

## Ahuriri Conservation Park Visitor Survey 2006

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### ABSTRACT

This report presents the findings of a visitor survey conducted at the Ahuriri Conservation Park (ACP) over the summer and autumn of 2005/6. Questionnaires were distributed to visitors in the area through strategically located collection and drop-off points, and also by DOC staff and the researchers. A total of 284 questionnaires were returned.

The typical visitor to the ACP could be characterised as a 45-54 year old New Zealander, working in a professional or managerial position. They would very likely be a South Islander, with about one-third of domestic visitors coming from the local area (Mackenzie Basin, Waitaki Valley and Lindis Pass areas). International visitors comprised 18% of the sample, predominantly European in origin. Visitors are most likely to be accompanied by one other person, or perhaps be found in a small group. Large groups are uncommon. The typical visitor will have had quite a few years of experience in the New Zealand outdoors (between 20 and 49 years). However this would probably be their first visit to the ACP. First time users (60% overall) predominate in all activities undertaken in the park, apart from hunting.

Most visitors access the park by 4WD (especially if from the local area), and would be staying in the park for at least one night. However, day trips are also common (43% of visitors). If staying the night, they may equally have used either a tent or a hut. Visitors' main motivations in coming to the ACP are to experience solitude, to go tramping, and to obtain easy access to nature. Another major motivation for visitors is to take their family into the outdoors: 15% of visitors were accompanied by children. Tramping was clearly the main activity undertaken in the ACP (47%), followed in order of importance by fishing and mountain-biking, and then sightseeing and hunting.

Visitor satisfaction was consistently high for all categories of visitors (98% for all visitors) and with all park facilities including: fishing and access trails, signage and interpretation, and tracks. Levels of satisfaction were marginally lower for huts and toilets, in particular the smaller more remote huts. Suggested areas of improvement were mainly in the areas of signage and information panels, but access, along with huts and toilet facilities were also highlighted. Satisfaction with road access was generally good, but some dissatisfaction was expressed with the road condition from Birchwood Station to Canyon Creek car park. By far most visitors were happy with the road end remaining where it is, while 20% wanted it further up the valley and a small number wanted it further down the valley. While preference for the status quo was evident for all categories of visitor, a larger proportion of hunters and fishers, particularly from the local area, desired the road end further up the valley. Most visitors were satisfied with the numbers of visitors in the ACP, however 18% reported feeling crowded. This was most evident in the small number of regular users of the Park. Overall, 99% of visitors said that they would return to the ACP. Reasons given centred around the scenic beauty, ease of access, lack of commercial development and the range of activities that could be pursued in the area.