



National Wildlife Refuge Visitor Survey 2012: Individual Refuge Results for Savannah National Wildlife Refuge

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

My wife and three grandchildren, ages 6, 5, and 2, had a wonderful time visiting the wildlife refuge. We drove through the marsh area where we were able to observe different waterfowl and alligators. We went to the Visitor Center and discovered that the refuge was having its spring open house. The children were able to participate in a multitude of physical and educational activities as well as face painting and observed birds being weighed and tagged. The staff and volunteers were friendly, helpful, and knowledgeable. It turned out to be one of the most enjoyable trips that we have taken with the grandchildren this year. Thanks for making the refuge available and for your wonderful staff.

— *Survey comment from a visitor to Savannah National Wildlife Refuge*



Savannah National Wildlife 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 Savannah National Wildlife Refuge (NWR) (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.

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.

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)

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 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

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

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 Savannah NWR, 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 Savannah National Wildlife Refuge

Savannah NWR encompasses over 29,000 acres of freshwater marshes, bottomland hardwoods, tidal rivers and creeks just outside of Savannah, Georgia. The refuge is situated within an area known as the ‘Lowcountry,’ a stretch of low land with sandhill ridges to the west and the Atlantic Ocean to the east that extends from Georgetown, South Carolina, to St. Mary’s, Georgia. Over 38 miles of river and 25 miles of streams and creeks wind through the refuge. The refuge and other Lowcountry areas are known for their abundant flora during the summer months and a diverse range of habitat and wildlife. Located within the Atlantic Flyway, the refuge temporarily hosts thousands of waterfowl and songbirds during their annual migrations and is the permanent home for many other bird species. Savannah NWR was established in 1927 as the Savannah River Bird Refuge and later renamed in 1931. It is one of seven refuges that comprise the Savannah Coastal Refuges Complex. Combined, these 7 refuges protect habitat on 100 miles of coastline and over 56,000 acres.

The refuge and surrounding area has a rich history. Native Americans lived on the land for thousands of years leading up to European settlement. In the 18th century, most land within the refuge was cultivated for rice production following the establishment of the city of Savannah in 1773. Current impoundment dikes use the remnants of old rice levees which were built by hand during this period. There are 36 historic and prehistoric inventoried archeological sites within the impoundment system.

Almost 150,000 individuals visited Savannah NWR during the 2012 fiscal year (Monica Harris, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, 2013, written commun.). Public use opportunities include hiking/biking trails, wildlife observation, bird watching, photography, fishing, hunting, an auto tour route, and use of the Visitor Center for environmental education and interpretation. Hunting seasons exist for white-tailed deer, feral hogs, turkeys, and squirrels. Migratory and residential bird species, crocodiles, deer, turkeys, hogs, a wide range of insect and aquatic species, as well as a number of threatened and endangered species such as the South Indian manatee, Shortnose sturgeon, Wood stork and two species of sea turtles, are just some of the

residents found on the refuge. Figure 1 displays a map of the refuge. Please visit <http://www.fws.gov/savannah/> for more information.



Figure 1. Map of Savannah NWR, courtesy of U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

Sampling at Savannah National Wildlife Refuge

A total of 331 visitors agreed to participate in the survey during the two sampling periods at the identified locations at Savannah NWR (table 2). In all, 215 visitors completed the survey for a 67% response rate, and $\pm 5.3\%$ margin of error at the 95% confidence level.²

Table 2. Sampling and response rate summary for Savannah NWR.

Sampling period	Dates	Locations	Total contacts	Undeliverable addresses	Completed surveys	Response rate
1	3/24/2012 to 4/7/2012	Kingfisher Recreation Site Laurel Hill Wildlife Drive Visitor Center				
SP1 Totals			171	7	120	73%
2	11/10/2012 to 11/24/2012	Visitor Center Kingfisher Recreation Site Laurel Hill Wildlife Drive				
SP2 Totals			160	4	95	61%
Combined Totals			331	11	215	67%

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 Savannah NWR 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 (91%). 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 (90%) 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 Savannah NWR had been to at least one *other* national wildlife refuge in the past year (61%), with an average of 7 visits to *other* refuges during the past 12 months.

Visiting This Refuge

Almost half of surveyed visitors (47%) had only been to Savannah NWR once in the past 12 months, while more than half had been multiple times (53%). These repeat visitors went to the refuge an average of 14 times during that same 12-month period. Visitors used the refuge during only one season (55%), during multiple seasons (25%), and year-round (20%).

Visitors first learned about the refuge from friends/relatives (42%), signs on the highway (37%), or people in the local community (21%; fig. 2). Key information sources used by visitors to find their way to this refuge include previous knowledge (55%), signs on highways (39%), or a GPS navigation system (18%; fig. 3).

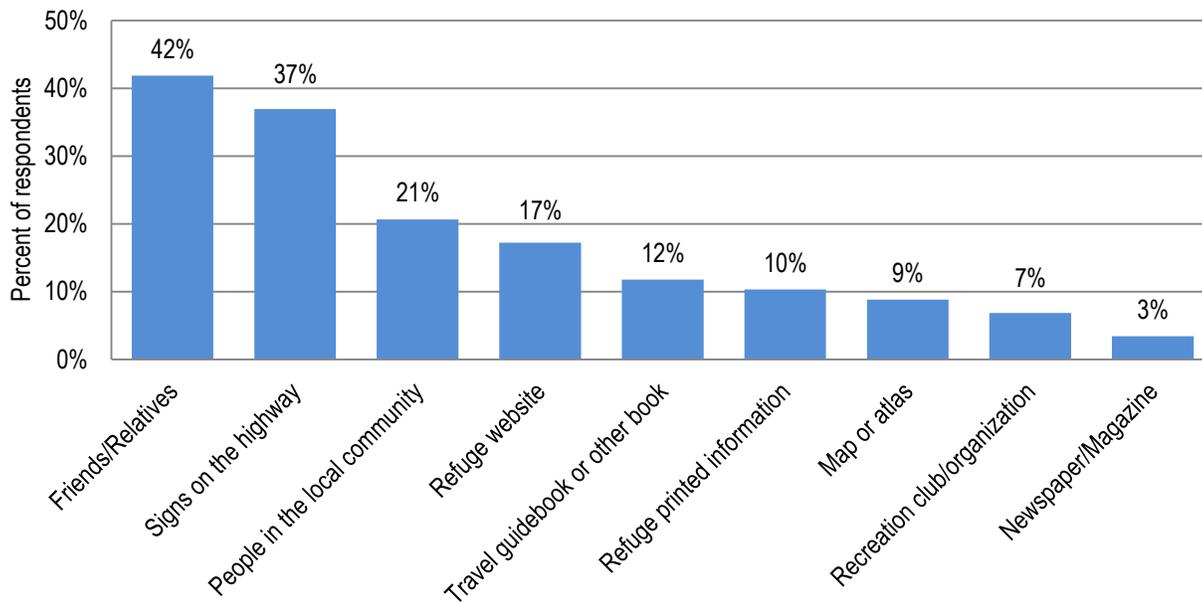


Figure 2. How visitors first learned or heard about Savannah NWR (n = 203).

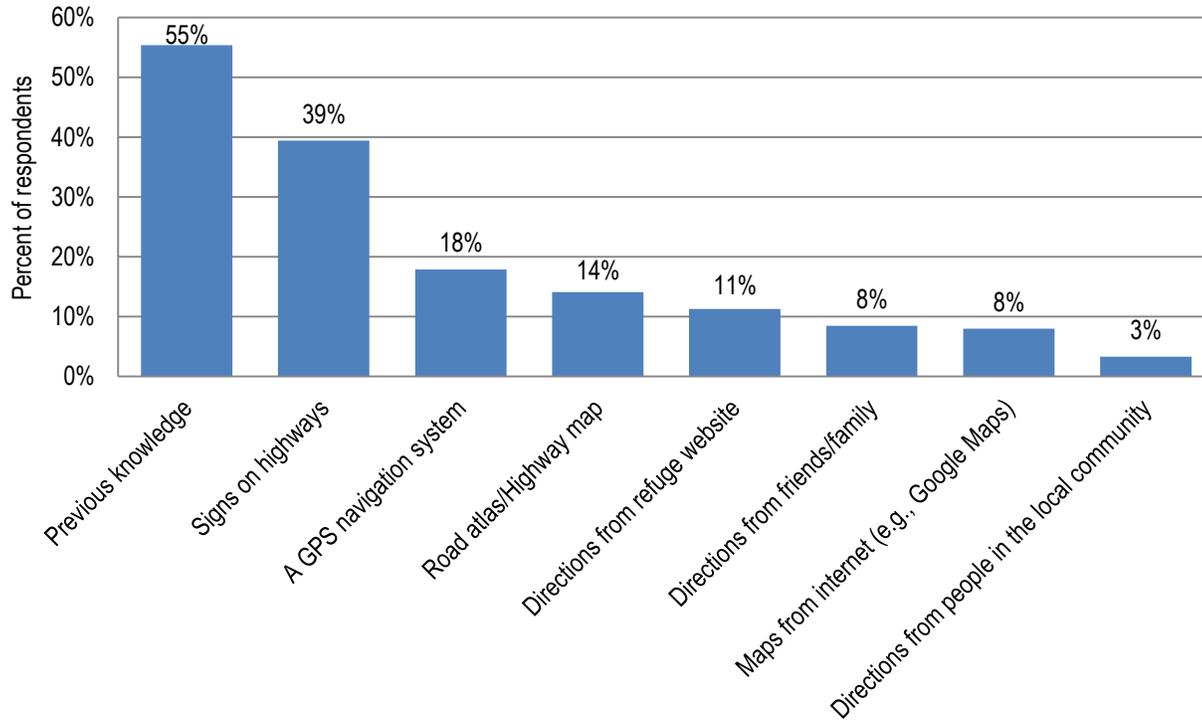


Figure 3. Resources used by visitors to find their way to Savannah NWR during this visit (n = 213).

Over half of visitors (52%) lived in the local area (within 50 mi of the refuge), whereas 48% were nonlocal visitors. For most local visitors, Savannah NWR was the primary purpose or sole destination of their trips (82%; table 3). For most nonlocal visitors, the refuge was an incidental or spur-of-the-moment stop on a trip taken for other purposes (42%) or one of many equally important reasons for their trips (40%).

Local visitors reported that they traveled an average of 20 mi to get to the refuge, while nonlocal visitors traveled an average of 703 mi. The average distance traveled for all visitors to this refuge was 297 mi, while the median was 30 mi. Figure 4 shows the residences of visitors traveling to this refuge. About 40% of visitors traveling to Savannah NWR were from Georgia.

Table 3. Influence of Savannah NWR 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	18%	40%	42%
Local	82%	8%	10%
All visitors	52%	23%	25%

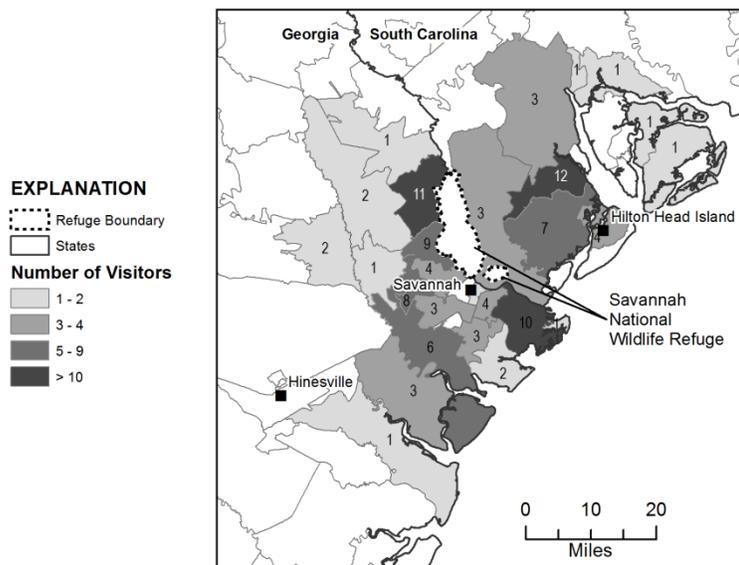
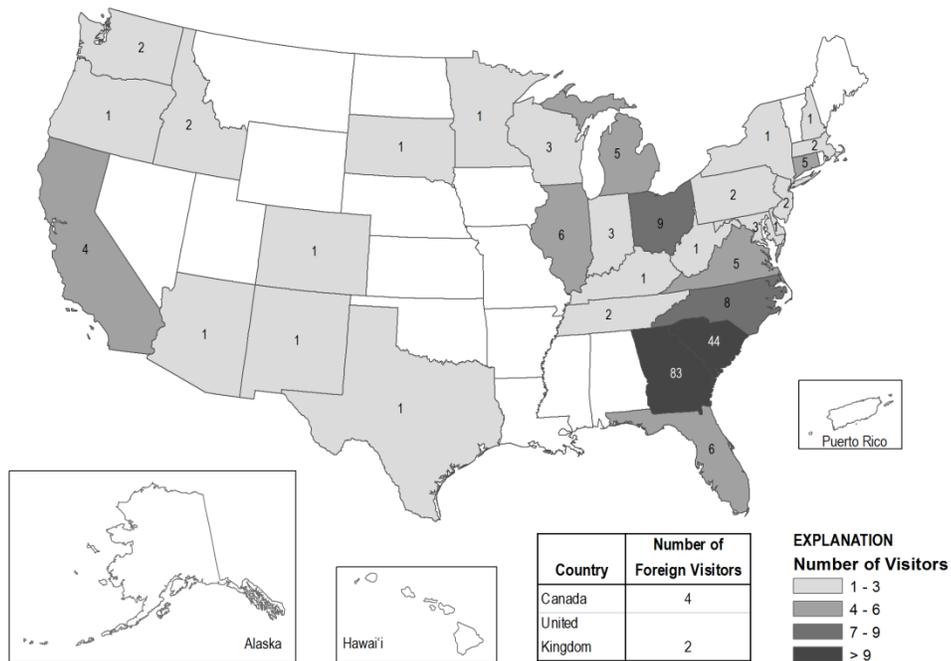


Figure 4. Number of visitors travelling to Savannah NWR by place of residence. The top map shows visitors residence by state and the bottom map shows residence by zip codes near the refuge (n = 214).

Surveyed visitors reported that they spent an average of 4 hr at the refuge during one day there, while the most frequently reported length of a day visit (the modal response) was 2 hr (27%). Most visitors indicated they were part of a group on their visit to this refuge (84%). 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 Savannah NWR (for those who indicated they were part of a group, n = 212).

Group type	Percent (of those traveling in a group)	Average group size		
		Number of adults	Number of children	Total group size
Family/Friends	97%	2	1	3
Commercial tour group	0%	0	0	0
Organized club/School group	1%	2	1	3
Other group type	2%	9	0	9

The key mode of transportation used by visitors to travel around the refuge was private vehicles (98%), and to a lesser degree, walking/hiking (22%; fig. 5).

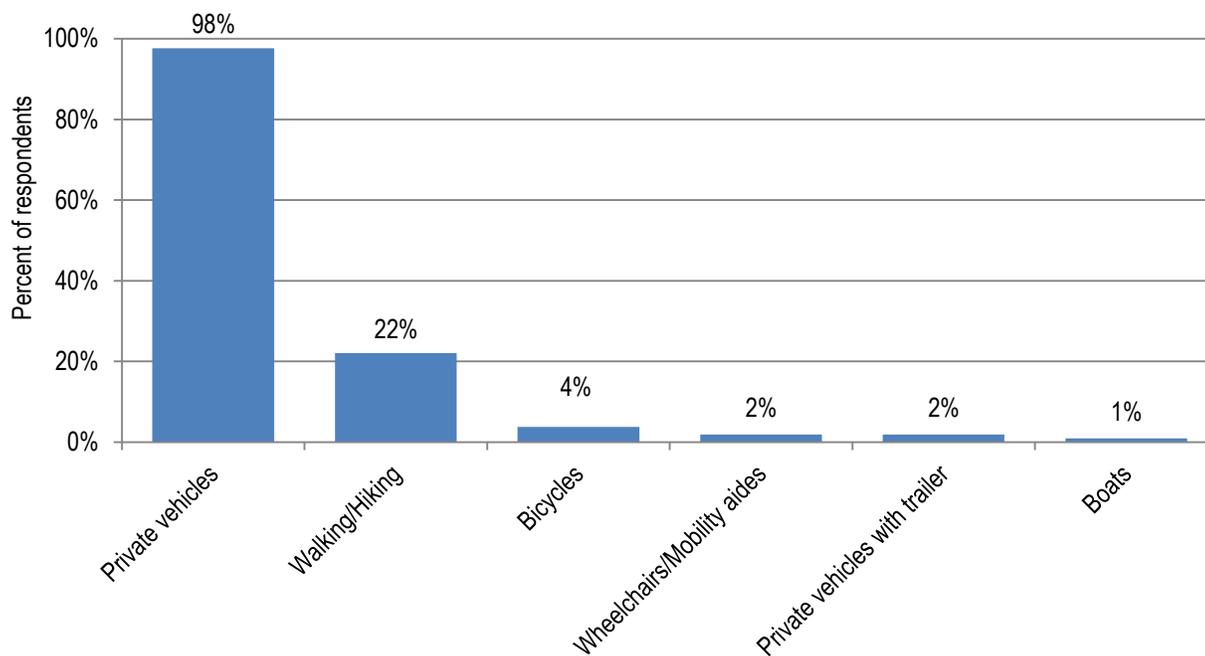


Figure 5. Modes of transportation used by visitors to Savannah NWR during this visit (n = 213).

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 wildlife observation (84%), auto tour route/driving (67%), and bird watching (66%). The primary reasons for visitors' most recent visits included wildlife observation (41%), bird watching (20%), and auto tour route/driving (11%; fig. 7). Many visitors also used the Visitor Center during their trips (68%), mostly to ask information of staff or volunteers (76%), view the exhibits (72%), and visit the gift shop/bookstore (71%; fig. 8).

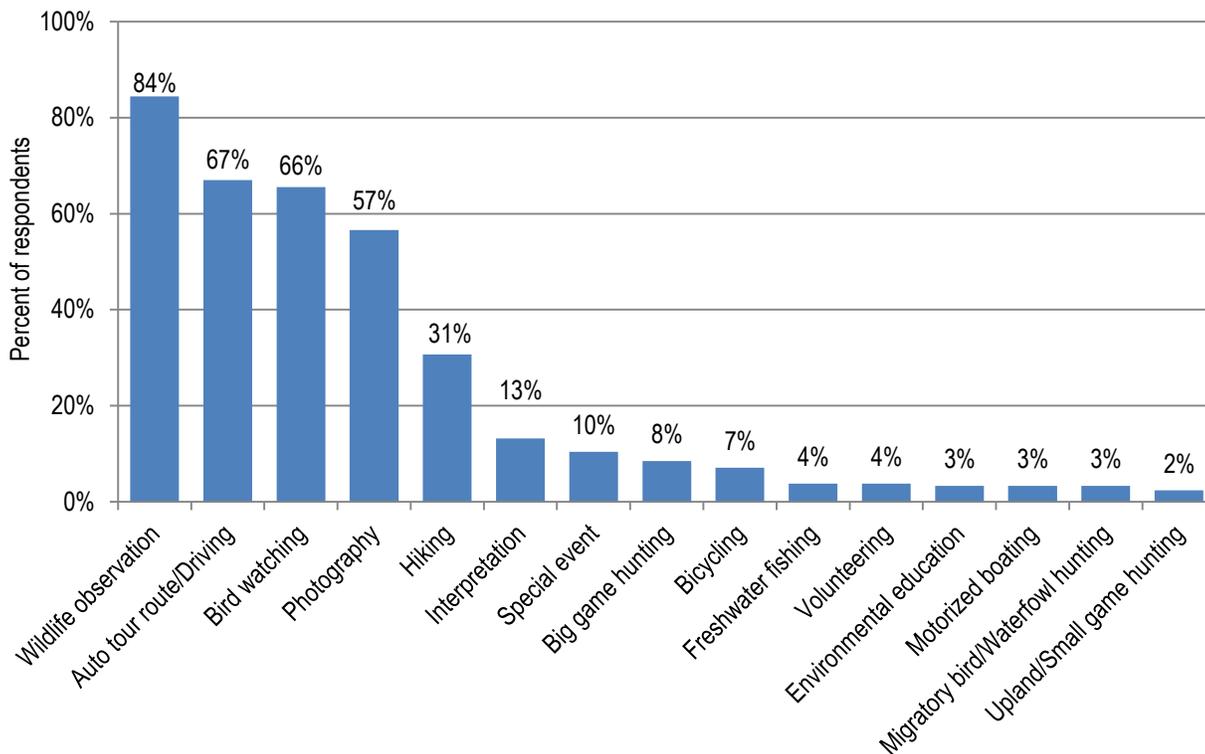


Figure 6. Activities in which visitors participated during the past 12 months at Savannah NWR (n = 212). See Appendix B for a listing of “other” activities.

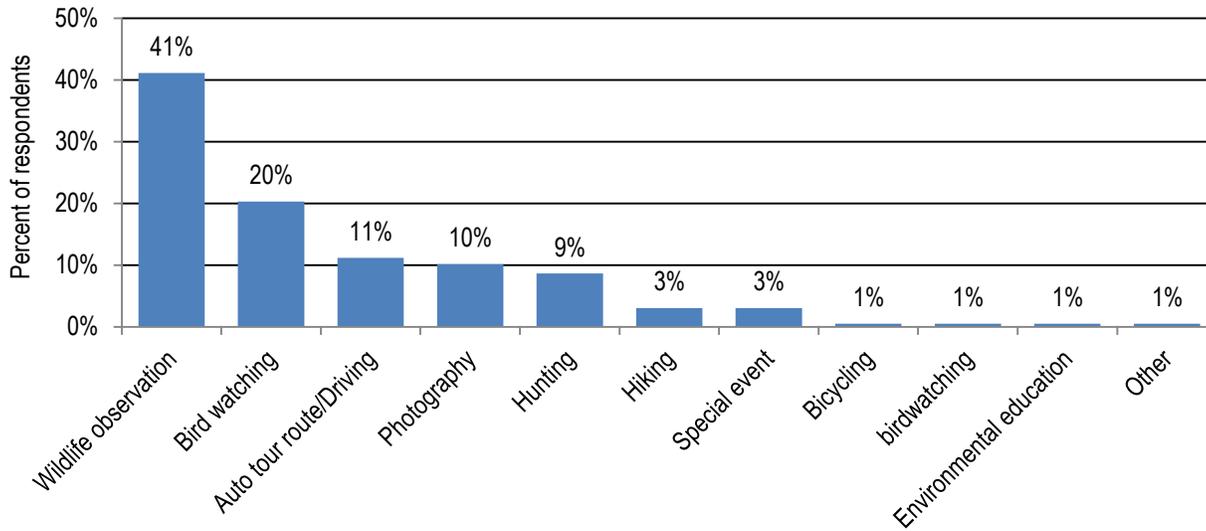


Figure 7. The **primary** activity in which visitors participated during this visit to Savannah NWR (n = 197). See Appendix B for a listing of “other” activities.

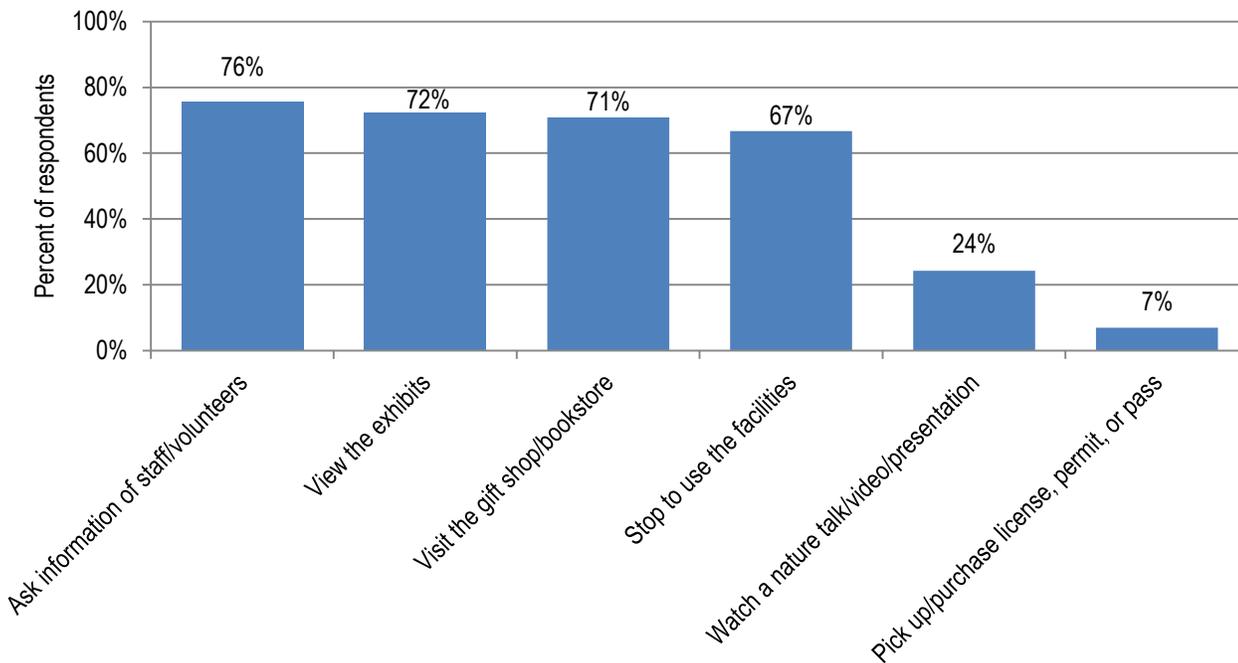


Figure 8. Visitor Center activities in which visitors participated at Savannah NWR (n = 144).

Visitor Characteristics

Nearly all (96%) visitors who participated in the survey at Savannah NWR indicated that they were citizens or permanent residents of the United States. These visitors were a mix of 61% male (with an average age of 55 years) and 39% female (with an average age of 51 years). Visitors, on average, reported they had 15 years of formal education (equivalent to three years of college or technical school). The median level of income was \$50,000-\$74,999. 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, 52% of surveyed visitors to Savannah NWR indicated that they live within the local 50-mi area while nonlocal visitors (48%) stayed in the local area, on average, for 6 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 \$81 per person per day and local visitors spent an average of \$30 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 Savannah NWR expressed in dollars per person per day.

Visitors	n ¹	Median	Mean	Standard deviation	Minimum	Maximum
Nonlocal	87	\$68	\$81	\$71	\$0	\$419
Local	84	\$13	\$30	\$41	\$0	\$190

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 Savannah NWR were as follows (fig. 9):

- 92% 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,
- 94% of visitors were satisfied with the services provided by employees or volunteers, and
- 94% of visitors were satisfied with the refuge's job of conserving fish, wildlife and their habitats.

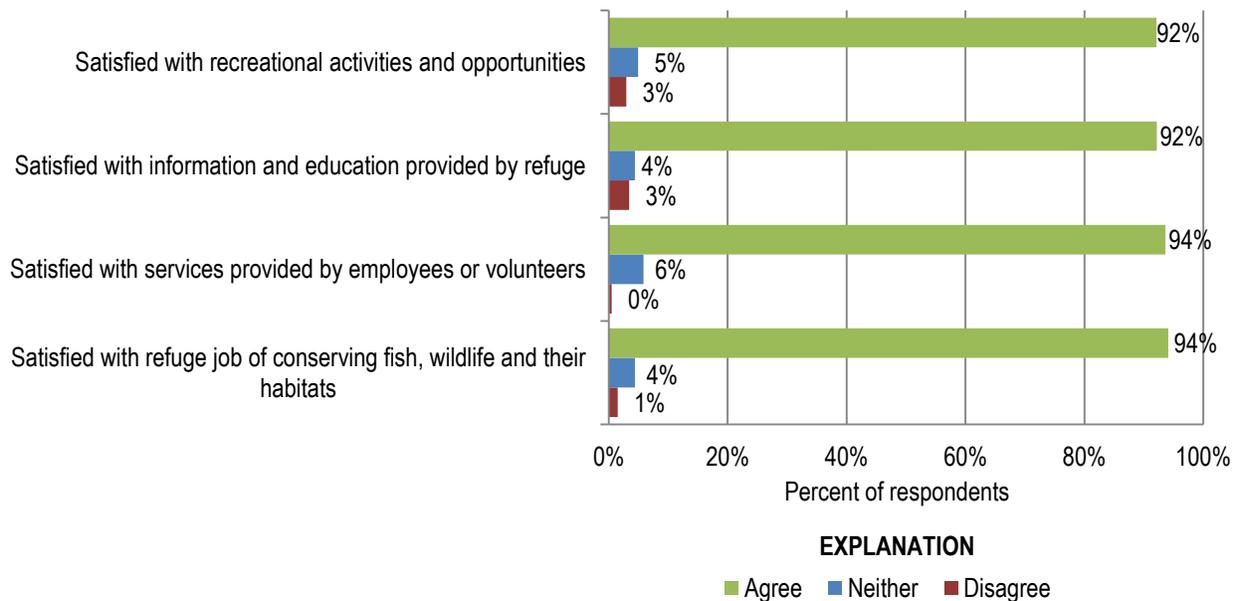


Figure 9. Overall satisfaction with Savannah NWR during this visit (n ≥ 203).

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 Savannah NWR. 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 fell into the "Look Closer" quadrant (fig. 11). The average importance of these activities is likely higher among visitors to Savannah NWR who actually participated in the activities during the 12 months prior to taking the survey than the score 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).

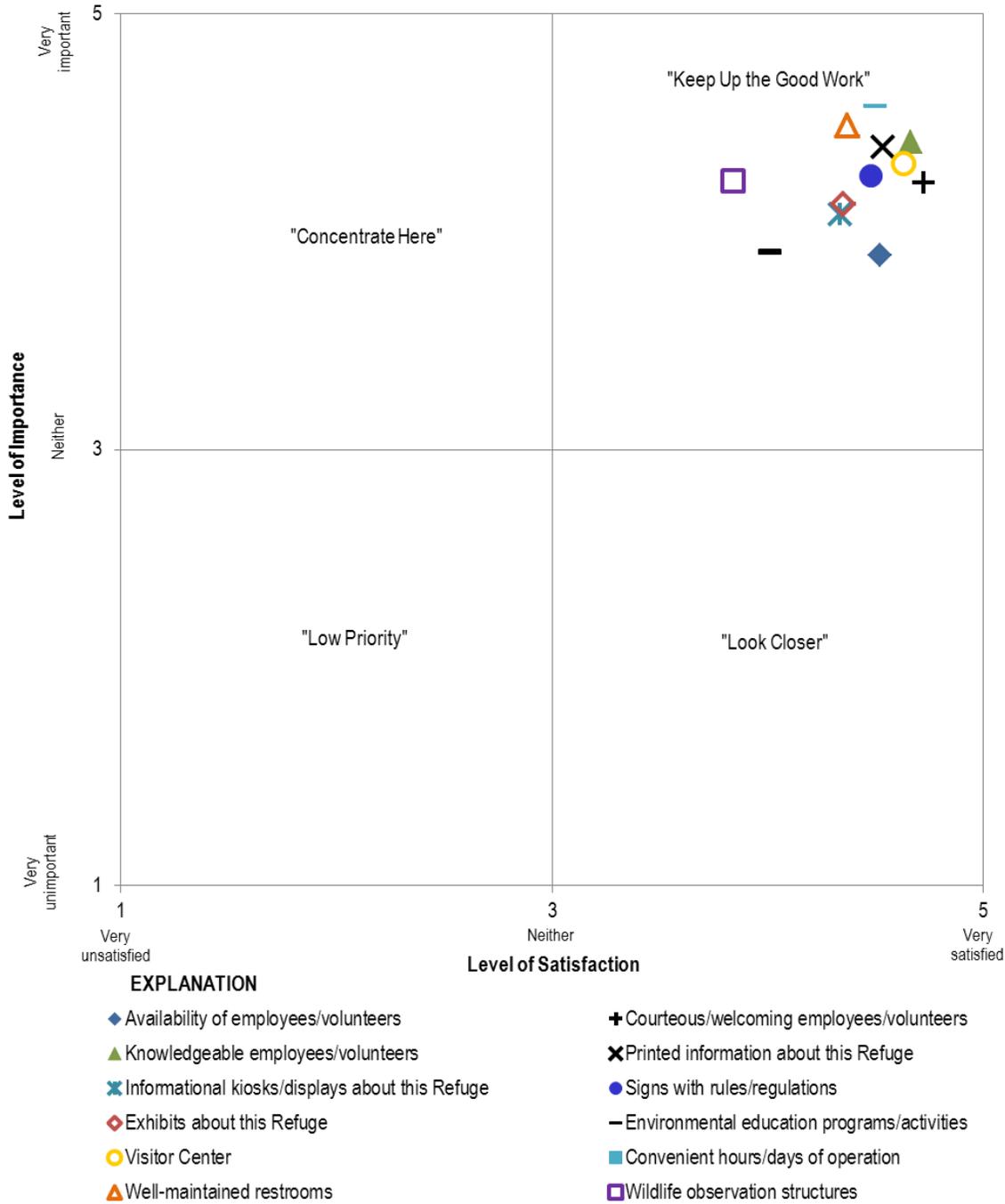
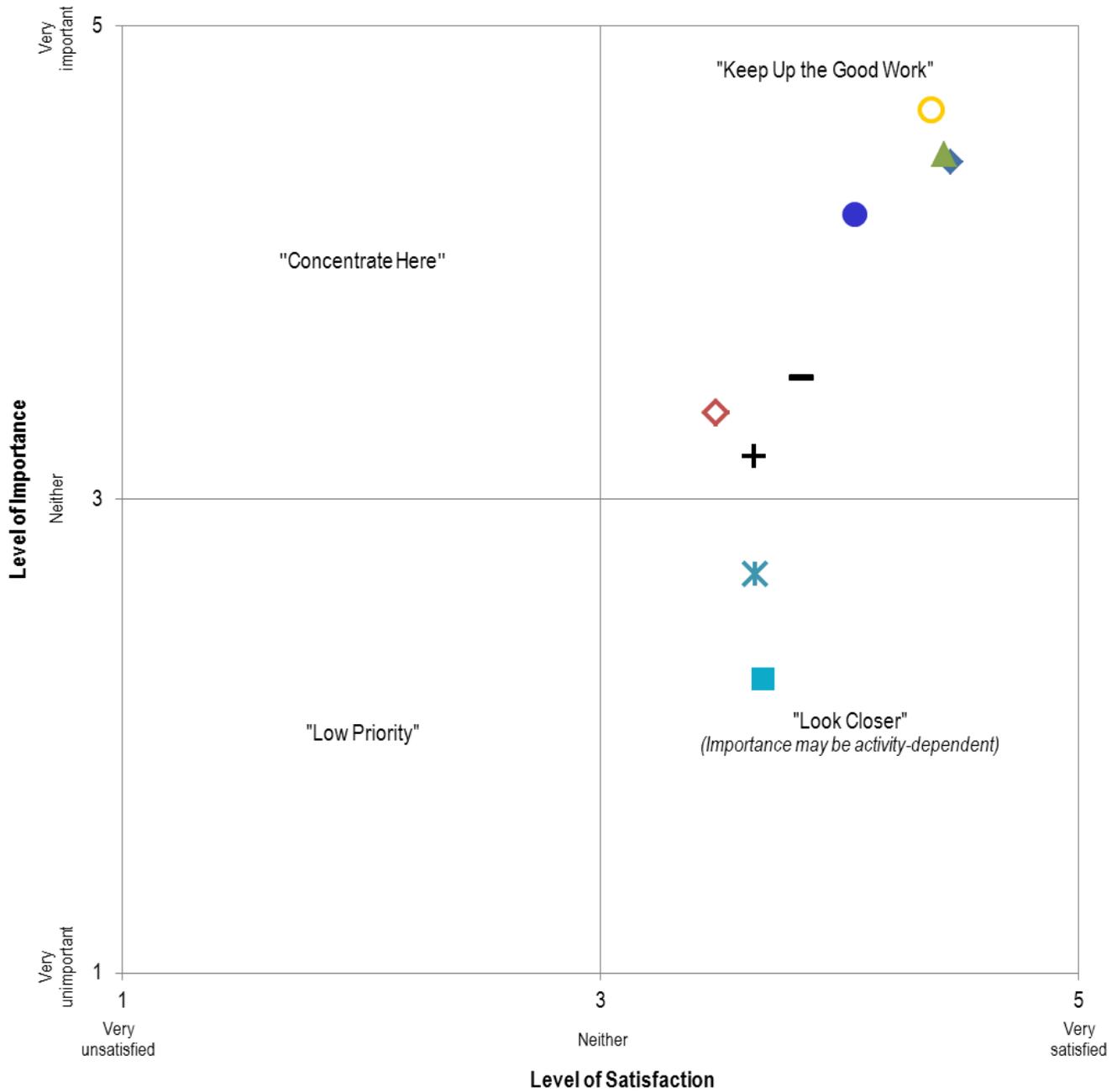


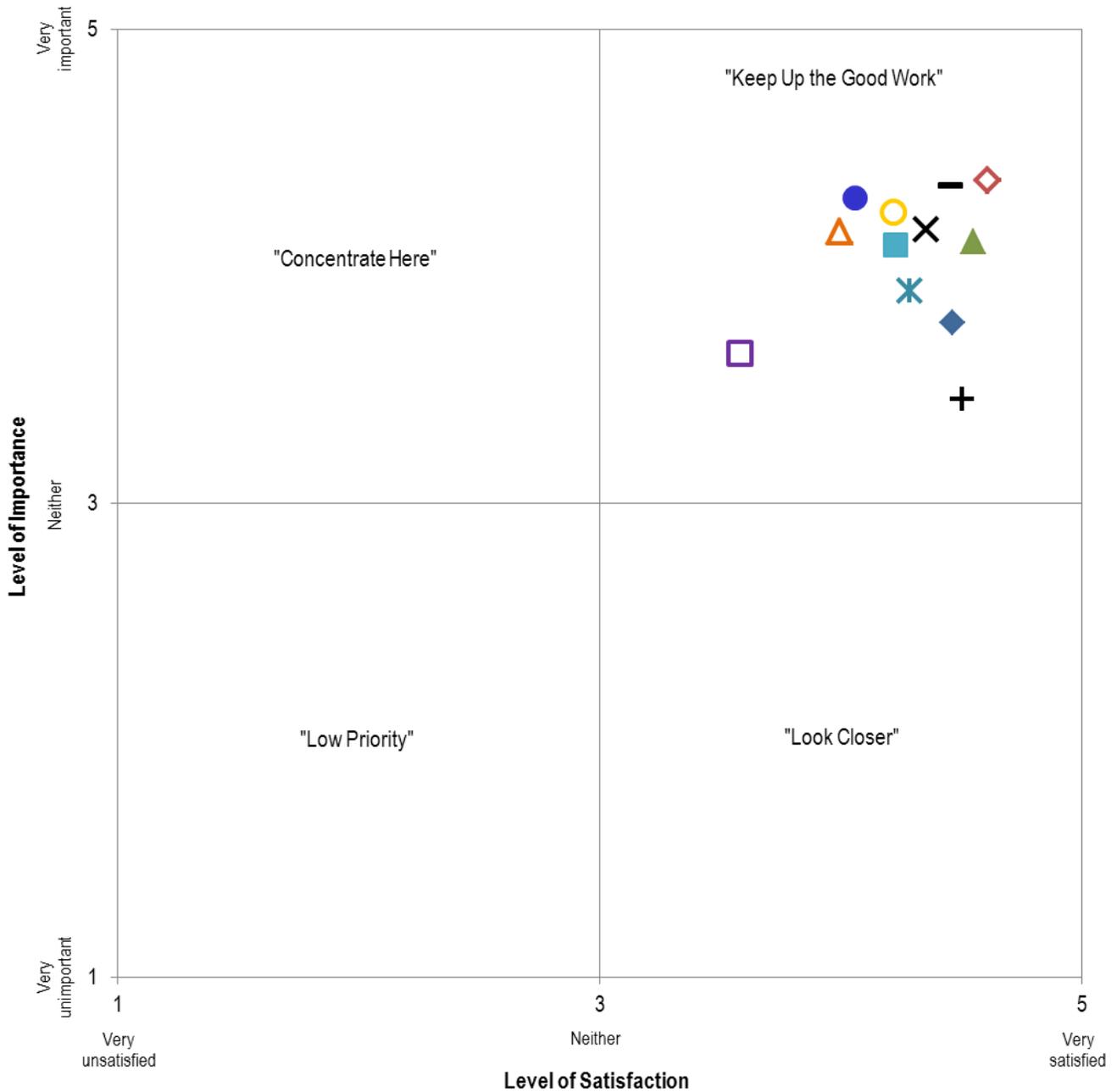
Figure 10. Importance-satisfaction ratings of services and facilities provided at Savannah NWR.



EXPLANATION

- ◆ Bird watching opportunities
- Wildlife viewing opportunities
- ▲ Photography opportunities
- Hunting opportunities
- ✕ Fishing opportunities
- Hiking opportunities
- ◇ Kayak/Canoe opportunities
- Bicycling opportunities
- ✚ Volunteer opportunities

Figure 11. Importance-satisfaction ratings of recreational opportunities provided at Savannah NWR.



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 Savannah NWR.

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 Savannah NWR 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 Savannah NWR 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;
- a bus/tram that provides a guided tour; 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.

When asked specifically about using alternative transportation at Savannah NWR, some visitors thought alternative transportation would enhance their experience (27%) while others thought it would not (28%). An additional 45% of surveyed visitors indicated they were unsure whether alternative transportation would enhance their experiences.

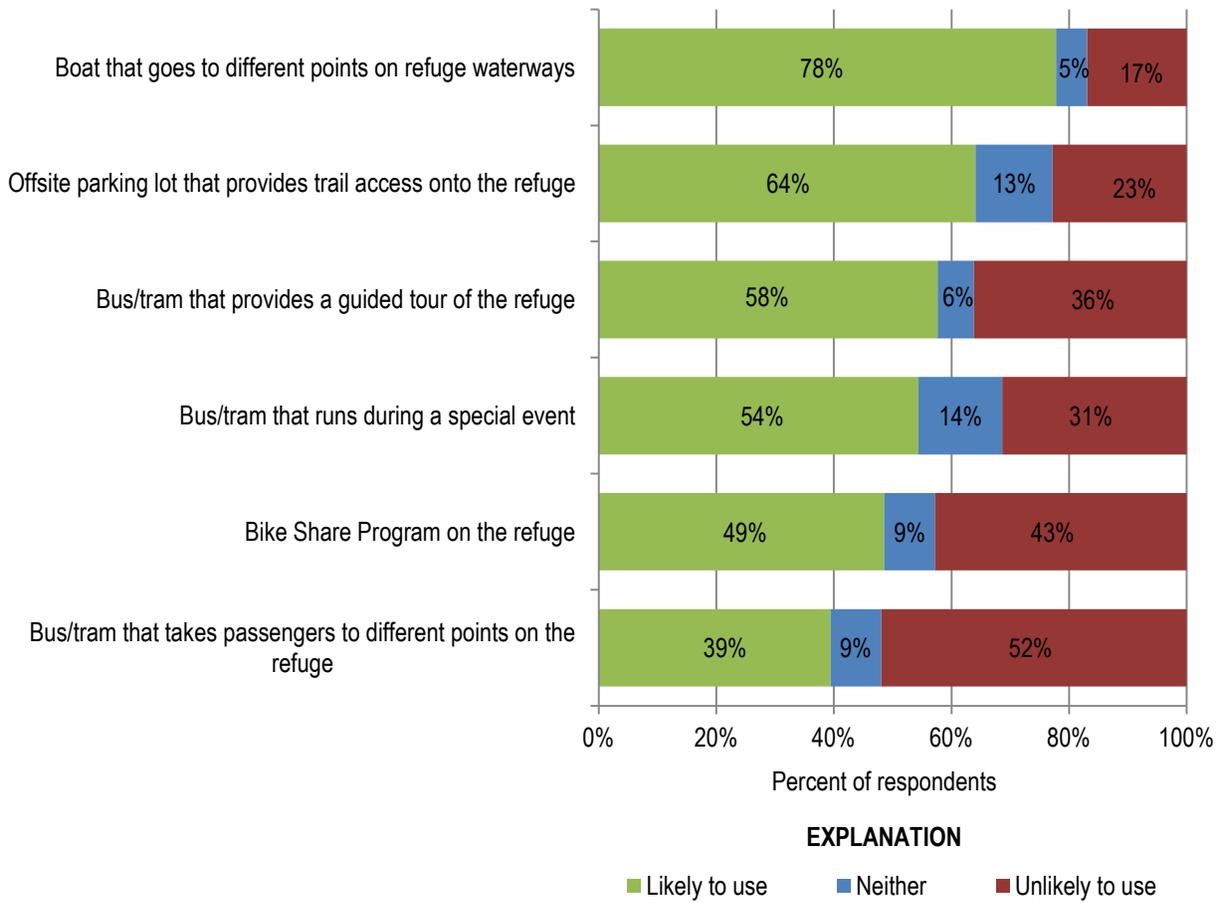


Figure 13. Visitors' likelihood of using alternative transportation options at refuges in the future (n ≥ 204).

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 Savannah NWR 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 (49%) indicated their experiences would be enhanced if Savannah NWR provided information about how visitors can help to address climate change impacts on fish, wildlife, and their habitats (fig. 14).

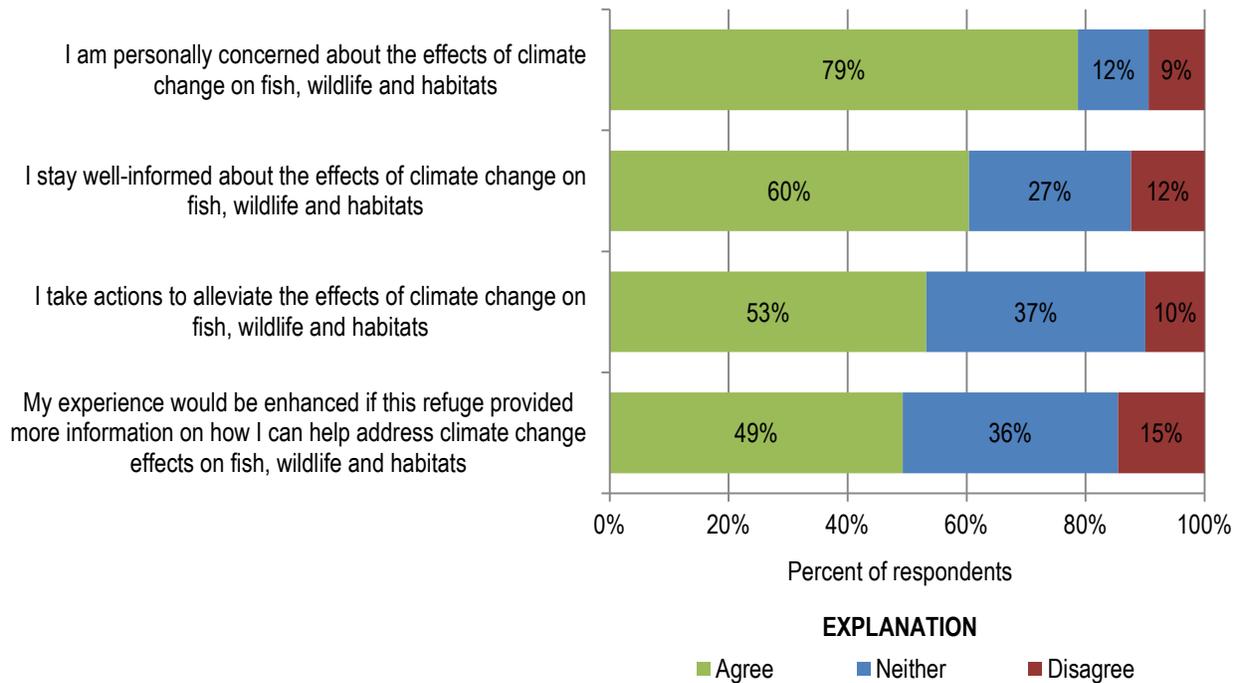


Figure 14. Visitors’ personal involvement with climate change related to fish, wildlife and their habitats (n ≥ 199).

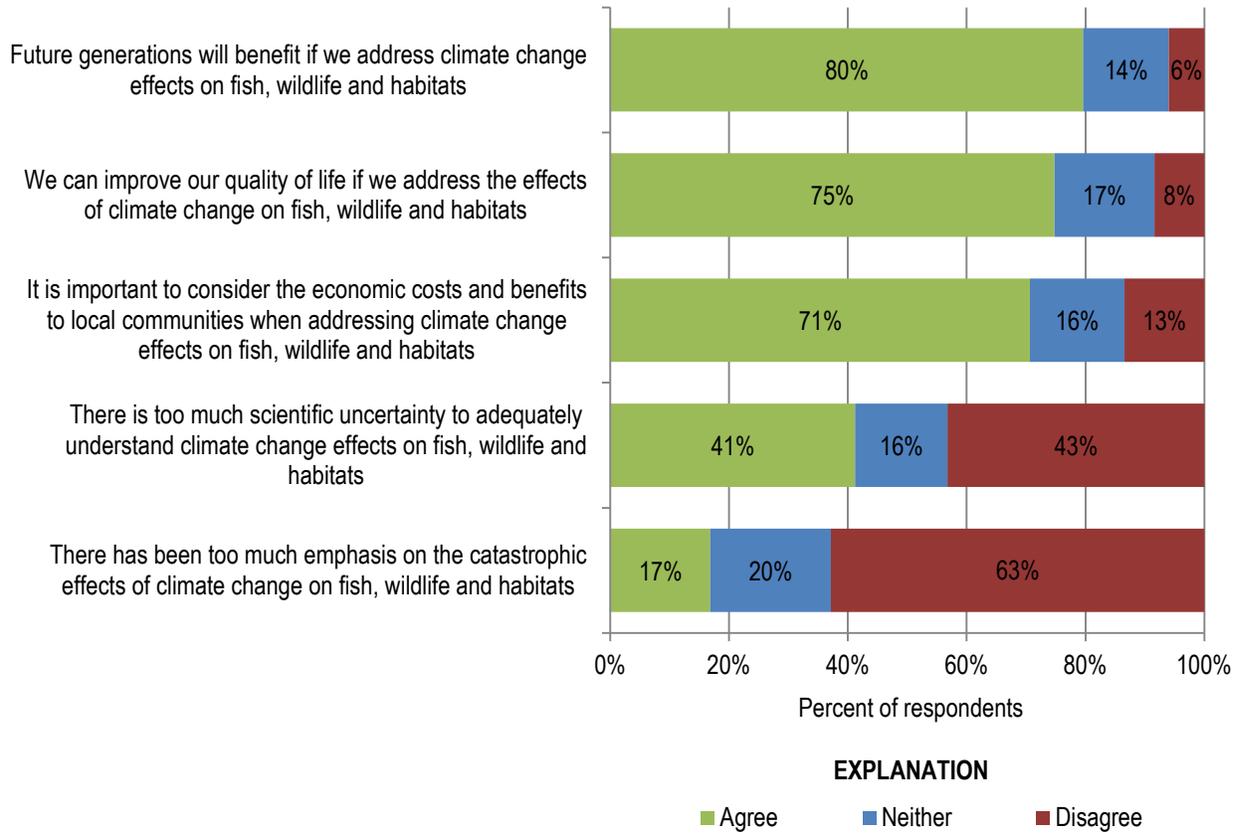


Figure 15. Visitors' beliefs about the effects of climate change on fish, wildlife and their habitats (n ≥ 199).

Conclusion

These individual refuge results provide a summary of trip characteristics and experiences of a sample of visitors to Savannah NWR 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 and visitor-satisfaction ratings with existing offerings, 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"/> 8% Big game hunting | <input type="checkbox"/> 31% Hiking | <input type="checkbox"/> 3% Environmental education (for example, classrooms or labs) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 2% Upland/Small game hunting | <input type="checkbox"/> 7% Bicycling | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 3% Migratory bird/Waterfowl hunting | <input type="checkbox"/> 67% Auto tour route/Driving | <input type="checkbox"/> 13% Interpretation (for example, exhibits, kiosks, videos) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 84% Wildlife observation | <input type="checkbox"/> 3% Motorized boating | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 66% Bird watching | <input type="checkbox"/> 1% Nonmotorized boating (including canoes/kayaks) | <input type="checkbox"/> 10% 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"/> 4% Other (<i>please specify</i>)
<u>See Appendix B</u> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 57% 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?

- 32% No
- 68% Yes → If yes, what did you do there? (Please mark **all that apply.**)
- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> 71% Visit the gift shop or bookstore | <input type="checkbox"/> 7% Pick up/purchase a license, permit, or pass |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 72% View the exhibits | <input type="checkbox"/> 67% Stop to use the facilities (for example, get water, use restroom) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 76% Ask information of staff/volunteers | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 24% Watch a nature talk/video/presentation | <input type="checkbox"/> 5% 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"/> 18%	<input type="checkbox"/> 82%	<input type="checkbox"/> 52%	It was the primary purpose or sole destination of my trip.
<input type="checkbox"/> 40%	<input type="checkbox"/> 8%	<input type="checkbox"/> 23%	It was one of many equally important reasons or destinations for my trip.
<input type="checkbox"/> 42%	<input type="checkbox"/> 10%	<input type="checkbox"/> 25%	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> 9 </u> Hours	<u> 30 </u> Minutes	<i>and</i>	<u> 703 </u> Miles
Local	<u> 0 </u> Hours	<u> 32 </u> Minutes	<i>and</i>	<u> 20 </u> Miles
All visitors	<u> 4 </u> Hours	<u> 10 </u> Minutes	<i>and</i>	<u> 297 </u> Miles

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

16% None, I visited this Refuge alone

(of those visiting with a group)

97% Family and/or friends

1% 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.*)

 2 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.*)

42% Family and/or friends

17% Refuge website

37% Signs on highway

4% Other website (*please specify*) See Appendix B

7% Recreation club or organization

0% Television or radio

21% People in the local community

3% Newspaper or magazine

10% Refuge printed information (brochure, map)

12% Travel guidebook or other book

9% Map or atlas

1% 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.*)

74% Spring
(March-May)

28% Summer
(June-August)

62% Fall
(September-November)

32% Winter
(December-February)

10. How many times have you visited...

...this Refuge (including this visit) in the last 12 months? 8 number of visits

...other National Wildlife Refuges in the last 12 months? 4 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"/> 98% | Private vehicle without a trailer | <input type="checkbox"/> 0% | Refuge shuttle bus or tram | <input type="checkbox"/> 4% | Bicycle |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 2% | Private vehicle with a trailer
(for boat, camper or other) | <input type="checkbox"/> 0% | Motorcycle | <input type="checkbox"/> 22% | Walk/Hike |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 0% | Commercial tour bus | <input type="checkbox"/> 0% | ATV or off-road vehicle | <input type="checkbox"/> 0% | Other (<i>please specify below</i>) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 0% | Recreational vehicle (RV) | <input type="checkbox"/> 1% | Boat | <u>See Appendix B</u> | |
| | | <input type="checkbox"/> 2% | 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"/> 55% | Previous knowledge/I have been to this Refuge before | <input type="checkbox"/> 8% | Maps from the Internet (for example, MapQuest or Google Maps) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 39% | Signs on highways | <input type="checkbox"/> 11% | Directions from Refuge website |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 18% | A GPS navigation system | <input type="checkbox"/> 3% | Directions from people in community near this Refuge |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 14% | A road atlas or highway map | <input type="checkbox"/> 8% | Directions from friends or family |
| | | <input type="checkbox"/> 3% | 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"/> 38%	<input type="checkbox"/> 14%	<input type="checkbox"/> 9%	<input type="checkbox"/> 27%	<input type="checkbox"/> 12%
...a bike that was offered through a Bike Share Program for use while on the Refuge?	<input type="checkbox"/> 28%	<input type="checkbox"/> 14%	<input type="checkbox"/> 9%	<input type="checkbox"/> 28%	<input type="checkbox"/> 20%
...a bus or tram that provides a guided tour of the Refuge with information about the Refuge and its resources?	<input type="checkbox"/> 23%	<input type="checkbox"/> 13%	<input type="checkbox"/> 6%	<input type="checkbox"/> 38%	<input type="checkbox"/> 20%
...a boat that goes to different points on Refuge waterways?	<input type="checkbox"/> 11%	<input type="checkbox"/> 6%	<input type="checkbox"/> 5%	<input type="checkbox"/> 42%	<input type="checkbox"/> 36%
...a bus or tram that runs during a special event (such as an evening tour of wildlife or weekend festival)?	<input type="checkbox"/> 22%	<input type="checkbox"/> 10%	<input type="checkbox"/> 14%	<input type="checkbox"/> 36%	<input type="checkbox"/> 19%
...an offsite parking lot that provides trail access for walking/hiking onto the Refuge?	<input type="checkbox"/> 13%	<input type="checkbox"/> 10%	<input type="checkbox"/> 13%	<input type="checkbox"/> 33%	<input type="checkbox"/> 31%
...some other alternative transportation option? (<i>please specify</i>) <u>See Appendix B</u>	<input type="checkbox"/> 12%	<input type="checkbox"/> 6%	<input type="checkbox"/> 18%	<input type="checkbox"/> 35%	<input type="checkbox"/> 29%

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

- 27% Yes 28% No 45% 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						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
2%	13%	11%	52%	21%	Surface conditions of roads	5%	4%	2%	19%	71%	NA
6%	15%	22%	42%	15%	Surface conditions of parking areas	3%	1%	11%	14%	72%	NA
4%	3%	12%	39%	41%	Condition of bridges	4%	1%	8%	12%	75%	NA
4%	4%	9%	39%	44%	Condition of trails and boardwalks	3%	4%	8%	26%	59%	NA
5%	4%	16%	48%	28%	Number of places for parking	4%	4%	11%	22%	59%	NA
2%	4%	5%	39%	50%	Number of places to pull over along Refuge roads	3%	12%	6%	31%	47%	NA
2%	3%	5%	35%	54%	Safety of driving conditions on Refuge roads	2%	2%	3%	18%	75%	NA
3%	3%	3%	39%	52%	Safety of Refuge road entrances/exits	3%	5%	3%	22%	67%	NA
3%	3%	9%	37%	48%	Signs on highways directing you to the Refuge	5%	6%	8%	28%	55%	NA
3%	7%	7%	46%	38%	Signs directing you around the Refuge roads	3%	6%	12%	26%	54%	NA
2%	3%	14%	36%	43%	Signs directing you on trails	2%	11%	12%	34%	40%	NA
5%	9%	31%	25%	29%	Access for people with physical disabilities or who have difficulty walking	4%	11%	38%	18%	29%	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)?

52% Yes

48% 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: 7 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: 3 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> <i>(within 50 miles of this Refuge)</i>
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
11%	23%	16%	9%	14%	5%	10%	1%	3%	2%	9%

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*)

Savannah National Wildlife 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.

Savannah National Wildlife 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"/> 5%	<input type="checkbox"/> 32%	<input type="checkbox"/> 60%	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"/> 4%	<input type="checkbox"/> 35%	<input type="checkbox"/> 57%	NA
Overall, I am satisfied with the services provided by employees or volunteers at this Refuge.	<input type="checkbox"/> 0%	<input type="checkbox"/> 0%	<input type="checkbox"/> 6%	<input type="checkbox"/> 24%	<input type="checkbox"/> 69%	NA
This Refuge does a good job of conserving fish, wildlife and their habitats.	<input type="checkbox"/> 0%	<input type="checkbox"/> 1%	<input type="checkbox"/> 4%	<input type="checkbox"/> 24%	<input type="checkbox"/> 71%	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
3%	10%	11%	44%	31%	Availability of employees or volunteers	3%	1%	9%	15%	72%	NA
3%	3%	9%	39%	46%	Courteous and welcoming employees or volunteers	2%	1%	5%	9%	84%	NA
3%	1%	5%	36%	56%	Knowledgeable employees or volunteers	2%	1%	4%	16%	77%	NA
2%	1%	4%	43%	50%	Printed information about this Refuge and its resources (for example, maps and brochures)	2%	4%	3%	18%	72%	NA
2%	4%	11%	50%	33%	Informational kiosks/displays about this Refuge and its resources	2%	7%	8%	24%	60%	NA
1%	5%	5%	45%	44%	Signs with rules/regulations for this Refuge	1%	1%	10%	26%	62%	NA
1%	4%	11%	49%	35%	Exhibits about this Refuge and its resources	1%	4%	14%	23%	59%	NA
3%	6%	22%	36%	33%	Environmental education programs or activities	2%	2%	31%	21%	44%	NA
2%	3%	7%	40%	48%	Visitor Center	1%	3%	6%	12%	78%	NA
1%	0%	3%	27%	68%	Convenient hours and days of operation	3%	4%	5%	16%	72%	NA
1%	1%	7%	30%	61%	Well-maintained restrooms	3%	6%	10%	14%	68%	NA
2%	2%	11%	41%	44%	Wildlife observation structures (decks, blinds)	5%	10%	20%	28%	37%	NA
2%	1%	11%	26%	60%	Bird-watching opportunities	1%	3%	7%	24%	64%	NA
1%	1%	2%	29%	69%	Opportunities to observe wildlife other than birds	2%	4%	6%	32%	56%	NA
2%	2%	7%	30%	60%	Opportunities to photograph wildlife and scenery	2%	2%	9%	28%	61%	NA
52%	7%	20%	6%	15%	Hunting opportunities	1%	1%	58%	8%	32%	NA
35%	10%	22%	20%	14%	Fishing opportunities	0%	4%	54%	14%	27%	NA
4%	3%	9%	38%	47%	Trail hiking opportunities	3%	4%	16%	39%	38%	NA
14%	7%	26%	35%	18%	Water trail opportunities for canoeing or kayaking	5%	5%	48%	22%	20%	NA
11%	8%	21%	39%	21%	Bicycling opportunities	0%	5%	37%	27%	31%	NA
15%	7%	40%	20%	18%	Volunteer opportunities	2%	1%	57%	12%	28%	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?

91% Yes

9% No

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

90% Yes

10% 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.	4%	5%	12%	40%	39%
We can improve our quality of life if we address the effects of climate change on fish, wildlife and their habitats.	3%	5%	17%	35%	40%
There is too much scientific uncertainty to adequately understand how climate change will impact fish, wildlife and their habitats.	19%	24%	16%	30%	12%
I stay well-informed about the effects of climate change on fish, wildlife and their habitats.	2%	10%	27%	45%	15%
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.	6%	7%	16%	51%	19%
I take actions to alleviate the effects of climate change on fish, wildlife and their habitats.	2%	8%	37%	37%	16%
There has been too much emphasis on the catastrophic effects of climate change on fish, wildlife and their habitats.	29%	34%	20%	11%	6%
Future generations will benefit if we address the effects of climate change on fish, wildlife and their habitats.	3%	3%	14%	31%	48%
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.	6%	9%	36%	35%	14%

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?

96% Yes 4% No → *If not, what is your home country?* See Figure 2 in Report

2. Are you? 61% Male 39% Female

3. In what year were you born? 1957 (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%			15%				45%				40%			

5. What ethnicity do you consider yourself? 1% Hispanic or Latino 99% 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"/> 2% Black or African American	<input type="checkbox"/> 97% White
<input type="checkbox"/> 2% Asian	<input type="checkbox"/> 0% Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	

7. How many members are in your household? 2 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"/> 1% Less than \$10,000	<input type="checkbox"/> 15% \$35,000 - \$49,999	<input type="checkbox"/> 18% \$100,000 - \$149,999
<input type="checkbox"/> 5% \$10,000 - \$24,999	<input type="checkbox"/> 24% \$50,000 - \$74,999	<input type="checkbox"/> 6% \$150,000 - \$199,999
<input type="checkbox"/> 6% \$25,000 - \$34,999	<input type="checkbox"/> 21% \$75,000 - \$99,999	<input type="checkbox"/> 5% \$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.)?

22 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 Savannah National Wildlife 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
Family Fun Day (March 31, 2012)	2
Friends Annual Meeting	3
Mobility-impaired deer hunt	6
Photography contest	1
Riverboat dinner cruise	1
Savannah Open House - March 31	2
Special Board of Elections	1
Spring Fling	5

Other Activity	Frequency
Bird banding demonstration	1
Junior Refuge Manager	1
Natural Interpreted Tour	1
Offer personal photos	1
Ogeechee Audubon Bird Walk	1
Skiing, scuba diving	1
Swimming, beaches	1
Visiting a friend who works there.	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
Vacation	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
Activities for children, bird banding.	1
I gave my guests a history of the former rice plantations the refuge is on.	1
Junior Refuge Manager Program	1
Use the posters for identification of a turtle and write what I saw on the dry-erase board.	1
Viewed the information board.	1
We did the birdwatching on the trail and at feeders.	1
We were not allowed to get in because we had a small dog.	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
Savannah NWTf	1
Wheelchair hunters	3

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

Other Website	Frequency
Google	2
Google Earth map from my cell, looked for parks on driving route from Atlanta to Jacksonville.	1
Google, Tripadvisor.com	1
I used my smart phone to find things to do nearby.	1
Tripadvisor.com	4

Other Ways Heard about This Refuge	Frequency
Leanne Holroyd	1
Wildlife Ranger	1

Survey Section 2

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

Other Ways Found This Refuge	Frequency
Directions from Visitor Center	3
Google Earth map from iPhone	1
iPad	1
Map from Visitor Center	2

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
Accessible transportation when available	1
Additional road paths within the refuge for driving or air boat tours.	1
Bicycle	1
Boat	1
Electric Car	1
Electric golf cart	1
Electric motorized vehicles	1
Free helicopter tours	1
Golf cart	1
Have own bike	1
Kayak	1
Kayak trail into refuge	1
Kayak/canoes	3
Quiet boat	1
Segways	1
Train	1
Wheelchair	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 = 42)

A clear stop sign is needed at the end of the Auto Tour Route.

Additional drive routes could be added. A few new open roads open to the present drive.

Because most of the wildlife can be observed from vehicles, accessibility isn't much of an issue.

Being in a wheelchair, I only have problems sometimes with getting in and out of my van. I don't know if there is any way to have a solid flat surface for my lift anywhere in the refuge, so I'm not complaining. Over all, I don't have a problem because usually I have someone from the refuge helping me.

Better biking trail surfaces would be great.

Better signs on I-95 on the S.C. side at exit 5.

Current condition and set up is fine. Bike share program would be very nice, or canoe neutral very nice.

Entrance around Kingfish Pond is locked when its government paid for refuge land access. When does someone control property the Government owns? We all need drive through access. Government built road for refuge not for personal use.

I am wheelchair bound and things like pull over spots don't allow room for exiting van lifts, so I never get out. The exception to this is the annual hunt, which the rangers do a great job at helping, but at that time we have the whole road for room to exit van.

I would like access to other areas of the refuge which are presently only accessible by boat due to private lands. I think that the FWS could negotiate with private land owners for access to historically significant areas such as the George Washington trail along HWY21 in Georgia. (Solomon's Tract- SNWR)

It was a bit hard finding the entrance to the drive, wasn't sure if the entrance was correct, looked the same as the others.

More signage marking the trails and distance of them would be helpful.

My experience would have been better if the trails had been mowed. Some were pretty high with grass and weeds.

Please improve signage directing visitors to walking trails.

Some roads and trails are not acceptable for disabled people.

Somewhat confused on actual closing time.

The drive we took was primitive, lots of gators and waterfowl, and I hope it stays that way, but there do need to be signs encouraging slow cars to pull over where possible to allow others to pass.

The main concern I have is people driving the wrong way through the refuge. The people going to the Fife Plantation running people off the roads, driving in backwards, and making it unpleasant when they are in a "hurry" to get to Fife.

The maps given out at the Visitor Center have no relationship or reference to the signage on the refuge road. VERY POOR!!

The refuge Visitor Center being separate from the observation road is ambiguous on first visit. There is a question about where to access the observation road, since it cannot be accessed from the Visitor Center. Not a big deal, but different vs. "conventional".

The Refuge was closed on the day we visited due to Disabled Hunters using the auto route. We were not able to visit any part other than the Visitor Center.

The road surface makes bicycling rather difficult.

The roads and trails are in very good condition- VERY SATISFIED.

The Savannah National Wildlife Refuge seemed to be a very primitive location that, perhaps, needs to be primitive to retain safety for the species found in the area. However, it would be beneficial to all to have development of an off-site Visitor Center and tours into the refuge led by experts in the wildlife field.

The Savannah Refuge is separated from the Visitors Center. Highway signage could be more clear where to turn for each site. Highways from the North are rather confusing near this location, so better refuge signage would be very helpful.

The signs from South Carolina are good. The signs from Georgia are great. The signs from Georgia needs mileage to the refuge.

The state road signs need to be better for directions to the Visitor Center and the driving/walking area!!!

There could be more signs on the main road directing us into the refuge.

There is no public transportation in Savannah. I would like to see more driving trails in Savannah.

There needs to be better directions and information for different walking trails.

There seems to be too few points to pull over and allow traffic to pass, and observation points to stop and observe the refuge. I would like to see an exploration of electric-powered transportation options such as golf cart-type vehicles. Less noise, less pollution, less disturbance of the wildlife, limited speed available, and a source of revenue if these were rented to visitors.

There should be signs asking motorists to pull over to the side of the road when viewing wildlife so that other people that do not wish to stop at that particular place can move on. Prevents traffic jams on the wildlife drive.

This refuge does an excellent job maintaining the wildlife drive road year round.

This refuge is a natural habitat for alligators. It is very important to keep driving areas plentiful and close to parking for trails as a safety measure. Many dislike roads closed to driving and I would like to see other areas of the refuge open to driving. I would love to see occasional evening tours to observe owls/night wildlife actually led by rangers.

This was the first time we had visited this refuge and we were surprised that it just so happened they were having their open house. We found the refuge to be in excellent condition; the staff too was extremely friendly and knowledgeable. We plan to revisit this refuge this summer again with grandchildren.

Traffic takes away from experience. Viewing areas to pull off and enjoy wildlife would be beneficial.

We did not get out and walk trails and the road was all one-way, very handy. Was there in late fall. Would visit in summer and see more wildlife.

We initially used signs on the highways to attempt to get the refuge, however, there was a key sign missing on the turnoff of Hwy 21. According to friends, there was previously a sign there. Because the sign was missing, we drove miles out of our way and if our friends had not been able to direct us to the refuge, we would not have found it and our 30 minute excursion driving around trying to find the refuge would have been pointless.

We only stayed a very short time and used our car only. I found the roads to be just fine and we were able to see many things from the road.

We were not allowed into the refuge the day we went - it was closed for some sort of hunt. They sent us to a refuge island nearby.

Well maintained.

You would need to cut some places down a little so we can see gators better.

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 = 70)

A raised observation platform or two, as used in other refuges, would be nice.

About convenient hours: Wish it had longer day-use hours.

All of this is very good at Savannah NWR. They have a great Visitor Center, great staff, friendly volunteers, and wonderful birding.

Bathroom around the side by the Fife Plantation, and also slowing down the traffic that is going over the speed limit and stirring up the dust when we are trying to take pictures.

Better hiking and biking trails would be great.

Could not judge most of the facilities or services since the reserve was off limits to everyone except disabled hunters the day we visited.

Didn't have an opportunity to observe wildlife due to cold weather conditions.

Employees are really great to talk with and very helpful.

Enjoy the beauty of different habitats and photography opportunities. Hiking in natural surroundings. Always see many birds and surprised by various wildlife. Beautiful Visitor Center, inside and out.

I believe there should be more knowledgeable staff or volunteers on the refuge with marked vehicles to assist visitors asking questions. Very often I have visitors come up to me asking about the refuge and wildlife while I am photographing, it would be nice to see the staff get out more and talk to the visitors that really want to know about what's going on here.

I didn't use the bathrooms so I don't know the condition they were in. Too many mosquitoes to walk or hike!

I enjoyed the refuge very much. I wanted to get out of the car and walk around to take more picture, but the mosquitoes were horrendous that day.

I have been going through the refuge for years and I really missed it when it was closed for 18 months during the digging up of the waterways, however I must say a lot has changed since then and I do not feel it was for the better. Shortly after it reopened all the fish in the water went belly up including a gator and the little tree swamp where all the baby gators use to lay has dried up, it has a little water now but the refuge lost a lot since the remodel. :(

I wish there were special events which offered sunset and evening access to the wildlife drive... but it is far too dangerous to explore alone.

I would like information on why you constantly vary the water level to the detriment of observation of mammals and migratory birds. Do you actually have a plan?

I would like to go to some of the trails which are closed.

I would like to see them offer a night tour option for a fee led by a naturalist guide. A boardwalk would be ideal. Also, you need picnic tables at the Visitor Center.

I'm happy with this refuge. Visitor Center is awesome although I wish it was next to the refuge. Wish there were better hiking trails.

I've always wanted to walk the trails on the refuge, but they aren't mapped or marked as to how long they are or where they lead. Also, there's not always somewhere to park to start out on a trailhead. The main problem concerning the trails is the lack of information on where they go, and how long they are. I think they're underutilized because of the uncertainty of those things.

It would be great if the refuge would offer a special mobility impaired hog hunt maybe in January or February or even March, since there is no season on hogs. It would also help the refuge.

More driving trails.

More identification guides would help those people who are not from the area and cannot readily identify marshland birds.

My grandson was totally engrossed with the archaeologist and spent 15-30 minutes listening to everything. My granddaughter went elsewhere.

My husband and I thought it was beautiful. He went before I did and told me all about it. I can't wait to go back in the spring or sooner.

My wife and I were very pleased with facilities and staff. I answered a number of statements above as "not applicable" because we did not take advantage of these opportunities with this visit. They are still somewhat to very important, however. Would take advantage of them if we lived closer. Visited from Virginia, spending time in Savannah; then spent one afternoon at the refuge.

Need to display a number to call game warden, I have seen many violations but no one to call.

Note: wheelchair bound, so much of this survey would be unreasonable to request more or better conditions. The cost would probably bankrupt our country. But the wheelchair hunt is always a pleasure for me, wish they had MORE of them.

Previously there were porta potties at the entrance of the refuge which have been removed - these should be put back. (Restrooms at the Visitor Center = 5 minutes is great.) Expanding a driving road onto the north side of Highway 170 over would be nice!

Protect at all cost.

Really enjoyed the auto tour route and the Kingfisher Loop. The trail maps and refuge brochure were excellent. Visitor Center was very nice and the store was great. If it had been open on Sunday we would have purchased something, but we got to the refuge late on Saturday and didn't have enough time to spend in the store.

Refuges are so user friendly!! I never see any litter.

Signs to the Visitor Center weren't obvious, I didn't see it until after the long dirt road drive around. It would have helped to have a map of the area since we thought we might be lost at one point. Wildlife viewing was wonderful from our car since it was raining.

The employee of yours that I met while I was there was great!

The employees and volunteers are excellent with the public.

The handicap hunts are very important to our family- we have always been very happy and satisfied with how they are handled. Employees at the refuge are outstanding!

The ladies at the desk and in the gift shop were very nice and very apologetic that we weren't allowed in. She spent a good amount of time telling us where else we could go to observe wildlife that day, instead.

The refuge entrance could alert the public for seasonal occurrences of huge mosquito and gnat populations; consequently a good idea to offer insect repellents.

The refuge has been a positive experience for me. The mobility impaired hunt gives the opportunity to enjoy the outdoors in a state other than where I reside.

The services offered at this refuge as well as the activities were varied and extensive since it was their open house. The staff and volunteers were friendly, helpful and knowledgeable.

The staff and volunteers were very welcoming and knowledgeable. We really enjoyed our visit and speaking with them!

The staff was helpful and very welcoming. Thank you for a great experience!

The use of the temporary restrooms on the drive was very welcome. Current location is near beginning of drive; additional facilities at 2/3 would be welcome because of the one-way and limited hours at Visitor Center.

The volunteer at the Visitor Center was very helpful, even letting us use her insect repellent before going out on the trail! This was great, because we were staying at a hotel, and hadn't thought to bring any from home.

The volunteer at this refuge was very helpful, informative and enthusiastic.

The volunteer was very helpful. The Visitor Center was informative and well maintained. Being able to drive on the levees made the experience doable for us.

There are no boardwalks or blinds for photography and observation.

There are two drive-through roads off to the left of the main drive that are closed. These roads closed most recently was distressful as we love seeing up to 15 species of warblers in the past. Please open it! Asked a lot about it.

There is a tremendous need for opportunity for young people (6 yr +) to volunteer. This is the time to catch their interest.

They have very helpful volunteers!

This is a lovely facility staffed by knowledgeable, welcoming people.

This is one of the best run and safe Mobility-Impaired hunts that I look forward to being drawn for. The staff and volunteers go out of their way to help us and feed us. They deserve a great pat on the back for a job above and beyond their duty. I hope to get drawn next year. Thank you, and please thank Russ, Amy, Lindsay, and all the rest of the staff and volunteers too.

Very friendly, welcoming, and good directions about what to do and where to go.

Very nice facility, helpful staff. Enjoyed the chance to see plentiful wildlife like alligators so close to an urban area. We were surprised how many birds and alligators were in one area.

Very nice place to visit and relax!

Very nice.

Visitor Center displays are outstanding. Volunteers were very friendly, very helpful and very knowledgeable.

Visitor Center should be open on Sundays! This a time when families are spending time together. If necessary, close one day during the work week in exchange for Sunday.

We could not find the Visitor Center. The signs directed us away from where we think it is.

We could really use another set of bathroom facilities towards middle/end of the trail/drive.

We have never seen any signs directing us to the Visitor Center...despite coming here for 10-15 years we never knew one existed until told by the volunteer.

We were just passing by and went in. We didn't have a lot of time to spend.

Well done!

When exiting the Refuge, the last 3/4 mile stretch (on the passenger side overlooking the canal)is OVERGROWN. Sight is very much hampered. Cutting of small scrubs/bushes is overdue.

While I prefer this refuge for its simplicity, there is room for improvement with off road observation areas, cleared walking trails and bathrooms.

Would be nice to have more educational signage about plants/animal life possibly seen and the seasons. Maybe the different colorations of the plants and animals during the change of seasons. A little more info on the refuge on signage as well, like what happened during the day to day lives of the people who lived there.

Would like more hunting time in March.

Would like to see some opportunity for canoeing/kayaking.

You drive through on a bare, basic road that is safe to travel but does not take away from the natural beauty. Please keep it like this.

You need more restrooms throughout the refuge.

You need to put up simple benches for us to sit and rest on the trails - 1/2 mile apart. We over 70 do need to rest.

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 = 147)

A natural area of local interest.

Ability to hunt on Sundays.

Ability to self guide at own pace.

Access to the refuge for the disabled. Hunting in the refuge for the disabled.

Access to wildlife and maintaining habitat makes it unique.

Accessible, easy to follow, lots of freedom, convenient, and refreshing.

Again, alligators. LOL!

Beautiful area to look at migratory waterfowl.

Because it allows families to get out and exercise and see how nature should really be, not just a bunch of buildings.

Being able to ride through and see birds, gators, and other animals is quite refreshing for myself as I am home bound most all the time.

Being close to nature and observing animals, birds, trees, and wildflowers.

Better opportunities to hunt feral hogs.

Birds in their natural habitat.

Chance to observe wildlife in a peaceful environment.

Chance to see wildlife in natural state, relatively undisturbed. The drive through allowed us to get around the refuge and see wildlife closely.

Dedication to the environment and wildlife.

Displays, information and the preservation of lands for wildlife.

Diversity of life from animals to plants to scenery.

Down in southeast U.S.

Drive, walk, bike- beautiful area for photography.

Driving, ease of access, free.

Due to mowing, etc. it changes every week.

Emphasis on education and conservation.

Generally quiet with less crowds.

Good way our tax money is spent...

Great conservation facility.

Habitat management to benefit wildlife; generally visited by people with a common passion for wildlife.

Hunting and fishing not allowed in state and national parks.

Hype and commercialism. Further, they appear to be well managed without being overregulated. Visitors are free to explore in a relatively unstructured manner.

I enjoy the ability to interact with and learn more about the environment I'm visiting.

I have never seen anything like it, of course I've never been to one before! I would definitely take the time to visit again.

I have spent many, many hours hunting, birding, hiking, photographing, boating, and canoeing at National Wildlife Refuges. They are indispensable in education, recreation, and conservation of wildlife. I taught High School Biology in Michigan for 31 years and often used the Shiawassee National Wildlife refuge for field trips and education of young people.

I never hunted flood plain marshes.

I really like that the NWRs provide an easy access to a natural setting.

I regularly visit NWR sites around the southeast. I strongly support conservation and protection of wildlife, plants and the ecosystems in which they live. I enjoy the NWRs because they are wild and more natural. You see the flora and fauna in their natural habitat. I think the NWR system is as important as the national park system.

In some respects, keeping these facilities available without a lot of tourist impact is important. The refuge purpose is to protect the species in their environments while allowing us to quietly observe. I am not sure to what extent the FWS must provide for us - the observers - beyond some literature and areas from which we can observe or photograph.

It gives me a peaceful place to go to at the end of my hectic week at work. I enjoy the wildlife and counting what we see!

It gives migratory birds a place for nesting and food to continue their journey.

It gives the public an opportunity to visit places without being a hunter or fisherman.

It gives visitors an opportunity to visit individual areas with pristine, yet diverse environments and the chance to see wildlife that thrives in these ecosystems.

It is a very natural setting which we both enjoy. Mother Nature at its finest.

It provides an opportunity to visit wildlife in their natural environment, unlike a zoo. I enjoy the refuges so much more because of this. I like how they are managed to benefit both wildlife and people.

It was different than areas I have visited before.

It would have been a great experience to observe the alligators however due to cold weather they were not present.

It's a beautiful and safe place for people to go and enjoy the birds, mammals, reptiles, and fauna the refuge holds. Many different people can use the refuge; the rich, poor, hunters, and non-hunters can all enjoy what the refuge has to offer.

It's a nice place to spend the day with your family.

It's our favorite "spot" to view/watch alligators!

Larger potential of interaction with wildlife and landscape.

Maintaining habitats.

More opportunity to observe wildlife, while knowing that the animals, birds, fish, etc. are very safe in this natural environment. Opportunities for learning.

Most refuges are unique areas in their "natural" condition.

National Wildlife Refuges occur through the US and they are accessible and offer a variety of outdoor experiences/opportunities. These public lands are well managed for the public and they serve the resident and migrating wildlife species that depend on the wildlife habitat for the basic requirements for food, water, and cover.

National Wildlife Refuges provide maintained trails, bathroom facilities, information areas, and employees that are available to answer questions. Refuges provide access to the public for hunting and fishing.

Natural environment, beauty, wildlife, our car can be used to view the area (no need to walk to see things), and fishing opportunities.

Nature as it is unspoiled and is best to enjoy.

NWR's provide great opportunities to observe birds on land and in water/marshes. Many refuges I have visited have both trails and loop roads making it possible to observe birds in many different habitats in different parts of the refuge.

NWRs are unique in that they perform vital tasks which illustrate the importance of wildlife to identify the health of an ecosystem.

NWRs offer a great way to connect with nature and raise awareness about how important it is to conserve land to protect fauna and flora for generations to come. Also, a visit to them is extremely affordable and an enriching experience.

NWRs seem to have extra to retain or attract more wildlife than State Parks or forests.

On this particular hunt we were able to observe four bobcats, owls, hawks hunting, wildfowl- several types and eleven turkeys at one time! Also such a beautiful place - love the fall leaves and of course the deer. Makes me feel good to be alive!

Opportunity to see birds, nature, and animals in their natural environment.

Opportunity to see wildlife in a protected environment.

Opportunity to view wildlife in natural habitat.

Other public lands seem to be marketed more for hunters and hikers where refuges provide a safe home for wildlife without the pressure of humans.

Preservation of natural areas.

Protected environment that is of significant scale, Resources and support available through the professional staff.

Protection and preservation

Protection and preservation of land and wildlife. Fishing and hunting opportunities.

Provides an opportunity for the public to learn and become aware of the environmental importance and beauty of natural resources.

Rare opportunity to observe the local wildlife in its natural environment.

Savannah National Wildlife Refuge is truly a wonderful place. I sort of grew up with my family on this place. It is kept very nice, clean, and very appropriate. It's nice to visit and see wildlife and openness. Also great for tailgate picnicking, spreading a blanket out and just napping. I have always loved it! Keep up the good work.

Savannah Refuge provides great opportunities for wildlife/birding experiences.

Staff is very well-informed and happy to share information.

The "non-commercialized" setting.

The 4 mile drive, most places you walk through. I like that you can drive through, it's better for older people, people with small children, etc.

The ability to access these areas and the diversity of wildlife that is observed.

The ability to be 'with' nature, as it really exists is a joy. Takes me back to my days in the mountains of PA.

The ability to interact with the environment on a personal level.

The ability to learn about wildlife and habitat management while viewing these wonderful refuges creates a very unique experience.

The ability to observe very natural surroundings without too many manmade structures is important to me. This refuge provides much in very natural structures and waterways.

The absence of commercial activities: the absence of vending machines.

The abundance of wildlife not found in other areas. The ability to drive through and pull over throughout the refuge. The combination of driving and walking trails.

The abundance of wildlife.

The accessibility and opportunity to drive through the marsh area and observe the different waterfowl and alligators makes it unique.

The facilities that I have visited have provided very helpful structures/drives to view wildlife.

The focus on protecting the natural environment and keeping the impact of humans to a minimum makes it unique.

The free admission makes it unique.

The habitat is preserved for birds and other wildlife, and wildlife can be viewed without paying a fee. The Visitor Center offers services and information.

The landscape, waterways and the number of birds I have seen are spectacular. It's a beautiful driving tour.

The maintenance of the natural habitat, while still maintaining a "birds eye" view of the animals as they really are, makes visiting a great learning experience.

The NWRs are meant to preserve unique wildlife populations without overwhelming the wildlife involved. The NWRs perform an extraordinary balancing act of conservation and public access. A bird watcher's paradise.

The NWRs I have visited consistently provide a low-cost, high-value wildlife observing opportunity where the lands are successfully developed and maintained to attract and sustain wildlife that private wildlife parks and state parks usually cannot match.

The opportunities to view waterfowl have been much better on the NWR properties I have visited compared to BLM or Forest Service lands.

The opportunity to see the outdoors and wildlife makes it unique.

The preservation of habitat for birds, wildlife, and plants makes it unique. It provides opportunities to be outdoors in quiet, natural areas and to learn about our environment.

The preservation of pristine natural landscape which in turn supports all natural wildlife and ecosystems.

The refuge is maintained to support wildlife - allow them to feed, nest, rest, breed, and behave naturally. It is great to see animals in a natural state. Seeing resident animals and migratory visitors is a treat. I enjoy going to NWRs to observe wildlife quietly. It seems like families with kids/dogs go more often to the National Parks and I get a better experience with my camera in less travelled NWRs.

The refuge offers a chance to see the different living habitats of the animals they're in. I also like the fact that each season offers different views of animals that might migrate to/by the refuge.

The road throughout the area allowed us to see birds and animals in a natural habitat.

The way you set up the driving trail to see the wildlife easily.

The wildlife is abundant, observable and free.

There are less people at most, less traffic at some, and wildlife is good (at times).

There are more recreational activities in the NWR.

There is a higher level of conservation and management than at State Parks.

There is very little encroachment on the natural habitat of wildlife.

They are "natural". They preserve the beauty of the area while providing a place for the birds and wildlife to survive and thrive.

They are always clean and well maintained, with excellent staff.

They are generally located in important ecological locations that provide necessary migration stops and breeding grounds and are managed for wildlife instead of rocks and maximum tourist exploitation.

They are low key.

They are managed, but kept in as natural a state as possible, allowing wildlife to thrive. The people who work there seem to care.

They are not complicated with unnatural attractions and activities.

They are quiet and give the opportunity to observe nature. I would like to see more restroom facilities at some of the refuges. This one has facilities! The special day was wonderful for my visiting grandchildren from two other states. These days need to be more publicized in local papers.

They are unique because their primary goal is to preserve natural areas for the plants and wildlife that live there rather than altering/destroying them to attract large numbers of tourists.

They are unique in that you get to experience birds and other animals in their natural habitats plus it is a very serene and peaceful setting.

They care more about the wildlife than the visitors. They allow hunting; and sometimes closed for hunting.

They help both the wildlife and the people who like to enjoy them. Saving wildlife without people being able to appreciate them is pointless, yet keeping their habitat realistic is important too. People viewing them from cars at least keeps people behind a "blind" and is less threatening to them.

They offer a glimpse into the local habitat.

They protect wetland communities that may otherwise not be found in National or State Parks/Natural Areas.

They provide unique areas for the public to get close to wildlife in a near wild setting.

They think of the animals first before people comforts.

They're islands of nature in the middle of whatever surrounds them. The one I visited was just across the river from Savannah, GA, but you'd never have known you were anywhere near civilization except for what you could see of the skyline of the Georgia Ports along the river in the distance.

Truly natural environment with very small human footprint.

Trying to maintain wildlife and their ecosystems, because there is not much left!

Unique to us as visitors from the UK. We do not have anything quite like them in the UK.

Unspoiled area; there are no picnic areas in the refuge area. The road is not paved and you can take your time and enjoy the environment. The area is not tamed, it's left (for the most part) to Mother Nature.

User friendly, unique nature areas, and well maintained.

Usually the rangers and volunteers are very helpful and knowledgeable. We have enjoyed other visits at other refuges at other times.

Viewing wildlife in a natural setting.

Was a spur of the moment excursion, found the move at your own pace driving tour to be the perfect way to visit this refuge and were introduced to a totally new (to us) ecosystem with different kinds of wildlife.

We are given the opportunity to observe wildlife in a natural setting as opposed to that of a zoo. Zoos are important and have a place in the opportunity to observe different wildlife, but there is nothing like seeing the native wildlife in a natural setting along with the chance to learn about said wildlife.

We are nature photographers and want to shoot our subjects in their natural environment.

We enjoy the opportunity to observe wildlife in natural habitat without having a lot of human activity.

We liked the "uncommercial" atmosphere and the opportunity to roam at our own pace in a relatively uncrowded site.

Well maintained.

Well managed, and kept 'wild'!

Well preserved very large pieces of land.

While maintaining its mission of conservation and management, NWR's are also exceptional at accommodating visitors - great facilities, good and usually well-marked trails, plenty of information.

Wildlife refuges provide the opportunity to view interesting animals in their natural habitat. I also think it is important to save wildlife, especially migratory and rare species.

Yes, this one I'm particularly interested in because the video we watched said exotic birds from South America come to this NWR during their winter. So I'd like to come back in the summer to see these migratory birds. I'd like to explore the trails more.

You always see something different every time you go and it's a great opportunity for the kids to see different types of wildlife.

You can drive all the way around.

You can only shoot the target game. Others kill anything. That is why I love to hunt to kill what I am going to eat and watch the other wildlife. Thanks for the good work.

You get to see nature in its real environment with real time observations from birth of baby ducks, gators and watching them grow up over time.

You get to see wildlife close up and the photography opportunities make it unique.

You have an opportunity to observe nature in its natural state.

You have maintained as much as possible of its natural beauty, and it is still very safe.

You have the ability to see wildlife up close and safely.

Additional Comments (n = 38)

A wonderful, intelligent, thoughtful, helpful and outgoing staff made my visit a pleasure.

Clear the last 3/4 miles so we can actually VIEW the canal!

Given the proximity to Savannah, you should reach out to the tourist trade via advertisement or posters/brochures at the visitor center in the city.

I absolutely love the Savannah NWR. My husband and I visit at least once a week and every time we see something different. I refer to the Savannah NWR as my place of serenity and I look forward to going there. They do a wonderful job in maintaining and changing the water levels at the different times of year to attract the migrating birds. LOVE IT!

I currently reside in SC. I watch a lot of Public Broadcast Stations (PBS) for both SC and GA and enjoy the shows that highlight nature shows, especially including NWRs. It increased my awareness, and I then plan a trip to go there, and have a better experience having that knowledge as a background. More shows like that would be nice to watch on TV. I would like to hear more follow up information on the status of the Golf Coast over post BP oil spill. Account info/data has died out after the immediate event timeframe. I want to know what the spill did to the environment (lagoons, marshes, etc.) and land - birds, etc. What is resident animal impact? Migratory? Reptiles? How are plans for oil pipeline (Keystone) going to impact wildlife areas? Migratory impact? NWR signs on interstates are great - it has alerted me to opportunities I wasn't aware of and I have diverted a visit often - to my delight. One of my "Bucket List" items includes visiting many National Parks, NWRs, and National Monuments in the USA as often as I can.

I do wildlife viewing in my home state--California--and was delighted that there was such a lovely NWR located adjacent to the area we were visiting.

I just take trips that I can drive to and from back in one day. Thank you for opening December for squirrels. That really helps because in October and November I hunt only hogs and deer. I have 5 children and I can take one at a time to teach them how to hunt squirrels without people with big guns hunting hogs and deer. Thank you.

I love SNWR and am considering volunteer activities.

I'm glad this refuge is finally open again. It does seem like we see less wildlife on the first half than we used to. That makes me sad. Otherwise, if we can spend a few hours visiting Savannah Refuge we always see something unexpected or unusual and leave feeling just a bit more connected to our natural world.

If a fee was added to the drive, I would not go as much, so keeping it as a free drive is very important thing for the many people that visit. I don't think you would have as many people visit it. Recent water flow gates improvements is a big plus for this refuge to control. Money well spent.

If we ever get to Savannah again, we will attempt to go back to this refuge.

It was natural and a healthy environment for wildlife, not too much traffic but enough to know that the wildlife was being enjoyed and not interfered with. It was better than the Everglades which had basically one good viewing area, but that park was very dry, so maybe not typical.

Lovely place to take visitors. Especially enjoy taking grandchildren to the refuge to see the exhibits at the Visitor Center and to see the wildlife in their natural habitat.

My wife and three grandchildren, ages 6, 5, and 2, had a wonderful time visiting the wildlife refuge. We drove through the marsh area where we were able to observe different waterfowl and alligators. We went to the Visitor Center and discovered that the refuge was having its spring open house. The children were able to participate in a multitude of physical and educational activities as well as face painting and observed birds being weighed and tagged. The staff and volunteers were friendly, helpful, and knowledgeable. It turned out to be one of the most enjoyable trips that we have taken with the grandchildren this year. Thanks for making the refuge available and for your wonderful staff.

Our refuge has way too much trash thrown out of vehicles. The past year and a half has been the worst I've ever seen it. We need more people either picking it up or catching the ones who do it and make them pay heavy fines for it! Also, all of the game wardens I've met have been great to talk to and ask questions about anything out at the Savannah National Wildlife Refuge.

Please explain draining water compounds. I do not see near the wildlife or birds that were very common 10 years go. Sometimes when you close the refuge for improvements absolutely nothing meaningful gets accomplished. Where has all the wildlife gone?

Please never offer four wheelers as an alternative transportation option.

Russ, Lindsay, and other staff are great and put on a great hunt. THANK YOU for a great trio and great memories.

Seems to be a well run refuge.

Thank you for the excellent job you do of protecting America's wildlife.

Thank you! We had a wonderful experience and hope to come back sometime in the future.

Thanks to Pelican Island NWR for setting the example!

The Spring Festival was great. We loved it. Staff was great. We'd love to have better and longer trails for hiking and biking! Thanks! This is tax money well-spent!

The visitor center is outstanding and we liked the display inside.

This is a very good refuge for alligators and birds.

Very good accessibility off Route 95 South and directions, very good birding in spring/early summer- ok in fall, wildlife is primarily gators with deer, biking off main route is very good with better chances of more gators or birds. This is one of my better parks on the way to Florida. You do a very good job at Savannah. Thank you.

Very happy to have found the Savannah National Wildlife Refuge in our recent visit to Georgia. Wonderful views of alligators and numerous birds, including a Killdeer guarding its eggs quite ferociously as we walked towards it! (Sorry for delay in returning questionnaire!)

Visits to this refuge are damn near essential to my emotional well being. I am still recovering from wartime military services connected disabilities and though I live in a mid-size city (not a big city), driving on a gravel road, with a 20 m.p.h. speed limit through the Savannah National Wildlife Refuge helps me regroup from the congestion, frenzy, and stress of driving in this tourist town, which often is congested with dicey driving conditions. And I went to the refuge directly after seeing all those terrible events of 9/11 on television. This little trip was very soothing.

We do not need to make trips especially for this purpose due to our close proximity to the Savannah Wildlife Refuge, and my husband's family lives in a rural area.

We enjoy visiting this wildlife refuge, it is well maintained and always a little different. And being free certainly helps our family. We think some signage about the refuge would benefit people and learning about the environment. Not sure what can be done about it, some people are not very safety conscience, we saw one family in a minivan with the doors open and the kids feet were sliding across the ground as the van was moving. We were concerned if the child fell out of the door, he would have been severely injured. Thank you for the opportunity to do this survey. My husband and I met working at a state park in Connecticut, so parks are very important for us.

We enjoyed our visit!

We live close to the Savannah NWR and visit sporadically throughout the year. We enjoy a nice slow car tour to see what chance bird/wildlife observations come our way. It is a quiet, peaceful respite from the hectic pace of day to day living

We need opportunities to get young people engaged in helping (picking up trash, giving appropriate tours, utilizing their natural interest in all things natural, etc.).

We really enjoyed our visit. Thanks!

We thought that it was a wonderful refuge because of the peace and quiet offered to all species living there. We were allowed to observe without being involved in massive tourism issues.

Wish there was more freedom to drive on those roads that are marked "no cars" - my friends and I are amateur photographers and would love an opportunity to explore those areas, since we visit so frequently. How can we get permission to do so?

Would like to be able to take a driving tour of the roads not on the driving 4+ miles at SWR and Harris Neck. As photographers we see the same waterways, trees, and etc.

Would like to have access to the east side of the refuge. I would like to visit that part very much.
