

# ACT PARKS & CONSERVATION VISITOR STUDY

## REPORT ON WHAT WE HEARD



### ACT PARKS & CONSERVATION VISITOR EXPERIENCE STUDY

It is estimated that no Canberran lives more than 3.5 kilometres away from a nature reserve, park or forest. These spaces are not only popular recreational areas within Canberra but deliver huge benefits ecologically in providing environmental offset areas, preserving large endangered native flora and fauna communities and giving a home and protection to local endangered species.

The research program aimed to provide insights into how ACT parks, nature reserves, and forests are used, appreciated and perceived by ACT residents as well as interstate and international visitors.

The study identified motivations to visitation, assessed the visitor experience and explored both community pride and sense of place. The study identified marketing and communication opportunities (to engage and enhance user experience) and the impacts of COVID-19.



### THE CONVERSATION

In March 2021, the ACT Parks and Conservation Service aimed to speak to the community about their use of our parks, nature reserves and forests so we could better understand our users and how we can enhance their experience.

We sought input from community members and people who engaged with our parks, nature reserves and forests to understand the needs and wants of individuals over the last 12 months. This survey was conducted via the YourSay Conversations website and included topics such as visitor profile, reason for visitation, likes and dislikes, engagement with the community and marketing and communication. The data and insights will help ACT Parks and Conservation Service with future strategies and management actions to improve visitor experience.

This is the first time an online survey of this nature has been conducted for ACT Parks and Conservation. We saw a delay in the survey being released due to the impacts of COVID-19 and the bushfires in the summer of 2019-20. The survey was open on the YourSay Conversation website from 16 March through to 25 July 2021.

The survey was promoted through a variety of networks. The ACT Parks and Conservation Instagram and Facebook pages, along with the Environment, Planning and Sustainable Development Directorate (EPSDD) Facebook page were the main social media platforms used to promote the visitors survey. The ACT Parks and Conservation Instagram and Facebook pages were particularly successful in reaching the community gaining 9,411 of the total 9,930 engagements.

Signage was created and placed around parks and reserves right across Canberra that included a QR code that visitors could use on the go. Signage was also put up in visitor centres to capture those users who were accessing that location as well.

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The survey was promoted on the [environment.act.gov.au](http://environment.act.gov.au) website under the latest news section on the homepage. This news item directed people to the YourSay Conservations website to have their say.

### WHO ENGAGED

The online survey was completed by 773 visitors to the ACT parks and reserves. This was made up of 93.8% of visitors from the Australian Capital Territory, 2.8% from other parts of New South Wales and 2.3% from the city of Queanbeyan. The sample was also made up 53.5% females and 46.5% males. The age group of visitors consisted of 26.1% aged 35-44 and 20.2% aged 45-54.

ParkCare volunteers were notified of the survey through the ACT Parks and Conservation ParkCare Hub.

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### Key insights from the community

#### Top 3 Visited Parks/Reserves

Visitors were asked which parks and reserves they had visited in the last 12 months

- Namadgi National Park – 70.0%
- Tidbinbilla Nature Reserve – 69.1%
- Cotter Reserve (e.g. Cotter Avenue, Cotter Campground) – 61.0%

#### Most Popular Times to Visit Parks and Reserves

Visitors were asked how likely they were to visit during certain times

- Spring months – 97.3% (likely/very likely)
- Autumn months – 97.1% (likely/very likely)

#### Top 10 Activities Undertaken by Visitors

- |                                |                                        |
|--------------------------------|----------------------------------------|
| 1. Walking – 78.6%             | 6. Photography – 33.1%                 |
| 2. Nature appreciation – 61.4% | 7. Mountain biking – 31.0%             |
| 3. Hiking – 58.6%              | 8. Camping/Using accommodation – 27.0% |
| 4. Relaxing – 43.3%            | 9. Cycling – 23.3%                     |
| 5. Picnic/BBQ – 39.0%          | 10. Exercising the dog – 22.7%         |

#### Motivation of Visitors (Top 2)

- To spend time in nature – 54.3%
- For physical exercise – 40.4%

#### Visitor Experience Satisfaction

- 92.3% were satisfied/extremely satisfied with overall experience

#### Net Promoter Score (NPS)

Visitors were asked how likely they are to recommend visiting ACT parks and reserves to family/friends/colleagues

- Score of +43.7
- Metric is classified into 3 categories: *Promoters* (rating 9 or 10), *Passives* (rating 7 or 8), *Detractors* (rating 0-6)
- Calculated by subtracting the percentage of *Detractors* from the percentage of *Promoters*.

#### Types of Activities/Events Visitors Want to See in the Future (Top 4)

- Improve what's already there (facilities/walk/bike trails/signage) – 24.4%
- Guided tours/walks – 10.0%
- More conservation management (weeds/litter) – 7.7%
- More Indigenous information given to the public (cultural information/naming parts of park) – 6.4%

#### Safety

Visitors were asked how safe they felt visiting the parks and reserves whilst COVID-19 restrictions were in place

- 80.1% felt very safe

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### WHAT'S NEXT?

All feedback submitted via the survey will be collated and reviewed for future use including annual reporting, future strategic planning and ongoing management and maintenance of our parks and reserves.

A full report will be released to let you know exactly what feedback we received while the survey was open. The data will be used to inform annual reporting and ongoing strategic planning and management.

To find out more about the ACT parks and visitors survey and other initiatives, policies and projects, visit <https://yoursayconversations.act.gov.au/> or follow us on Facebook or our ACT Parks and Conservation Instagram page.

#### Key Timings

**16 March 2021** – Survey opened to the public on the YourSay website

**25 July 2021** – ACT Parks and Visitors Survey closed for submissions

**October 2021** – Listening Report released on YourSay outlining what we heard during the survey open period (**We are here**). Report detailing more information about what was heard through the survey open period will be released.

**Early 2022 onwards** – The feedback received through the survey will inform future strategic plans including experience development and trail maintenance

#### THANK YOU FOR YOUR FEEDBACK

**773**

Individuals provided feedback through the online survey

**3,426**

Total number of open-ended responses from visitors

**10**

The number of major parks and reserves that were analysed in the report

**9,930**

Canberrans were reached through our social media posts