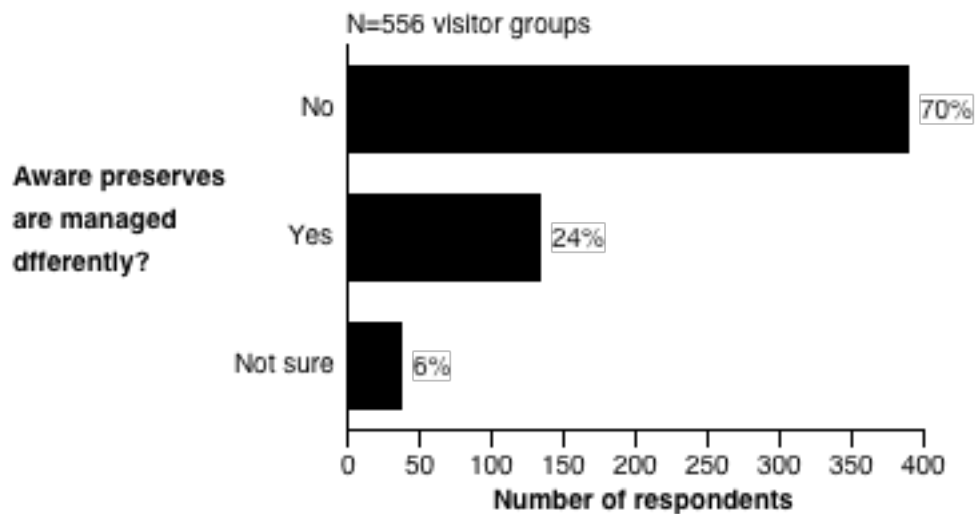


Figure 71: Aware national preserves are managed differently from national parks?

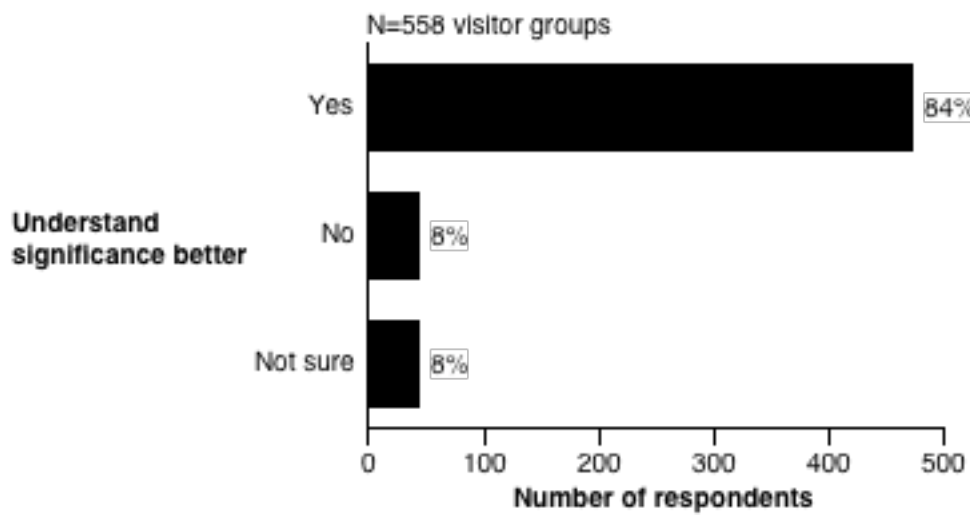


Figure 72: Understand national significance of Big Cypress National Preserve?

Safety

Visitors were asked to rate how safe they felt on this visit to Big Cypress National Preserve. Fifty-three percent of visitor groups reported feeling extremely safe while only 5% felt extremely unsafe (see Figure 73). Table 10, below, lists the most commonly given reasons for feeling unsafe which include hunters, presence of juvenile prison, other visitors, and lack of people.

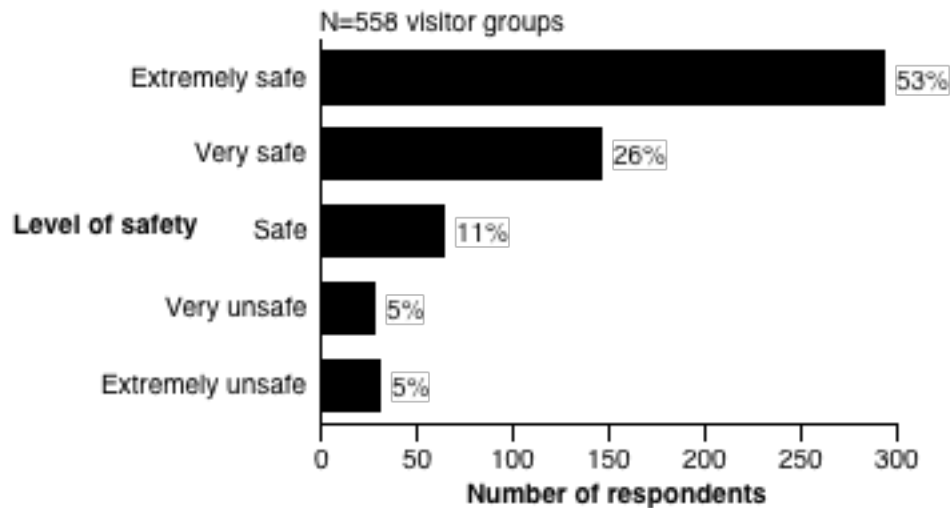


Figure 73: How safe did you and your group feel?

Table 10: Reasons for feeling unsafe

N=39 comments;
some visitors made more than one comment.

Comment	Number of times mentioned
Hunters	7
Presence of juvenile prison	6
Other visitors	4
Lack of people	4
Lack of rangers	3
Wild animals	3
Other campers	2
Visitors driving too fast	2
ORV users	2
Presence of guns	2
Other comments	4

Visitors were asked, “To help managers plan for the future of Big Cypress National Preserve, please rate the importance (from 1 to 5) of the following preserve issues to you and your group: water quality, wildlife habitat, endangered species, and non-native plants.” Figures 74-77 show the importance ratings that were provided by visitor groups for each of the individual issues. The issue that received the highest combined proportion of “extremely important” and “moderately important” ratings by visitors was wildlife habitat (90%). The issue receiving the largest proportion of “not important” ratings was non-native plants (11%).

Importance of issues

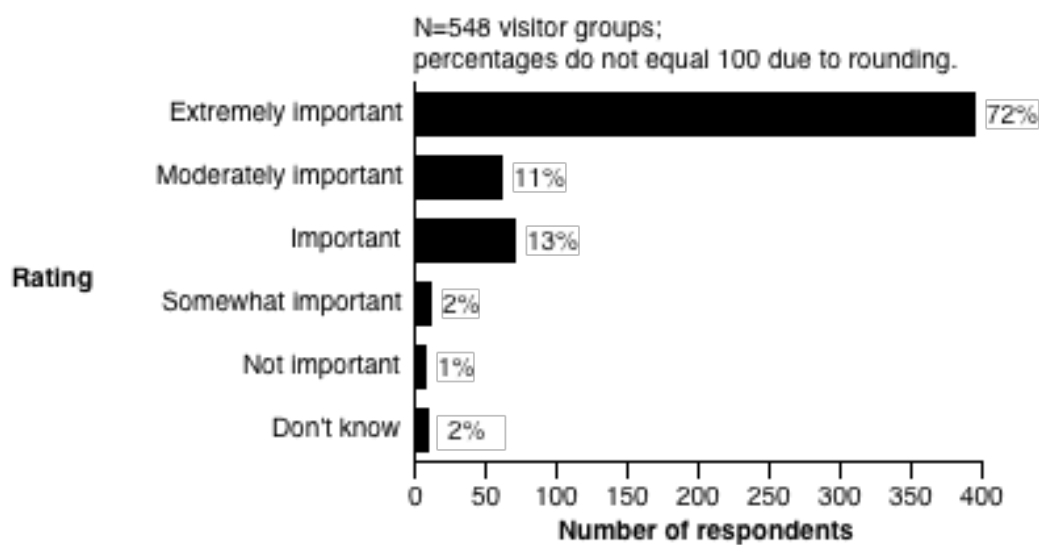


Figure 74: Importance of water quality

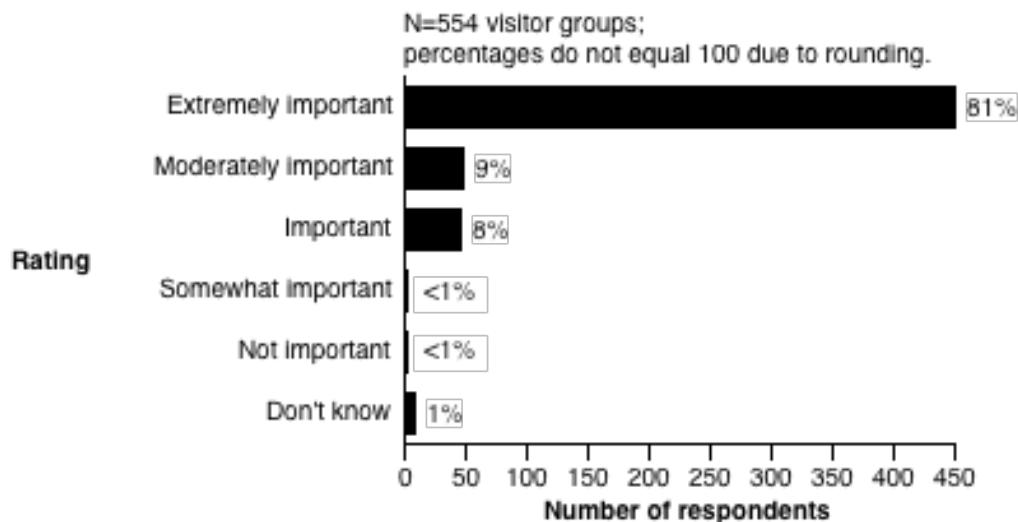


Figure 75: Importance of wildlife habitat

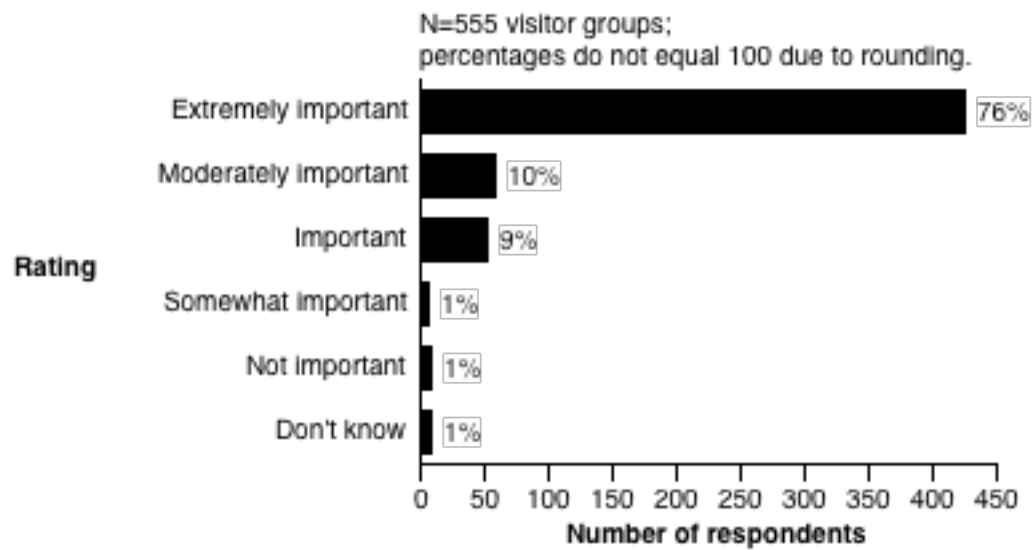


Figure 76: Importance of endangered species

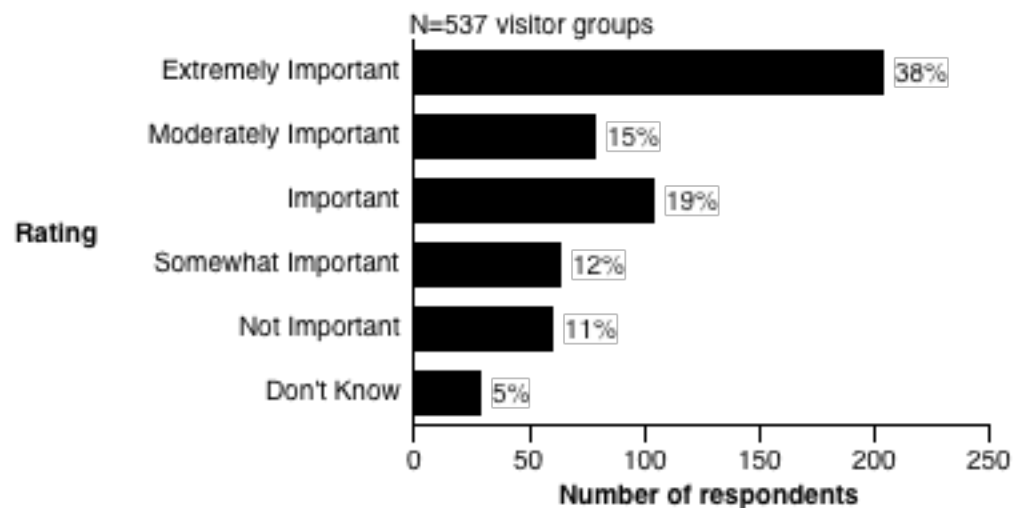


Figure 77: Importance of non-native plants

Visitor groups were asked what subjects they would be interested in learning about on a future visit. Twenty-three percent of respondents are not interested in learning about Big Cypress NPres (see Figure 78). Of the groups interested in learning, 84% are interested in ecosystems, and 79% are interested in wildlife management (see Figure 79). "Other" subjects visitors were interested in learning about on a future visit included local history, future development, oil production, and preserve management.

Visitor groups were also asked how they would prefer to learn about the preserve's natural and cultural resources on a future visit to Big Cypress NPres. As shown in Figure 80, most visitors prefer learning about preserve resources through printed materials (74%), visitor center exhibits (60%), roadside/trailside exhibits (59%), ranger-guided walks (56%), and tours (56). "Other" preferences for learning about preserve resources include newsletters, websites, and additional visitor centers.

Subjects of interest for future visits

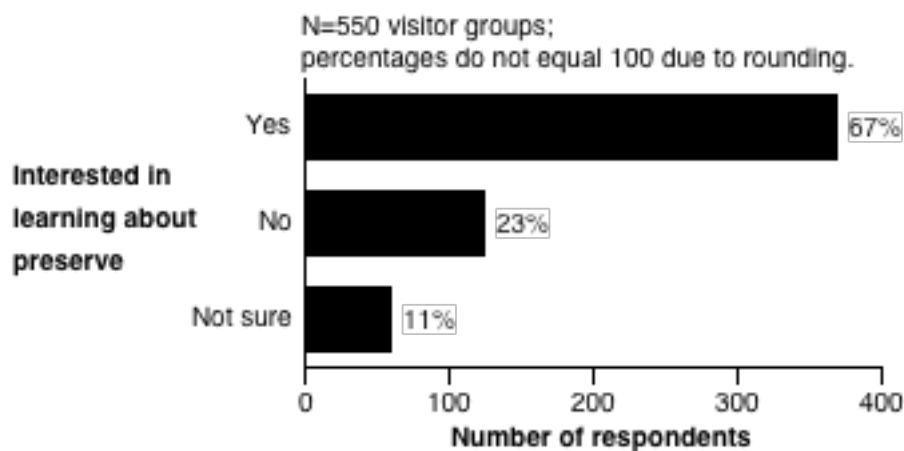


Figure 78: Interested in learning about natural and cultural resources of Big Cypress National Preserve

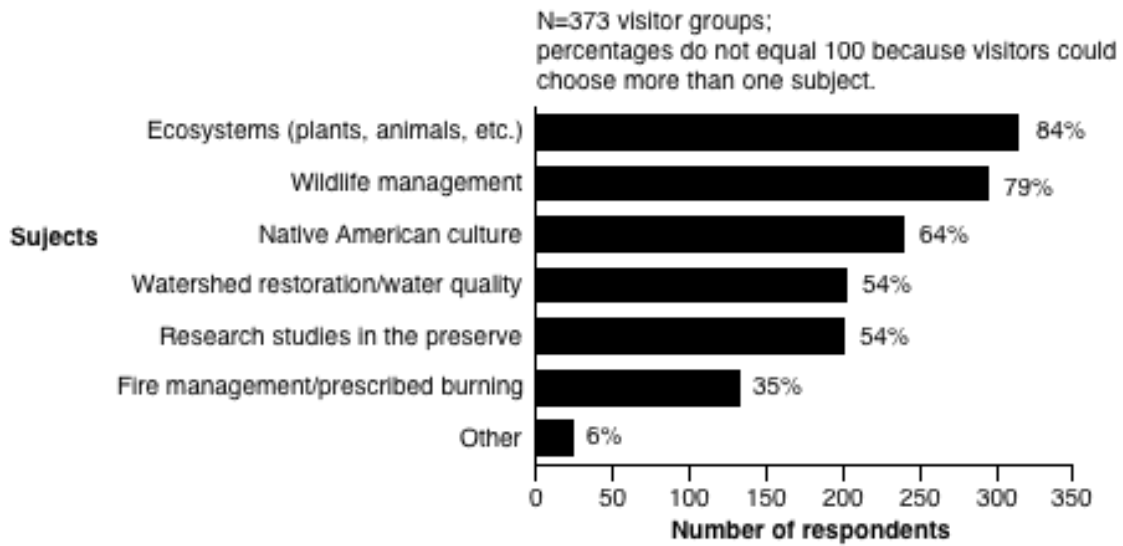


Figure 79: Subjects which visitors are interested in learning about

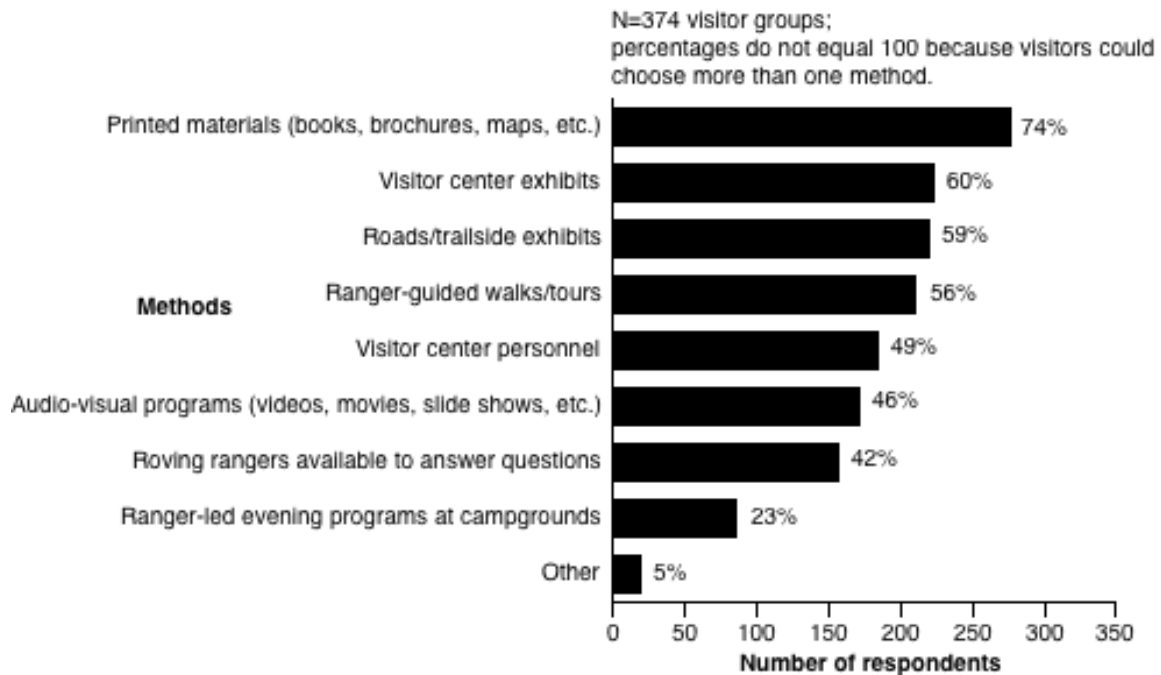


Figure 80: Methods of learning about natural and cultural resources

Visitors were asked, "If this is your first time to Big Cypress NPres, would you consider visiting again?" Forty-nine percent of respondents were first-time visitors who would consider visiting again (see Figure 81).

Future visits

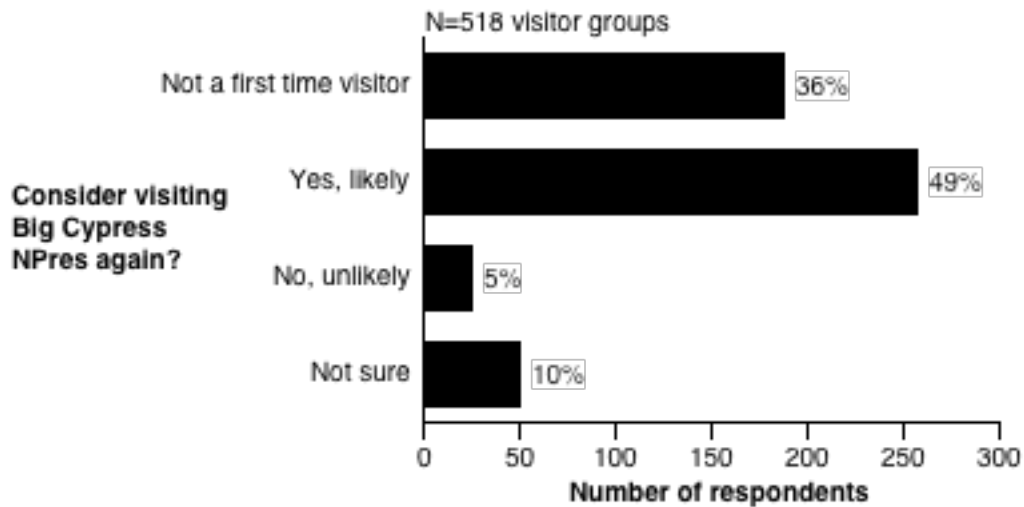


Figure 81: First-time visitors who would consider a return visit

**Overall quality
of visitor
services**

Visitor groups were asked to rate the overall quality of the visitor services provided at Big Cypress NPRES during this visit. Most visitor groups (86%) rated services as “very good” or “good” (see Figure 82). One visitor group rated the overall quality of services provided at Big Cypress NPRES as “very poor.”

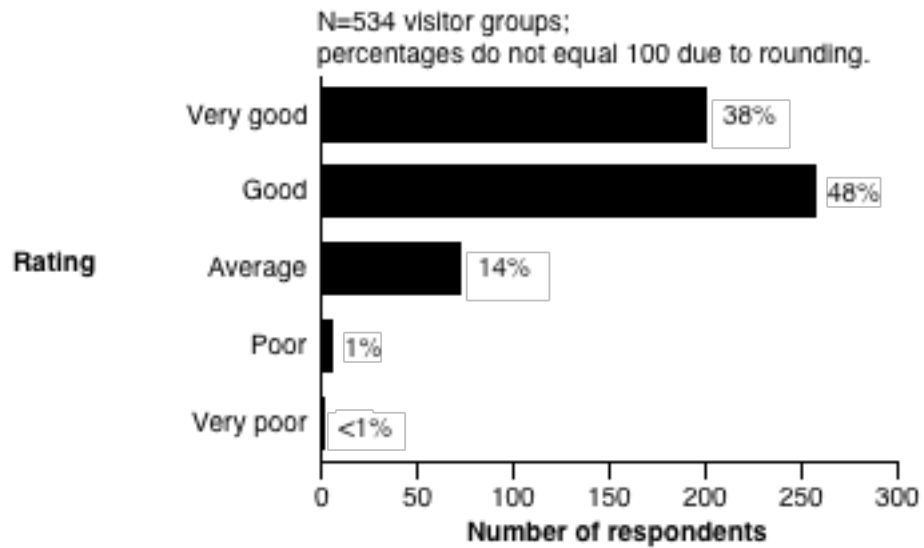


Figure 82: Overall quality of services

Visitor groups were asked, "What did you like most about your visit to Big Cypress National Preserve?" Seventy-nine percent of visitor groups (457 groups) responded to this question. A summary of their responses is listed below in Table 11 and complete copies of visitor responses are contained in the appendix.

What visitors liked most

Table 11: What visitors like most

N=578 comments;
many visitors made more than one comment.

Comment	Number of times mentioned
PERSONNEL	
Helpfulness and friendliness of rangers and staff	17
Naturalist at campsites	2
Friendly interviewers	2
Campground hosts	2
Other comments	1
INTERPRETIVE SERVICES	
Visitor center exhibits	8
Film in visitor center	6
Wet walk	2
Panther exhibit	2
Other comments	2
FACILITIES/MAINTENANCE	
Boardwalk	7
Cleanliness	7
Restrooms	4
Campgrounds	3
Other comments	7
POLICIES	
Free camping	7
Open to hunting	2
Other comments	5
RESOURCE MANAGEMENT	
Seeing wildlife	210
Wide open undisturbed spaces	67
Scenery	52
Diversity of plant and animal life	19
Protecting the natural environment	14
Access to wilderness	3
Uncommercialized	3
Other comments	3

Comment	Number of times mentioned
GENERAL IMPRESSIONS	
Solitude	43
Airboat ride	17
Being outdoors/close to nature	10
Fishing	10
Camping	9
Few tourists	5
Walking the trails	5
Learning/education	5
Well managed	3
Hunting	3
Riding an ATV	3
Accessibility	3
Warm weather	2
Very interesting	2
Self-directed activities	2
Other comments	13

Visitor groups were asked, "What did you like least about your visit to Big Cypress National Preserve?" Forty-one percent of visitor groups (286 groups) responded to this question. A summary of their responses is listed below in Table 12 and complete copies of visitor responses are contained in the appendix.

What visitors liked least

Table 12: What visitors like least

N=340 comments;
many visitors made more than one comment

Comment	Number of times mentioned
PERSONNEL	
Lack of rangers	2
Staff did not give enough information	2
Other comments	2
INTERPRETIVE SERVICES	
Lack of information/poor signage	12
Visitor center was uninspiring	3
Too few short nature trails	3
Lacked information on Native Americans	2
Poor living conditions of captive animals	2
Other comments	8
FACILITIES/MAINTENANCE	
Quality of roads	25
Too much litter	21
Not enough long trails/opportunities to explore	7
Lack of vehicle pullouts and overlooks	6
Lack of restrooms	6
Lack of bridge walkways	5
Lack of campgrounds with services	5
No showers	5
Wet trails	3
Quality of campgrounds	2
Lack of recycling	2
Other comments	7
CONCESSIONS	
Lack of adequate places to eat	4
Lack of gas stations in area	2
Too expensive	2
Other comments	4
POLICIES	
Hunting and fishing	18
People driving too fast	16
Off-road vehicles and ATV's	13
Airboats	5
Day limits on camping	3
Commercialism	2
Other visitors' dogs	2
Other comments	9

Comment	Number of times mentioned
RESOURCE MANAGEMENT	
Lack of animals	13
Damage to resource from airboats, ORV's, and ATV's	9
Noise pollution from tram, airboats, ORV's, ATV's	6
Too many people	6
Lack of scenery	3
Lack of access	2
Other comments	6
GENERAL IMPRESSIONS	
Time spent too short	27
Cold weather	12
Bugs	10
Loud/rude visitors	6
Seeing animals in captivity	4
Too much traffic	3
Unable to go out in preserve	2
Not being aware of preserve	2
Private in-holdings within preserve boundaries	2
Did not feel safe	2
Visible construction	2
Other comments	13

Visitor groups were asked, "If you were a park manager planning for the future of Big Cypress National Preserve, what would you propose?" Fifty-three percent of visitor groups (306 groups) responded to this question. A summary of their responses is listed in Table 13 and complete copies of visitor responses are contained in the appendix.

Planning for the future

Table 13: Planning for the future

N=555 comments;
many visitors made more than one comment.

Comment	Number of times mentioned
PERSONNEL	
More rangers	5
Other comments	4
INTERPRETIVE SERVICES	
Better signage	24
More guided foot/bike tours	18
Need to promote Big Cypress National Preserve	16
List of available activities/amenities	8
Education program about S. Florida ecology in schools	7
More roadside exhibits	6
More visitor center exhibits	5
Need more short, walking interpretive loops	3
Interpret Big Cypress ecosystem	3
Website with schedule of walking tours	2
Interpret exotic flora & fauna	2
Interpret water issues	2
Teach the significance of preserves for future generations	2
Develop mailing lists	2
Greater variety of programs at visitor center	2
More audio-visual programs	2
Other comments	11
CONCESSIONS	
Small snack stand at visitor center	4
More hotels	4
Food concessionaire	3
Small restaurant	3
More tour guides	2
Other comments	3

Comment	Number of times mentioned
FACILITIES/MAINTENANCE	
Boardwalks into wet areas	20
Increase number of trails	19
More scenic overlooks or roadside parking areas	18
Improve quality of roads	16
Improve/replace existing facilities	11
Viewing platforms and blinds	11
Provide roadside trash cans	6
More restrooms	5
Modernize restrooms	5
Hot showers	5
Build a second visitor center	4
Improve trash collection	4
More primitive campsites	3
Eliminate flush toilets	3
More trail markers	2
Dry camp sites	2
Provide more RV areas	2
Other comments	25
POLICIES	
Discontinue ORV, airboat, & ATV usage	44
Prohibit hunting and fishing	23
Discontinue mining and drilling	15
No development	12
Expand park boundary	6
Limit use of large vehicles in park	6
Make it a national park	5
Increase camping day limit	5
More access to park interior	5
Get rid of commercialism	4
Develop restricted hunting zones	4
Increase safety for all visitors	2
No fishing on roadways	2
Increase fines for littering	2
Maintain hunting season dates	2
Eliminate all private in-holdings	2
Segregate motorized and non-motorized users	2
Eliminate use of generators in all campgrounds	2
One week camping limit	2
Charge fees for camping	2
Other comments	21
RESOURCE MANAGEMENT	
Careful preservation of area	50
Restore water quality	11
Restore natural ecosystem	10
Eradicate exotic flora and fauna	3
Decontaminate fish	2
Other comments	11
GENERAL IMPRESSIONS	
Liked this survey	2
Reduce traffic	2
Find alternative funding to oil exploitation	2
Other comments	5

Thirty-two percent of visitor groups (184 groups) wrote additional comments, which are included in the separate appendix of this report. Their comments about Big Cypress National Preserve are summarized below (see Table 14). Some comments offer specific suggestions on how to improve the park; others describe what visitors enjoyed or did not enjoy about their visit.

Comment summary

Table 14: Additional comments

N=196 comments;
many visitors made more than one comment.

Comment	Number of times mentioned
PERSONNEL	
Rangers friendly and helpful	8
Rangers need to provide more information	3
Volunteers friendly, helpful, and knowledgeable	2
Other comments	2
INTERPRETIVE SERVICES	
Needed more information about activities and amenities	3
Better signage	2
Better highway signs outside the park	2
Other comments	9
POLICY	
Like free camping	3
Willing to pay entrance fee	3
Liked using ORV's and airboats	2
Do not allow hunting	2
Eliminate ORV usage	2
Other comments	5
RESOURCE MANAGEMENT	
Uses must not damage bird and wildlife habitat	2
Other comments	6
GENERAL IMPRESSIONS	
Enjoyed our visit/keep up the good work	54
Plan to return	31
Did not spend enough time	17
Beautiful/unique area	11
Just passing through	7
Thanks for opportunity to provide input	4
Did not know Big Cypress NP existed	3
Uncrowded	2
Survey too long	2
Other comments	9

Big Cypress National Preserve Additional Analysis VSP Report 109

The Visitor Services Project (VSP) staff offers the opportunity to learn more from VSP visitor study data.

Additional Analysis

Additional analysis can be done using the park's VSP visitor study data that was collected and entered into the computer. Two-way and three-way cross tabulations can be made of any of the characteristics listed below. Be as specific as possible--you may select a single program/ service/ facility instead of all that were listed in the questionnaire. Include your name, address, and phone number in the request.

- Sources of information
- Travel plans/destination
- Accommodations prior to visit
- Places visited in addition to BICY
- Sites visited this visit
- Order of site visitation
- Used an ORV
- Type of ORV used
- Visitor activities
- Feature or activity importance
- Arrival by plane
- Method of transport to preserve
- Direction entered BICY
- Days spent in park
- Hours spent in park
- Group size
- With guided tour
- With educational tour
- Group type
- Age
- State of residence
- Country of residence
- Number of visits
- Consider return visit
- Primary language- English
- Understand preserve significance
- Visitor service/facility use
- Visitor service/facility importance
- Visitor service/facility quality
- Adequacy of signage
- Expected to see or do
- Aware of preserve status
- Aware of accepted activities
- Aware of management policies
- Interest in learning about preserve
- Subjects of interest
- Method of learning
- Issue importance
- Safety
- Overall quality rating

Database

The VSP database is currently under development.

Phone/send requests to:

**Visitor Services Project, CPSU
College of Forestry, Wildlife, and Range Sciences
University of Idaho
Moscow, Idaho 83844-1133**

**Phone: 208-885-2819
FAX: 208-885-4261**

QUESTIONNAIRE

Visitor Services Project Publications

Reports 1-6 (pilot studies) are available from the University of Idaho Cooperative Park Studies Unit. All other VSP reports listed are available from the parks where the studies were conducted or from the UI CPSU. All studies were conducted in summer unless otherwise noted.

1982

1. Mapping interpretive services: A pilot study at Grand Teton National Park

1983

2. Mapping interpretive services: Identifying barriers to adoption and diffusion of the method
3. Mapping interpretive services: A follow-up study at Yellowstone National Park and Mt Rushmore National Memorial
4. Mapping visitor populations: A pilot study at Yellowstone National Park

1985

5. North Cascades National Park Service Complex
6. Crater Lake National Park

1986

7. Gettysburg National Military Park
8. Independence National Historical Park
9. Valley Forge National Historical Park

1987

10. Colonial National Historical Park (summer & fall)
11. Grand Teton National Park
12. Harpers Ferry National Historical Park
13. Mesa Verde National Park
14. Shenandoah National Park
15. Yellowstone National Park
16. Independence National Historical Park: Four Seasons Study

1988

17. Glen Canyon National Recreational Area
18. Denali National Park and Preserve
19. Bryce Canyon National Park
20. Craters of the Moon National Monument

1989

21. Everglades National Park (winter)
22. Statue of Liberty National Monument
23. The White House Tours, President's Park (summer)
24. Lincoln Home National Historical Site
25. Yellowstone National Park

1989 (continued)

26. Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area
27. Muir Woods National Monument

1990

28. Canyonlands National Park (spring)
29. White Sands National Monument
30. National Monuments, Washington, D.C.
31. Kenai Fjords National Park
32. Gateway National Recreation Area
33. Petersburg National Battlefield
34. Death Valley National Monument
35. Glacier National Park
36. Scott's Bluff National Monument
37. John Day Fossil Beds National Monument

1991

38. Jean Lafitte National Historical Park (spring)
39. Joshua Tree National Monument (spring)
40. The White House Tours, President's Park (spring)
41. Natchez Trace Parkway (spring)
42. Stehekin-North Cascades NP/ Lake Chelan NRA
43. City of Rocks National Reserve
44. The White House Tours, President's Park (fall)

1992

45. Big Bend National Park (spring)
46. Frederick Douglass National Historic Site (spring)
47. Glen Echo Park (spring)
48. Bent's Old Fort National Historic Site
49. Jefferson National Expansion Memorial
50. Zion National Park
51. New River Gorge National River
52. Klondike Gold Rush National Historical Park (AK)
53. Arlington House-The Robert E. Lee Memorial

1993

54. Belle Haven Park/Dyke Marsh Wildlife Preserve (spring)
55. Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area (spring)
56. Whitman Mission National Historic Site
57. Sitka National Historical Park
58. Indiana Dunes National Lakeshore (summer)
59. Redwood National Park
60. Channel Islands National Park
61. Pecos National Historical Park
62. Canyon de Chelly National Monument
63. Bryce Canyon National Park (fall)

**Visitor Services Project
Publications (continued)****1994**

- 64. Death Valley National Monument Backcountry (winter)
- 65. San Antonio Missions National Historical Park (spring)
- 66. Anchorage Alaska Public Lands Information Center
- 67. Wolf Trap Farm Park for the Performing Arts
- 68. Nez Perce National Historical Park
- 69. Edison National Historic Site
- 70. San Juan Island National Historical Park
- 71. Canaveral National Seashore
- 72. Indiana Dunes National Lakeshore (fall)
- 73. Gettysburg National Military Park (fall)

1995

- 74. Grand Teton National Park (winter)
- 75. Yellowstone National Park (winter)
- 76. Bandelier National Monument
- 77. Wrangell-St. Elias National Park & Preserve
- 78. Adams National Historic Site
- 79. Devils Tower National Monument
- 80. Manassas National Battlefield Park
- 81. Booker T. Washington National Monument
- 82. San Francisco Maritime National Historical Park
- 83. Dry Tortugas National Park

1996

- 84. Everglades National Park (spring)
- 85. Chiricahua National Monument (spring)
- 86. Fort Bowie National Historic Site (spring)
- 87. Great Falls Park, Virginia (spring)
- 88. Great Smoky Mountains National Park (summer)
- 89. Chamizal National Memorial
- 90. Death Valley National Park (fall)
- 91. Prince William Forest Park (fall)

1997

- 92. Great Smoky Mountains National Park (summer & fall)
- 93. Virgin Islands National Park (winter)
- 94. Mojave National Preserve (spring)
- 95. Martin Luther King, Jr., National Historical Park (spring)
- 96. Lincoln Boyhood Home National Memorial
- 97. Grand Teton National Park
- 98. Bryce Canyon National Park
- 99. Voyageurs National Park
- 100. Lowell National Historical Park

1998

- 101. Jean Lafitte National Historical Park & Preserve (spring)
- 102. Chattahoochee River National Recreation Area (spring)
- 103. Cumberland Island National Seashore (spring)
- 104. Iwo Jima/Netherlands Carillon Memorials
- 105. National Monuments & Memorials, Washington, D.C.
- 106. Klondike Gold Rush National Historical Park (AK)
- 107. Whiskeytown National Recreation Area (summer)
- 108. Acadia National Park (summer)

1999

- 109. Big Cypress National Preserve (winter)

For more information about the Visitor Services Project, please contact the University of Idaho Cooperative Park Studies Unit; phone (208) 885-7863.

