

6

Presentation of the natural and cultural heritage

6.1 What's in this chapter?

This chapter reports on the performance of management in fulfilling the World Heritage management obligation of presenting the natural and cultural heritage of the TWWHA. Presentation is taken to encompass the concept of assisting people to learn about and/or see and experience the special values of the TWWHA. In practical terms, this involves providing information and educational materials, catering for appropriate and ecologically sustainable recreation and tourism activities, and providing compatible visitor facilities and services.

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At a glance...key findings of this chapter

Market research demonstrated that there was a significant increase in Tasmanian public awareness and support for the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area over the management period. The percentage of Tasmanians who had not heard of the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area decreased from 18.4% in 1993 to 4.4% in 1999. At the same time, the percentage of those who considered World Heritage listing to be 'a good thing' increased from 63% in 1993 to 76% in 1999 (a statistically significant change). The percentage that considered World Heritage listing was 'a bad thing' remained stable at about 4%. (See Section 6.2 'Community awareness and support for the TWWHA'.)

The vast majority of Tasmanians gain their information about the World Heritage Area from television programs (72%), followed by newspapers (58%), magazines (25%) and radio (19%). Only 3% named the Parks and Wildlife Service as a key source of information. However, the Parks and Wildlife Service's world wide web site is experiencing a rapid rise in usage and attracting positive feedback from users. (See Section 6.3 'Popularity and effectiveness of information and education products and services')

Surveys of visitors at the Visitor Centres at Cradle Mountain and Lake St Clair revealed that both centres rated highly with visitors. 88% or more of visitors assessed each centre as being good to excellent on both 'information value' and 'entertainment value' (see Section 6.3.4 'Visitor Centres'). The Summer Interpretive Program (in which temporary rangers provide face-to-face interaction and activities for visitors during the summer months) was demonstrated to be both popular and effective in achieving its objectives, including enhancing public enjoyment and communicating basic conservation and management messages (see Section 6.3.5 'Summer Interpretation Program').

A range of new facilities and supporting infrastructure was provided in and adjacent to the TWWHA to attract visitors, enhance their experience and control their impacts. New facilities included a major new Visitor Centre at Lake St Clair; a new circuit walking track around Dove Lake at Cradle Mountain; and a variety of high quality tourist stops with short walking tracks along the Lyell Highway. (See Section 6.4 'Visitor facilities and other infrastructure'.)

The Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area was a significant attraction for local, interstate and international visitors. The number of visitors increased strongly (by about 30–35%) over the 1992–1999 period. The most visited sites were Cradle Mountain (with about 200,700 person visits per year) and Lake St Clair (with about 104,000 per year). (See Section 6.4.2 'Visitor numbers to the TWWHA'.)

Visitor surveys revealed that visitors were overwhelmingly positive about their visit to the TWWHA. Personal benefits that visitors identified from their visit largely centred on the opportunity to be active in a natural, beautiful and peaceful setting away from their normal lifestyles. The overall message from visitors was that the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area is valued primarily for its natural qualities, and people want it to remain that way. (See Section 6.2 'Visitor satisfaction with facilities, services and their experience of the TWWHA'.)

The majority of visitors who had previously visited the TWWHA considered that the place either hadn't changed or had changed for the better (see Section 6.5.4 'Quality of visitor experience').

6.2 Community awareness and support for the TWWHA

Key Desired Outcome addressed in this section:

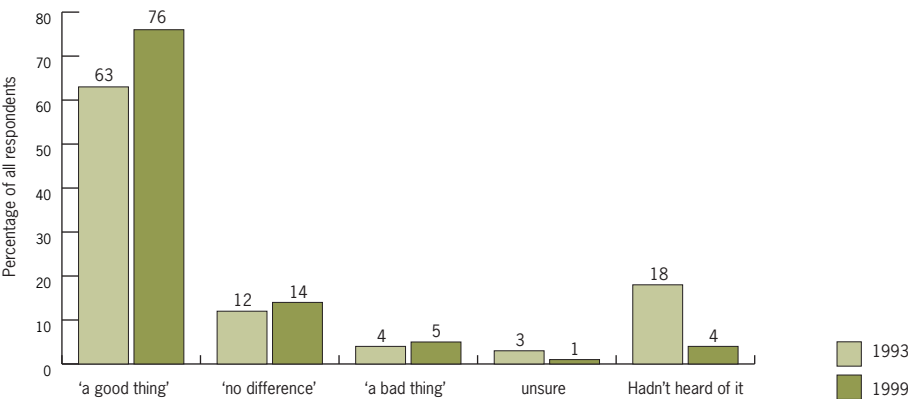
KDO 5.1: Widespread community familiarity with, appreciation of, and support for the World Heritage Area, the protection and conservation of its natural and cultural values, and the management of the conservation issues the area faces.

6.2.1 Tasmanians’ awareness of the TWWHA

Market research by telephone surveys in Tasmania in 1993 and 1999 revealed that there was a significant increase in Tasmanian public awareness of the TWWHA, and a strengthening of public opinion that World Heritage listing has been beneficial to Tasmania⁵⁷.

Over the 1992–1999 period, the percentage of Tasmanians who had not heard of the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area decreased from 18.4% in 1993 to 4.4% in 1999. At the same time, the percentage of those who considered World Heritage listing to be ‘a good thing’ increased from 63% in 1993 to 76% in 1999. These changes are statistically significant. The percentage that considered World Heritage listing as ‘a bad thing’ remained constant at about 4%.

Figure 19
Tasmanian public awareness and support for the TWWHA



The 1999 survey revealed that 82% of Tasmanians had heard of the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area compared with 80.6% in 1993. 76% of Tasmanians could spontaneously name at least one World Heritage area in Australia. Awareness of the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area was the highest (55%) followed by Kakadu (40%). The lowest level of World Heritage awareness was in people aged less than 25 years (see Section 2.9 ‘Transmission of knowledge and ability to future generations’).



Ferns and rainforest along the Franklin River nature trail.
Photo by Glenys Jones

This chart shows responses received from random samples of Tasmania residents who were asked: ‘On balance, do you think that the listing of the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area has been a good thing or a bad thing for Tasmania or has it made no difference?’. The findings demonstrate there was a significant increase in public awareness and support for the TWWHA between 1993 and 1999.

Sources: EMRS⁵⁸ 1993, EMRS 2000a, Hocking 1994a

57 Telephone surveys of 500 randomly selected Tasmanian residents were conducted as part of this evaluation by a market research company on behalf of PWS in 1993 and 1999 to monitor long-term changes in public awareness of, and attitudes to, the TWWHA (EMRS 1993, Hocking 1994, EMRS 2000a).

58 Enterprise Marketing and Research Services

6.2.2 Public perceptions of benefits and costs of World Heritage Listing

BENEFITS OF WORLD HERITAGE LISTING

The Tasmanian public identified the following as the main benefits from World Heritage listing of the TWWHA:

- preserving the environment (51%)
- preserving the area for future generations (39%)
- promoting tourism (28%);
- protecting species (13%);
- recognising special areas (8%)
- better management of the area (7%) and
- getting an international focus (6%).

These findings are presented in Figure 20(a).

COSTS OR DISADVANTAGES OF WORLD HERITAGE LISTING

In 1999, almost half the respondents (46%) said there were no costs associated with World Heritage Listing compared with 42% in 1993. However, the more recent survey recognised a broader variety of costs or disadvantages associated with World Heritage listing. Of those who considered there were costs, the main disadvantages of World Heritage listing were identified as:

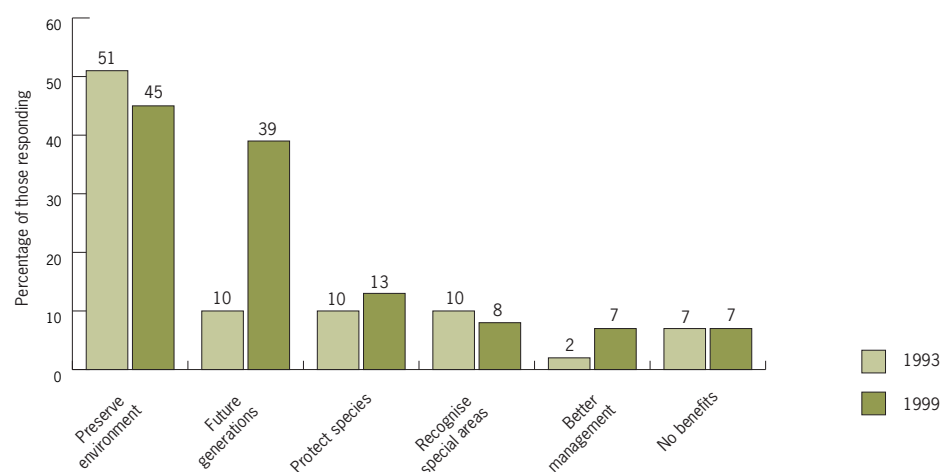
- limiting access (16%)
- economic restrictions (15%)
- restricting other uses (11%)
- preventing development (10%) and
- losses to the mining and timber industries (each 8%).

These findings are presented in Figure 20(b).

Figure 20

Tasmanian public perceptions of the main benefits and costs of World Heritage listing

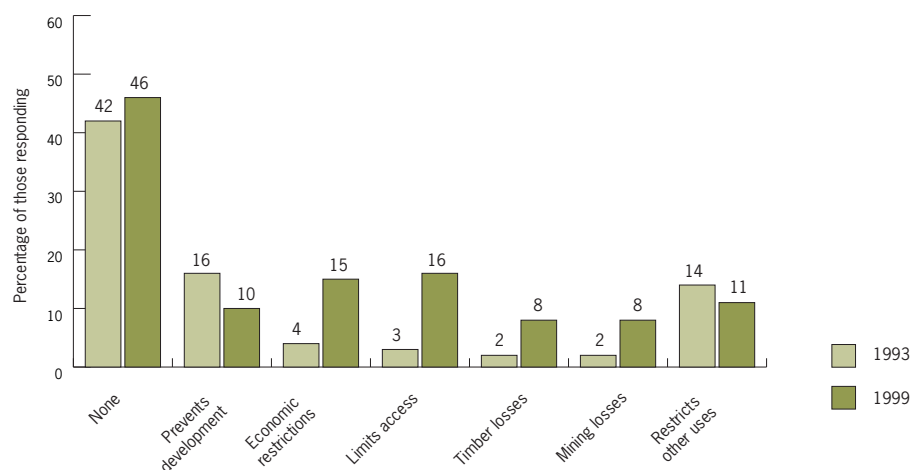
(a) Main benefits from World Heritage listing



This chart shows responses received from a random sample of Tasmanian residents who were asked 'What do you consider to be the benefits or advantages of having part of Tasmania declared as World Heritage?'. The main benefits that were identified were preserving the environment, protecting the area for future generations, and promoting tourism.

Sources: EMRS 1993, EMRS 2000a, Hocking 1994a

(b) Main costs or disadvantages of World Heritage listing



This chart shows responses received from a random sample of Tasmanian residents who were asked 'What do you consider to be the costs or disadvantages of having part of Tasmania declared as World Heritage?'. The findings demonstrate that by 1999, almost half of the Tasmanians surveyed (46%) said there were no costs associated with World Heritage listing. Of those who considered there were costs, the main disadvantages were identified as limiting access, economic restrictions, restricting other uses, preventing development and losses to the mining and timber industries.

Sources: EMRS 1993, EMRS 2000a, Hocking 1994a

6.3 Popularity and effectiveness of information and education products and services

Key Desired Outcome addressed in this section:

KDO 5.2: High levels of satisfaction of the community, a wide range of visitors, educational institutions and other interest groups with information, education and interpretation products, activities, programs and services.

The Parks and Wildlife Service provides a range of products and services offering information, education and interpretation⁵⁹ about the TWWHA, including:

- Pre-visit information which 'invites' and informs potential visitors to Tasmania's parks and reserves. This is provided through the PWS web site, notesheets, pre-visit brochures, phone calls, over-the-counter enquiries, and other media.
- On-site interpretation and education which includes face-to-face interpretation (e.g. Summer Interpretation Program, guided walks, Visitor Centre staff) and on-site signage, brochures, displays, drama or other artistic presentations.
- On-site visitor information which includes brochures and notesheets, visitor service interaction and casual interaction.
- Off-site information and community education, which includes teacher training and eco-tourism training for tour operators.

In addition, Tourism Tasmania and PWS provide visitor information about the TWWHA through their respective websites and visitor information centres, and through their promotion of media coverage of the TWWHA e.g. through media articles, television documentaries, and through the 'Visiting Journalist Program' which can generate numerous media stories, editorials and documentaries.

Relatively little measured information is available upon which to evaluate the use, popularity, or effectiveness of information, educational and interpretive products or services provided for the TWWHA. The findings of the following visitor surveys generally reflect correlations between the initiatives undertaken by the managing agency and the positive outcomes observed—however, without specific evaluations of programs, it is difficult to establish a direct causal relationship between initiatives and results.

Interpretation at Franklin River Nature Trail, Wild Rivers National Park.

Photo by Tasmanian Great Short Walks



Visitors at Heritage Landing on the Gordon River pause to browse through the information panels which highlight some of the special features of the TWWHA.

Photo by Glenys Jones

⁵⁹ 'Interpretation' as used here means an educational activity that aims to enhance understanding and appreciation of the natural and cultural heritage through the use of various media such as talks, guided tours and exhibits.



Geoff Lennox worked with the Parks and Wildlife Service for 25 years, the last decade as Manager of the Interpretation and Education Section. In that position, Geoff oversaw the development of interpretation in the TWWHA, including the establishment of Visitor Centres at Cradle Mountain, Lake St Clair and Strahan. An authority in fields such as historic research and educational philosophy, Geoff retired in 2000.

Photo by PWS

6.3.1 Public and visitors' key sources of information about the TWWHA

The 1999 public phone survey of Tasmanian residents found that the vast majority of Tasmanians gained their information about the World Heritage Area from television programs (72%), followed by newspapers (58%), magazines (25%) and radio (19%). Comparison of the results with the 1993 survey results revealed that use of Parks and Wildlife Service publications and the Internet for information about the TWWHA increased from zero in 1993 to 3% in 1999 (EMRS 1993, Hocking 1994a, EMRS 2000a). These findings are presented in Figure 21.

Consistent with other market research studies, younger people were found to be more likely to gather information from television, whilst printed media (newspapers and magazines) were more important to older people as a key source of information (EMRS, 2000a).

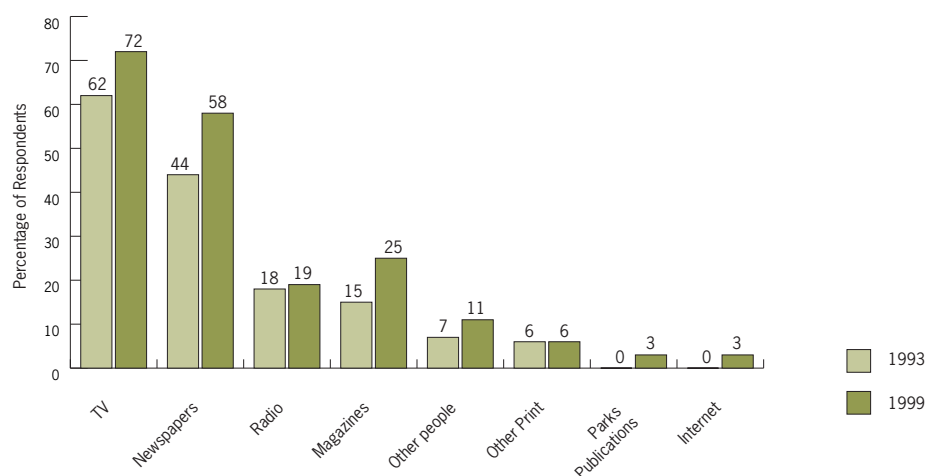
On-site visitors to the TWWHA include both Tasmanians and a broad range of interstate and international visitors. Surveys of on-site visitors by the Parks and Wildlife Service revealed that most visitors to the TWWHA relied on brochures and word of mouth to find out about parks and what they have to offer. Use of the Internet for information about parks was approximately 5%–16% of survey respondents, depending on sites (1999 Visitor Survey Program).

Figure 21

Key sources of public's knowledge about the TWWHA

This chart shows responses received from a random sample of Tasmanian residents who were asked 'From what sources have you learned about World Heritage?'. The findings demonstrate that the vast majority of Tasmanians gain their knowledge about World Heritage from television, newspapers, magazines, and radio.

Sources: EMRS 1993, EMRS 2000a, Hocking 1994a



Interpretation at Nelson Falls, Lyell Highway.

Photo by Barry Batchelor



Visitors explore the nature trail at Nelsons Falls, Wild Rivers National Park.

Photo © Geoffrey Lea – Tasmanian Great Short Walks



Over the 1992–1999 period, many new information signs were erected to assist visitors to visit and enjoy the TWWHA.

Photo by Glenys Jones

6.3.2 Visitor satisfaction with the provision of information and education

There was no consistent ongoing program of visitor surveys over the management period by which to evaluate the satisfaction of visitors with the provision of information and education. The following findings have been extracted from a variety of visitor surveys conducted over the 1992–1999 period.

Areas of dissatisfaction or other issues arising from the provision of information included:

- Some information products prepared by PWS (e.g. the Overland Map, Notes and Notebook) were not used by many visitors. For example, relatively few walkers used the Overland Map and Notes, or the Overland Notebook (12% and 1% respectively⁶⁰).
- There was some visitor dissatisfaction with walking track signage (particularly for short walks) e.g. unreliable walking times and no distances provided; difficulty in choosing appropriate grading or type of walk; and poor directional signs.
- Some visitors considered that there was too much reliance on Visitor Centres as sites for information dispersion, e.g. visitors considered that information about choice of walks should be provided at trackheads (i.e. where people make their decisions about walks) rather than in Visitor Centres, and that interpretation on flora, fauna and geology should also be provided trackside.⁶¹ Similarly, surveys of Overland Track walkers also revealed that few of these walkers were dropping into Visitor Centres for information.⁶²
- Information signs and/or displays were considered good to excellent at Melaleuca birdhide and Heritage Landing; however, some inadequacies were identified in the directional signs at Mt Field⁶³ and Sarah Island.⁶⁴ However, these findings are based on a visitor survey program undertaken early in the management period, and so may not reflect the current situation.

In addition a number of unmet visitor needs were identified⁶⁵:

- Visitors strongly identified a desire for more Aboriginal Interpretation in the World Heritage Area (e.g. about Aboriginal culture and the relationship of Aborigines with the area), and also identified the need for more information about wildlife.
- Visitors identified a desire for trackside interpretation about flora, fauna and geology.
- An issue raised by a number of visitors was the difficulty of obtaining advance information from interstate or overseas about what parks offer and the services and accommodation etc available to visitors.

Staff observations and visitor feedback suggest that face-to-face information and education programs (e.g. slide shows, night walks, kids' activities etc provided by Parks staff) were very popular with most visitors. Visitors also responded very positively to having face-to-face interpretation of Aboriginal heritage from Aboriginal people; although this has only been provided on rare occasions.

6.3.3 PWS world wide web site

The Parks and Wildlife Service's Internet website (<www.parks.tas.gov.au>) was first developed in 1995 as part of the management program for the TWWHA. The website has opened up new opportunities for presenting the TWWHA to local and global audiences in a manner that was unimaginable only a few years ago. Visitors to the PWS web site can learn why the TWWHA was listed; how the World Heritage Convention operates; what recreational opportunities are available in the TWWHA; and how the area is managed. Users can also take a 'virtual visit' via 360° panoramas to various scenic locations within the area. Complementary visitor information is also available from the Tourism Tasmania website at <<http://www.dtpa.tas.gov.au>>, follow the links to Tourism/Discover Tasmania.

The PWS web site has attracted very positive feedback from users in Australia and around the world, and the level of usage of the website has rapidly increased. For example, the total number of 'hits' in May 2001 (approx. 2.5 million) exceeded the total hits received over the



Visitors on a guided walk of Sarah Island, Macquarie Harbour. Knowledgeable guides can help visitors to understand more about how the island operated in former convict times.

Photo by Glenys Jones



Peter Grant has been with the Parks and Wildlife Service since 1991. During this time, Peter has been responsible for preparing the South Coast Walks Map and Notes, many park brochures, as well as the interpretive signs at Nelsons Falls, Lake St Clair, Cockle Creek, Heritage Landing and roadside interpretation such as along the Gordon River Road. Peter now manages the Interpretation and Education Section.

Photo by Tim O'Loughlin

60 2000 Overland Survey Program (survey and diary)

61 1999 visitor survey program

62 1999 visitor survey program

63 Mt Field, although outside the TWWHA, is managed as a Visitor Services Zone for the TWWHA e.g. to act as a gateway to the TWWHA and to provide interpretation of World Heritage values such as tall forests.

64 1992–1994 Visitor Survey Program (Cockle, Sarah Island, Heritage Landing, Melaleuca, Mt Field)

65 1999 visitor survey program



The Tasmanian devil is a star attraction on the Parks and Wildlife Service's website (<www.parks.tas.gov.au>).

Photo by PWS Interpretation Section

66 More recent figures on monitored usage are not available as a result of changes to the operational system for the website (associated with agency restructures).



Steve Johnson (Interpretation and Education Officer) began his employment with the Parks and Wildlife Service as a Summer Interpretation Ranger in 1991, working at Cradle, Strahan and Mt Field National Parks. He subsequently wrote the Gordon River Tour Operator Training Kit; developed interpretative signage (eg at Sarah Island, Melaleuca, Nelson Falls and Donaghys Hill); and is currently completing an Education Kit about the TWWHA. One of Steve's greatest contributions has been the development of the Parks and Wildlife Service's web site. Steve also trains Summer Rangers, Eco-Tour operators, TAFE and University students in order to promote better understanding and appreciation of the TWWHA.

Photo by Sophie Underwood

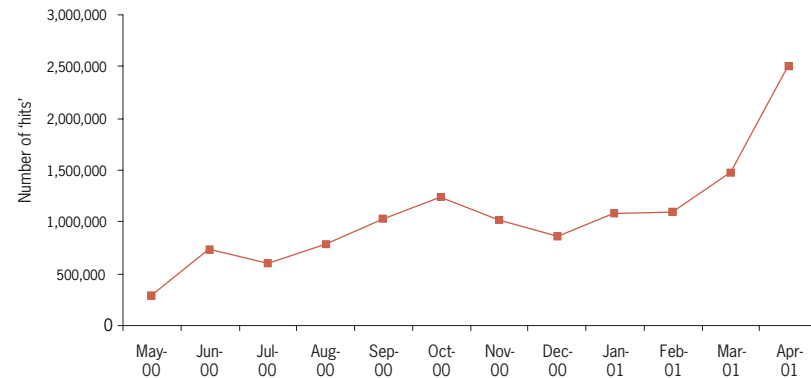
The most frequently visited topics on the website are those providing information about Tasmania's wildlife (especially the Tasmanian devil, platypus and snakes) and information for people planning to visit Tasmania's National Parks, and outdoor activities. There is also a significant level of interest in a wide range of other topics.

entire first 2 years of operation (see Figure 22(a)). The most popular pages are those dealing with Tasmanian wildlife (especially the Tasmanian devil and the platypus), visitor guides, information about national parks and outdoor recreation, the 'kids-only' site, cultural heritage, and the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area. An indication of the topic areas within the PWS Web Site that are proving most popular is shown in Figure 22(b).

Figure 22

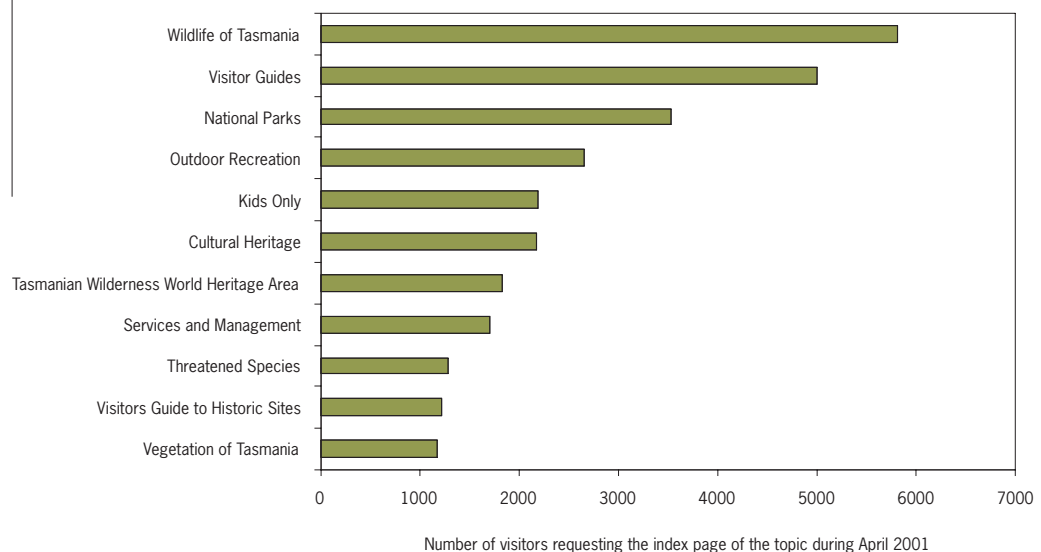
Monitored use of the Parks and Wildlife Service web site

(a) Growth in the number of 'hits' on the Parks and Wildlife Service web site



The Parks and Wildlife Service's website (<www.parks.tas.gov.au>) was first developed in 1995. Monitored usage of the site reflects rapidly growing popularity⁶⁶.

(b) Relative popularity of topics on the Parks and Wildlife Service web site



Number of visitors requesting the index page of the topic during April 2001

6.3.4 Visitor Centres

Major Visitor Centres have been provided at or near all the main visitor entrances to the TWWHA, i.e. at Cradle Mountain, Lake St Clair, Strahan, and more recently at Mt Field. These Visitor Centres are purpose-designed buildings with modern facilities that provide a venue where visitors can interact face-to-face with Parks staff, get information about activities and facilities, and browse through educational displays and learn about the park and its values. Visitor Centres also provide an important sheltered venue during inclement weather where visitors can gain some appreciation of the park, e.g. through displays and audio-visual presentations. Some Visitor Centres also provide refreshments and meals. Other smaller supporting centres at Liawenee and at Hastings provide a basic level of visitor services and interpretation.

Surveys of visitors at the Cradle Mountain and Lake St Clair Visitor Centres found that both Centres rated similarly well with visitors. 88% or more of visitors assessed each centre as being good to excellent on both 'information value' and 'entertainment value' (1999 visitor survey program).

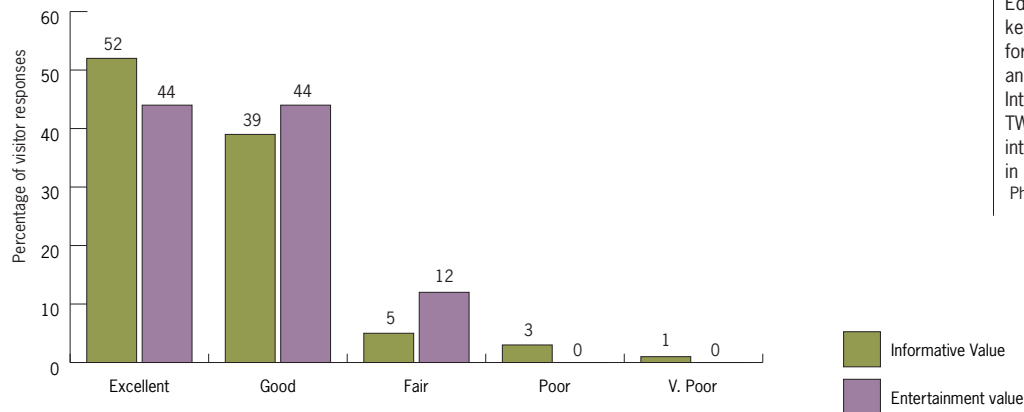


Tom Mumbray was with the Parks and Wildlife Service between 1990 and 1995 in the Interpretation and Education Section. Tom played a key role in creating the displays for the Lake St Clair Visitor Centre and overseeing the Aboriginal Interpretation Strategy for the TWWHA. Tom has since moved interstate where he also specialises in wildlife interpretation.
Photo by Environmental Protection Agency

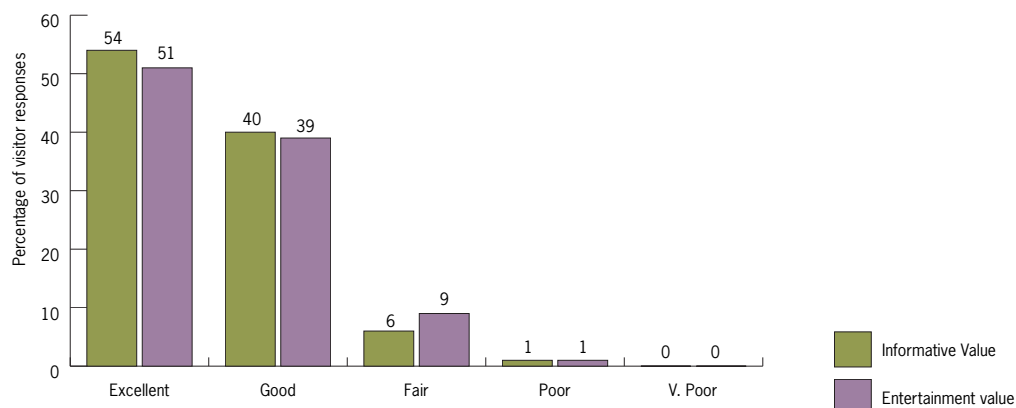
Figure 23

Visitor satisfaction with Visitor Centres

(a) Visitors' assessment of the Cradle Mountain Visitor Centre



(b) Visitors' assessment of the Lake St Clair Visitor Centre



Visitors at the Visitor Centres of Cradle Mountain and Lake St Clair were asked to assess the informative value and entertainment value of the Centre. Both Centres were rated highly by visitors. Figure (a) shows the results for the Cradle Mountain and Figure (b) shows Lake St Clair.

Source: Parks and Wildlife Service 1999 visitor survey program

Ingrid Albion commenced work with the department in 1994 as a Summer Interpretation Ranger at Lake St Clair and subsequently became the department's Education Officer. Ingrid's work includes talking to school classes to foster a basic understanding of National Parks and wildlife, and providing training for the Summer Interpretive Rangers and University teacher training courses to 'teach the teachers' about Tasmania's parks and reserves. Ingrid is also responsible for developing interpretation signs and displays in Visitor Centres, and has recently been responsible for the development of a video documentary about the TWWHA which plays at the Mt Field Visitor Centre.
Photo by Sophie Underwood



Temporary Summer Interpretation Rangers organise activities for visitors at the major Visitor Services Sites for the TWWHA (including Cradle Mountain, Lake St Clair, Cockle Creek, and Mt Field) during the popular summer months to assist visitors to enjoy and gain insight into the values and management issues in the reserve.

Photo by Jenni Burdon

6.3.5 Summer Interpretation Program

The Summer Interpretation Program, which operated over the 1992–1999 period, consisted of temporary rangers providing face-to-face interaction and structured activities for visitors to National Parks during the summer months.

A consultant's evaluation of the program (*Earthlines* 1999) demonstrated that the program was very popular with visitors (particularly families) and that the program had been effective in achieving its goals in that it had:

- **Enhanced the public's appreciation and enjoyment of parks and reserves.** The program was very popular with families, particularly those staying overnight and those with a conservation leaning. Participants in the program rated the programs very highly—84% of respondents to the survey rated their enjoyment as 'happy' or 'very happy' while 98% of visitors felt the activities met or exceeded their expectations. The only disappointment for visitors was the sometime failure of wildlife to appear on cue in wildlife viewing activities.
- **Encouraged visitors to appreciate and value National Parks and reserves.** 61% reported that they were influenced by the activity to visit another National Park.
- **Communicated basic conservation and management messages.** All respondents said that they had learnt something from the activity, with 38% stating they had learnt 'a lot'. Over two thirds of respondents considered that they had been influenced to change their behaviour either at home or in the park so as to support conservation strategies (e.g. not to feed wildlife; to stay on tracks etc.)
- **Encouraged a positive view of the Parks and Wildlife Service.** Many participants commented very favourably on the program and on the personal qualities of the Summer Interpretive Rangers, citing particularly their friendliness and level of knowledge.

The evaluation identified the following opportunities for improving the program:

- programs need to be developed to cater for non-family and/or short stay visitor audiences (i.e. the majority of visitors at the larger sites);
- key audiences at each park should be identified;
- programs need to be tailored in consultation with district staff;
- improve local advertising of programs;
- include more Aboriginal content;
- expand the season over which the program runs.

6.3.6 Ecotour guide packages

Ecotour guide packages were developed to assist Gordon River tour operators to provide their clients with quality information about the natural and cultural heritage of the area. These products proved popular with visitors and there were high levels of demand for the kits. The success of this approach prompted the reprint of the kit and is supporting the development of similar products for other key tourism areas.

6.4 Visitor facilities, use and sustainability

Key Desired Outcome addressed in this section:

KDO 6.1: Ecologically sustainable management of human use of the World Heritage Area to within acceptable, and where necessary defined, limits of environmental and social impact which do not threaten or compromise the objectives of World Heritage Area management.

6.4.1 Visitor facilities and other infrastructure

A range of new facilities and supporting infrastructure was provided or upgraded over the 1992–1999 period in and adjacent to the TWWHA to attract visitors, enhance their experience, and control their impacts. New or upgraded facilities and infrastructure within the TWWHA included:

- Cynthia Bay, Lake St Clair, underwent major redesign and construction of new visitor facilities and infrastructure in accordance with the Site Plan for the area. Major changes included the construction of a new Visitor Centre incorporating educational displays and a restaurant, the provision of a large parking area in a less intrusive area (which replaced the former lakeside carpark), and new accommodation cabins at the campground. A major new sewage treatment plant was constructed to service the site.
- At Cradle Mountain, and in accordance with the Site Plan for the area, a new circuit walking track was constructed around Dove Lake, and the Waldheim chalet was converted to a 'living museum' to recognise the early history of the park and the contribution of pioneers to conservation of the area. The Day Hut was also refurbished with the assistance of volunteers.
- A variety of high quality tourist stops with short walking tracks were provided along the Lyell Highway and at other convenient access points to the TWWHA (e.g. the Franklin River Nature Trail; the Woodland Walk⁶⁷ and Platypus Bay track at Lake St Clair; and other short walks at Hartz Mountain, Devils Gullet, Sarah Island, and Mt Field).
- A range of other visitor facilities were provided and/or upgraded in a variety of locations including the construction of an additional commercial hut at Kia Ora on the Overland Track, provision of remote-area toilets, and the provision of visitor facilities at Devils Gullet lookout, Needles picnic area, Franklin River picnic area, Hartz Mountain, East Pillinger, and the upgrading of the Strahan Customs House.
- Numerous degraded and actively eroding walking tracks throughout the TWWHA were stabilised, upgraded or re-constructed in accordance with the Walking Track Management Strategy.
- Several access roads to the TWWHA were upgraded e.g. to Marakoopa Caves, Hartz Mountain, and Lake Ada; and a formal amendment to the 1992 management plan (Parks and Wildlife Service, 1997) allowed for the retention of the Mt McCall 4WD track near Queenstown (previously scheduled for closure and rehabilitation).

6.4.2 Visitor numbers to the TWWHA

The total number of visitors to the TWWHA increased significantly over the 1992–1999 period⁶⁸. It is estimated that the overall increase was in the order of 30–40%, although the available data do not allow precise figures to be determined.

About half of all interstate and overseas visitors to Tasmania visited at least one site in the TWWHA⁶⁹ during their stay in Tasmania (Tasmanian Visitor Survey⁷⁰), and the total numbers of interstate and international visitors to Tasmania increased from approx 400,000 in 1992 to approx. 550,000 in 1999. Information on the number of Tasmanian visitors to the TWWHA is not available because locally based visitors are not covered by the Tasmanian Visitor Survey or any comparable survey. Consequently detailed data on the total number of visitors to the TWWHA are not available. However, the findings of market



Trevor Westren, a Technical Officer with the Parks and Wildlife Service, has been employed with the National Parks Service since 1972 and is currently involved in the provision of infrastructure services (such as water supply, sewerage, power and communication systems) to high public use areas in the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area such as Cradle Valley.

Photo by J. Westren



A variety of high quality short walks was provided along the Lyell Highway and other sites to encourage travellers to stop and enjoy the Tasmanian Wilderness. Visitors can get out of their car, breathe in some of the cleanest air in the world, and stretch their legs on several easy strolls. Interpretive signs were provided along the tracks to assist visitors to understand more about the area and its values.

Photo by Glenys Jones

67 This walk was recently provided with signage about Aboriginal heritage and renamed the Larmairremener Tabeti Walk.

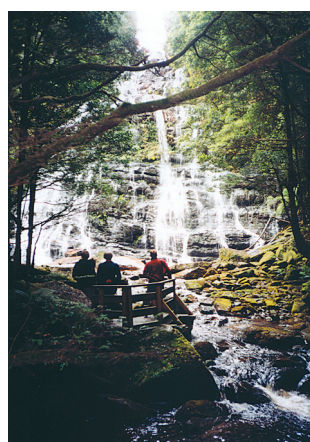
68 The information on visitor numbers in this section has been derived from a variety of sources including vehicle and people counter records and analysis of logbook entries by walkers.

69 Sites within the TWWHA include: Gordon River, Lake Pedder, Great Lake/Central Plateau, Cradle Mtn, Lake St Clair, Southwest/Port Davey, Hartz Mtns.

70 The Tasmanian Visitor Survey is a departure survey of passengers at Tasmanian airports and ferry terminals, and is conducted by Tourism Tasmania.

Sue Rundle (Research Officer, Statistics) joined the Parks and Wildlife Service in 1994 and is responsible for visitor monitoring. Here, Sue is carrying an automatic track counter to be installed—one of several technologies trialled for automatically counting the number of walkers using tracks in the TWWHA.

Photo by Nick Sawyer



Nelson Falls—one of several high quality short walks provided for visitors along the Lyell Highway.

Photo by Glenys Jones

research polls of randomly selected Tasmanian residents suggest that in 1998/99 about 36% of all Tasmanians had visited the TWWHA some time over the past year (EMRS, 2000a).

The most visited sites were Cradle Mountain (with a total of about 200,700 person visits⁷¹ a year) and Lake St Clair with about 104,000 person visits a year.

Visitation to the nearby Mt Field National Park was just over 130,000 person visits a year. Of note is the finding that the number of person visits to Mt Field declined significantly following the introduction of Park Entry Fees in 1993 (dropping from about 179,000 in 1992/93 to 130,700 in 1999/2000), and numbers have not recovered to the present. This decline is attributed to a reduction in use by local residents.

The most popular walking track in the TWWHA is the Overland Track which is a 5–7 day walk from Cradle Mountain to Lake St Clair. Usage of the Overland Track steadily increased over the 1992–1999 period from about 5,400 per year in 1992/93 to about 7,300 in 1999/2000 (an increase of about 35%).

Also very popular are the South Cape Bay walk from Cockle Creek to the south coast (4 hours return) and the Walls of Jerusalem tracks (see Figure 24⁷²). Visitor statistics suggest that usage of the Walls of Jerusalem tracks increased from about 2,600 to 3,200 over the 1992–1999 period (an increase of about 23%). Reliable visitor statistics are not available for most other areas in earlier years, although figures for the Frenchmans Cap Track suggest an increase in usage of about 17% over the 1992–1999 period.

The number of rafters on the Franklin River increased from approximately 236 person visits in 1992/93 to 493 in 1999/2000. The maximum number of rafters was recorded in 1996/97 at 540. The percentage of rafters on commercially operated trips varied between 58% and 80% of all rafters⁷³.

Commercial visitor services associated with the TWWHA increased over the 1992–1999 period, with the introduction of a number of new adventure tour operations that offer guided activities in the TWWHA. The number of visitors landing at Melaleuca by plane is estimated to have increased from approximately 3,800 in 1992/93 to about 5,000 in 1999/2000⁷⁴.

A key emerging issue for the TWWHA is how increasing tourism and visitation can be effectively managed to deliver ecologically sustainable human use of the TWWHA that does not degrade the area's natural and cultural heritage.

71 A 'person visit' occurs whenever a person enters a site for the first time for the reason of participating in protected area activities. This terminology is consistent with the recommendations of the ANZECC Benchmarking and Best Practice Program (see The National Parks Service Victoria, 1996) and does not include traffic on roads that pass through the World Heritage Area (e.g. Lyell Highway and Lake Highway).

72 Note that these figures are based on walker registrations, and estimates of walker registration non-compliance vary between 10% and 30%.

73 These figures are based on Collingwood River registrations and Mt McCall Road permits.

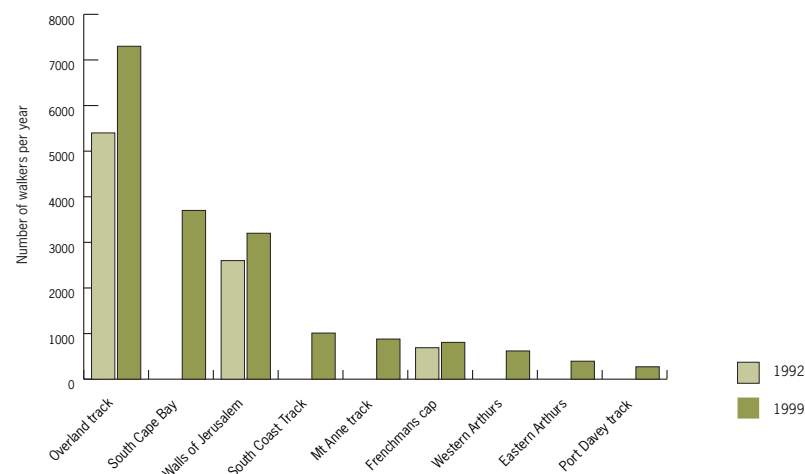
74 Figures based on observations and records from local residents.

Figure 24

Visitor use of major walking tracks in the TWWHA

Visitor data (where available) indicate that there were significant increases in the usage of walking tracks over the 1992–1999 period. Walker numbers increased about 17% on the Frenchmans Cap Track, 23% on the Walls of Jerusalem tracks, and 35% on the Overland Track.

Source: PWS visitor monitoring data



6.4.3 Management for ecologically sustainable human use

Management for ecologically sustainable human use of the TWWHA over the 1992–1999 period focused on four main management strategies:

- the promotion of minimal impact practices;
- the development of the Walking Track Management Strategy;
- the application of scientific research and monitoring to management of human use; and
- the application of environmental standards or limits to activities.

PROMOTION OF MINIMAL IMPACT PRACTICES

Minimal impact practices were promoted to raise awareness of, and adoption of, environmentally responsible practices by visitors and commercial tour operators. A major Minimal Impact Bushwalking program was conducted that promoted minimal impact and safe walking practices. In collaboration with user groups, environmentally sensitive codes of practice were developed for the major recreational activities being undertaken in the TWWHA. Codes of practice were developed for horseriders ('Horse riding in the high country'), 4WD drivers ('Cruisin' without bruising'), trail bike riders ('Ride around Tasmania' and 'On yer bike'), responsible angling ('Tackling more than trout'), and boating ('What's in your wake?').

These programs all focused on the 'leave no trace' ethic and promoted carrying out all rubbish, using fuel stoves instead of campfires, dealing with faecal waste appropriately, and camping and walking in ways that minimised environmental impacts. Specific advice was provided that targeted the activities of each recreational user group. For example, for fishing, the use of lures was promoted over live bait. This advice aimed to avoid the potential introduction of non-native species to the TWWHA, and to avoid the physical disturbance of the environment associated with searching and digging for live bait.

Two other programs were aimed generally at all users—the policing of 'fuel stove only areas' (which were legally binding over the majority of the TWWHA); and the 'keep wildlife wild' program which discouraged the feeding of native animals to avoid health problems for the animals (e.g. 'lumpy jaw' disease in wallabies) and nuisance and safety problems for people (e.g. from aggressive or emboldened animals).

The vast majority of visitors abided by the fuel stove only policy and there were no known campfire escapes over the 1992–1999 period. Similarly, the 'keep wildlife wild' campaign was associated with a significant reduction in the level of feeding of wildlife, particularly at Lake St Clair. Other promoted minimal impact practices were broadly adopted by most users over the management period.

Commercial tour operators were encouraged, and at times required, to improve various environmental practices. For example, following changes in the operations of commercial rafting tours—including commencing taking out all their clients' waste (including faecal waste)—campsites along the Franklin River improved in aesthetic and environmental quality. Tourism Tasmania also assisted in raising tourism operators' awareness of accreditation.

Several tourism operators demonstrated a growing awareness of environmentally sensitive practices in the TWWHA and, in some cases, placed more emphasis on promoting their activities on the basis of their environmental credentials. The following excerpt is from a Submission to Cabinet⁷⁵ by a tourism operator in the TWWHA: *'To be successful, the wilderness must remain unspoiled and our customers true ambassadors for the protection and recognition of this area's real worth—pure wilderness.'* Many commercial operators now actively promote the minimal impact philosophy.



Rosemary Hollow (Recreation Research Officer) developed several policy documents to assist management of visitor use in the TWWHA, including campfire use on the Central Plateau, cruise vessel access to Port Davey–Bathurst Harbour, and a strategic framework policy for visitor services.

Photo by Tim O'Loughlin

75 'Submission to Cabinet for a Tourism Development in harmony with Tasmania's South West National Park—a World Heritage Area', Par Avion Wilderness Tours, 1996.

The new circuit track around Dove Lake, Cradle Mountain, has proved very popular with visitors. It is easy enough for the whole family and provides visitors with an unforgettable experience of Tasmania's natural treasures.

Photo by Glenys Jones



Weather conditions can change rapidly in southwest Tasmania and unprepared walkers in remote areas can suddenly find themselves in a dangerous situation and at risk of hypothermia. Management aims to ensure all visitors are well informed and prepared before they set out.

Photo by Barry Batchelor



DEVELOPMENT OF THE WALKING TRACK MANAGEMENT STRATEGY

The development of the Walking Track Management Strategy aimed to achieve physical and environmental sustainability of the TWWHA walking track network by managing the physical condition of tracks and limiting walkers to sustainable levels.

The Walking Track Management Strategy resulted in the upgrading and rehabilitation of many actively eroding tracks and the provision of hardened tracks and campsites in some areas. However, monitoring of the walking track network over the 1992–1999 period revealed continuing expansion and degradation of extensive sections of the walking track network (see Section 4.10.3 ‘Case study—Walker impacts’.)

While the 1992 TWWHA management plan provided for the implementation of use restrictions to limit environmental impacts and reduce unplanned track formation, there was significant community opposition to regulating visitor numbers and/or use, and use restrictions have not to date been applied. As degradation is continuing, alternative approaches to regulating visitor use are currently being explored (in 2003) in collaboration with bushwalking groups. The approach currently under development by the Bushwalking and Track Review process (BATR) is based on designating ‘Limits of Acceptable Change’ (LAC), monitoring performance, and implementing the necessary management responses to achieve the desired results.

APPLICATION OF SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH AND MONITORING TO MANAGEMENT

Scientific research and monitoring programs were used to investigate the impact of a variety of human activities in the TWWHA. The findings were then applied to actively manage those activities for sustainability. For example, there were significant achievements in the management of commercial cruise boat operations on the lower Gordon River (see Section 4.10.2 ‘Case study—Riverbank erosion on the lower Gordon River’) and the management of horseriding on the Central Plateau (see Section 4.10.4 ‘Case study—Horseriding on the Central Plateau’). For some recreational activities, the use of experimental trials generated a sound scientific basis for guiding the ecologically sustainable use of the TWWHA e.g. sustainable carrying capacities were determined for bushwalking in different vegetation communities, and for horseriding on the Central Plateau.

Importantly, research also demonstrated that some visitor activities were currently being sustainably managed e.g. hunting of wallabies on the Central Plateau.

APPLICATION OF ENVIRONMENTAL STANDARDS OR LIMITS TO ACTIVITIES

A variety of environmental standards or limits were introduced to assist the ecologically sustainable management of human use. For example:

- the Fuel Stove Only Area policy restricted the use of campfires in sensitive alpine environments which reduced the risk of peat fires or other wildfires, and also halted the degradation associated with firewood cutting around campsites;
- effluent quality standards were set for public and private huts and toilets on the Overland Track;
- limits were applied to group sizes for commercial tour groups; and
- speed limits were introduced or reduced for vessels on rivers prone to riverbank erosion (including the lower Gordon River, Davey River and Melaleuca Inlet).



A remote area composting toilet at Waterfall Valley, on the Overland Track. The mountain in the background is Barn Bluff.

Photo by Trevor Westren

6.5 Visitor satisfaction with facilities, services and their experience of the TWWHA

Key Desired Outcome addressed in this section:

KDO 6.2: High levels of community and visitor satisfaction with:

- the range and quality of recreational opportunities and facilities available;
- the operations and services of the Service, licensed tour operators, concessionaires; and
- the quality of their experience in the World Heritage Area

6.5.1 Management of visitor facilities and recreational opportunities

Management of visitor facilities in the TWWHA over the 1992–1999 period aimed to maintain wilderness quality while providing a range of appropriate recreational opportunities that enabled visitors to gain a first hand experience of the values of the TWWHA. To achieve this, management focused on locating facilities that would cater for higher numbers of visitors on the edges of the TWWHA or close to existing roads in Visitor Services Zones and Sites, and protecting the more remote ‘core’ areas from impacts in Wilderness Zones. Intermediate areas allowed for a broad range of outdoor recreational activities in Recreation and Self Reliant Recreation Zones.

The result is a range of recreational opportunities and facilities available to visitors to the TWWHA that ranges from extremely remote, long distance, wilderness walking opportunities to highly managed environments such as Visitor Centres and short high quality built walking tracks. Recreational opportunities available within the TWWHA include sightseeing, bushwalking, guided tours, picnicking, rafting, boating, camping, fishing, canoeing, caving, climbing, abseiling, skiing, diving, surfing, recreational driving, horseriding, and hunting. For further information about recreational activities available in the TWWHA and other Tasmanian reserves go to the PWS website at www.parks.tas.gov.au and follow the links to Bushwalking and Outdoor Recreation; Visitors’ Guides; and Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area.

With over 1,000km of walking tracks in the TWWHA, bushwalking is one of the area’s major visitor attractions. Walking opportunities include high quality short walks, an extensive range of day walks, long-distance multi-day walks, and expedition level treks. Over the 1992–1999 period, numerous degraded and actively eroding walking tracks throughout the TWWHA were stabilised, upgraded or re-constructed. A new day walk circuit track was constructed around Dove Lake at Cradle Mountain and a variety of high quality short walking tracks with interpretive signs were provided at tourist stops along the Lyell Highway and at other sites.

Major interpretive Visitor Centres are located at all the main entrances to the TWWHA, at Cradle Mountain, Lake St Clair, Strahan and more recently at Mt Field (see Figure 25).

The majority of visitor accommodation facilities and campgrounds servicing the TWWHA are located outside the TWWHA in adjacent communities e.g. at Pencil Pine–Cradle Valley, Strahan, and Derwent Bridge. This reflects a general management approach of encouraging visitor accommodation facilities to be located outside the TWWHA in order to maintain high wilderness quality within the area. The number and capacity of tourist accommodation facilities in these areas increased over the management period.

Public accommodation⁷⁶ within the TWWHA is limited to small cabins at Waldheim (Cradle Valley) and Cynthia Bay (Lake St Clair) and a range of basic huts and shelters located along popular walking tracks (see Figure 25). Camping grounds within the TWWHA are located at Cynthia Bay (Lake St Clair) and at Edgar Campground. There is no lodge or motel accommodation within the TWWHA; however, an ecotourism lodge is currently being considered for Pump House Point, Lake St Clair.

Over the 1992–1999 period, the 8 cabins at Waldheim (which accommodate up to 44

Children doing what comes naturally in the great adventure playground of the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area.

Photo by Glenys Jones



Octogenarians enjoying a taste of the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area at Bird River.

Photo by Glenys Jones

76 Apart from public accommodation facilities which cater for short-term overnight visitors, there are a small number of dwellings in the TWWHA that house parks staff and their families and/or intermittent casual workers, volunteers, Artists-in-Residence etc. These are mostly located at Cradle Valley, Lake St Clair and Marakoopa. There is also a small manager’s residence at the Lake St Clair camping area and several dwellings associated with the light-house on Maatsuyker Island. In addition, there are a variety of huts and shacks in the TWWHA that are used intermittently by community groups and individuals.

Figure 25

Public accommodation facilities and walking tracks in the TWWHA



people) were maintained as provided for by the site plan. At Cynthia Bay, the cabins at the Cynthia Bay campground were upgraded and new cabins were built which resulted in a doubling of the accommodation capacity of the cabins from a maximum of 44 beds in 1992 to 88 beds by 1999.

Relatively high standard bushwalkers' huts are located along several long-distance walking tracks in the TWWHA e.g. the Overland Track and Frenchmans Cap Track. Walking tracks in Southwest National Park are generally managed to be hut-free with the exception of historical huts, which are retained. A number of other huts in the TWWHA are managed in association with local community groups, anglers and others. Over the 1992–1999 period, one additional commercial bushwalker's hut was constructed at Kia Ora on the Overland Track. Public accommodation facilities and walking tracks in the TWWHA are shown in Figure 25.

6.5.2 Visitors' views about recreational opportunities and facilities

A major visitor survey was undertaken in 1995 to explore visitors' attitudes to the concept, importance, value and recreational use of wilderness (Hocking, 1995). The visitors interviewed were a cross-section of age groups (including families with young children and elderly people), with various degrees of fitness for outdoor activity, who were undertaking a wide range of different types of activity in different settings in the TWWHA.

In relation to recreational activities within the TWWHA, the survey found:

- Most visitors were concerned that whatever activities were allowed within the World Heritage Area should not cause environmental damage. Acceptance or rejection of various activities appeared to be dependent on the perceived potential of those activities to cause damage to the World Heritage Area. Whilst many visitors did not want to be unduly restrictive about the activities of others, there was general concern that protection of the natural values of the area should be the prime consideration.
- Visitors were concerned about preserving the experience of the TWWHA as a natural unspoilt and peaceful place, so activities generating noise and attracting irresponsible elements were not favoured.
- Overall, visitors were in agreement with the existing restrictions on recreational activities within the area.

In relation to visitor facilities, the survey found:

- No specific additional facilities were sought by visitors.
- Some visitors commented adversely on the increased cost and more sophisticated overnight facilities at Lake St Clair and Cradle Valley as being incompatible with their perceptions of what was appropriate for a natural area.

6.5.3 Operations and services provided by PWS and approved commercial operators

Over the 1992–1999 period, there was a growing emphasis on improving the performance and delivery of operations and services in the TWWHA provided by both commercial operators and staff of the Parks and Wildlife Service.

A visitor survey in 1999⁷⁷ revealed that visitors generally found the quality of service provided at Cradle Mountain, Lake St Clair and Mt Field to be very good to excellent. More specifically, the survey revealed:

- 96–98% of visitors who sought someone to help them were able to find help;
- the quality of the service provided was assessed by visitors as being very good to excellent at all three sites.



Sue Haimes (Project Manager, Visitor Centres) was a Site Planner for the TWWHA from 1992 until 1997 and was involved with the preparation of site plans for Melaleuca, Mt Field, Cradle Mountain, Cockle Creek, Liffey Falls, Liawenee, Sarah Island and Kia Ora on the Overland Track. Sue was also involved in the assessment of the proposed Pump House Point tourism development at Lake St Clair in 1996.

Photo by Barry Batchelor



A variety of walks throughout the TWWHA were upgraded to encourage a broad range of visitors to get out and enjoy a bushwalk suited to their individual tastes, level of physical fitness and appetite for challenge.

Photo by Glenys Jones

⁷⁷ PWS 1999 visitor survey program.



Carole McCourtie (Senior Commercial Visitor Services Officer) joined the Parks and Wildlife Service in 1994 and was responsible over the management period for administering leases and licences for commercial operations within the TWWHA. These included guided walking tours (both day and overnight trips), rafting trips (e.g. on the Franklin River), accommodation cabins (e.g. on the Overland Track and at Lake St Clair), kiosk/restaurants (e.g. at Lake St Clair and Mt Field), cruise boats (e.g. on the lower Gordon River), standing camps (e.g. at Melaleuca), and aircraft landings (e.g. seaplanes on the lower Gordon River and aircraft at Melaleuca).

Photo by Sophie Underwood



Getting close to nature is one of the main attractions for visitors to the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area. Here, children enjoy the excitement of getting close to a grazing wombat near Waldheim at Cradle Valley.

Photo by Glenys Jones

Issues raised by several participants in relation to the provision of services included:

- the difficulty of obtaining information from interstate about the services provided at Lake St Clair.
- the level of private enterprise at Lake St Clair, which drew a very mixed response from visitors—some considered it a model for other sites while others considered it an appalling degradation of a wilderness site.

Visitor surveys between 1992–1994⁷⁸ (which are now somewhat outdated⁷⁹) revealed:

- 30% of visitors to Cockle Creek and 54% at Melaleuca considered the ranger services provided were excellent. Less than 10% considered the services to be inadequate at either site.

Approved commercial operators in the TWWHA who generally met their clients' expectations did not generate a lot of correspondence from clients to the managing agency or Minister. However, dissatisfied clients were often motivated to relate their experiences and offer their views about the performance of particular operators.

Of the approved commercial operators within the TWWHA, the commercial operator at Lake St Clair consistently attracted the highest level (and fervour) of public complaint over the 1992–1999 period, both via the visitor comment card system and by direct correspondence to the Parks and Wildlife Service and the Minister. The most frequent complaints related to rude service on the ferry, poor amenities and maintenance at the campground, the high cost of the cabins, and the poor service and product in the restaurant. No other commercial operator came close to the volume of complaint received over the 1992–1999 period. However, in the most recent survey of visitors at Lake St Clair (in 1999), there were no complaints of rude service on the ferry (which suggests that this problem has been rectified); however, there were still complaints about the poor level of ferry services provided, especially in winter e.g. people arrived expecting to go on the ferry only to find that there were no more services for the day. Complaints about the campground remain unacceptably high, with 25% of surveyed people who had stayed at the campground complaining about the poor standard and maintenance of amenities, and high costs. Management of the Lakeside St Clair operations has recently changed hands and works are currently underway to upgrade the campground facilities.

Routine PWS policy is that copies of all correspondence received by PWS and Minister are forwarded to the manager of the relevant operation for information, comment and/or action as appropriate.

6.5.4 Quality of visitor experience

PERSONAL BENEFITS OF VISITING THE TWWHA

A major visitor survey in 1995 revealed that the majority of visitors to the TWWHA were 'overwhelmingly positive' about their visit and identified many personal benefits for themselves from their visit (Hocking, 1995). The benefits they identified centred largely around the opportunity to visit or be active in a natural, beautiful and peaceful setting away from their normal lifestyles.

On a personal level, the main things that visitors felt they 'were getting out of their visit' to the TWWHA were:

- beauty (44%);
- getting close to nature (27%);
- getting away from the rat-race (24%);
- relaxation (22%);
- solitude, peace and quiet (21%);
- exercise (18%);
- new experiences or places (15%);

78 PWS 1992–1994 visitor survey program. Note that visitor surveys were undertaken intermittently by PWS during the 1992–1999 period and data are not available for most of this period.

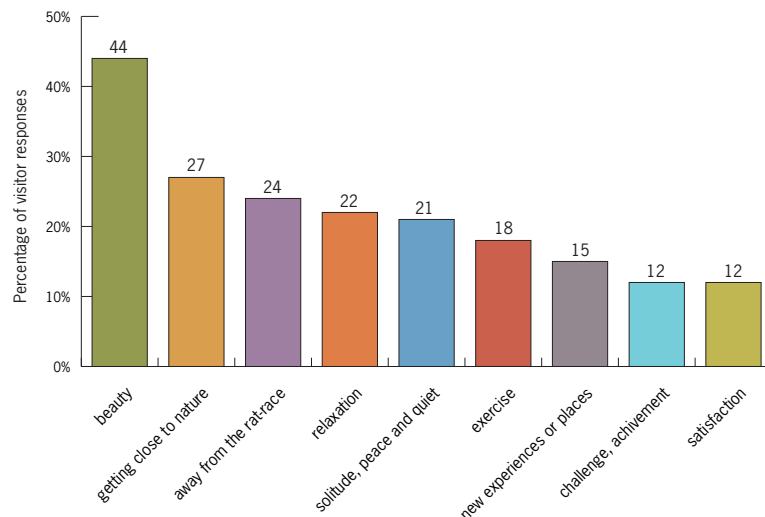
79 Note that on-site Ranger presence is no longer provided at Melaleuca.

- challenge and achievement (12%); and
- satisfaction (12%).

Other benefits mentioned by smaller numbers of respondents included happiness or enjoyment (9.5%), company of the group (9%), self-awareness (8%), rejuvenation (7%), and a greater appreciation of the values of the area or of nature (7%). Other miscellaneous benefits included spiritual experiences, appreciation of nature from a religious viewpoint, pride in showing visitors their state, and revisiting places from years before. These findings are presented in Figure 26.

Figure 26

Visitors' personal benefits of visiting the TWWHA



Visitors at a variety of sites within the TWWHA were asked: 'At a personal level, what are you getting out of your visit?' The findings reveal that most visitors identified benefits that largely centred around the opportunity to visit or be active in a natural, beautiful and peaceful setting away from their normal lifestyles.

Source: Hocking, 1995

VISITOR EXPECTATIONS AND SATISFACTION WITH THEIR EXPERIENCE

A visitor survey in 1995 revealed that the majority of visitors come to the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area expecting it to be a wilderness area. The vast majority of visitors (96% of those interviewed) were satisfied that their visit to the TWWHA had generally lived up to their expectations (Hocking 1995).

Aspects of their experience which were important to visitors focussed on the beauty and naturalness of the area, and the opportunities that this provided for relaxation, peace, and the experience of being close to nature.

Only 4% of people considered that some sites (Cradle Valley and Lake St Clair) did not live up to their expectations. The numbers of visitors and the extent of development were mentioned as factors contributing to this disappointment.

On the basis of the survey findings, Hocking (1995) concluded:

'The consensus of opinion was a most notable feature of the survey. It mattered not whether the visitor was an elderly picnicker or an exhausted rafter, a female visitor from WA or a perennial Tasmanian male resident, the overall message remained the same: the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area was valued primarily by visitors for its natural qualities, and people wanted it to remain that way....Visitors to the World Heritage Area do not want to see developments or commercialism in wilderness areas, and resent the intrusion of activities which disturb the peace or intrude into the visual beauty of the place.'

'The dilemma of managing wilderness frequently surfaced. People wanted to see such areas but recognised that by doing so they were compromising the idea of wilderness. Above all, they did not want environmental damage from visitation or use of such areas.... The responses of the survey overall may be interpreted as visitors seeking to have as close as possible to a wilderness experience within their own expectations and capabilities.



Wildlife and scenic photography is an activity enjoyed by most visitors to the TWWHA, whether it be a few holiday snaps or the ardent pursuit of photographic perfection.
Photo by Glenys Jones

That is, even if they had driven to a visitor site, they did not wish to see further signs of developments in the form of shops, advertising, motorised activities, large crowds of people or commercial developments, preferring to enjoy the naturalness around them and, in the further distance, areas which almost certainly were of higher wilderness quality.'

'The survey also showed ways in which humans construct the concept of wilderness and the special meanings that it has for people. This included the peace it offered and a link with nature. As such, it is important for the management of the World Heritage Area as a wilderness area to maintain these qualities alongside the maintenance of biophysical characteristics.'

VISITOR COMMENTS FROM LOGBOOKS AND VISITOR COMMENT CARDS

Visitor logbooks are located at various sites throughout the TWWHA and a visitor comment card system at Lake St Clair provided opportunities for visitors to provide written feedback and suggestions about their experience in the TWWHA.

Comments over the management period mostly described visitors' impressions of the scenery, weather, animals, displays in Visitor Centres, tracks and facilities, signposting, and services provided. Sometimes, suggestions were made for what visitors felt should be done to improve arrangements. Examples of a representative selection of visitor comment cards are shown at left.

The comments provided were periodically reviewed by PWS staff and taken into account in ongoing management. In some cases, visitor suggestions directly influenced management actions. For example, at Lake St Clair, feedback from visitors about their desire for more information about Aboriginal heritage was one of the factors that contributed to an emphasis being placed on Aboriginal heritage in the new Visitor Centre. And on a smaller scale, one visitor's suggestion led to the provision of a baby change table in an amenity block.

PERCEPTIONS OF CHANGE IN VISITOR EXPERIENCE

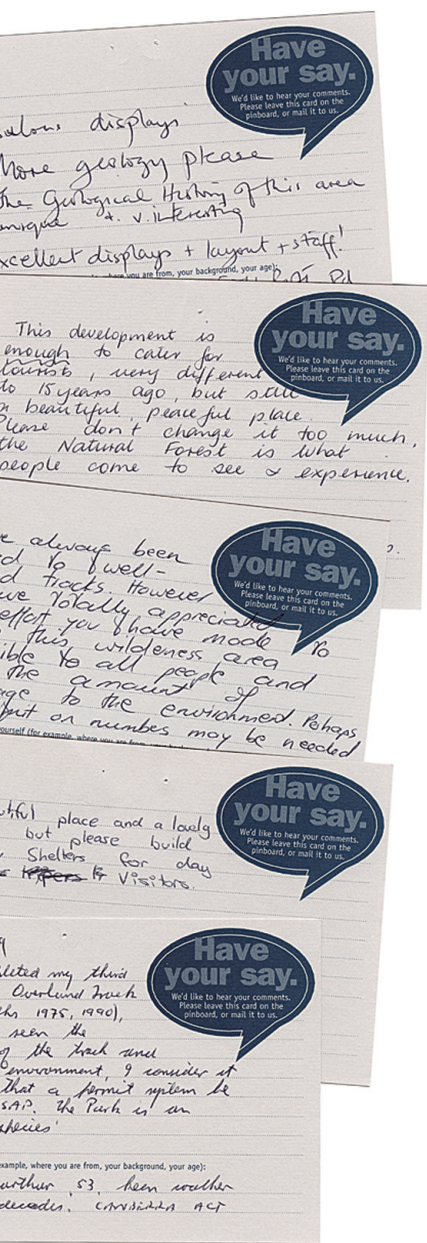
Visitors in a variety of places and undertaking a variety of activities in the TWWHA were asked if the place had changed in their experience, and if so, whether it had changed for the better or the worse (Hocking, 1995). Visitor responses are summarised in Figure 27.

Amongst people who had visited the TWWHA before (about 44% of visitors), about half felt that the place had changed, and about two thirds of these considered that the change had been for the better. Some of the positive comments were based on rehabilitation or revegetation of sites; better provisions for visitors e.g. the new circuit walk at Dove Lake in Cradle Valley which was considered to be sensitively constructed to meet visitor needs.

Issues identified by those who considered the place had changed for the worse generally related to larger numbers of people and too much development e.g. the new cabins and other developments at Cynthia Bay, Lake St Clair. Visitors in both remote areas and at major visitor sites were concerned about track erosion, campsite damage, rubbish and numbers of people, all of which were perceived to have increased over the years. For some people, the increasing number of visitors was not particularly welcomed, but they felt it was understandable and that the higher visitor numbers were being better managed at some sites.

An emerging issue that was identified by the survey was the displacement of Tasmanian residents from some places that they had previously frequented. 'Some of those Tasmanians interviewed expressed disappointment about the changes which were occurring, effectively pushing them out of favourite areas, especially when this was the result of upgrading facilities to capture a visitor market. While it may be argued that non-Tasmanians are now major users of the Area, Tasmanians are regular and repeat visitors to the Area, and their support is vital to the management of the World Heritage Area.' (Hocking 1995).

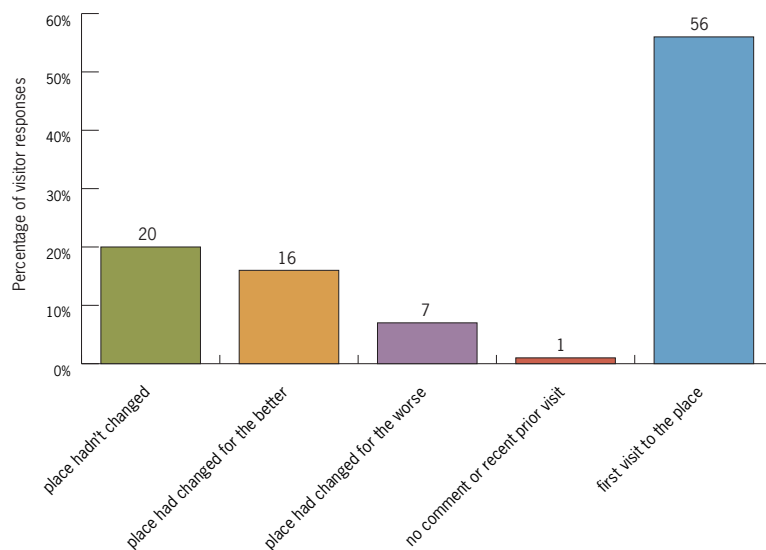
Visitor data for Mt Field also show that there has been a significant decline in visitor numbers to the park since the introduction of Park Entry Fees, and this decline is attributed to a reduction in the level of usage by local residents.



At Lake St Clair, visitor comment cards allow visitors to provide feedback and suggestions to managers.

Figure 27

Visitors' perceptions of change in the TWWHA



This chart shows responses received to a visitor survey question that asked 'Has this place changed?' [in your experience]. The findings revealed that over half of all visitors to the TWWHA are first-time visitors. Of those who had previously visited the area, the majority considered that the place either hadn't changed or had changed for the better.

Source: Hocking, 1995

6.5.5 Wilderness recreation experience

Because of its high quality of wilderness recreation experience, the TWWHA is regarded as a mecca for local, national and international bushwalkers, and Franklin River is regarded as one of the world's great white water rafting experiences.

The 1992 TWWHA management plan placed high emphasis on the maintenance of biophysical and recreational wilderness quality.

Over the 1992–1999 period, there were significant increases in the levels of visitation to the TWWHA (see Section 6.4.2 'Visitor numbers to the TWWHA'), and increasing levels of mechanised access to more remote areas, especially in small sightseeing planes, helicopters, and motor boats. In some popular locations at peak times of the year, some level of crowding is evident.

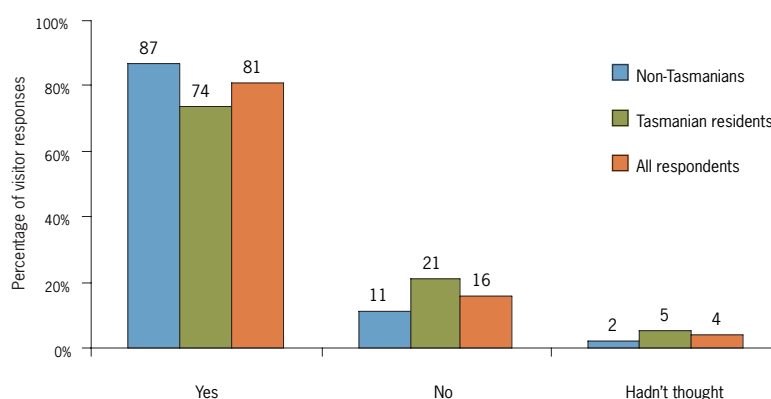
A major visitor survey was undertaken in 1995 to explore the concept, importance, value and recreational use of wilderness to visitors to the TWWHA (Hocking 1995). Visitors at various sites within the TWWHA were interviewed about their expectations and experience in relation to wilderness.

81% of all visitors to the TWWHA expected to be in a wilderness area (see Figure 28). Over two thirds of all visitors (71%) reported that the TWWHA fitted their expectations of wilderness. People who gave the highest acceptance of the place they had visited as wilderness included Gordon River cruise passengers, rafters completing the Franklin River trip, and walkers in the Walls of Jerusalem National Park, Hartz Mountains National Park, and from routes in the Scotts Peak/Strathgordon Road area.

However, a substantial proportion of visitors (23%) considered that the place they had visited did not seem like wilderness, and this view was more common amongst Tasmanians (29%) than non-Tasmanians (18%) (see Figure 29). This finding suggests that Tasmanians have higher expectations of wilderness and/or a greater awareness of the concept of wilderness than non-Tasmanians. Almost 10% of those who had expected to be in a wilderness area did not feel that the place they had visited fitted their expectations of wilderness. The difference between expectation and reality was most marked at Cradle Valley, Lake St Clair and Melaleuca. Dove Lake at Cradle Valley and Lake St Clair were the sites with the lowest acceptance as wilderness. The sense of wilderness was also diminishing for a significant proportion of walkers on the Overland Track.

Figure 28

Visitors' expectations of the TWWHA being a wilderness area

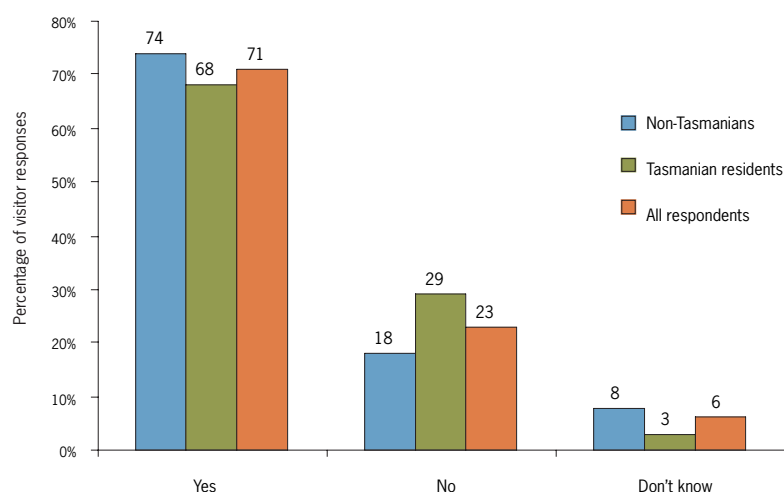


This chart shows responses received to a visitor survey question that asked 'Were you expecting a wilderness area?'. The findings reveal that the vast majority of visitors to the TWWHA come with the expectation of experiencing a wilderness area.

Source: Hocking, 1995

Figure 29

Visitors' satisfaction with their wilderness experience in the TWWHA



This chart shows responses received to a visitor survey question that asked 'Does it seem like wilderness to you?'. The findings reveal that over two thirds of all visitors to the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area considered that the place they had visited fitted their expectations of wilderness. However, a substantial proportion of visitors (especially Tasmanian visitors) considered that the place they had visited did not seem like wilderness.

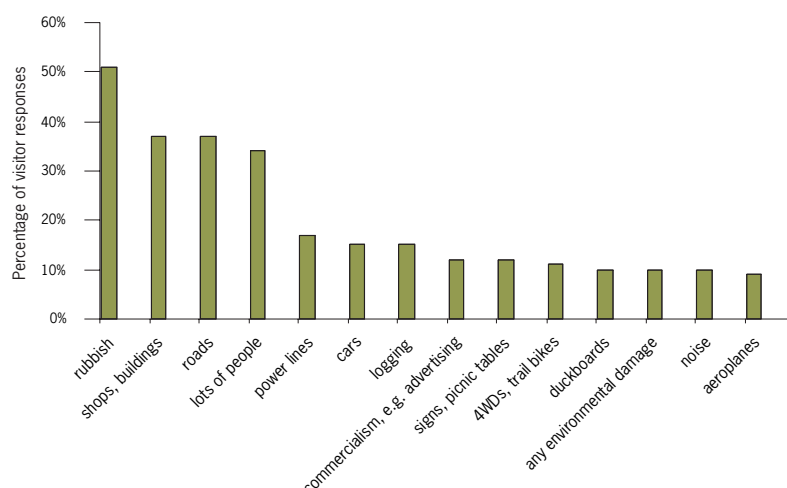
FACTORS THAT WOULD SPOIL VISITORS' WILDERNESS EXPERIENCE

When asked about the sorts of things that would not be expected in, or would spoil their experience of, wilderness, the overall message from visitors was that signs of human activities and developments were not to be expected in wilderness areas. The impact of seeing or experiencing a wide range of intrusive activities, infrastructure and commercialism would spoil the experience, regardless of the type of activity that the visitor had come to enjoy. Visitors' responses also reflected a sense of respect for the natural values of wilderness and the negative impact of any environmental damage.

Elements that were commonly cited as being inconsistent with wilderness included rubbish; shops and buildings; roads; lots of people; power lines; cars; logging; commercialism (e.g. advertising); signs and picnic tables etc; and 4WD trail bikes (see Figure 30). Other factors mentioned included duckboards, environmental damage, noise, aeroplanes, pollution, motor boats, mining, exotic plants or animals, damage to tracks and views spoilt by human activities.

Figure 30

Factors that would spoil visitors' wilderness experience



This chart shows responses received to a visitor survey question that asked 'Let's imagine that you have gone to a place that you thought was a wilderness area. What sorts of things would you not expect to see there or would spoil the wilderness experience?'

Source: Hocking 1995 (from data presented in Table 7)

TRANQUILLITY IN THE TWWHA

Of significance as an emerging issue for management of the TWWHA is the importance that the Tasmanian public attaches to the maintenance of peace and quiet in the TWWHA.

A recent public consultation process related to consideration of a proposal to allow helicopter landing sites in the TWWHA gave rise to an unprecedented level of virtually unanimous opposition to the proposal (Parks & Wildlife Service, 2000). Of 651 submissions received through the public consultation process, only 12 supported the proposal to allow helicopter landing sites in the TWWHA, and three of these were from the proponents. The principal concern of most respondents was that aircraft noise would disturb the 'peace and quiet' of the area and degrade the quality of their wilderness experience.

In addition to the above findings, independent visitor surveys have also identified noise as one of the factors that visitors consider would spoil their wilderness experience in the TWWHA (Hocking 1995). Concerns about noise management are corroborated by overseas experience where noise disturbance from overflights has become a significant management issue in several national parks including the Grand Canyon in the USA, and Mt Cook in New Zealand.

Noise also has the potential to impact on wildlife and is of particular concern at Melaleuca where as much as 90% of the wild-breeding population of the endangered orange-bellied parrot occurs within 10km of the airstrip. The management of noise therefore has both important social and ecological aspects.

The main sources of anthropogenic noise in the TWWHA are aircraft (especially low-altitude aeroplanes and helicopters) and power boats. Aircraft use over the TWWHA is mainly for the purposes of scenic flights and visitor transport (e.g. to Melaleuca) or for management operations (such as servicing remote huts and toilets, and delivering supplies for track-work). Powerboat usage is mainly for private recreational purposes (such as trout fishing on Lake St Clair) or commercial scenic cruises and visitor transport (such as the cruises on the lower Gordon River and the passenger ferry on Lake St Clair).

Management of the levels and frequency of noise in the TWWHA requires close cooperation between the Parks and Wildlife Service and airspace regulatory bodies as well as aircraft and vessel operators. While the Parks and Wildlife Service has scope under the *National Parks and Reserves Management Act 2002* to draw up contracts covering aircraft flight behaviour where a proponent wishes to land on reserved land, it has no regulatory authority over airspace above the TWWHA which is controlled by the Civil Aviation Safety Authority (CASA). Any restrictions or curtailment of the types of aircraft used or the

number and routes of over-flights over the TWWHA would require cooperation between the Parks and Wildlife Service and airspace regulators and aircraft operators.⁸⁰

Over the 1992–1999 period, ‘Fly Neighbourly Advice’ was developed by the Parks and Wildlife Service in conjunction with the Tasmania Regional Airspace Users Advisory Committee (RAPAC) to promote the harmonious relationship between aviation activities and environmental and conservation interests. The advice specified the general minimum overfly altitude, agreed routes and the nature of flying operations over the TWWHA and Mt Field to minimise noise and visual impact for ground users. Subsequently a ‘Fly Neighbourly Code of Practice’ was developed by the Parks and Wildlife Service in conjunction with RAPAC and CASA. This code is available from the PWS website <www.parks.tas.gov.au>. This code has generally been adopted to date. The code does not address matters related to the number or frequency of flights over the TWWHA.

The natural tranquillity of the TWWHA is likely to have been slightly degraded over the 1992–1999 period as a result of increasing frequency of noise associated with increasing numbers of scenic and management overflights by planes and helicopters, and increasing usage of power boats. However no quantification of noise within the TWWHA has been carried out to date.

Increases in helicopter and/or small plane flights over the TWWHA and powerboat usage have the potential to degrade the natural tranquillity of the TWWHA and so degrade the quality of visitors’ recreational wilderness experience. Proactive management to limit noise and protect natural tranquillity of the TWWHA is an area that warrants attention.

80 Note however, that legislation was introduced in the USA to enable the National Parks Service to control scenic flights over the Grand Canyon.

For many visitors, wilderness areas offer a place for relaxation, reflection and spiritual renewal.

Photo by Nick Mooney

