

An Empirical Study of Visitor Conflicts in New Zealand's Southland Conservancy - The Case of Hunters and Trampers on Stewart Island

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The aim of this project was to gain insights into the expectations, motivations, values and norms held by users of Rakiura National Park, particularly as they relate to encounters with other visitor groups.

Quantitative Methods

A questionnaire survey was administered on-site to both trampers and hunters, from March to May 2007. Separate questionnaires were developed for the two groups, with minimal differences between the two versions.

Qualitative Methods

In-depth interviews were conducted with 7 hunters and 6 trampers that visited the island during the summer of 2006-2007.

Response

469 questionnaires were distributed; 164 delivered to trampers and 305 surveys to hunters.

	Personal Delivery	Commercial Operators	Clubs and Associations	DOC Field Centre Staff	Total
Trampers	140	x	x	24	164
Hunters	120	117	68	x	305
Total	260	117	68	24	469

220 (46.9%) valid surveys were returned.

	Response Rate
Trampers	50.6%
Hunters	44.9%
Total	46.9%



RESULTS

Respondent Demographics

- Age: Trampers were mostly young adults and hunters more evenly distributed between 35 and 64 yrs of age
- Gender: 98% Male hunters; 60% Male trampers
- Nationality: 88% New Zealand hunters; 35% New Zealand trampers
- Median Travel Party Size: 7 hunters; 2 trampers

Top 5 Best Aspects of the Visit for each group

Themes	Hunters	Trampers
Nature (Scenery, Wildlife, Bush, etc.)	70.8%	100%
Hunting and/or Presence of Deer	57.0%	-
Fishing	39.2%	1.2%
Being with Friends and/or Family	28.5%	11.2%
Peace and Quiet / Solitude	18.5%	27.5%
Facilities / Services	9.2%	22.5%
Seeing Kiwis	8.5%	22.5%
Tramping Tracks	-	13.7%
Total Number of Respondents	130	78

Top 5 Worst Aspects of the Visit for each group

Themes	Hunters	Trampers
Weather Conditions	36.5%	16.6%
Track and Facilities	35.6%	44.9%
Presence of Pests (excluding deer) or other Wildlife Disturbance	24%	14.1%
Other	17.3%	15.4%
Lack of Game or Wildlife	12.5%	3.8%
Personal Discomforts	11.5%	19.2%
Conflict with other Recreationists in general	10.6%	23.1%
Mud	7.7%	35.9%
Total number of respondents	63	78

Perceptions of Backcountry Areas

The sample diverged significantly in only 4 out of 16 variables:

- To be provided with track safety info – 60% trampers vs. 24% hunters found this to be very appropriate
- To encounter and receive general info about the site through rangers – 23% hunters vs. 5% trampers found this to be not at all appropriate
- To have road access to start of track – 38% hunters vs. 13% trampers found this to be not at all appropriate
- Hunting non-native animals – 23% trampers vs. 76% hunters found this to be very appropriate

Environmental Values

The sample diverged significantly in 3 out of 7 variables:

- Deer are an exotic animal that should be hunted – 68% hunters vs. 29% trampers strongly agreed
- There is no point in having a place where plants and animals are preserved, when I never actually see them – 34% hunters vs. 67% trampers strongly disagreed
- Nature has a value in itself, so preservation should be a priority when managing parks – 34% hunters vs. 60% trampers strongly agreed

Motivations

The sample diverged significantly in only 2 out of 11 variables:

- To be able to tell others about my experience – 43% hunters vs. 18% trampers found this to be very important
- Being with friends and/or family – 50% hunters vs. 27% trampers found this to be very important

Reasons for Conflict

The sample diverged significantly in only 3 out of 18 variables regarding conflict:

- Use of motorised transport – 55% hunters vs. 33% trampers found this to be not at all important/not important
- Noise of people on tracks and in huts – 24% hunters vs. 42% trampers found this to be important/very important
- Noise of motorised transport – 31% trampers vs. 54% hunters found this to be not at all important/not important



"Obviously hunters' hours are quite different to trampers, so they sort of hang around in the hut during the day, and they were heading... they arrived back quite late... so we only had to ask them to be quiet once so we could get to sleep, but they were very considerate" (quote from trumper)

"We do our best not to cause frustration to others and like to provide them with cooked fish, cold beer and other extravagances... On this trip we offered to take a French trumper fishing (he declined because the weather was not too good and he wanted to get on the track). Previously we have taken a German trumper out fishing and he loved it (caught his first fish). I believe it is good to mix hunters and trampers as long as people are mindful of others and want them to have a good experience." (quote from hunter)

Recommendations

- The existing level of conflict alone does not warrant the construction of additional hunter huts. If more hunting huts are to be built, they should be allocated at remote hunting blocks where only old camp sites exist so as to improve camping conditions and put less pressure on the environment.
- In order to deal with the crowding issue and, therefore, improve conflict management, a booking system for some of the most popular huts seems to be a good alternative.
- Tourists should receive information about hunting on the island as a positive cultural feature of their visit.
- Management should increasingly focus on participatory involvement of all stakeholders.