WILDLIFE VIEWING IN THE MOUNTAIN NATIONAL PARKS OF CANADA: AN EXPERIENTIAL VIEW

by

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Abstract

The topic of wildlife tourism has received considerable academic attention within the last decade. While much of the existing literature has focused specifically on the impacts of tourism/recreation activities on wildlife, much less attention has been given to understanding visitor perceptions and experiences viewing wildlife. This research examines visitor experience viewing wildlife in the mountain national parks of Canada by: 1) identifying what factors contribute to a meaningful wildlife viewing experience; and 2) identifying the value and meaning of wildlife viewing experiences for park visitors. A mixed-method approach largely based on qualitative data revealed that while there is an individual set of themes present that contribute to meaningful wildlife experiences, more important is the processing of the visitors emotions throughout the experience. This finding suggests that truly meaningful wildlife experiences may be the result of a series of stages over time, rather than based solely on the moment of the encounter. Based on the data interpreted, recommendations for management and future research are provided. Management plans should provide direction for implementing programs to assist visitors in continuing to process their wildlife experiences over the long term.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Background

Tourism is a widespread industry that increasingly caters to niche markets. Nature based tourism, and wildlife tourism in particular, is quickly growing as a focal point of the tourism industry. In recent years, wildlife tourism has attracted interest from governments, the tourism industry and researchers (Moscardo and Saltzer, 2004; Higginbottom, 2004; Bushnell and McCool, 2007; Manfredo, 2008). Parks and protected areas are attractive settings for the growing demand for tourism activities in natural environments (Eagles et al., 2002). Increasingly seen as an alternative source of revenue, tourism can provide considerable benefits to protected areas and the communities adjacent to or within them (Bushnell and McCool, 2007).

Wildlife tourism can be defined as tourism based on encounters with non-domesticated (non-human) animals, and can occur in either the animals' natural environment or in captivity (Higginbottom, 2004). It includes activities historically classified as 'non-consumptive' (Higginbottom, 2004), and is typically associated with nature-based activities such as the observation and/or photography of wildlife (Hammit and Wells, 1993), looking for signs of wildlife such as tracks (Wilson and Heberlein, 1996), and learning about wildlife (Russell and Hodson, 2002). Wildlife tourism can be found in a variety of forms, from specialised wildlife tours (e.g. safari tours, bear viewing tours), attractions featuring natural aggregations of wildlife (e.g. migratory pathways, breeding colonies), experiences available in association with tourist accommodation (e.g. resorts that feature surrounding wildlife) and unguided encounters by independent

travellers (e.g. visiting national parks) (Valentine and Birtles, 2004). For the purpose of this study, the focus will remain on unguided encounters by independent travellers.

Although the topic of wildlife tourism has received considerable academic attention, especially in the last decade, much of the existing literature has focused more specifically on the impacts of tourism/recreation activities on wildlife (e.g. habituation, physiological impacts), with much less attention given to the benefits of wildlife viewing and satisfaction with wildlife viewing experience. That is, on what exactly it is that makes wildlife so attractive to visitors, what wildlife tourists want to see, and where and how they want to experience it (Coughlan and Prideaux, 2008).

Since visitors are an integral element of any tourism product or service, ultimately a sustainable tourism activity is one that provides a quality experience for visitors (Moscardo et al., 2001). An experiential view of wildlife tourism pertains to the "emotional, psychological and physical benefits of taking a wildlife holiday" (Curtin, 2005, p.1). Coe (1985) suggests that the recreation function of wildlife viewing is not simply satisfied by viewing 'aesthetic, active and unusual animals'. Rather, experiential factors such as anticipation, emotional involvement, surprise, mild-fear, and risk-taking play important roles (cited in Montag, Patterson and Freimund, 2005). This indicates that tourism consumption is therefore about purchasing experiences rather than 'things', and increasingly these experiences include natural spaces and wild animals (Curtin, 2005).

1.2 Study Significance

Understanding visitor perceptions and experiences is an important but little researched element of wildlife tourism. There has been only limited research comparing visitors and their experiences in non-captive wildlife settings (Moscardo et al., 2004; Reynolds and Braithwaite, 2001; Schanzel and McIntosh, 2000). As a result, little is known about the actual demand for non-consumptive wildlife tourism, or what characterizes people who desire wildlife encounters (Moscardo and Saltzer, 2004). Previous approaches to research tell us that people enjoy participating in wildlife tourism for a number of reasons (e.g. to experience animals in the wild and observe their natural behaviour), but it does not really explore what it means to enjoy wildlife experiences, the content of what exactly is enjoyed, the process through which people perceive wildlife or the emotional responses it provokes (Curtin, 2005). Therefore it is critical that the human dimension of wildlife interactions be considered, paying particular attention to the psychological and sociological processes that underlie human-wildlife relations and human interest in wildlife (Newsome, Dowling and Moore, 2005).

In recent years, Parks Canada has gradually shifted the focus of their mandate from offering quality services to the visitor, to setting the stage for the visitor to create personal experiences and memories (Parks Canada, 2007). Although previous studies have identified viewing wildlife as a general motivation for visitors to come to the parks, there is little evidence to suggest why it matters so much to some people and how much it influences people's decisions to visit the parks (Parks Canada, 2007). By gaining a better understanding about the nature of wildlife viewing experiences this research will aid park

managers in developing management strategies that enhance visitor experience, while continuing to maintain the conservation values of the parks.

1.3 Description of Study Area

As areas known for their abundance of wildlife, the Canadian mountain national parks have become popular destinations for tourists seeking wildlife viewing opportunities. Located in Western Canada, the chain of mountain national parks comprises Banff National Park, Jasper National Park, Kootenay National Park, Waterton Lakes National Park, Glacier National Park and Mount Revelstoke National Park (Fig.1).

Fig.1 Rocky Mountain National Parks of Canada (Parks Canada, 2012)

In total, 56 mammalian species have been recorded within the range of the parks. Species include mountain goat, bighorn sheep, northern pika, hoary marmot, moose, mule deer, white-tailed deer, caribou, grey wolf, grizzly bear, black bear, wolverine, lynx and cougar (UNESCO World Heritage Centre, 2012). Banff National Park in itself is home to an estimated 53 mammals, which reflects upon the wide range of habitats found among these parks due to variations in elevation, climate and plant communities. As a result, the chance to observe wild animals is one of the most unique experiences that the parks have to offer (Parks Canada, 2009).

1.4 Study Objectives

This thesis addresses the experiential aspects of wildlife viewing as identified by visitors participating in wildlife viewing activities. It will present a broad context of what makes up a meaningful experience and the importance of those experiences to overall visitor satisfaction. The following main objectives and associated research questions have been set for this research:

1. To identify what factors contribute to a meaningful wildlife viewing experience;

2. To identify the value and meaning of wildlife viewing experiences for park visitors.

The associated research questions are:

a. What factors (e.g. species, time of day, geographic location, distance from animal, behaviour of animal, presence of others, etc.) seem to create memorable wildlife viewing experiences;
b. What emotional responses do encounters with wildlife provoke; and
c. Do these experiences have any lasting impacts on the visitor?

1.5 Thesis Structure

This thesis is an examination of the wildlife viewing experiences by visitors to the mountain national parks in western Canada. It examines the nature of memorable wildlife experiences and the components that contribute to visitors' engagement in these experiences. The report has been organized into four major sections: 1) a review of the existing literature, 2) a detailed description of the methodology used, 3) description and interpretation; and 4) recommendations for managers of parks and protected areas and for future research.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

This chapter presents a review of literature related to wildlife viewing in nature-based tourism destinations. Its purpose is to outline and describe the current state of knowledge of wildlife tourism by examining the economic, ecological and social impacts of wildlife tourism, with a focus on the experiential aspects of wildlife tourism.

2.1 An Overview of Wildlife Tourism

Wildlife tourism has been identified as an area of overlap between nature-based tourism, ecotourism, consumptive use of wildlife, rural tourism, and human relations with animals (Reynolds and Braithwaite, 2001). It involves a broad spectrum of experiences included in all aspects of tourism with the distinctive feature of wildlife as the primary attraction (Hughes et al., 2005). While the only feature shared by all wildlife tourism products or experiences is their inclusion of a wildlife element, labeling and discussion of wildlife tourism as a distinct class of tourism is becoming increasingly common. Although referred to as 'viewing' for the purpose of this report, this form of tourism can also involve listening, photography, or any other form of interaction that does not kill the animal (Higginbottom, 2004).

From the tourists' point of view, there is a rapidly increasing desire for interaction with the environment in a variety of ways (Jenner and Smith, 1992). This general interest in nature and nature-based experiences is reflected in an increasing demand to participate in wildlife tourism activities, with increasing value being placed on animals in the wild, as opposed to those in captive or semi-captive environments (Gauthier, 1993). The types

of experiences are diverse, from encountering an animal while hiking on a trail to by-passing an animal while driving along a highway; however, they all feature wild animals as a major or significant part of the experience. Such experiences are becoming a large part of the organized tourism industry and contribute substantially to the economy of many countries (World Travel and Tourism Council [WTTC], 2000). Increasingly, popular destinations for wildlife tourism are located in, or are adjacent to national parks and other protected areas (Powell and Ham, 2008).

2.1.1 Wildlife and National Parks

Park reserves or "forest parks" were first established on the line of the Canadian Pacific Railway west of Banff at Lake Louise and Field; at Waterton Lakes in the southwestern part of what is now Alberta, and at Jasper. Together, along with Rocky Mountains Park (now Banff National Park), these reserves formed the core of Canada's National Park system (Lothian, 1976). While square miles of land were originally preserved in reservation for public use, numerous species and forms of wildlife were also given protection through the preservation of their natural habitat (Lothian, 1981).

Since the late 1800s, viewing wildlife, both in captivity and in the natural environment, has been an important activity for visitors to these park reserves. Even in the beginning of the formation of the national parks, the government's policy on wildlife in the park was largely in response to the perceived needs of the tourist (Great Plains Research Consultants, 1984). In 1886, the former Commissioner of Fisheries of Canada conducted an investigation into the park's flora and fauna to make recommendations

concerning the handling of these resources for the tourist. He concluded that a strong policy of preservation should be implemented:

> Paucity of fish and game will undoubtedly deprive the national park of something of its many wild attractions; whilst plenteousness will be a source of profit and pleasure to Canadians interested in its development as a free popular resort for health and recreation, as also to strangers attracted thither by the natural features of scenic beauty and hygienic excellence which it assuredly embodies in an eminent degree (Lothian, 1977, p.64).

Over the years, the approach has evolved and as societies' views of nature conservation developed, so did the role that national parks play in protecting and presenting wildlife in their natural habitat.

Various means were employed in the Rocky Mountains Park to attract visitors and foster interest in wildlife conservation. In 1903, a small museum in the Banff town site (now the Banff Park Museum National Historic Site) displayed mounted specimens of large mammals found in the park, along with birds and waterfowl. In addition, exhibits of mountain sheep, mountain goats, elk, deer and buffalo were also displayed. This brought attention of visitors to the diverse range of wildlife species within the park (Lothian, 1976).

The role of Rocky Mountains Park as a sanctuary for wildlife began in 1897. A gift of three buffalo was given to Rocky Mountains Park by T.G. Blackstock, Q.C., of Toronto; supplemented in 1898 by Lord Strathcona with the presentation of an additional sixteen buffalo. To make viewing easier, the animals were enclosed in an area only 1.5 miles from the Banff town site in a place visible from both the railway as well as a popular road to Lake Minnewanka, By 1916 species of elk, moose, deer, goats and

bighorn sheep had been added (Lothian, 1981; Luxton, 1975). In 1904, William Whyte, vice-president of the Canadian Pacific Railway, presented the park with ten pheasants of different varieties. This further addition of wildlife led to the formation of an aviary within Banff town site. The aviary became known world-wide and three years later a zoo was started in the same grounds. Enclosures mimicking each species natural habitat housed black and grizzly bears, polar bears, mountain lions, lynx, raccoons, marmots, timber wolves, coyotes, wolverines and foxes. While this was a popular attraction for visitors, the zoo was discontinued by the government at the close of the 1937 visitor season. Despite this, the concept that Banff National Park offered adequate opportunity for viewing species in their natural habitat was accepted by both residents and tourists (Lothian, 1981; Luxton, 1975).

A more distinctive and purposive role for Canada's national parks began to take shape with the replacement of the Rocky Mountains Park Act with the Dominion Forest Reserve and Parks Act in 1911. Commissioner James B. Harkin, head of the new Dominion Parks Branch lead the shift to a more conservation-based focus; preservation of the environment, conservation of wildlife, and tourism were his primary concerns (Luxton, 1975). A continuing need to provide information about the national parks, stressing preservation of their fauna, flora and other features, led to the experimentation with an education and interpretation section within the National Parks Branch in 1959 (Great Plains Research Consultants, 1984; Lothian, 1981). After 1961 Banff National Park established a permanent interpretive staff with two main tasks: (1) to increase the pleasure of park visitors and, (2) to strengthen public appreciation of the park environment (Great Plains Research Consultants, 1984).

The opportunity to encounter wildlife in their natural surroundings has long been repeated by promoters of park tourism. In the first few decades after Jasper National Park was established, tourists were encouraged to engage with the bears in the region. People were encouraged by advertisements to travel to Jasper where they could see and feed the bears (Cronin, 2011). A brochure published by CNR in 1934 claimed that, "one of the great charms of the park is the abundance and fearlessness of its wildlife. To wake in the morning and see a deer below one's window, a black bear ambling off into the forest, or, on the trail, and to be able to come close to the shyest creatures of the wild, mountain sheep and goats....is a pleasure which makes every walk or ride a possible adventure" (Canadian National Railways, 1934, cited in Cronin, 2011). The thrill of a 'turn-of-the-century tourists' encounter with wildlife is described by Luxton (1975):

> *"One day in July 1903, four ladies were driving along the Loop Road when one looked back and saw a mountain lion trailing them, about a hundred yards behind. One lady exclaimed it was fourteen feet long, another said it was the size of an elephant, and the visitor next to the driver said it was the size of an ordinary buffalo. The driver, showing great presence of mind, stated that atmospheric conditions caused unacclimatized people to be deceived in regard to size and distance and that the animal was only of the ordinary size. When the ladies reached the Banff Springs Hotel and told their story, many of the guests called for saddle-horses. Of course, when the riders arrived at the spot, they only saw the tracks where the animal had turned into the bush. Such were the events that made a visitor's day exciting"* (p.124).

Today, this notion of humans existing with wildlife has remained a strong focal point in the promotion of the mountain national parks. Representations of wildlife have continued to play a significant role in the construction of the national park experience and are a key component of national park tourism (Cronin, 2011). Additionally, initiatives to maintain the preservation of wildlife continue through actions such as voluntary area

closures for important wildlife habitat, programs for wildlife education and encouraging visitors to report sightings of wildlife (Parks Canada, 2010). One example of a program which has been successful at facilitating visitor understanding and encouraging positive conservation practices is the Bear Guardian program. This program involves on-the-spot information to visitors about safe viewing of bears along roadways. Since 2006, Parks Canada staff has made 4600 personal contacts at numerous "bear jams" (Parks Canada, 2008). The Bear Guardians, along with other initiatives aimed at facilitating visitor understanding continue to encourage positive visitor experiences and educational opportunities within the national parks, while also maintaining the preservation of important wildlife habitat and species.

2.1.2 Economic Impacts of Wildlife Tourism

Although reliable global estimates of the economic impact of wildlife tourism are limited, it clearly involves increasingly large numbers of participants, and has the potential to generate a substantial amount of money (Higginbottom, 2004). The most detailed research to determine the importance of wildlife-related activities has been in the United States (US). Cordell et al. (1990) concluded that by the year 2040, participation in wildlife viewing activities will increase by 74%, or 121 million trips, and is predicted to be one of the most rapidly growing outdoor recreation activities in the US. Estimates from 2001 suggest that 66.1 million (31%) of the US population sixteen years and older observed, fed, or photographed wildlife. Of that 66.1 million, at least 21.8 million (10%) traveled at least one mile away from their home for the primary purpose of doing so (US

Department of the Interior, Fish and Wildlife Service, 2002, cited in Higginbottom, 2004).

Travelers from the US have also been stated as being considerably more likely to include wildlife viewing activities while traveling. Of the estimated seven million American travelers who visited British Columbia (BC) in 2003 and 2004, over three million (43%) participated in wildlife viewing activities while traveling, and nearly one million (13%) indicated that wildlife viewing was the primary reason for at least one trip (Cowichan/Ladysmith Marine Tourism Authority, 2005).

Yellowstone National Park, located in Wyoming, Montana and Idaho, is home to a diverse spectrum of wildlife species including grizzly bears, wolves and bison (United States National Park Service, 2011). As a park well known for wildlife viewing opportunities, wildlife tourism is one of the top reasons people choose to visit Yellowstone (Duffield, Neher and Patterson, 2006). Wolf watching in Yellowstone has been especially popular. In 2005, 44% of visitors to the park indicated that they would like to see wolves, stating the only species they would like to see more was the grizzly bear. Depending on the season, 50% or more of visitors indicated they were specifically interested in the possibility of seeing or hearing wolves, with 59% indicating they were there specifically for the possibility to see wolves in the winter. An average of 3.5% of park visitors indicated that they would not have come to Yellowstone if they had not had an opportunity to hear or see wolves. Based on the average spending of visitors across the four seasons, about $22.5 million are directly attributable to the presence of wolves in the park. Based on the amount of money spent in the three-state area around Yellowstone

National Park, visitors who specifically want to see or hear wolves generate approximately $35.5 million annually (Duffield, Neher and Patterson, 2006).

In Canada, the total number of participants in non-consumptive wildlife viewing activities was predicted to increase 21% over 1987 estimates by 2006 (Manfredo, Pierce and Teel, 2002). In a report compiled by Tourism British Columbia (TBC) summarizing information on the wildlife viewing sector in BC, it was stated that of the estimated 5.6 million Canadian travelers who traveled within BC in 2003 and 2004, over 1.5 million (27%) participated in wildlife viewing activities while traveling. Approximately 310,000 (6%) stated that wildlife viewing was the primary reason for at least one overnight trip (Tourism British Columbia, 2009).

In British Columbia, whale watching is a wildlife tourism market which has seen a growth of approximately 4.2% per year since 1998 (O'Connor et al., 2009). Tofino, BC, located in Pacific Rim National Park Reserve (PRNPR) is one location on BC's west coast where marine mammal viewing has been centered, along with Victoria, Campbell River and Telegraph Cove (O'Connor et al., 2009; Clarkson, 2006). From 1998 to 2008, the number of whale watchers increased from 285,000 to 430,600 per year, despite the number of operators (47) remaining the same (O'Connor et al., 2009).

Expenditures on wildlife related activities have seen an increase over the last decade. Wildlife viewing expenditures in 1996 increased approximately $5 billion over 1991, to a total of $30 billion, rising to $40 billion in 2001. In 2006, wildlife viewers in the US spent over $45 billion on their activities, an average of $816 per person. This included both around-home and away-from-home viewing (US Fish and Wildlife

Service, 2006). In Canada, BC specific figures estimated that wildlife viewers spent $6.3 billion on wildlife viewing activities in 1996, an annual amount of $454 per person. In total, 63 percent of that spending was on direct wildlife viewing (e.g. trips away from home where the main purpose is to watch, photograph or study wildlife) (Reid, 1998). In 2008 alone, total expenditure of whale watchers, both direct and indirect went from $69,129,000 to $118,176,000 (O'Connor et al., 2009). These figures suggest that the continuing development of wildlife tourism can be a valuable means of promoting economic activity.

2.1.3 Other Impacts of Wildlife Tourism

In addition to promoting economic activity, an important claim made by those who support wildlife viewing is that wildlife experiences can provide opportunities for visitors to develop a greater awareness of wildlife and other nature-based conservation (Tisdell and Wilson, 2001; Higginbottom, 2004; Bushnell and McCool, 2007; Moscardo, 2008; Ballantyne et al., 2011). One of the key concerns of wildlife encounters is the detrimental effects the presence of humans can have on wildlife (Ballantyne et al., 2011). Some of these negative impacts include changes in animal behaviour, habituation to humans, disruptions to foraging, injury, stress or death, and habitat displacement resulting from harassment of animals by recreationists (Boyle and Samson, 1985; Gauthier, 1993; Shackley, 1996; Green and Higginbottom, 2000; Green and Giese, 2004). These impacts become more apparent over long periods of time whenever and wherever recreation occurs (Cole and Landres, 1995).

To reduce the negative impacts associated with wildlife tourism, many wildlife tourism experiences are accompanied by conservation themed interpretation that aim to increase visitor awareness of conservation issues and encourage them to adopt behaviors that encourage conservation practices in their experiences (Ballantyne et al., 2009). Originally defined by Tilden (1977), interpretation is an educational activity aimed at revealing meanings and relationships to people about the places they visit and the things they see and do there. Alan Helmsley, a Canadian authority on park interpretation, defined it as "the art of stimulating in people an interest in, and an awareness of, an understanding and an appreciation of the landscapes and ecological communities of the national parks, with recognition of the historical role of man within these landscapes and his continuing relationship to them" (cited in Lothian, 1981, p.134). Ham and Weiler (2001) state that interpretation is a necessary centerpiece of wildlife tourism not only because of its potential to influence tourists' beliefs and actions towards wildlife, but also because of its importance in shaping the nature and quality of tourist experiences. By contributing to the intellectual and emotional dimensions of a tourist's encounter with wildlife, interpretation can strongly influence the nature of the experience formed in the visitor's mind. Increasing evidence suggests that visitors not only expect information, but interpretation, as part of their wildlife experiences and for many, high quality interpretation is a major contributor to overall satisfaction (Ham and Weiler, 2001). In addition to visitors, wildlife interpretation has also been shown to benefit other stakeholders such as tourism operators, entrepreneurs and protected area managers.

Education of wildlife tourists can result in changes in attitudes and increased knowledge. The ways in which wildlife tourism is potentially associated with

conservation benefits can be organized into a three main categories (Higginbottom and Tribe, 2004): (1) direct wildlife management and supporting research, (2) use of income derived from wildlife tourism to fund conservation initiatives, and (3) education of visitors to encourage support or enhance conservation. In turn, interpretive education can promote more responsible behaviour towards wildlife, involvement in wildlife conservation or research, increased donations towards conservation, and a higher level of overall satisfaction (Higginbottom and Tribe, 2004).

A study conducted by Orams (1997) testing the effectiveness of an education program for managing tourists at Tangalooma, Australia, showed that interacting with dolphins produced a desire in tourists to change their behaviour and become more environmentally responsible. However, tourists who participated in a structured education program were more likely to follow through with those changes than those who did not participate in any type of program. This shows that an education program, combined with the experience of interacting with animals, may be an important influence on tourist behaviour (Orams, 1997).

2.2 Understanding Wildlife Tourism Markets

As noted in section 1.2, the non-consumptive side of human interactions with wildlife has received little recent attention compared to the negative biophysical impacts of human interactions with wildlife. A non-consumptive interaction with wildlife refers to "public interest in wildlife and wildlife-related activities that extend beyond traditional hunting and fishing activities" (Rockel and Kealy, 1991, p.422). Although the existing literature provides many references to support the size and growth of the wildlife tourism

market, little is known about the actual demand for non-consumptive wildlife tourism, and what characterizes tourists who desire wildlife viewing opportunities (Moscardo and Saltzer, 2004). Moscardo and Saltzer (2004) state that studying wildlife tourism markets and understanding the level of visitor demand for wildlife tourism experiences is important for three reasons: 1) To guide the planning of infrastructure and services, 2) determine the nature of the visitor markets and factors that contribute to satisfaction with wildlife tourism opportunities; and 3) gain a better understanding of visitor behaviour and how it can be influenced. In doing so, the negative impacts of wildlife tourism may be effectively managed, and positive outcomes such as conservation awareness and support can be encouraged (Moscardo and Saltzer, 2004).

One of the challenges faced in the field of wildlife tourism is that few researchers have looked at the nature of the experience of each individual visitor. This is important because individual wildlife viewing experiences can reveal a number of benefits that visitors can gain from these types of experiences. There is also substantial evidence that encounters with wildlife can elicit emotional and other affective responses from people (Kellert, 1996). Visitor relationships with outdoor areas can reflect broader satisfactions with social life, broader socio-cultural and spiritual connections, and evolving place identities (Fredrickson and Anderson, 1999; Manzo, 2003). Paying closer attention to the psychological needs of tourists will expand our knowledge on all these fronts; this in turn may impact wildlife tourism practices aimed at improving visitor experience.

2.2.1 Wildlife Viewing Preferences of Visitors

Wildlife tourism experiences can vary greatly in terms of the emphasis or intensity of encounters, and the aesthetic appeal of certain characteristics of wildlife species may facilitate more positive responses from the visitor. Aesthetic appeal can be defined as the "attraction various species hold for tourists...aesthetic preferences can be individualistic, shaped by social and cultural processes, and is often found to be greatly influenced by colour, shape, movement and visibility" (Kellert, 1996, p.90). It is also expressed in commonly used terms such as 'cute and cuddly', features primarily linked to age and size class, skin texture, and behavioural traits. Research suggests that the more 'cute and cuddly' an animal, the more positive the response from the visitor will be in terms of attraction, feelings, attitudes and treatment (Newsome, Dowling and Moore, 2005). In a review of literature focusing on the most liked and disliked animals, Woods (2000) provided a set of features that were associated with greater preference for particular types of wildlife. Animals that were stated as being more attractive to humans included larger animals, animals perceived as intelligent, and colourful, graceful and soft animals. Animals perceived to be dangerous to humans were generally disliked, and animals that were perceived as being similar in appearance or behaviour to humans were preferred (Woods, 2000).

Woods (2000) also provided findings of factors found to be related to overall satisfaction. These include variety of animals seen, being able to get close to wildlife, seeing large, rare or new species, and the natural setting itself. This is supported by a number of examples in the literature. Higginbottom and Buckley (2003) identified that

attractive wildlife resources for tourism generally fall into one of three categories: (1) large numbers of animals, (2) single species, usually of large body size (generally termed charismatic megafauna), and (3) areas of high species diversity. Lemelin and Smale (2006) suggest that wildlife tourists expect to see higher levels of activity by wildlife, and hope to come within close proximity of wildlife. Woods and Moscardo (2003) described the factors mentioned in people's descriptions of their "best" wildlife encounters as including: being in close proximity to large or rare animals in natural habitats, seeing a variety of animals, high levels of animal activity, and unexpected, surprising or new experiences. Chapman (2003) also found that the most memorable experiences involved being in close proximity to the animal, feeling intimacy through activities such as eye contact, and the element of surprise. Together, these studies suggest that there is a large diversity of ways in which tourists may encounter wildlife in a way that best suits their needs, their desired experience and their ability to control the encounter (Orams, 1996).

While the literature suggests that seeing wildlife is special in and of itself, it appears that opportunities to be close in proximity to wildlife and viewing natural behaviour is extra special (Farber and Hall, 2007). Schanzel and McIntosh's (2000) research at Penguin Place, Otaga Peninsula, New Zealand, revealed that visitor satisfaction often stems from the 'closer the better' and the most frequently mentioned cause of dissatisfaction was not being able to get close enough. Visitors felt they had benefited from being able to view the penguins at close proximity, reporting a higher degree of enjoyment when they got closer to the penguins than expected (Schanzel and McIntosh, 2000). Such close encounters have also been noted to create feelings of

intimacy through factors such as eye-contact and surprise or novelty (Chapman, 2003), and are an important aspect of the overall experience (Curtin, 2005).

The species of wildlife viewed has also been considered an important factor in determining the overall experience for the visitor. Shackley (1996) noted that a strong focus in wildlife tourism is placed on rare and endangered species. This is also supported by Reynolds and Braithwaite (1996) who state that "species on rare and endangered lists appear to hold a special attraction for wildlife tourists" (p.36). One explanation for this is that an encounter with such an animal presents an extraordinary and unique opportunity that one does not get to experience on a regular basis (Newsome, Dowling and Moore, 2005).

Charismatic mega-fauna represents a feature of protected areas most important to tourists, and play a key role in attracting many visitors to national parks (Lindsay et al., 2007). This is illustrated in a report submitted by IPSOS REID for Parks Canada in 2007 following a study conducted on the Bow Valley Parkway in Banff National Park. One of the objectives of the study was to determine the wildlife that visitors had seen along the Parkway, the wildlife species they would like to have seen but did not, and the top three animals visitors who did not see any wildlife during their visit would most like to see. Many respondents named animals such as bears, moose, and cougars. However, many respondents also stated that they did not expect to see any animals, and were happy to have sightings of any types of wildlife (Parks Canada, 2007).

A correlation was found between less commonly seen animals and animals that respondents would most like to see. Animals that only a small proportion of respondents

had reported seeing (e.g., cougar, moose) were considered to be the most desired animals other respondents would like to see if they had a choice (Parks Canada, 2007).

2.3 Activities Associated with Wildlife Tourism

In addition to the characteristics of the wildlife itself that create satisfying experiences, there are activities associated with the observation of wildlife that can play an important role. Perhaps the most frequent of these activities is photography. Promotion of the mountain national parks has repeatedly drawn on photogenic animals such as elk, mountain sheep, and bears (Cronin, 2011). Photography is an essential component in many aspects of tourism as it helps to illustrate a level of experience. It can serve to both recreate one's memories of a trip, as well as offer evidence that the trip was made and that satisfaction was achieved (Russell, 1995). Sontag (1977) argued that photography is a principal device for experiencing something. She states that "most tourists feel compelled to put the camera between themselves and whatever is remarkable they encounter. Unsure of other responses, they take a picture. This gives shape to the experience" (p.10). Urry (1990) describes photography as a "means of transcribing reality...A photograph thus seems to furnish evidence that something did indeed happen" (p.139). As well as documenting their experiences, the images captured can provide evidence of an authentic wildlife experience, and recall and relive the event at whatever time they choose, thereby recreating the experience (Cronin, 2011; Newsome, Dowling and Moore, 2005).

2.4 Setting Attributes of Wildlife Tourism

In terms of landscape, tourists can encounter wildlife in a broad range of environments. These vary from remote and wild regions such as natural wildlife habitat areas, to secure and confined enclosures such as zoos, aviaries and aquariums (Newsome, Dowling and Moore, 2005). This landscape continuum provides a variety of opportunities for tourists to encounter wildlife in a way that best suits their desired experience. Floyd and Gramann (1997) identified a link between the setting of the landscape and experience; such that the type of setting in which the encounter takes place can constrain or facilitate the attainment of the visitors' desired experience (cited in Newsome, Dowling and Moore, 2005).

Wildlife encounters in captive or semi-captive settings can provide tourists with the opportunity to experience reasonably close encounters with wildlife that may be otherwise unattainable for a number of reasons such as due to age or inaccessibility, or, as in the case of some rare, endangered or dangerous animals, an encounter not possible in the natural environment (Newsome, Dowling and Moore, 2005).

In terms of non-captive settings, while wildlife encounters may provide incentive for a trip, there are other attributes that may be additionally significant to the overall experience. For example, the landscape itself may provide a backdrop for the experience and add to the overall satisfaction of the visitor (Valentine and Birtles, 2004).

2.5 An Experiential View of Wildlife Tourism

While attention has been given to the preferences of visitors in regards to wildlife characteristics, little research has furthered understanding as to how wildlife experiences affect tourists and how these experiences change in different settings (Curtin, 2005; Lemelin and Wiersma, 2007). An experiential view of wildlife tourism concerns the "emotional, psychological and physical benefits of taking a wildlife holiday" (Curtin, 2005, p.1), and there is substantial evidence that encounters with wildlife elicit emotional and other affective responses from humans (Kellert, 1996). Harrison (2003) noted that tourists want, "intellectual, physical, even spiritual stimulation" from their travels (cited in Curtin, 2005, p.27). Further, Ulrich (1983) has argued that, "emotional experiences are among the most important benefits realized by many recreationists in the natural environment" (cited in Farber and Hall, 2007, p.250). In order to gain a deeper understanding of the processes that underlie the development of human-wildlife relations, human interest in wildlife, and the nature and role of such relations, a better understanding of what factors contribute to a satisfying visitor experience is needed (Newsome, Dowling and Moore, 2005).

Essential to providing a satisfying experience is an understanding of the factors that contribute to quality experiences. The quality of the experience can provide greater or lesser satisfaction for a visitor, and often depends on the degree of control which the visitor feels they have (Reynolds and Braithwaite, 2001). The degree of satisfaction felt by a tourist is derived in part by a combination of pre-existing circumstances, and conditions combined with the influence of his or her personality. The quality and nature

of the resulting satisfaction that the visitor experiences then is determined by the match between reality and expectations (Shackley, 1996). Driver and Tocher (1970) suggested that each individual who undertakes a trip has expectations, knowledge and past experiences which go together to evaluate whether a trip is a success (cited in Reynolds and Braithwaite, 2001). The definition of a successful visitor experience, therefore, must be related to the realization or exceeding of expectations (Shackley, 1996).

Several areas of research help us understand human emotional responses to other animals. Wilson (1984; 1993) introduced the biophilia hypothesis. Biophilia can be defined as, "the innate emotional affiliation of human beings to other living organisms" (1993, p.31). Wilson argues that this tendency is inherited genetically, and is facilitated by biologically based tendencies to learn (1984). Building upon this, Ulrich (1993) discusses how in addition to the biophilic response to living things, there also exists a "biophobic" response. Biophobia deals with "fears related to natural hazards or life forms such as snakes and spiders that have threatened humans throughout evolution"(Manfredo, 2008, p.35). Other explanations have been offered that describe human emotional responses to animals as an innate tendency of humans to be aroused and attentive to wildlife that are given meaning by experience, culture and learning. This suggests that such tendencies integrate biological processes and environmentally learned responses (Manfredo, 2008; Katcher and Wilkins, 1993; Kellert and Wilson, 1993).

There is substantial evidence that wildlife encounters elicit emotional and other affective responses from humans (Kellert, 1996). Increasingly, emotions are displayed in social settings and the desire to reveal emotions is an important component of

communication. Consideration, therefore, needs to be given as to how emotional communication can be incorporated in discussion surrounding natural resources, as well as the effect that our emotions can have on behaviours and social interactions in natural resource settings (Manfredo, 2008).

The element of feelings is one we most readily identify in our day-to-day use of language about emotions. When people express the emotions they experience over an event, we tend to identify with the personal sensation of that experience (Manfredo, 2008). Rolston (1987) suggested that viewing wild animals is a source of fascination because they are more than mere objects. He noted the spontaneity of wildlife, the possibility of surprise and appreciation for the moment, and the idea that people are likely to highlight and remember the surprises of the trip (cited in Montag, Patterson and Freidmund, 2005). Schanzel and McIntosh (2000) found that a significant proportion of the experiences and emotions reported by the tourists interviewed could be conceptualized as experiences of wonder and unforgettable memories. Specifically, beneficial feelings such as a "sense of exploration, of fascination, amazement, and privilege, of seeing endangered birds in their habitat, and feeling of happiness" were described by respondents (Schanzel and McIntosh, 2000, p.49). Similar responses were recorded in a study conducted by Fredrickson and Anderson (1999), who explained their respondents sense of awe and wonderment at the exhilaration of seeing or hearing wildlife in its natural environment. They stated that there is an "intense and pressing recognition of one's insignificance and the heightened interrelatedness of all life forms...above all, a mixture of awe and thrill at being exposed to the sheer powers of nature and a reawakened sensitivity towards the sights and sounds of nature"

(Fredrickson and Anderson, 1999, p.10). This suggests that visitors have intense and deeply personal experiences through viewing wildlife. It is fair to assume then, that if an animal elicits a positive response, the experience based on that response has the potential to deliver important outcomes for the visitor and is more likely to result in visitor satisfaction (Kellert, 1996).

2.6 Management Implications

Worldwide, parks and protected areas are being identified as major attractions for visitors, and the growing demand for wildlife tourism in these areas challenges the capacity of management to meet this demand without affecting the values for which protected areas exist (Bushnell and McCool, 2007). Traditionally, managers of protected areas with wildlife have focused their efforts toward managing the potential negative impacts of visitor/wildlife interactions then toward the psychological determinants of quality experiences (Hendee and Potter, 1971 and Manning, 1986, cited in Hammitt, Dulin and Wells, 1993). While these types of management efforts protect the traditional values of protected areas, they sometimes reduce the opportunities for visitors to observe and learn about wildlife; for example, management actions that disperse wildlife from roadsides and other areas that reduce chances of seeing wildlife, as well as trail and other road closures designed to protect the habitats of certain species (Wright, 1998).

The management of wildlife resources that include encounters between tourists and wildlife has emerged as a major issue for management agencies (Coghlan and Prideaux, 2008). Increasingly, a common goal of management is to provide opportunities for high-quality recreational experiences. In order to provide these experiences one

needs an understanding of the factors that contribute to quality experiences (Hammit, Dulin and Wells, 1993). The challenge for researchers and managers is to more clearly define the nature of the wilderness experience (Borrie and Birzell, 2001), to give managers a better understanding of what constitutes high quality experiences and the social-psychological benefits visitors receive (Farber and Hall, 2007).

Moscardo et al. (2001) identified a knowledge gap concerning demand for and satisfaction within wildlife tourism. Five conclusions are identified which reflect the information on the level and nature of demand for wildlife based tourism that is generally lacking: (1) There is some evidence that opportunities to see wildlife are very important to a majority of tourists, both international and domestic; (2) There is some evidence that interest in wildlife viewing opportunities are increasing; (3) There is evidence that interest in wildlife at captive or semi-captive attractions is steady or in decline; (4) There is little information available on the total number of tourists going to sites specifically for wildlife viewing; (5) There is little information on the types of wildlife based experiences desired by tourists (Moscardo et al., 2001).

Protected area management agencies require a clear indication of how the expectations of users are satisfied (Duffus and Dearden, 1993), and an understanding of the inherent diversity in visitors' attitudes and preferences (Fredman and Emmelin, 2001). Furthering the knowledge and understanding of tourists' interactions with wildlife will not only enhance the visitor experience in parks, but also allow for greater optimization of management strategies to do so without compromising the conservation values of natural resources (Lemelin and Smale, 2006). Studies that help to build an

understanding of wildlife tourists' wildlife experiences can assist in developing appropriate management strategies to enhance the viewing experience for visitors, to better respond to existing or potential problems arising from human-wildlife interactions and their associated impacts, and to facilitate the positive contributions such visitors can make (Lemelin and Smale, 2006).

Chapter 3: Methodology

This research project is based on a mixed-method approach consisting of both quantitative and qualitative methods. Previous research on the outcomes of wildlife encounters have been criticized for relying heavily on quantitative methodologies rather than qualitative approaches (Deruiter and Donnelly, 2002). By applying research methods that are both quantitative and qualitative, the researcher can benefit from the strengths and weaknesses of either approach (Jick, 1979; Denzin, 1989; Patton, 2002; Tashakkori and Teddlie, 2003). Exploring wildlife tourism from a more qualitatively based approach may therefore be of value in understanding the full range of what it is that visitors take away with them following a wildlife experience (Moscardo, 2008).

To accomplish this, I triangulated methods for data collection. Broadly defined by Denzin (1978), triangulation is a combination of methodologies in the study of the same phenomenon. A need has been identified for the use of multiple methods in the investigation of values related to natural resources that include the application of qualitative approaches (Champ, 2002; DeRuiter and Donnelly, 2002). Champ (2002) argues that such an approach will enhance understanding of topics like wildlife value orientations.

For the purpose of this thesis, a combination of more than one research strategy was used as a tool for cross validation, to increase the credibility of the research and to reduce flaws within the individual methods used, and yield comparable data. This chapter will provide a description of the methods used. In addition, the data collected regarding demographic information of the initial survey population will be included.

3.1 Data Collection

My data was collected as part of a broader study being conducted by Parks Canada focusing on mountain national parks backcountry day-use research and monitoring (Rettie, 2009). I was a member of the research team that gathered basic demographic information about visitors, their motives for choosing specific trails, their reasons for visiting national parks, and their main activities. While data was not collected specifically for my research, the questions and focus were similar enough to be adapted to my purposes. Baseline data was collected using a personally administered structured questionnaire. The questionnaire also served to screen participants who would be eligible to participate further in my own research. This follow-up data was collected through the use of a sub-sample of in-depth interviews, and a public weblog.

Research Instrument

Research for this project was conducted in three complementary stages: (1) a structured questionnaire, (2) a series of in-depth interviews, and (3) a public Weblog. The first two stages correspondingly used two different interview instruments: (1) standardized interview questions, and (2) in-depth open-ended interview questions.

Development of these instruments occurred through a number of steps including review of relevant literature in social science research methods (e.g., Denzin and Lincoln, 1998; Patton, 2002; Neuman, 2004) and an examination of methods used in various other similar studies (e.g., Simpson, 1995; Dill, 1998; Finkler, 2001).

Structured Questionnaire

During the summer of 2009, a short structured questionnaire was administered as part of a backcountry day-use research and monitoring study being conducted by Parks Canada (Rettie, 2009). The questionnaire consisted of 20 short questions pertaining to visitor experience on backcountry day-use trails in the mountain national parks, and collected general demographic information.[1] The questions provided to visitors at selected sites (these sites will be reviewed in section 3.2). Due to the similar nature of the study sample I was able to combine my questions onto the structured questionnaire being used by Parks Canada.

For the purposes of my research, I surveyed 428 mountain national park backcountry day-use visitors over a period of four months[2]. The questionnaire served three main purposes: (1) collect general demographic and trip information; (2) determine visitor motivations for visiting national parks; and (3) a screener for park visitors who fit the desired respondent criteria for the second stage of my research (in-depth interview). To better achieve the qualitative nature of the interviews, I used a purposive sample. Therefore, the purpose of the screening question was to identify those respondents who felt strongly that seeing wildlife was very important to them during a trip to the mountain national parks.

Survey participants were recruited at a series of pre-identified sites in each of the seven mountain national parks. These sites consisted of hiking trails considered to be low, medium or high-use. Respondents were approached on the basis of being the next

[1] Refer to Appendix 1 for full questionnaire
[2] Parks Canada surveyed a total of 2142 visitors

available individual/party entering the area. If there was more than one individual in the approaching group, the participant was then selected based on a 'next occurring birth date' basis.

In-depth Interviews

In-depth interviews were conducted with a subsample of respondents who were identified through the screener in the structured questionnaire. This subsample consisted of 15 visitors to the mountain national parks who considered seeing wildlife very important to their experience.

The purpose of the in-depth interviews was to explore a deeper and more personal understanding of the meaning of wildlife viewing experiences. It has been suggested that the limits of previous research in the area of wildlife values implies the appropriateness of using qualitative methods (Strauss and Corbin, 1994; Deruiter and Donnelly, 2002). Using open-ended questions in a semi-structured format allowed for the opportunity of a thorough qualitative analysis. Relevant topics of interest included: wildlife as a motivation for visiting national parks, activities planned around increasing opportunities to view wildlife, desired species to see, most memorable experiences viewing wildlife, and lasting impacts on visitors as a result of wildlife viewing experiences.

Participants were given a choice of three options in how and where the interviews would be conducted: (1) on-site immediately following the structured questionnaire, (2) off-site in a neutral location of the participants' choice, or (3) via phone at a convenient

date specified by the participant. The purpose of having these three options was to accommodate what was most convenient for the participant.

Of the 15 in-depth interviews, one interview was conducted on-site immediately following the questionnaire, six were conducted off-site, and eight were conducted by phone. My initial intention was to complete 30 in-depth interviews. However, this target was not met for two reasons: a) by giving people the option to be contacted for a phone interview, the degree of follow-up success was more limited than what I had anticipated, and b) after going through each interview in the process of analysis, the data began to reach a point of saturation. The categories, concepts and dimensions that were developed by the researcher were consistent among each interview. For this reason, in reviewing the number of interviews collected it was decided that additional collection of interviews was unnecessary. Alternatively, a third method of data collection was added to provide a yield of comparable data.

Weblog

The third instrument used was a weblog. A site was created using a publishing platform available through the University of Northern British Columbia. The weblog was open to the public and used as a forum where wildlife viewers could share their experiences online. This instrument was added as an additional research method following the 2009 field season as a means to acquire additional data that would be useful in supporting the results found in the analysis of the in-depth interviews. The purpose of using the weblog as a research instrument, therefore, was as a tool for a comparative

analysis. Entries submitted on the weblog were analysed for similarities/differences with the data accumulated through the in-depth interviews.

The weblog was advertised through a variety of ways. I contacted a number of organizations including various naturalists' societies, hiking/outdoors clubs, wildlife societies and other related organizations. Each of these organizations passed on the link to the blog via mailings lists and newsletters. The weblog was also advertised within Parks Canada through their newsletter. In addition, information about the weblog was spread by word of mouth through friends, family and other acquaintances to those people whom they thought may have a keen interest in wildlife and who may be interested in participating.

The weblog itself invited participants to share their experiences viewing wildlife by writing a personal entry describing their experience. The project was described in detail, and descriptions were given as to what kind of information an entry should contain. Additionally, a page was available to the reader describing in detail the purpose of the research, the consent implied by submitting an entry, and contact information for myself, as well as the UNBC Office of Research. The response rate of the blog resulted in a total of 10 submissions within the time frame of my analysis.

Studies in recent years have shown that there are numerous benefits to using weblogs as a research instrument. First, they provide a publicly available and instantaneous technique for collecting substantial data (Hookway, 2008). In addition, blogs are naturalistic data in textual form. This allows for the creation of immediate text without the resource intensiveness of tape recorders and transcription (Liamputtong and

Ezzy, 2005). Lastly, due to the anonymity of the online context bloggers are able to be relatively unselfconscious about what they are writing since their identity remains hidden from view (Hookway, 2008).

3.2 Sample Design and Selection

Sample Design

The sampling period for the structured questionnaire and the in-depth interviews was mid-June through mid-September 2009. This three month period was chosen based on peak visitation to the mountain national parks, and because it corresponded with the study being conducted by Parks Canada. It also allowed for sufficient time for instrument design and revision.

Sampling was scheduled by weekday, weekends and holiday weekends, and time of day. This sampling schedule was designed in a systematic random sampling fashion with a purpose of obtaining a representative sample.

Respondent Selection Procedures

The sample population for this study was defined as those visitors to the mountain national parks during the months of mid-June 2009 through mid-September 2009 who have a keen interest in wildlife viewing. More specifically, respondents in the first stage were screened to identify those visitors who feel that seeing wildlife on a trip through the national parks was very important, and who may have purposely sought out wildlife viewing opportunities.

Sampling occurred in two stages, corresponding with the first two research instruments: (1) standardized questionnaire, and (2) in-depth semi-structured interviews. In the first stage, the sample consisted of a stratified random sample by location (e.g. specified trails within the mountain national parks). For any given survey period, the next available individual/party entering the area was approached and a participant was selected based on a 'next occurring birth date'. Only individuals above the age of 18 were eligible to participate. Answers for the questionnaire were given based on individual representation. For this first stage, the targeted sample size was approximately 396 completed surveys (based on a 95% confidence level with a +/- 5% error margin).

The second stage of sampling consisted of an in-depth, semi-structured set of interview questions administered to a sub-set of survey respondents who indicated that seeing wildlife on their visit to mountain National Parks was 'very important'. The sample represented in the second stage of research consisted of a non-probabilistic sample. Consequently, calculating a sample size a priori was unnecessary. Instead, interviews were obtained from a range of visitors over the season and in various locations, working under the principle of theoretical saturation (Patton, 2002).

Sampling Sites

The sampling sites were selected based on the visitor study being conducted by Parks Canada (Rettie, 2009). The sites were representative sample of low, medium and high use backcountry day-use trails within the seven mountain national parks: Banff,

Jasper, Yoho, Kootenay, Waterton Lakes, Glacier, and Mount Revelstoke National Parks (Table 1).[3]

Park	Survey Sites
Banff National Park	• Bourgeau Lake • Lake Louise Trails (Lake Louise Lakeshore, Fairview Lookout, Lake Agnes, Plain of Six Glaciers) • Johnston Canyon from Moose Meadows • Mt. Norquay; • Red Earth • Rockbound Lake • Taylor Lake
Jasper National Park	• Astoria River Trail • Geraldine Lakes • Maligne Canyon • Mt. Edith Cavell • Sulpher Skyline Trail • Wabasso Lake
Yoho National Park	• Lake o'Hara • Takakkaw Falls
Kootenay National Park	• Floe Lake • Marble Canyon • Paint Pots • Stanley Glacier
Waterton Lakes National Park	• Akamina Parkway • Bertha Lake Trail • Red Rock Canyon
Glacier National Park	• Asulkan Valley Trail • Balu Pass • Mount Sir Donald
Mount Revelstoke National Park	• Eva Lake • Meadows in the Sky

Table 1. Survey Sites

[3] Refer to Appendix 2 for full maps

3.3 Data Analysis

Data was analysed in two stages using a combination of descriptive statistics and thematic analysis.

3.3.1. Stage One

Basic descriptive statistics were used to examine the data collected in the structured questionnaire. As descriptive statistics provide a tool for simplifying and summarizing basic information from a mass of data (Hopkins, Glass and Hopkins, 1987) this was the most appropriate method to describe the set of categorical data (e.g., sex, age, group size) collected through the questionnaire.

Results of the structured questionnaire

In total, 428 respondents participated in the on-site questionnaire. The data acquired from the questionnaire was used to supply a demographic profile of backcountry day-use visitors in the mountain national parks. The subsample population from this group consisted of 15 people. The 15 individuals who participated in the in-depth interviews were not selected specifically to be representative of the survey population; however, they tended to represent a cross-section of gender, age, and origin.

1. Demographic Profile of Backcountry Day-Use Visitors in the Mountain National Parks

Overall, visitors were primarily Canadian, equally split between male and female with an average age ranging between 50 to 59 years of age[4].

[4] Refer to Appendix 3 for full list of figures

2. Trip Characteristics of Backcountry Day-use Visitors in the Mountain National Parks

Survey location

The distribution of survey locations was spread throughout the seven mountain national parks. This was based on previous visitation numbers per individual park based on results from research previously conducted by Parks Canada. The majority of respondents were approached on trails within Banff National Park, followed by Jasper, Yoho, Kootenay, Waterton Lakes, Glacier and Revelstoke National Parks.

Respondents were asked to indicate what part of the season they generally visit the national parks. The majority of respondents indicated that this was their first visit to the national park. This was followed by respondents who stated that they visit the national parks during any time of the season. A small portion of respondents indicated that they visit during a specific seasonal period.

Respondents were asked to indicate which activities they participated in or planned to participate in during their trip to the national park. The most popular activities included hiking, sightseeing, camping and eating out. In terms of planned activities, wildlife watching was a less popular activity in terms of planned activities.

Importance of seeing wildlife

Respondents were asked to indicate how important it is for them to see wildlife on a trip through the mountain national parks. Despite a low number of respondents indicating wildlife watching as an activity they plan on a trip through the mountain national parks, the majority of respondents (46%) stated that seeing wildlife was very

important to them. This was followed by a moderate level of importance (40%), and the fewest number of respondents indicated that seeing wildlife on a trip through the national parks was of no importance (14%).

3.3.2.Stage Two

The method of analysis chosen for both the second (in-depth interview) and third (weblog) stage of data collection was thematic analysis. Thematic analysis is a search for themes that emerge as being important to the description of the phenomenon (Patton, 2002; Daly, Kellehear, & Gliksman, 1997). For the purpose of this research, the analysis was primarily inductive, and involved the identification of codes, categories and themes within the data (Boyatzis, 1998; Patton, 2002). The thematic analysis was done separately for each individual interview and was repeated from the beginning multiple times to reconsider the patterns and themes, and maintain a consistency between interviews. Once this was done I refined the themes by looking across transcripts to represent the interviews collectively as a whole. These results will be discussed in the next chapter.

I initially organized the data using the qualitative research software "NVivo 8". However, after a closer examination of the interviews I felt that a more thorough analysis and interpretation would be accomplished through personal analysis. Using a process of open coding (Patton, 2002), I began by examining each individual interview transcript and developing a codebook. Coding was emergent but informed by my reading of the literature. Encoding the information allowed me to organize the interviews to identify categories of codes and patterns and ultimately to reveal themes in the interviews.

Boyatzis (1998) states that a "good code" is one that captures the qualitative richness of the phenomenon. He defines a theme as "a pattern in the information that at minimum describes and organises the possible observations and at maximum interprets aspects of the phenomenon" (p.161). Coding was done through the creation of a structure of nodes that provided a complete listing of all categories for each dimension being coded. For example one set of codes included elements such as "scary" "fear" and "anticipation" that were grouped in a category called "feelings or emotions". Once I had conducted a detailed coding and categorized this information I looked more closely at these categories and across categories to discern patterns in the results. These patterns were interpreted to identify a series of themes. At that point I looked more closely at each transcript to identify all of the information that more specifically related to each individual theme. This process involved recognizing the individual respondents' ideas and allowed me to examine the data more thoroughly.

The entries of the weblog were analysed using the same process of thematic analysis. The text of each blog entry was assigned codes from the same node structure created for the interview transcripts and examined for similar arising themes. A negative case analysis was done on the resulting data from the weblog. The purpose of this was to search for any elements in the data that did not support, or appeared to contradict, the patterns that emerged from the analysis of the in-depth interviews. Where patterns and trends have been identified, our understanding is increased by considering the instances and cases that do not fit within the pattern (Patton, 1999). Doing so may revise, broaden and confirm the patterns emerging from the original data analysis (Creswell, 1998).

After identifying the core or central themes in the interviews and blog entries I re-examined and interpreted this information in what might be termed a meta-analysis or meta-synthesis (Lewis-Beck et al., 2004). This is similar to Attride-Stirling's (2001) notion of global themes. These global-themes "are super-ordinate themes that compass the principal metaphors in the data as a whole" (p. 389). In my research, my overarching findings were not necessarily themes *per se* but were a synthesis across themes that identified a series of central ideas.

3.4 Study Limitations

Data Collection Methods

Due to the nature of the data being collected, in-depth interviews were chosen as the main research instrument in this study. There are, however, limitations associated with the sampling frame chosen. The sub-sample of in-depth interviews conducted was originally intended to be conducted primarily as face-to-face interactions with participants. The intention of having a face-to-face interaction with the visitor was to allow for a more personal relationship to be developed between the interviewer and the visitor, as well as to allow for a more thorough interpretation of visitor experiences through the use of facial expressions and body language. However, visitor schedules (e.g., travel time constraints), made it difficult to get participants to agree to on-site interviews. To cope with these obstacles, visitors were given the additional options of meeting off-site at a later time, or setting up the interview via phone at a later date.

There were two major limitations associated with giving participants the option of where and how the interviews were conducted. First, many of the respondents who agreed to participate in off-site interviews via phone failed to respond despite multiple attempts to contact them. Thus, the number of interviews collected was lower than had originally been anticipated. Second, because the phone interviews were conducted in a timeframe after their actual trip, details recalled regarding individual experiences may not have been as accurate or thorough as they might have been had the interview been conducted during the trip itself.

A second major limitation regarding the data collection methods was the nature of the information itself. While the study was originally designed to be specific to wildlife experiences within the national parks system, the focus ended up being less specific to the national parks and more directed towards the most memorable experiences had by visitors, be it in the national parks or elsewhere. This occurred through visitors relaying experiences that they have had viewing wildlife outside of the national parks. However, because of the similarity in nature, it was determined that information collected from such other experiences is still useful in how it could be applied in a national park setting.

3. 5 Conclusion

This chapter presented the design and methodology of the study. A mixed-method approach was chosen, using a combination of a structured questionnaire, in-depth interviews, and a public weblog. The questionnaire was administered to park visitors at a set of low, medium and high use trails throughout the seven mountain national parks in western Canada. Through this questionnaire, a sub-sample of participants was chosen

based on the importance they placed on seeing wildlife on a trip through the national parks. This sub-sample participated in individual in-depth interviews based on their experiences viewing wildlife in the national parks and elsewhere. The public weblog was developed as a separate tool for individuals to share their wildlife viewing experiences.

Analysis was done using a combination of descriptive statistics, thematic analysis and negative case analysis. The results from the thematic analysis of the in-depth interviews and the public weblog will be interpreted and discussed in the following chapter.

Chapter 4: Description and Interpretation

In this chapter I provide a description of the in-depth interviews that were conducted with 15 individuals in the Canadian mountain national parks in the summer of 2009. In addition, entries from my weblog have also been included in this interpretation to support and add to the descriptions of the various elements shown to contribute to a meaningful wildlife experience. My interview questions were focused on the major elements of wildlife tourism as related to experience as described in the literature. These included topics such as species preference, mode and proximity of viewing, and general accounts of memorable experiences.

Given the qualitative approach to the thesis, this chapter is both a description and interpretation of the interviews. In doing so, I hope to provide a comprehensive description of the components identified to contribute to a meaningful wildlife experience. In addition I hope to draw the reader into the experiences described and give deeper insight into encounters with wildlife. The purpose of the interpretation is to explain my findings and build the visible patterns into an analytic framework (Patton, 2002). I will start by sharing some of the personal experiences encountering wildlife as described by the participants. This will be followed by a description of the individual themes that were present in the responses of participants, and in the latter part of the chapter I will provide a more holistic picture of meaningful wildlife viewing experiences.

4.1 Encounters with Wildlife

My interest in encounters with wildlife first stemmed from when I was working as an interpretive guide in Lake Louise, Alberta. It was the first job I'd ever had in my field

of study, and the first time I'd ever spent a quality amount of time within a national park. Each day I would meet new people from different areas of the world who were always keen to share stories of their trip with me. Many times these stories were about wildlife they had seen along the highway, or encountered on a trail. As the summer went on I became more aware of how often people actually began discussions with, "Guess what we have just seen?" The amount of excitement and passion they tended to express amazed me. My interest only continued to grow as I began to have my own experiences with wildlife. I can still vividly recall the first time I ever encountered a bear on a hiking trail. We were happily hiking along and up ahead of us realized that the two figures in front were that of a black bear mother and her cub. Although we turned around immediately, we encountered another group of hikers on the way out. We warned the two women that there was a bear with her cub up ahead on the trail, and to my surprise, rather than turning around, they immediately both got out their cameras and continued on ahead. This only confirmed my intrigue of people's interest in seeing wildlife. Since then I have spent a significant amount of time within national and provincial parks throughout Alberta and British Columbia and my interest in encounters with wildlife has never ceased. I wondered what it was about wildlife that was so exciting for people, including myself. During the summer that I collected my research for this project I had the pleasure of having many individuals share their experiences with me. Relaying a few of those here to the reader sets the context for subsequent interpretation of components of the experiences.

In the interviews participants shared personal stories of experiences they've had with wildlife, both in the national parks and elsewhere. Each of these stories is unique in

many aspects, including species involved, where and how the experience took place, and the feelings and emotions that were reflected in the experience. In an interview with a woman I encountered in Kootenay National Park I was in awe at the amount of emotion and passion in her voice as she recalled an experience she had viewing multiple bears on Vancouver Island.

> *My most memorable experience is the, it's a very beautiful picture I will give to you. It was, I watched oh for about half an hour, some black bears. It was on Vancouver Island on the west coast and I can't exactly remember the name, but there had been a pulp mill which had been closed, so interventions at the pulp mill had been planted, cherry trees. There were cherry trees along on one side of the whole road. I went there with a friend and we sort of had gone on to this road that wasn't really leading anywhere, we had sort of lost our way a little bit, and we saw, oh there must have been 15 bears, from little tiny cubs to big mommies and daddies and they were all up in the cherry trees gorging themselves. Some were big bears and they were heavy and they were reaching out and gorging themselves and then they kind of plopped to the ground and roly-pollied over the grass. They were so fun to watch. Then the mama bear was kind of, kind of hitting the little bears, like sort of as if they were being too naughty. Then after awhile you could tell they were so full, they sort of went into the thicket beyond and you could just imagine they would just go in there and just sleep. We were no more than 30 to 35 feet away, and they of course didn't know we were there, but it was just the most amazing thing, and there were about 15 bears. It was so fun and so beautiful. I could sort of imagine if they came upon big areas of wild berries and then gorging themselves and then playing and enjoying themselves and just eating themselves silly* (Participant #6).

Participant #4 recalls the excitement demonstrated by her husband in an encounter with a bear:

> *He (my husband) was so excited; he was like a little kid. He was bent down in front of me and I looked over his back and there was this bear. Well he got up and his eyes were this big and he was so excited. He was so excited that he was chuckling like a little kid looking up, like get out of my way! I was thinking about all the things they tell you with a bear of what to do. It starts flicking through your mind. You're so close and you're thinking is it a black bear or a grizzly bear, because it's different right? All I could think of was just back up, just back up and get out of*

here. But my husband, he was laughing he was so excited. He was like, did you see that bear? That was so cool! The biggest thing I wish is just that I would have had a camera to get a picture of him that close, but I didn't. It was exciting.

Many of the stories demonstrate a wide range of emotions that occur throughout the experience, ranging from fear and excitement, joy and exhilaration, to a sense of peace and calm. This was the experience of participant #9 as he recalled a run in with a moose in the forest:

We were just walking around in the winter and we came around the corner and there was a moose just standing right there in the middle of the trail. It was almost like there was a pause for about 15 seconds, and utter silence. We didn't know what to do, whether to run or anything like that. It just kind of stood there looking at us. I think it was kind of thinking, "oh hopefully they don't see me", even though it was standing there right in the middle of the snow. So there was kind of a pause, and kind of this quiet silence, then all of a sudden it just trotted off into the woods. It was neat because I had never seen one that close, not being in a vehicle. At first it was scary, like oh god big moose, but then you're okay and it's not doing anything. It was really peaceful and calm. So it contradicted how I maybe felt ahead of time if I had seen a moose like that.

A similar display of emotions was revealed in an experience posted in a blog entry appropriately titled "Weak in the Knees" as the writer described a series of bear sightings which started off in the safety of a vehicle as they travelled along the highway, and transferred into a personal and unexpected encounter on a trail along their drive:

My fiancé and I were lucky enough to take our '78 tent trailer on a road trip from Edmonton to Prince George. We had a lovely drive out as the weather was perfect. I had never seen so many bears in all my life! It was so exciting to press my nose to the window like a child and be on the lookout for bears. They seemed to be around every corner lazily soaking up the sun or grazing casually as if there was no one else existing. It was one of the best road trips I had been on, just me and my beau, cruising music and bears galore. On our way home we stopped at a trail, it was magnificent! I was nattering the entire time to put my mind at ease thinking that any bears that could hear me would turn and run the other way. I felt fairly safe until my fiancé calmly told me to stop. I was warned

beforehand if we spotted any bears not to run, just to stand still. Yeah right! I was about to turn and bolt when he grabbed my hand. My knees went limp and it took all my might just to stand there. There, about 60 ft away, was a mama bear and her cub. Holy crap! She had grunted and snorted to make us aware of her presence. My fiancé quickly grabbed a couple of branches and started banging them together like a mad man. The black bear stared us down, not willing to give up her grazing spot. The cub stood on two legs, interested in what all the commotion was about. The only other option was for us to retreat, finding a new path to continue our walk. Now I was terrified to finish the rest of the trail in fear of running into more bears. We had to have a break so that my knees and heart had time to forget my near death experience, at least in my mind, of coming upon a mama and her cub. Although the experience was terrifying, it was also exhilarating to witness the beauty of the black bear and her young in their true surroundings. It made me experience the true "wild" in wildlife.

The importance of the feelings that occur in encounters with wildlife was effectively described by one participant, who shared her thoughts about the feelings of her experiences, after sharing a few encounter stories with me. This story opened my eyes even further into how unique the process of each experience is for every individual. She uniquely described her feelings about wildlife experiences using an analogy of another type of naturally occurring event.

It's the feelings that are fantastic. The feeling that I had is the same for each of those experiences when I'm describing them. The only other thing I can think of that I can compare it to is watching a thunderstorm, because it's another natural event that you're kind of lucky to see that close. It's spectacular, you have no control over it, and your encounter with it is kind of unknown how it's going to react. It's the same in each of those wildlife ones, the same feeling; different than anything else. I think it's the hiking for a long time. You can't drive up, or you can't expect to hike for half an hour and see wildlife, it just doesn't do it. You've got to be hiking for awhile to immerse yourself in the environment and then if you see something it's neat because you are in it; you're more in the environment.

Even people who are well versed in the environment and being in backcountry settings have startling experiences with wildlife that they are generally very familiar with.

A commercial guide shared his experience in the blog entry "The Early Bear Catches the Snowshoers":

> *As a commercial guide I never expected this! Leading a group of 12 people from Britain, we snow-shoed up the Marble Canyon Trail in Kootenay National Park and were marvelling at the frozen waterfall under the bridge. It was almost the end of the season, April 10th. All of a sudden someone called out, "What's that?" I looked to where they were pointing and saw a massive grizzly bear 'swimming' through the deep snow, directly towards us. His stroke was immensely powerful and he was approaching quickly. As I reassured my guests (and tried to formulate a plan) his head came up from the wave of snow in front of him and his course adjusted to our left, just 100 ft from the bridge. Over just a couple of minutes we startled to see the unexpected, awed at this animal's amazing power, and were left breathless as he quickly and silently disappeared over a small knoll. That is wildlife viewing in the Rockies; unpredictable and no time for a photo.*

These stories and the others that were shared with me during the discussions I had with each participant demonstrate that encountering wildlife is a unique and personal experience for each individual. Each story gives insight into the multiple characteristics that come together to create something that is meaningful to the individual involved and which often has a profound and lasting impact on the life of the person. The remainder of this chapter will be used to describe and interpret these discussions and blog entries more deeply to explore wildlife viewing experiences and the specific aspects that contribute to making them more meaningful and memorable for wildlife viewers. I will begin by examining the individual themes that arose from the interviews/blog entries and move into a more holistic interpretation of these themes as the chapter goes on.

4.2 Central Themes within Wildlife Viewing Experiences

Situational Factors Are More Relevant Than Species Viewed

When speaking with each participant, the importance of what type of species individuals prefer to see or seek out was discussed. Initially the responses I was given were what I had expected and what is supported in the literature; a general desire to see rare and less well known species (e.g., wolverine, wolf, cougar) and large charismatic megafauna (e.g., grizzly bear, moose) (Farber and Hall, 2007; Lindsey et al., 2007; Woods, 2005; Moscardo and Saltzer, 2004; Chapman, 2003; Higginbottom and Buckley, 2003; Reynolds and Braithwaite, 2001). Although the literature suggests that animals which are considered to be potentially dangerous to humans are generally disliked, it is also suggested that there are some exceptions, particularly with big cats (Woods, 2000). I found this to be congruent with what I heard from participants. Many participants expressed interest in seeing more predatory-type wildlife such as cougars, wolves and bears. Participant #1 stated more than once their desire to see a cougar; however, they were conscious of the issue of safety, stating "I would love to see a cougar, but I don't want to find myself on the path with it". Participant #13 also shared that they would be interested in seeing, "stuff you don't get to see very often like wolverines, wolves and bears". This appeared to arise out of the excitement and rarity associated with seeing less common predator species.

While bears were commonly mentioned, their popularity might be explained by the fact that bears have become a distinctive symbol of Canada, especially within the mountain national parks. This was described by participant #2 as he shared with me an encounter he had with an international tourist on a trail:

I had a very interesting experience here last year. I think they were Japanese tourists, all around on the trail over this way, at Oesa (Yoho National Park). We had spotted a mountain goat, Billy goat, big guy, by himself, and he was just very slowly going along the scree slope. This couple came by and we pointed him out to them. The woman was a bit interested, but the man was like, "Huh? Goat? I came to see a bear". I found that very interesting, but I think many other people come from other countries and hope to see things like bears; bear in particular for many people.

It's been suggested that charismatic mega-fauna represents the feature of protected areas most important to tourists, and these species play a key role in attracting the bulk of visitors to parks (Lindsey et al., 2007). This could partly explain the emphasis that seems to be consistently placed on viewing bears in the mountain national parks. If this is so then charismatic species could be important in motivating first time visitors to participate in more frequent trips. As a result, visitors may begin to develop interest in opportunities to view a more diverse set of species (Lindsey et al., 2007).

An additional explanation that might further describe why there tends to be a specific emphasis on bears within Canada could be the focus placed on bears in the media and advertising for the national parks (e.g., The Discovery Channel, National Geographic). In an increasingly urbanized world where individuals have less direct contact with wildlife, mass media are an important source of wildlife information. For many people who lack much direct personal contact with wildlife, perceptions of wildlife are achieved through a variety of sources, such as other people, entertainment, mass media, advertising and books (Corbett, 1995). Champ (2002) explored this idea of media influence in an investigation of wildlife media and value orientation. In this study, 30 of the 60 families involved were aware of at least some wildlife media presentations even when they have limited access to different media types (ex. internet). Champ (2002)

describes how creators of wildlife media texts most often participate in practices such as staging scenes, sensationalizing nature, and concentrating on charismatic megafauna. If this is the case, then mediated wildlife, especially charismatic megafauna that is regularly showcased (such as bears) can become icons that ground us (Champ, 2002). If this is so, the initial desire to see larger animals and other rare species may arise out of wildlife value orientations created by elements of exposure to products of wildlife media.

As many of the interviews progressed, the importance of which particular species was desired seemed to decrease, suggesting that maybe the type of species isn't as important to wildlife viewers as they might even believe themselves. Most participants began by describing experiences with larger and less common species such as bears and moose; however this was often followed by descriptions of experiences involving more common and species frequently considered as being less interesting such as squirrels, marmots or deer. In my discussion with participant #1, he shared with me how his focus on large species was easily changed in an encounter with some marmots.

> *I'd love to see a bear, but only in the right circumstance. I'd love to see a cougar or something, but I don't want to find myself on the path with it. There's that element, the big animal in the wild is more amazing then seeing a pika or a marmot, yet just today watching the marmots with my kids, and they were incredibly cute and we sat and stopped and let them run around. That's pretty cool too.*

The preference of other participants who also leaned toward seeing large species was often contradicted as the discussions got further into detail. This was the case for participant #12 who shared with me their desire to see larger sized species:

> *I guess really I like to see any kind of larger animal. Then again, marmots and stuff are pretty cool too...I guess I'm not too picky after all.*

Participant #2 shared a similar thought:

Meeting a bear or a moose or any large mammal is in some sense more dramatic, but no more interesting than smaller animals.

One reason that may explain why species is not as important as people may believe could be that the quality of the experience may be influenced more by situational factors rather than the animal itself. The interviews indicate that wildlife viewers find meaning not only in species, but also in where and how the experience occurs:

I need to see what nature would provide at whatever time I am there

(Participant #6).

I'd say it depends on the situation. Just seeing it isn't all that amazing, but if I see it in a beautiful place or doing something interesting, that would make it more special (Participant #7).

I think it's more the situation than the actual species; like with elk. I don't generally think that elk are that interesting, but because of how the whole situation was and how funny it was, that made it more memorable. I think it's possible to have a pretty amazing experience with any sort of animal (Participant #15).

Viewing Wildlife Away from Building Infrastructure Creates a More Authentic Interaction

The mode in which an animal is viewed emerged as being an important factor related to creating meaning in an encounter with wildlife. Two main points that were illustrated as being most important in regard to the mode of viewing are that it should occur: (1) away from the highway or major roads (e.g., on a trail); (2) outside of the safety of a vehicle.

Viewing wildlife out on a trail or away from built infrastructure was described by participants as creating a more dynamic and authentic feeling of having an interaction within the animal's environment. This was described by participant #10:

> *The experience is really different because seeing the animal on the road is almost like they are entering our world and it's a different perspective. Being out on the trail it's more that we're in their domain and we're impacting their world rather than the other way around.*

A very similar view was also described by participant #14 who stated, "I would rather see something out on a trail or something where there are less people and it's more like the animal is letting you be there". An authentic experience has been considered to be an experience in which, "individuals feel themselves to be in touch both with the 'real' world and with their 'real' selves (Handler and Saxton, 1988, p.243). This sense of realness was described by participant #11 as he explained his feelings on viewing wildlife from a vehicle:

> *There's kind of that idea of security, you're behind a window, but there's no realness to it, you're not really interacting. Whereas if you're out on the trail, if there was for example a bear you would feel afraid and be like, what am I going to do? Am I going to be attacked? There's that possibility, so there's kind of that realization that we're not on the top of the food chain. Anything can happen and it's kind of real.*

Bruner (1991) suggests that authenticity often becomes a projection of tourists' own beliefs, expectations and preferences. If we consider this in context to wildlife viewing experiences, it may mean that wildlife viewers see wild animals as being symbolic of the wilderness. Reynolds and Braithwaite (2001) suggest that authenticity is one factor that is intrinsic in capturing the quality and richness of a wildlife encounter for the person experiencing it. Authenticity in this sense is described in terms of the degree of natural behaviour exhibited by wildlife, and the environment it is observed in. This

could explain why viewing wildlife in a setting that is more immersed in nature might allow for the individual to connect more meaning to the encounter as a result of it being more 'authentic'.

Other responses by participants suggest that seeing wildlife away from built infrastructure creates a type of switch between environments, placing humans in the animal's environment rather than the animal having wandered into "human space". This idea could support the notion that by removing protective barriers, such as being in a vehicle, it may create a more authentic and meaningful experience by further exposing the visitor to the animal's environment and therefore its natural behaviour.

The removal of a protective barrier was indicated as an element in creating a more authentic experience. Of the few respondents who mentioned they might like to see wildlife from a vehicle, it was only as a means of safety rather than the experience. Participant #11 described how "there's that idea of security, you're behind a window, but there's no realness to it. You're not really interacting". This could indicate that while being in a vehicle might create a safer and more comfortable viewing environment, the experience might be less meaningful.

While none of the blog entries specifically went into any descriptions regarding preference to mode of viewing, each of the experiences described in every entry took part in some sort of wilderness setting, away from a road or vehicle. Since these entries were un-probed and shared purely out of the memory of the writer, this may be a good indication that the most memorable experiences occur in natural settings, away from built infrastructure.

Being in Close Proximity to Wildlife is a Key Factor in the Experience

In my discussions with participants the notion of "the closer the better" was also described in the characteristics of their meaningful wildlife experiences. When asked to reveal their most memorable wildlife experience, participants revealed that being in close proximity to the animal was a key factor of the experience:

> *The fact that you're in somewhat proximity to them and the feeling of being that close is pretty amazing* (Participant #1).

> *There was a black bear, and he was big. He was just stopped and he just kind of looked at us like this, and we were looking at him. So that was probably the most memorable because we almost walked into him* (Participant #4).

> *We did know that there were bears in the area. It was quick, we just came around the corner and boom there they were. So I think because it was my first time; it was my first time being that close, too close, to a bear* (Participant #5).

> *It was an exciting experience to be that close and for them to be calm and acting normal like they would* (Participant #10).

This could be because the closer an animal is in proximity to the person may decrease the level of comfort of the visitor, and contribute to the amount of emotion involved in the experience. A statement made by participant #15 supports this idea in stating that, "I wasn't really used to the idea of wildlife being that close to me". There is a significant body of evidence that supports the notion of the importance of proximity in wildlife encounters. Schanzel and McIntosh's (2000) research revealed that satisfaction stems from being in close proximity and an often stated source of dissatisfaction is not being able to get close enough. Similar findings have been described in several other studies related to overall visitor satisfaction, stating the importance of being able to get close to wildlife (Moscardo and Saltzer, 2004; Higginbottom et al., 2001; Reynolds and Braithwaite, 2001; Wright, 1998).

Seeing Signs of Wildlife can Create an Equally Significant Experience

A very interesting commonality that I came across throughout my interviews involved the physical presence of wildlife, or lack thereof. Throughout my discussions with the participants, multiple participants noted that there does not necessarily need to be wildlife physically present in order to have a meaningful experience. Instead, signs that there has been wildlife present at some point in time, or even just a feeling of their presence created an equally significant experience. Such experiences were described by the following participants:

> *We've walked up to an area and just gotten a really strange feeling, just one of those auras. That's very impactful; it changed the dynamic of the hike* (Participant #1).
>
> *There was so much scat, relatively fresh, and for the whole 12 km. That in itself is an experience, and evidence; very clear evidence* (Participant #2).
>
> *I've seen tracks all the time, and found antlers in the woods and all that kind of stuff. It's really interesting. I wouldn't say it's the same experience as turning the corner and seeing a big group of elk or something like that, but it's definitely still a memorable experience* (Participant #7)
>
> *I've gone hiking before where I haven't seen any animals but I've come across a big fresh pile of bear poop. I'll even go home and tell people about that, so I think there's definitely some kind of meaning there* (Participant #14).

Such types of experiences may indicate that even without the physical presence of wildlife there is still a great amount of interest in seeing traces of the paths that animals may be taking, and as described by participant #10, "Almost a way of understanding their lives". A similar finding was described by Fredrickson and Anderson (1999) who explained their respondents' sense of awe and wonder at the natural world. They discuss

how the exhilaration of even just hearing wildlife in its natural setting adds to the excitement of being in unfamiliar territory. This also relates to finding that there is, "an intense and pressing recognition of one's insignificance and the heightened recognition of the inter-relatedness of all life forms...above all a mixture of awe and thrill of being exposed to the sheer powers of nature and a reawakened sensitivity towards the sights and sounds of nature" (Fredrickson and Anderson, 1999, p.26). This is important as it demonstrates the possibility that the revelations of being exposed to wildlife habitat and the evidence that animals are, or have been, present may be equally important to the overall experience. This could be an important implication for managers to facilitate wildlife experiences in a way that does not compromise the well-being of wildlife in the park.

Wildlife Photography Does Not Enhance an Experience so Much as Documents it

Although stated as an important component of wildlife tourism in the literature (Russell, 1995; Shackley, 1996; Lemelin, 2006), photography was not described as a significant contributor to meaningful wildlife tourism experiences within my interviews. Lemelin (2006) states that central to the experience of wildlife viewing is the visual experience, and related proof of the experience. While photographs did come up many times in my discussions with participants, most individuals found it more important to be in the moment than to spend it trying to get their camera out. Photographs of the experience appear to act more as a documentation that the experience happened, rather than an important part of the experience itself.

The pictures that we've taken, I like to look at them because they remind me of the place, but it's the mental memory, it's almost like a visceral memory; the animals in the picture don't do it. Yeah, the pictures just document that you were there; it recalls...It's kind of hard to look through the camera, what you shoot isn't what you want (Participant #3).

Although individuals liked to have a memento of the experience to share with friends or family, most people felt that the quality of the photograph that you get is not worth missing the defining moments of the encounter itself.

Well it's nice to have pictures, but I don't think it's too important. I find with wildlife by the time you get your camera out the animal has always moved anyway. I guess I'd rather just spend the time watching. If it's that exciting then I'll remember it (Participant #12).

It's always nice to have some sort of memento to take back and show people, but for me when it saves in my memory it's always there, so just being able to see something and be there and experience it is rewarding enough (Participant #10).

I'm one of these people who, if I run around with a camera and I've got to get this exposure and I'm looking through a lens, and I have just as much time to look at an animal to get that photograph, I'm not really experiencing it properly, I'm just making sure I get this photograph, I'm not really experiencing it properly. I'm just making sure I get this photograph and then later on I can pull out the photograph and look at it, but I wasn't there at the time...Just to really be there properly, I'm not in the future, I'm not in the past, I'm just right there and then I can actually remember that animal much better than I could looking at that photograph. It's more important for me to see with my own eyes (Participant #6).

Although photography was not an important component of the experience within the discussions I had with participants, I suspect this could partially depend on the skill level of the individual. Perhaps this would change with an increase in the skill level and ability of the individual to take photographs of wildlife. This is evident in my interview with participant #7, who shared how his experiences in the wilderness have actually inspired photography to be an important part of his life.

I've sort of become an amateur photographer and painter, just because I've grown up camping all the time, seeing wildlife, all that jazz. It's dramatically affected my

life, and the amount of room I have in my apartment...I like to show off to friends and family whenever I can, but they don't care to see all that many photos, but I like to share. That's why I got into painting as well, just sort of to reach a wider audience.

Although this participant is an exception to the other individuals I interviewed, for him photographs and painting act as a channel for sharing his experiences. While most participants felt that photographs are not an essential part of the experience, sharing the experience with others, through other various means, was extremely important. This will be discussed in more detail later in the chapter.

4.3 Experiential Components of Wildlife Viewing

Experiential Stages: Processing the Emotions of a Wildlife Experience

After examining the individual themes that arose from my interviews, a pattern began to emerge that could perhaps indicate that it may not just be the individual components of a wildlife encounter that contribute to the creation of a meaningful experience. Rather, there is a processing component that is important. This may also explain why the importance of what species are viewed might not be as important as it initially appeared to be. This occurred to me as I reviewed an interview I had with participant #3. In our discussion she shared with me the way in which she interprets seeing different species in one hike as a progression of signs that lets her know how immersed in nature she has become. For her this progression begins with the smallest, most common species that are generally quite easily spotted.

I always like to see chipmunks, they make me smile. That's the first thing I see in the wild and it makes me know I'm out in the forest. That feels good. Then after that I like to see marmots and pikas; then you know

you're getting out in the woods and you're more likely to see something. You're lucky if you see more after that. Absolutely after that then it's luck.

After listening to her describe this and reading it over again in the interview, I realized that there were other participants whose descriptions of their experiences also showed a certain type of progression. This might indicate that the development of a meaningful wildlife experience may be the result of a series of stages that occur over time, rather than just at the defining moment of the encounter. This progression, however, does not necessarily arise out of the sighting of different species, but rather a sequence of emotional stages that occur over a period of time throughout the encounter. Manfredo (2008) suggests that the element of feeling is one we most readily identify with. He states that the experience of emotion brings together "affect, perception of meaning in one's world, and one's existing knowledge about emotion" (p.53). While I did expect that there would be a broad variety of feelings and emotions felt by the participants that were associated with their past experiences, something that I did not expect was the distinct emotional pattern that appeared. This pattern appears to be characteristic in almost all of the accounts shared by participants in their interviews. For example, in the blog entry, "1 Bear, 2 Bear, 3 Bear cubs!" the writer describes how his feelings progressed in an encounter with multiple bears while on a biking trail:

As I came flying around a technical corner I found myself pulling on both breaks to try and avoid the inevitable collision with the black bear. Finally coming to a skidding stop I am looking the bear in the face about 1 to 2 feet away. We are both curious... a wave of adrenaline/fear slapped me in the face but was quickly turned into a confident "avoid being attacked" emotion and all the thoughts of how to act rushed in... it ended up with me slowly backing away while yelling only to find out that backing down the trail took me to a mother grizzly with three cubs, not a better place to be by any means. I ran into them just as the mother was crossing the trail to catch up with the young cubs. I don't want to imagine how it

> *would have gone down if I was a few minutes earlier and was in between the mother and cubs. This second encounter was beautiful, there was no fear (maybe because I still had some adrenaline pumping through me) and I just watched as the mother and cubs continued through the bush...After both encounters I had let go of almost all fear I was feeling before and gained a lot of respect for these majestic animals.*

Fear or apprehension was frequently mentioned in the first stage of emotions that were felt by individuals, followed by more positive emotions as the experience continued. In an encounter with an elk, participant #15 described how they were afraid the whole time, however, the following morning when her group was discussing what had happened they were all really excited about it and laughing. This type of change in emotion was also described by other participants as they reflected on their experiences. In a close encounter with a moose described by participant #2, he recalled how he felt a "big mixture of reactions" and how his emotions went from "fear, to interest, to some sort of awe and admiration". A similar spectrum was described by participant #6 who shared how his experience was scary at first, but then once he realized he was okay it turned to peacefulness and calm, extinguishing his initial feelings of fear. The spectrum of emotion that is described by each of the participants, despite what type of species they encountered, appears to align with each 'stage' of the experience.

Using the approach described by Manfredo (2008), this could indicate that a meaningful wildlife experience develops over a period of time or number of encounters, and increases in intensity through this series of emotional stages. Based on additional findings from my interviews, this time of processing seems to occur over a series of 4 stages: (1) expectations before viewing wildlife; (2) the moment of the encounter; (3) the

moments directly following the encounter; and (4) a longer term period of reflection (Table 2).

Stage	Associated emotions
1. Pre-encounter	Anticipation, intrigue
2. Moment of encounter	Adrenaline, fear, shock, surprise
3. Post-encounter (directly following)	Relief, excitement, calm, peacefulness
4. Reflection (long-term)	Inspiration, fortune, privilege, connectedness with nature

Table 2. Emotional stages of wildlife viewing experience

Stage one: Pre-wildlife encounter

In the first stage, common feelings that were described by participants were a sense of anticipation and intrigue, not knowing what they might encounter.

> *You come here this time of year, you're going to see flowers, and you know you are. As soon as the snow pulls back, out come the flowers. But you don't know whether or not you're going to see wildlife. Now I think you can expect that you'll see some, like you might see some squirrels, but you can never be sure how many. But the larger mammals, you know say marmots, and then in particular goats, sheep, moose, bear, you know, becomes less and less of a certainty that you're going to see them, so there's this sense of anticipation, you're always looking and looking and looking* (Participant #2).

Stage two: The moment of the encounter

The second stage frequently incurred feelings of adrenaline and fear, especially in the presence of larger animals. Smaller less threatening wildlife such as marmots, pikas or martins was more frequently described in this stage as a sense of shock or surprise.

Participant #12 recalled her feelings in the moment of an encounter with a black bear while hiking.

> *We were just talking and not really paying too much attention and we came around the corner and there was this bear right there on the edge of the trail. I'm not even sure that it saw us, we could really only see its butt, it was busy eating plants. It definitely caught us off guard...at first I think it was shock; it just totally took us off guard. I kind of get into a bubble when I'm hiking, get lost in my thoughts and whatnot. So I guess I was just surprised.*

Participant #15 shared her feelings of fear on a camping trip during elk rutting season.

> *I woke up in the middle of the night to the most awful noise coming from right outside of our tent. I mean, it sounded like it was just outside the tent. It freaked me out. I couldn't actually see it but it was obvious what it was...I mean, I don't know how close it was exactly, but it was obvious that it wasn't too far away. And elk are big! I mean, I can remember thinking what if it tramples over our tent or something...I was afraid, probably the whole time. It was so loud and close.*

Stage three: Short-term post-encounter

Moving into the third stage, the moments directly following the encounter, participants described feelings of relief, excitement, calm, and peacefulness. In my discussion with participant #14, she described her feelings after an encounter with a mountain goat.

> *I was by myself and when I got to the top of the trail and there was a big snow patch and there was this mountain goat there, just chilling out up there by itself...I think at first I had some adrenaline pumping, I mean I think mountain goats aren't generally very aggressive animals, but I guess because I was by myself I was a little freaked out. I didn't want to startle it or anything. But I just kind of stood still and watched it for a bit. It was really serene, it was just so quiet and it was just doing its own thing and I happened to come upon it. I guess I felt pretty lucky.*

Stage four: Long term reflection

The fourth stage appears to occur as a long term result of an encounter. In this stage the emotions of the encounter appear to develop over a length of time as the experience is re-played by the individual. Common feelings described by participants in this post-

encounter stage include a connectedness with nature, inspiration, fortune, and privilege. Along with the development of these feelings in this stage, there also appears to be a strong desire to share the experience with others. The lasting impacts of these feelings and the importance of sharing experiences will be discussed later in this chapter.

Multiple participants described how they felt that they had more intense feelings after the moment was over. The existence of this fourth 'reflection' stage might explain this because as time passes the individual has more time to process the details of the experience. This extended time frame, therefore, may allow for the development of deeper feelings that connect more emotional meaning to the experience, and as a result creates a deeper and more profound memory.

Experiential Learning

Although the emotional processing was something that I did not expect to find, when I returned to the literature there were previously developed models connected to experience that can be applied to the experiences described in wildlife viewing. This progression of emotional stages is reminiscent of the Lewinian Experiential Learning Model described by Kolb (1984). This model describes a 4-stage cycle through which learning is conceived. It begins with a here-and-now experience. This provides a basis for reflective observation, where the individual can reflect on the personal meaning of the experience. This is followed by a stage of conceptualization that can then be analyzed by adopting new behaviours which can then influence the next experience. This is then analyzed by the individual in the experience and the conclusions are used in the modification of their behaviour and choice of new experiences (Kolb, 1984).

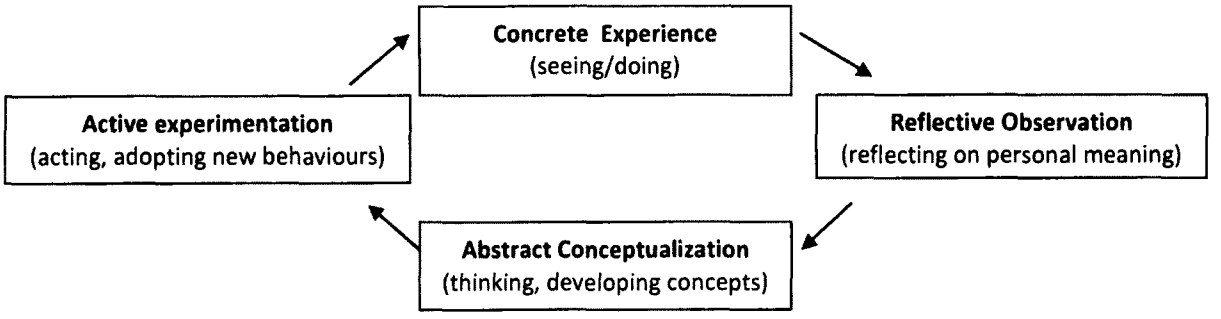

Fig.2 The Lewinian Experiential Learning Model (Kolb, 1984)

Ballantyne et al. (2011) identified a similar hierarchy of responses from visitors in a study examining participants' memories of their wildlife tourism experiences and processes through which such experiences lead to long-term changes in conservation behaviour. The authors identified four levels of visitor response to their wildlife tourism experiences (p.773):

1. Sensory impressions: Visitors report vivid visual, auditory, olfactory or tactile memories of their experience;
2. Emotional affinity: Visitors report emotional responses to the experience or emotional connections with the animals they observed;
3. Reflective response: Visitors report new insights as a result of cognitively processing their experience or make comments that indicate they have reflected on what they saw or heard; and
4. Behavioural response: Visitors report having taken specific actions in response to their wildlife tourism experience or report a heightened awareness of the need for such action.

The differentiation between the stages that I feel are the most important and those described by both the Experiential Learning Model (Kolb, 1984) and the four levels of visitor response (Ballantyne et al., 2011) appears to be in the first stage. While neither model addresses the period of time before the concrete experience, I found this time to be

an important stepping stone to the building of a meaningful experience. The emotions felt before an encounter with wildlife appears to set the stage in what the individual may be expecting to follow. As a result the level of excitement or anticipation the individual feels may contribute to a deeper development of emotion when those feelings are confirmed by the occurrence of an actual encounter.

Consistent with both Ballantyne et al. (2011) and Kolb (1984) is the stage of reflective observation or response. If the reflection stage of the process is as important as it appears to be then perhaps it is also essential to the development of deeper more embedded memories of the experience. Manfredo (2008) suggests the topic of wildlife is closely aligned to the development of emotions with humans. He describes three ways emotions can affect memory: (1) as a quality of what is remembered, (2) as a condition of the mental state of an individual when encoding information, and (3) as the condition of the individual recalling information. Dillard and Meijnders (2002) also suggest that memory for an emotional event is better than for an emotionally neutral event. Curtin (2005) states that, "lived experiences gather significance as we reflect on and give memory to them" (p.3). This may indicate then that the deep emotional connections that appear to result in more vivid memories of a wildlife experience may also have an important impact in creating long-term, lasting impacts on the life of the wildlife viewer. Such impacts appear to reveal themselves differently based on the individual.

Sharing Contributes to Long Term Meaning and Reflection

In the discussions with the participants, each individual seemed to relay their memories through different forms of expression. Examples of this include keeping the

memory as an internal reward, using the memory as a learning tool, and using the memory to share the experience and relive the encounter with other people.

In some instances, the positive feelings acquired from meaningful wildlife experiences appears to have lead some individuals to have a better appreciation for wildlife, and encouraged more frequent visits to the mountain national parks and other natural areas to pursue similar types of experiences. Participant #13 explained how his experiences, "encourage you to go out and go further and do more, to get a chance to view something like that again". These multiple experiences appear to contribute to the development of a continuous spectrum of learning opportunities, as described by participant #14 who revealed how they learn something new from each experience, especially because the details of each experience are vastly different. This might also result from an increase in confidence in encountering wildlife as a result of having experiences where the outcome is positive:

> *These experiences definitely change the way I look at predatory wildlife or wildlife in general. Just changing my perspective from before in hearing other people's stories and just kind of going by them, whereas once you actually have an experience like that or an encounter you kind of see the other side. The more beautiful side of it* (Participant #11).

> *I've encountered bears and such, but not really close, and I'm always afraid I might panic and do something silly, so it was a good experience in showing that I could be calm and collected and nothing bad happened, so you know you can see wildlife in the wilderness and it's not necessarily going to be a bad situation* (Participant #9).

This was also the experience of an individual whose blog entry "1 Bear, 2 Bear, 3 Bear Cubs!" described a series of multiple encounters with bears while on a biking trail:

> *A wave of adrenaline/fear slapped me in the face but was quickly turned into a confident, 'avoid being attacked' emotion. The second encounter was beautiful, there was no fear. After both encounters I had let go of*

> *almost all fear I was feeling before and gained a lot of respect for these majestic animals.*

In addition to actively seeking out new experiences and feeling more confident, meaningful wildlife experiences also appear to influence some participants in their lifestyle and important decisions in their lives. This was described by participant #10 who explained how his experiences have impacted his life in multiple ways:

> *I think going out and experiencing wildlife in a natural setting helps you appreciate it, and for me that's led me to want to live more sustainably and preserve that for the future so that other people can experience the same.*

He continued by further describing how his experiences with wildlife has shaped his interests and what he's been led to do throughout his life, including the educational degree he chose to pursue. This could be an indication of the strength of wildlife experiences as an influential source of shaping life choices and decisions. This finding supports the literature in ways that wildlife tourism can contribute to conservation. This participant chose his academic pursuits based on experiences he has had with wildlife. This aligns with the notion that wildlife tourism can lead to subsequent involvement with wildlife conservation or research, and enhanced perception of the value of the natural environment (Higginbottom and Tribe, 2004).

Sharing the Experience

One of the most significant impacts of a meaningful and memorable wildlife experience that came out of the descriptions in my interviews is the opportunity to share those experiences with other people. Whether it is friends, family, or complete strangers, sharing their stories was perhaps one of the most central parts of the experience for

almost all of the participants. In many of the discussions I had with participants, as well as in the blog entries, it was mentioned that the wildlife experiences they've had come up repeatedly in conversations over a long period of time. Patterson et al. (1998) found that the opportunity to reflect on, analyse and share experiences after an intense nature/wildlife interaction seem to consolidate experiences and transform them into cherished memories. It is also suggested that sharing these experiences adds value to the life of the participant long after the on-site activity (Curtin, 2005). This was demonstrated to me by participant #4 who revealed to me how she and her husband share their experiences:

> *We tell that story so often and he (my husband) gets excited every time, oh yeah, we're always telling stories. When we go back home, well, we'll be telling the one about the hairy marmot chasing us down the trail, and you know, it's just another story we'll be telling people about, we'll be showing them pictures of whatever we got... but you know, you're just talking to people about stuff and we still talk about things we've seen, even to each other, we're both there, and also other people that we talk to, our family and friends.*

The one thing that I found fascinating about this was the amount of detail and emotion that she presented during our conversation. The animation in her hands and the level of excitement in her voice increased with every story. As she described to me how much they share their stories with each other and other people she also continued to recall other stories. This was the same for many participants. Participant #14 explained how she can't wait to go home and tell someone when she's had an exciting encounter:

> *To see something that you haven't seen before, or that just not very many people get to see in general, then it's super exciting, and you know, you can't wait to go home and tell someone about it.*

Through my observations of the emotion and animation that presented itself as each story it continued to become even more apparent of the impact that such types of experiences have on an individual.

Another thing that I found interesting was that it was not only with friends and family that the stories were important to share with, but also with other park visitors and trail users who they happen upon along. Participant #12 describes the significance of this:

> *I think it's really important. It seems like that's always the first thing I want to tell people about, is wildlife I've seen. Even just running into other people on trails, if you stop and chat it always seems to come back to that.*

This could indicate sharing wildlife experiences with other park visitors may be an important means to relate to one another over some kind of common ground.

The story that is connected to each experience also appears to be very important in creating even more meaning as it is continually relayed to other people. In my discussion with participant #2, he explained to me how he felt that in his encounter with two mountain goats it was "more than that I just saw two goats because there's a bit of a story connected to it". This appears to be the same even for people who shared the same experience together. Participant #12 explained how they felt that sharing was "really important because you have two different perspectives and everyone has a different opinion or outlook or emotion, and then kind of sharing that other side of it is really neat". All of these examples illustrate how it might be possible that meaningful experiences are lasting, continue to be rewarding over a long period of time, and create a

way to bond with friends, family, and other visitors through the sharing of deep memories.

4.4 Summary

In my discussions with participants and through submitted entries from my weblog I was able to identify five central themes that have a high level of relevance to wildlife viewing experiences:

1. Situational factors are more influential than species viewed;
2. Viewing wildlife away from built infrastructure creates a more authentic interaction;
3. Being in close proximity is a key factor of the experience;
4. Seeing signs of wildlife can create an equally significant experience;
5. Photography does not enhance an experience so much as documents it;

Each of these themes showed some level of relevance to the participants and helps to describe the individual factors that are present in contributing to meaningful wildlife viewing experiences that are personal to the individual.

However, in addition to the individual themes, what appeared more central was the idea that a meaningful experience develops through a series of emotional stages and is facilitated by sharing the experience with others. This processing of emotions appears to enable the individual to connect more meaning to the experience, while also leaving lasting impacts on the life of the individual. It is evident that this process continues over a long period of time and that the meaning of the experience strengthens as it is relived through various channels of sharing. This finding suggests avenues for further research and use for people looking for positive methods of facilitating wildlife viewing opportunities. This will be discussed in the following chapter.

To achieve a truly meaningful wildlife experience that is valuable to the individual, I believe that there are a number of factors involved that include not only the animal, but more importantly specific characteristics of the physical surroundings, and the level of emotion that is present throughout the encounter. Through my interpretation I conclude that within the context of the individuals I studied:

1. meaningful experiences develop over a series of time;
2. emotional connections to experience are essential in creating more meaningful and lasting memories; and
3. wildlife experiences have important lasting impacts on the life of the viewer.

Chapter 5: Recommendations and Conclusions

5.1 Management recommendations

This research provides important insights for managers of parks and protected areas who are adapting to a shifting focus on visitor experience. As noted in previous chapters, wildlife tourism is a growing form of tourism, especially within parks and other protected areas. The information obtained in this study demonstrates the importance of visitor interactions with wildlife and the impact the experiences associated with such interactions can have on the visitor. If managers are able to focus on ways to encourage and enhance such types of experiences, a number of positive benefits may result such as increased visitation, positive economic impacts, and increased awareness, concern, and efforts towards education and conservation.

Consistent with findings from Ballantyne et al., (2011a), and Ballantyne et al., (2011b), the findings of this research indicate that tourism managers should encourage visitors to find an emotional connection with the wildlife they encounter and develop ways in which they can reflect on those experiences. To do so, managers should address the individual components that contribute to meaningful wildlife experiences. This will provide visitors with the information and tools necessary to facilitate and enhance wildlife encounters before, during and after they occur. Additionally, managers need to focus on developing ways to aid visitors in continuing to process their experiences after they occur.

Design interpretive programs to focus specifically on wildlife viewing

It has been argued that increasing visitor awareness will lead to pro-active behaviour in conservation practices, possibly reducing the negative effects of human-

wildlife encounters (Powell and Ham, 2008; Ballantyne et al., 2007; Higginbottom, 2004; Schanzel and McIntosh, 2000). In addition to encouraging pro-active behaviour, I suspect that increasing visitor awareness can facilitate opportunities to aid visitors in achieving more meaningful wildlife experiences. Effective interpretive programs have the potential to assist people to better see and identify wildlife and natural wildlife behaviour (Ballantyne et al., 2004). In their study examining visitors' memories of wildlife tourism, Ballantyne et al. (2011a) provide suggestions for steps that wildlife managers should take to implement interpretation that addresses human-wildlife relationships. Building on these ideas, the development of wildlife specific interpretive programs and experiences should address the individual components that have been identified in this research as being important in achieving meaningful wildlife experiences. In addition, such types of programs may be an important tool in guiding visitors in the ways that they can interact with wildlife. The results of this research indicate three areas of focus which programs should be developed around:

1. Emphasize safe practices of interacting with wildlife.

Emphasizing the importance of knowing how to safely interact with animals in the wild and how to understand the types of behaviour that an animal may be displaying would provide visitors with effective tools to pursue wildlife experiences in a safe and appropriate manner. Some examples include information such as how to interpret the behaviour of the animal, especially pertaining to specific seasons (e.g., elk in rutting season or bears in important periods of foraging), recommended distances to stay away from the animal based on species type, what types of human behaviour encourage aggressive behaviour in wildlife, and what actions to take if an animal shows aggressive

behaviour towards the visitor. This could be further enhanced by providing visitors with the proper information of what types of situations that park staff should be contacted in and the importance of reporting wildlife sightings. Such information will encourage more pro-active behaviour by allowing the visitor to understand why such actions are important and give them a feeling of ownership that their actions are contributing positively to the park.

2. Place more focus on species outside of charismatic megafauna.

Currently, national park promotion in the mountain parks places a large amount of emphasis on charismatic megafauna, specifically bears. Providing more interpretive opportunities to learn about species outside of the typical focus on charismatic megafauna has the potential to increase awareness and appreciation for smaller mammals that visitors may have a higher probability of encountering. For example, species such as squirrels, marmots, martens and pikas. Creating a greater level of awareness of the positive attributes of smaller wildlife species will enable opportunities for an increased number of wildlife encounters, and increase the potential for such encounters to be equally as meaningful and memorable as those with rare and larger sized species.

3. Educate visitors on how to identify signs of wildlife

Educating visitors and giving them the tools necessary to be able to more easily identify signs of wildlife will facilitate and encourage more meaningful experiences in nature even in the absence of the physical presence of wildlife. This can be done by designing programs that encourage the visitor to incorporate multiple senses (e.g., sight, sound, smell) while pursing activities that will result in a greater awareness of the presence of wildlife. By doing so visitors will be more attuned to their surroundings and

have the capability to interpret what wildlife may have been there before them, what wildlife may still be in the area, and how various species of wildlife live and survive. In turn, by being more aware of their surroundings visitors will increase their own level of safety, as well as the safety and well-being of wildlife they may encounter.

Provide access to information to increase visitor opportunities to see wildlife

Management should provide information to the visitor that may increase the opportunity to view wildlife, without compromising the objectives of the park and the well-being of wildlife and their habitat. Examples of such types of information might include promoting appropriate times of the day or the year when wildlife is more likely to be seen. This type of information may be a positive alternative to revealing specific locations that are common to some animals while still encouraging the visitor. Such types of wildlife viewing tips may prevent large numbers of visitors from travelling to specific areas and possibly compromising the health of various habitat areas or the safety of wildlife present. In doing so, managers can continue to cater to visitor satisfaction and experience by encouraging the desire to see wildlife and increasing their likelihood of having an encounter.

Assist visitors in processing the experience

Apart from addressing the individual components, the results of this research indicate that it is important that managers focus on developing methods of facilitating opportunities for visitors to continue the emotional processing of their experiences after the encounter occurs. Research in the environmental education literature suggests that

emotions also influence conservation learning (Meyers et al., 2004; and Ballantyne et al., 2001). In addition, encouraging visitors to continue this process after their visit will aid the visitor in continuing to enhance the meaning of the experience and the associated lasting impacts. One way in which this could be done is by encouraging participatory sharing among visitors. This will enable visitors to continue to process and reflect upon their experiences through recalling specific details of their experiences while sharing with other visitors and parks employees. This can be done in a number of ways. One way would be by integrating participatory activities into interpretive programs that encourage visitors to re-play their experiences. For example, having audience members come up to re-enact a funny or exciting wildlife encounter. In doing so this would also allow family members or groups of friends to interact with each other and reflect on the meaning of the experience together.

Another way managers can aid visitors in the processing stage of the experience is by providing resources that encourage participation or use of programs that the visitor can continue to use in the days, weeks or even longer periods after the visit. This may be through the use of web-based technologies, or permanent fixtures within the park. PhotoVoice is an example of an existing program whose idea fits the principles that would be beneficial to visitors looking for opportunities to share their experiences. While this specific program serves a different purpose, ultimately it provides a channel for participatory photography and digital storytelling methods (PhotoVoice, 2012). By developing a similar platform, visitors would have a means to continue to share their experiences with friends, family and other visitors. Other channels that may encourage similar sharing opportunities may be social networking pages, or the construction of story

boards within the park where visitors could submit photos, drawings or writings of encounters they have had. Such activities will help visitors continue to reflect upon and focus on the emotional aspects of the experience.

Encourage visitors to pursue conservation endeavours

Since meaningful wildlife experiences appear to have lasting impacts on the life of the individual, managers can use this to draw attention to various issues and provide opportunities for the visitor to contribute. Previous research has shown that encounters with wildlife can lead to pro-conservation behaviour of visitors (Orams, 1997; Higginbottom and Tribe, 2004; Ballantyne et al., 2009; Ballantyne et al., 2011). Building upon their ideas, I believe that managers of parks and protected areas can encourage pro-conservation behaviour by providing visitors with examples of practical and realistic things that they can do that will ultimately contribute to the welfare of wildlife, in some cases specifically towards an individual species they may be passionate about as a result of a positive encounter. Types of positive outlets may be through providing examples of small changes they can make in their own behaviour, volunteer opportunities, or providing information for various organizations where financial contributions can be made.

5.2 Recommendations for Future Research

The findings in this thesis reveal multiple areas that merit further examination to better understand the nature of wildlife viewing experiences.

Wildlife behaviour

In terms of the wildlife itself, one thing to look at specifically is the behaviour displayed by the individual animal(s) in the encounters described. Further questions to consider are:

- Does the behaviour that the animal is displaying (e.g., foraging, sleeping, showing aggression) change the outcome of the whole experience for the visitor?
- If so, what type of behaviour creates the most meaningful and memorable type of wildlife experience and why?

Improving vocalization of wildlife experiences

Additional research to be considered concerns the individual visitor. In my research I found that the ability of the participants to vocalize their experiences was often limited. It appeared that participants frequently had a difficult time finding the language to adequately describe their experiences outside of generic descriptions such as 'exciting', 'awesome' and 'incredible'. By understanding the limits to vocalizing experiences it may be possible to uncover a way to aid visitors in elaborating the descriptions of their feelings. This will allow for the collection of a broader depth of information regarding expression of individual experience.

Long term impacts of wildlife experiences

As I suspect that wildlife viewing experiences have a long term impact on the lives of the individual visitor, tracking the long term effects of such experiences is important to understand the true benefits that wildlife tourism has. A follow-up with participants could reveal a number of things regarding the impacts of wildlife viewing experiences. Examples of topics for follow-up are:

- Measurement of intent and action of visitors who state intentions to change their behaviour in terms of conservation practices;
- Does the individual's species preference still hold true following the experience?
- Do individuals reshape the memory of their experiences as time passes?

Comparison of user groups

Since my population was focused quite specifically on backcountry day-use trail users within the mountain national parks, examining whether my findings hold true for other user groups would be valuable in identifying if the characteristics of memorable wildlife experiences remain constant. Other user groups to be considered should include non-trail users and roadside wildlife views, as well as visitors who do not necessarily place a high level of importance on seeing wildlife in the national parks. For those who are not motivated wildlife viewers, an additional question to consider may be whether wildlife experiences have a more profound impact.

Media influence

As I suggested that media may influence the way various species appeal to different individuals, an additional question to consider may be how exactly media portrayal of wildlife shapes visitor preferences and does this influence change the experience for the individual. Questions to consider are:

- In what ways do TV documentaries, books, magazine ads, and wildlife news coverage shape the way in which visitors perceive wildlife?
- How do perceptions of wildlife differ between exposures to various types of wildlife media?
- What, if any, effects do these perceptions have in shaping wildlife experiences?

Visitor based research methods

Lastly, since the major limitations I faced related back to the timing and location that the interviews were conducted, I recommend that future studies in visitor based research use one consistent method of contact with each visitor. For example, in my experience I found it very difficult to follow up with visitors who had stated they would like to participate via a phone interview at a later date. As a result the total number of in-depth interviews I desired was reduced. I feel that this would have been improved by requesting only on-site, face to face interviews with participants. This also aids in developing a more personal relationship with the visitor and allows the interviewer to develop a deeper interpretation through facial expressions and body language.

Exploring these areas of further research will allow for a greater breadth of information into how visitor perceptions of wildlife are shaped, how these perceptions affect the way that visitors experience wildlife, and how to better understand the impacts of wildlife experiences and how they differ among individual visitors.

5.3 Conclusions

Wildlife tourism is a quickly growing focal point of the tourism industry and is attracting interest from governments, the tourism industry and researchers (Moscardo and Saltzer, 2004; Higginbottom, 2004; Bushnell and McCool, 2007; Manfredo, 2008). Increasingly, parks and protected areas are attractive settings for the growing demand for encounters with wildlife in natural environments (Eagles et al., 2002). Emphasis on visitor experience is becoming an increasingly common goal for agencies like Parks Canada and other protected areas agencies. Therefore, a greater understanding of what contributes to meaningful and satisfying visitor experiences is essential for managers to

successfully set the stage to providing such experiences. Research investigating the dynamics of wildlife viewing encounters from the visitor's perspective can help managers to better understand the importance of these specific types of experiences, and aid them in developing ways to enhance such experiences for the visitor, even long after it has occurred.

A large portion of research previously conducted in wildlife tourism has largely focused on the individual components of wildlife viewing (e.g., size, species). Increasingly, more attention is being paid to the emotional aspects of human-wildlife relationships. Previous approaches to understanding human-wildlife relationships have been largely quantitative. While this has been an effective way in obtaining data related to visitor preferences for wildlife, future studies with a more qualitative approach should be conducted to gain a greater depth of understanding into the emotional connections that visitors have with wildlife. The results of this research emphasize this. My findings indicate that while the individual components of wildlife viewing do play a role in experience, more important are the emotional connections that are associated with a wildlife encounter and the various stages of the experience where those emotions come into play. In addition, these experiences often have important lasting impacts on the life of the individual. As a result, managers of parks and protected areas need to pay greater attention to the emotional connections that visitors have with wildlife and utilize these relationships to facilitate more meaningful visitor experiences, while also continuing to increase support for conservation and encourage return trips to the national parks.

In the final section of this thesis I have made several management suggestions based on the results of my research. The two most important areas of focus that I feel

need to be addressed are: (1) provide visitors with the tools necessary to increase their awareness of wildlife, ultimately increasing the opportunity for the visitor to have a wildlife experience and (2) provide opportunities for visitors to continue processing their experiences after they have occurred. In doing so, visitors will have the means necessary to enhance the meaningful nature of their experiences and continue to reflect upon those experiences in ways which create long-term positive impacts on the individual. Future research recommendations have been made that will continue to build a better understanding of the nature of wildlife viewing experiences. In doing so, managers will be better able to reach a broader visitor audience and continue to achieve their goals of maintaining ecological integrity while providing opportunities for positive visitor experiences.

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Appendix 1: Standardized Questionnaire

2009 Summer Survey #_____ Int._____ Time_____Date_____

Trail name _____ **Park**_____

1. How did you find out about this trial?

a.visitor centre b. friend/family c. internet d. written info e. other _____

2. What factors contributed to your choice of trail?

a. appropriate distance and elevation gain
b. landmark or view along trail
c. schedule and availability of time
d. weather
e. recommended
f. other _____

3. How far did (will) you travel along the trail today? _____ (km increments or trail landmark)

4. What three words best describe your experience so far.

5. Did the trail meet your expectations? yes no

6. Overall, what are some things that Parks Canada can do to better meet your expectations?

7. How many days will you spend in the following areas?

Banff NP	_____days	Lake Louise area	_____days
Kootenay NP	_____days	Icefields Parkway	_____days
Jasper NP	_____days	Glacier NP	_____days
Revelstoke NP	_____days	Waterton NP	_____days
Yoho NP	_____days	Other	_____

8. What other activities do you have planned for this trip through National Parks?

sightseeing hiking shopping eating out camping relaxing museums/exhibits wildlife watching other

9. When do you usually come here

O this is my first visit
O early season (May/June)
O mid-season (July/August)
O late season (September/October)
O all season

10. What is your main reason for visiting national parks:

11. How important is it to you to see wildlife during your visit to the national parks?

O not important O moderately important O very important

12. Do you have any activities planned purposely to increase the opportunity to view wildlife?

13. How did Parks Canada staff influence your experience?

14. What are some new things you have learnt while in the National Parks?

15. Where and how did you learn about these things?

16. Where is your home? City/Town _____ Prov/State _____ Country _____

17. Are you: solo___ with group of friends and/or family _____(# of ppl) other _____

18. Are you a (please check one per line):

Sex: **O** male **O** female

Age: **O** <20 **O** 20-29 **O** 30-39 **O** 40-49 **O** 50-59 **O** 60-70 **O** >70

Employment status: **O** employed **O** self-employed **O** retired **O** student **O** unemployed

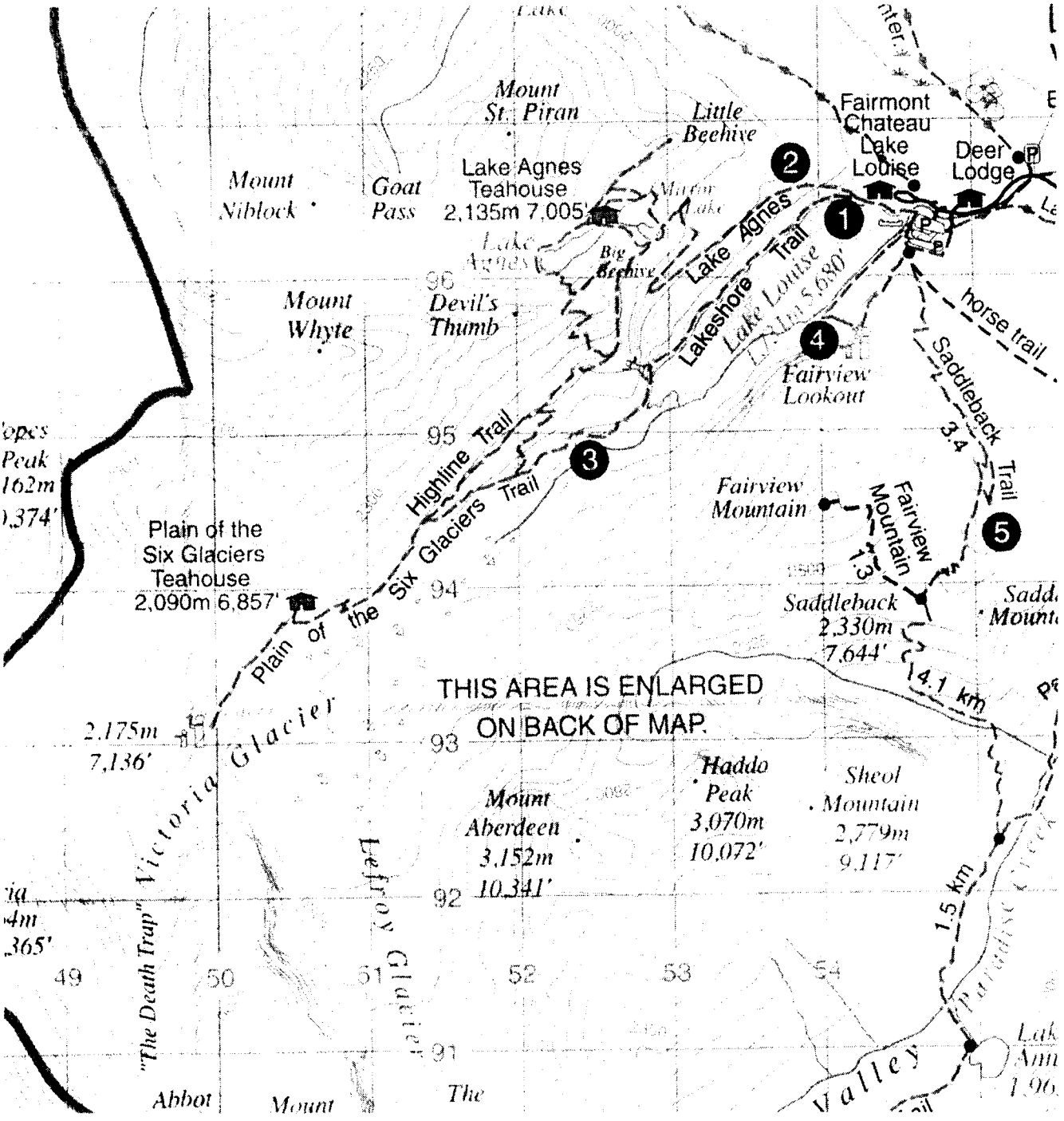
Family income: **O** <$35,000 **O** $35,000-$50,000 **O** $50,000-$70,000 **O** $70,000-$100,000 **O** >$100,000

19. Comments:

Thank you for assisting in better management of National Parks

Appendix 2: Study Area Maps

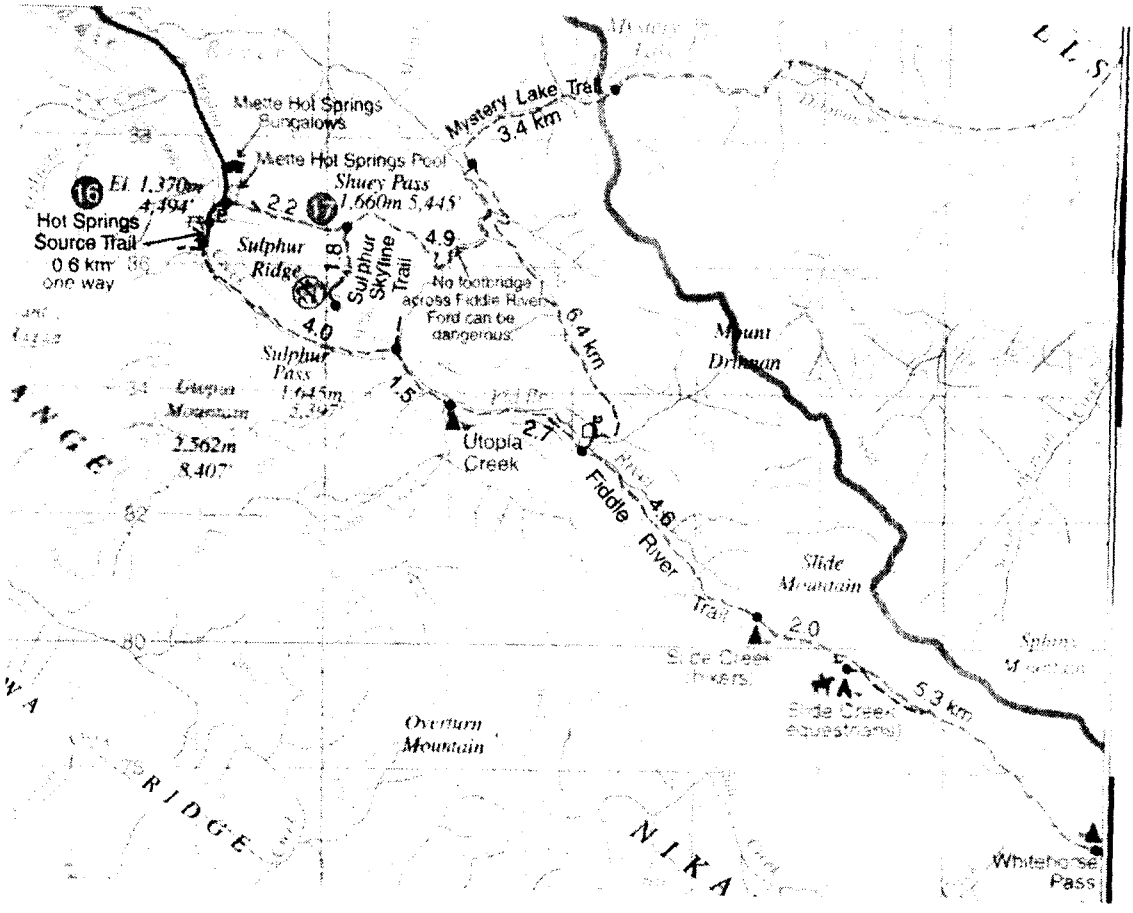
Banff National Park Trail Information #1

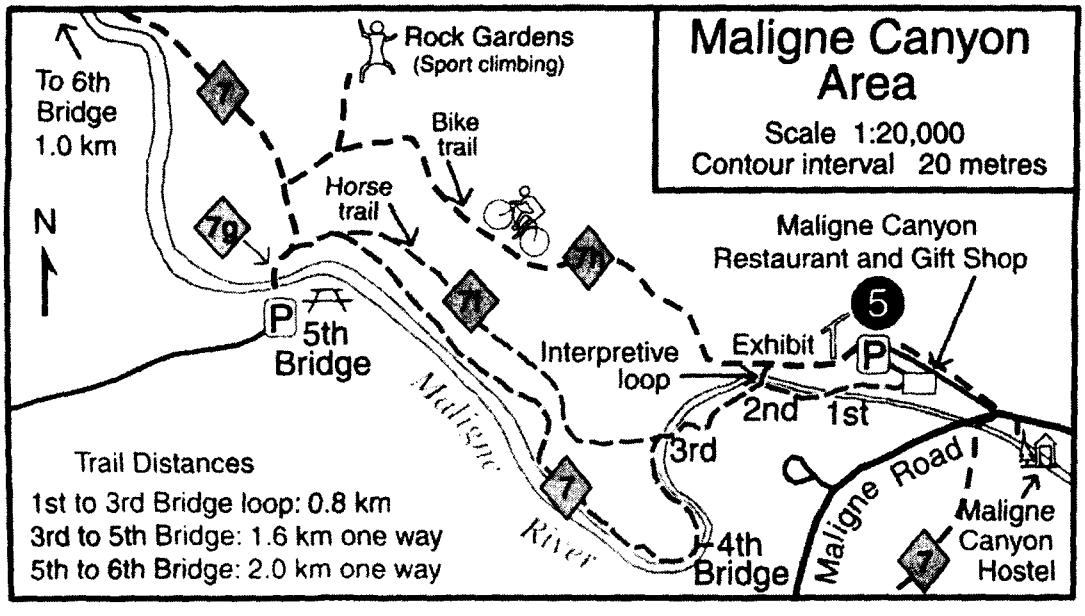


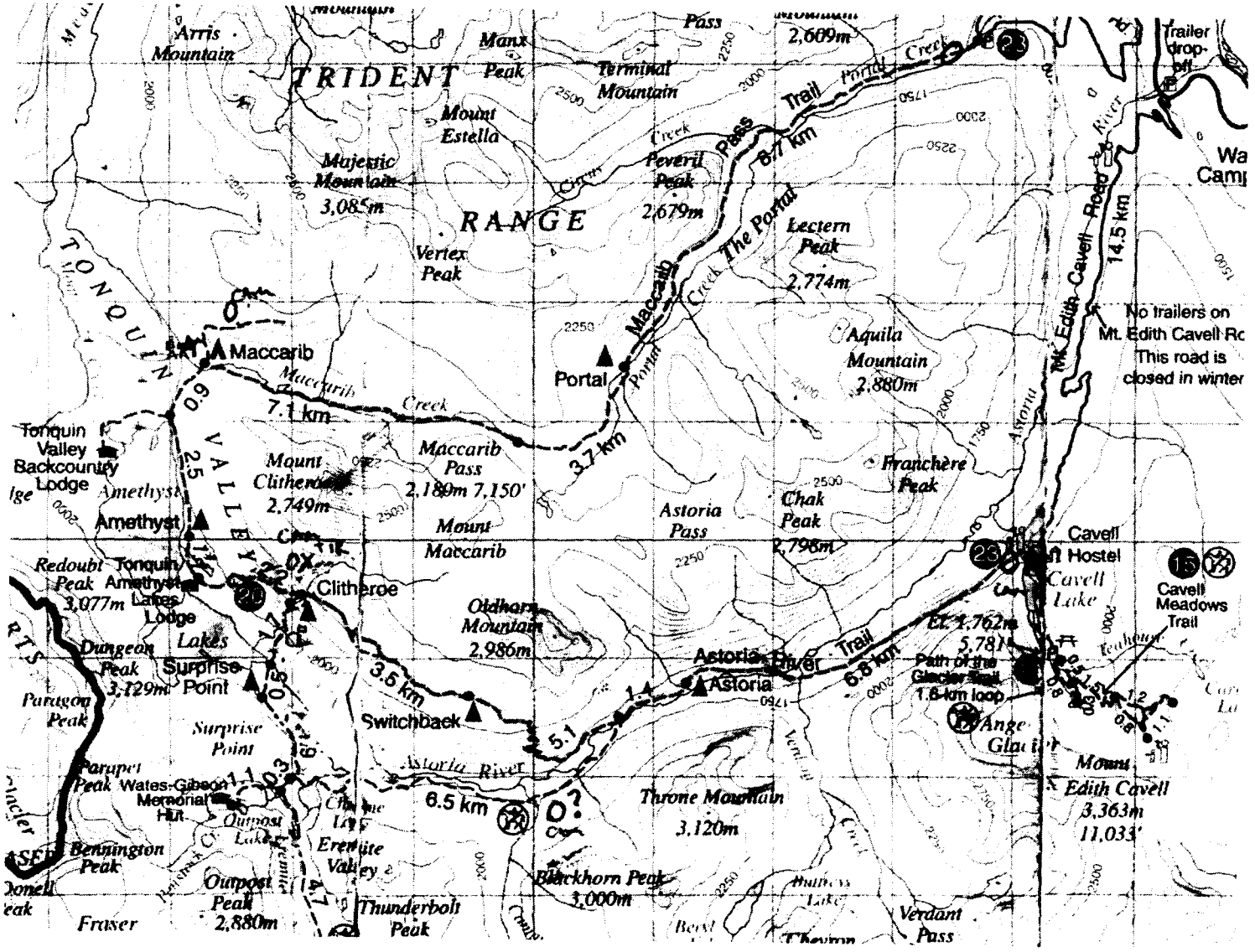
Banff National Park Trail Information #2

Boom Lake Trail
Storm Mountain Lodge
1720m 5,643
Trans-Canada Highway
Canadian Pacific Railway
Castle Lookout Trail
Castle Mtn. Village
Castle Mountain Campground
Castle Mountain Hostel
Silver City Exhibit
Johnston Canyon
Johnston Canyon Resort & Campground
2,751m 9026
2000
1500

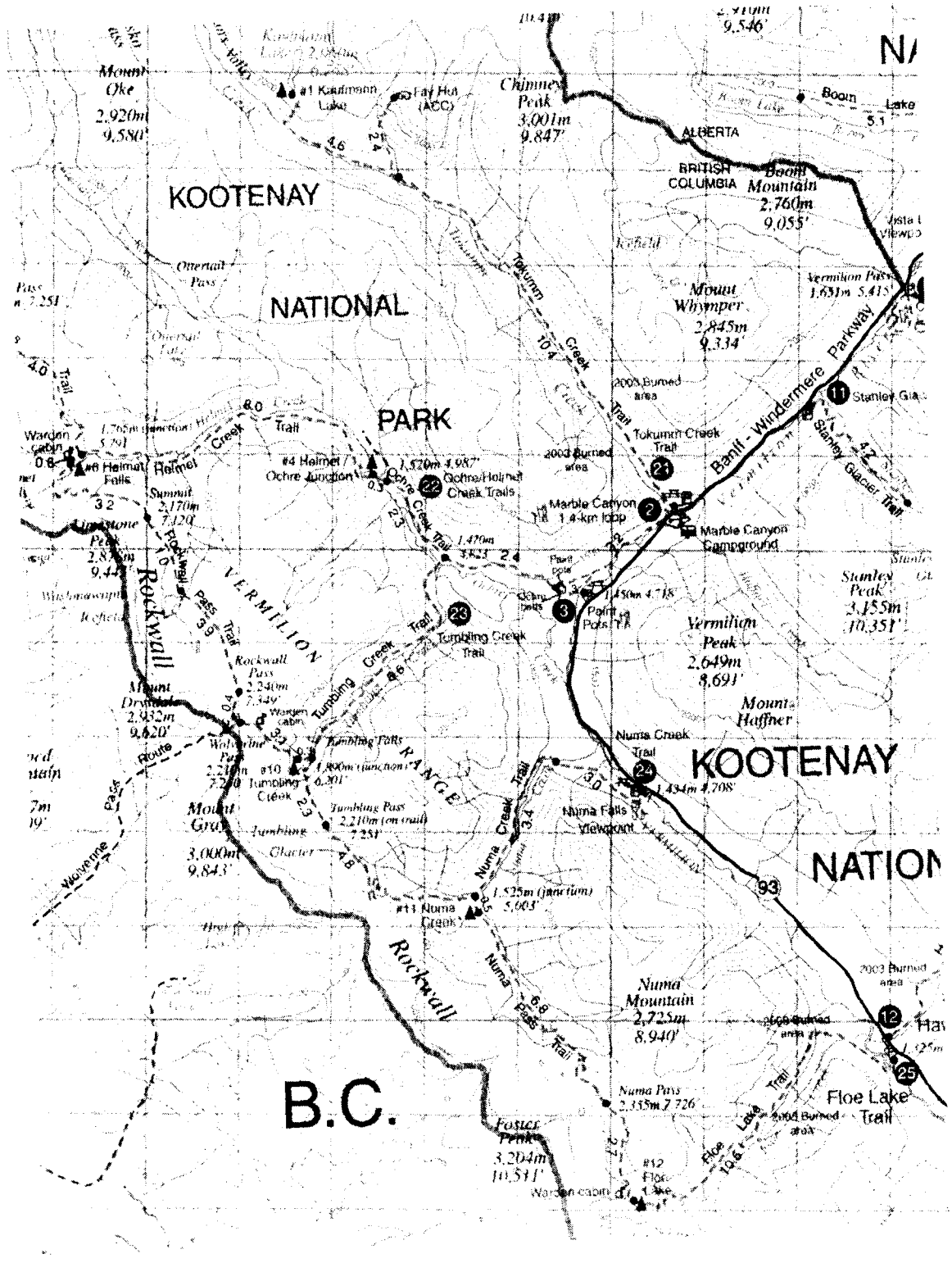
Jasper National Park Trail Information



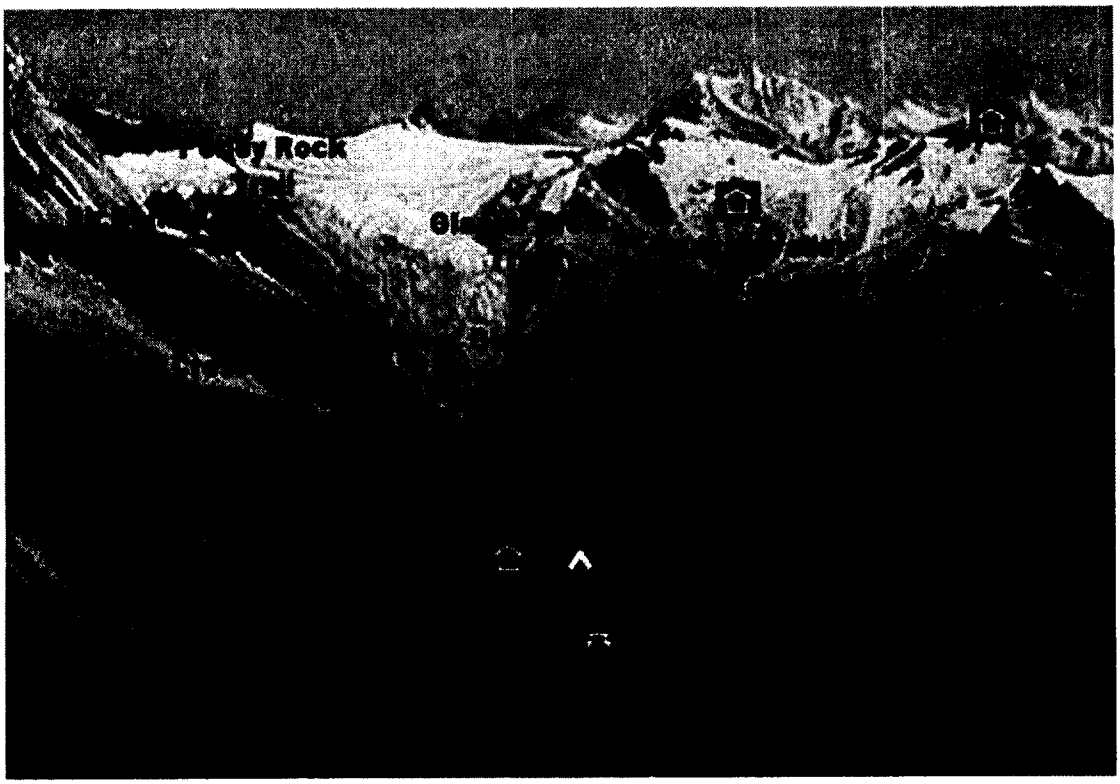


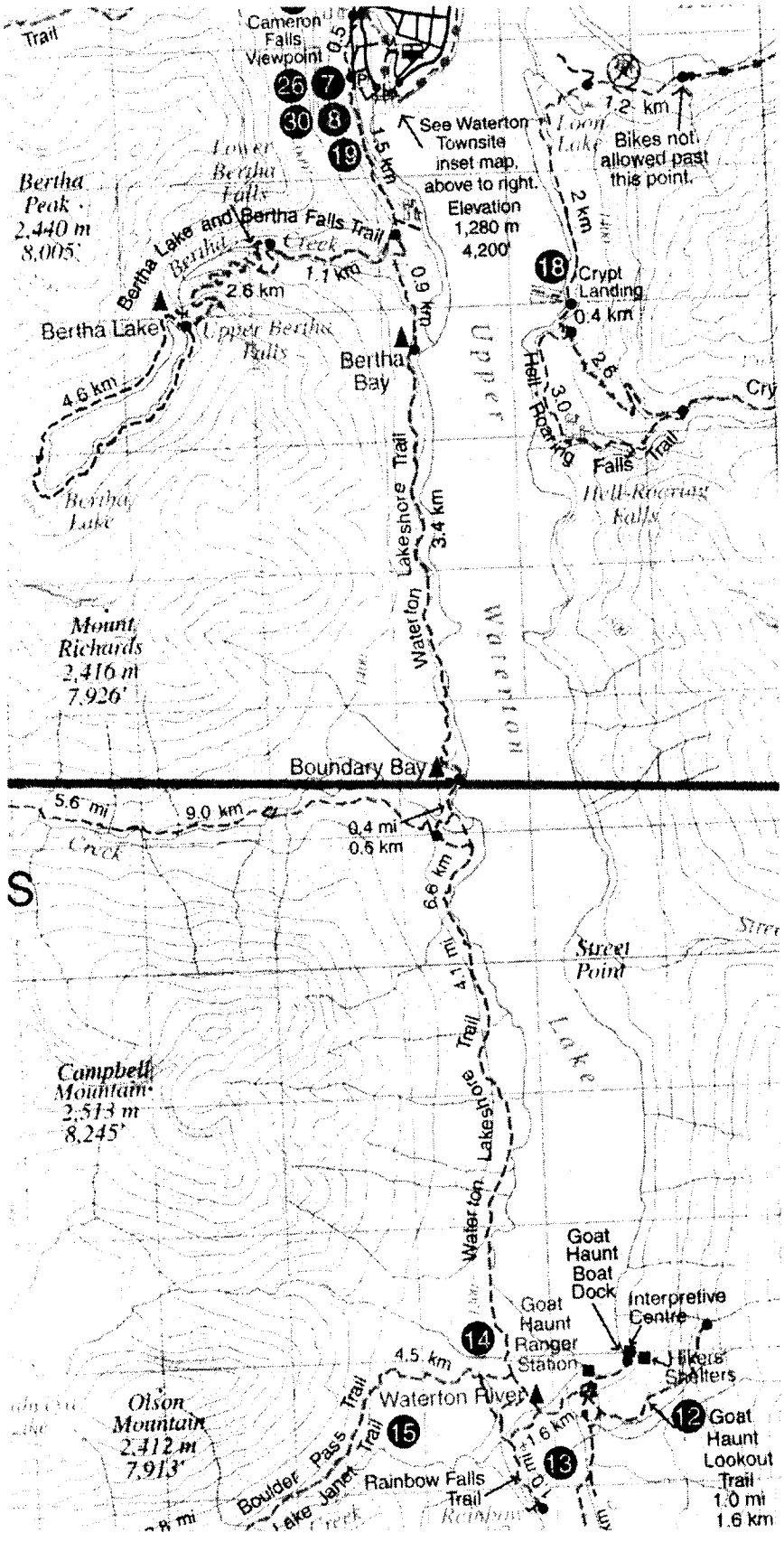

TRIDENT RANGE
Arris Mountain
Manx Peak
Terminal Mountain
Pass
2,609m
Mount Estella
Majestic Mountain 3,085m
Peveril Peak 2,679m
Peveril Pass
6.7 km
Portal Creek Trail
Trailer drop-off
Lectern Peak 2,774m
Vertex Peak
The Portal
Maccarib Creek
Portal
Aquila Mountain 2,880m
Mt. Edith Cavell Road
14.5 km
No trailers on Mt. Edith Cavell Rd
This road is closed in winter
Maccarib
7.1 km
Maccarib Creek
3.7 km
Tonquin Valley Backcountry Lodge
Amethyst
Mount Clitheroe 2,749m
Maccarib Pass 2,189m 7,150'
Mount Maccarib
Astoria Pass
Chak Peak 2,798m
Franchere Peak
Cavell Hostel
Cavell Lake
Cavell Meadows Trail
Redoubt Peak 3,077m
Tonquin Valley Lakes Lodge
Clitheroe
Oldhorn Mountain 2,986m
Dungeon Peak 3,129m
Surprise Point
Lakes
3.6 km
Switchback
Astoria
Astoria River Trail
6.8 km
Path of the Glacier Trail 1.6-km loop
Ange Glacier
Mount Edith Cavell 3,363m 11,033'
Surprise Point
Parapet Peak
Wates-Gibson Memorial Hut
Astoria River
6.5 km
Throne Mountain 3,120m
Outpost Lake
Ermite Valley
Bennington Peak
Outpost Peak 2,880m
Thunderbolt Peak
Blackhorn Peak 3,000m
Fraser
Verdant Pass

Kootenay National Park Trail Information

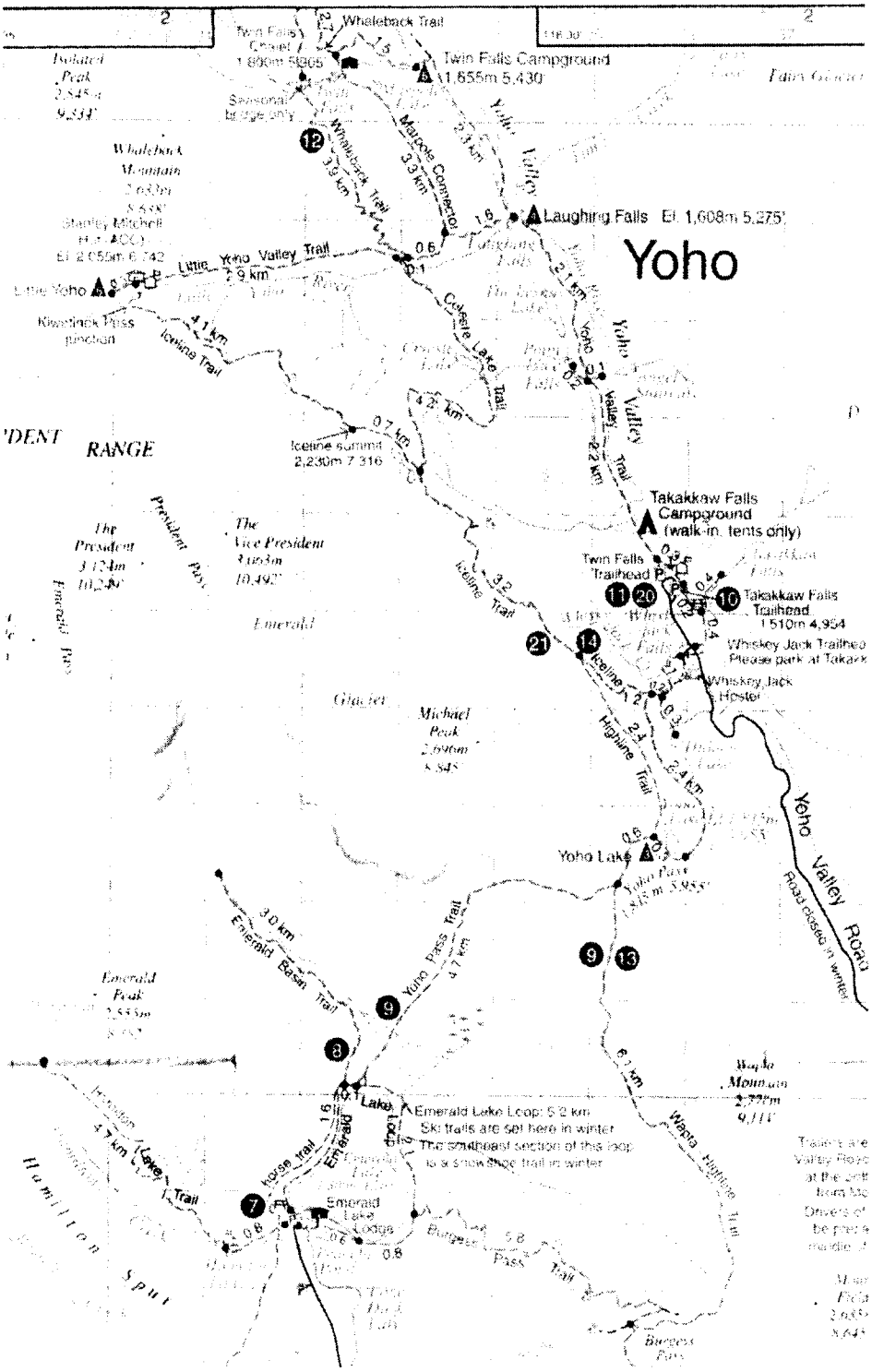


Glacier National Park Trail Information

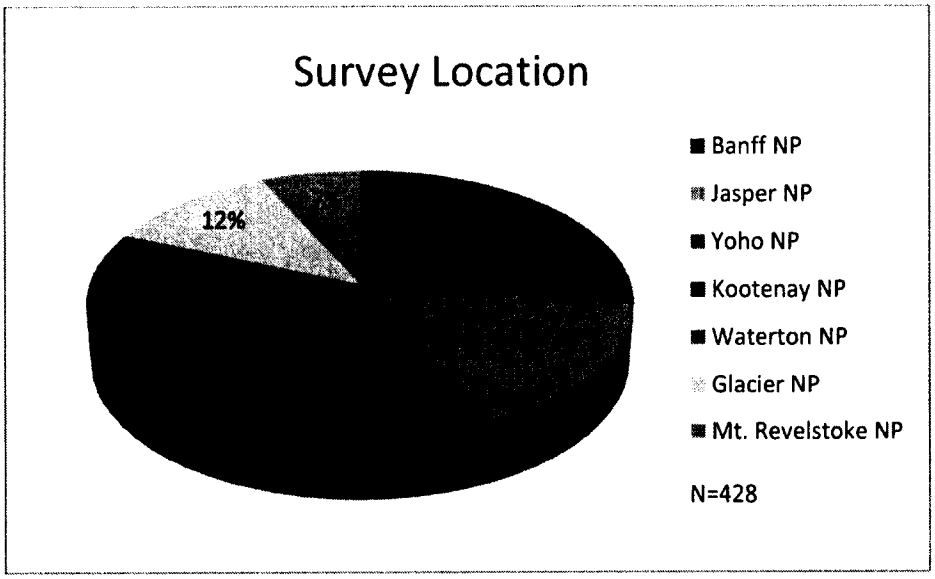


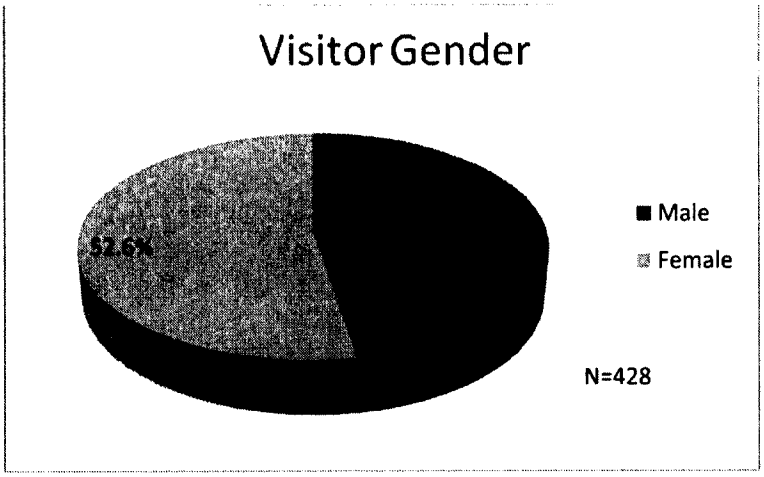

Cameron Falls Viewpoint
See Waterton Townsite inset map, above to right.
Elevation 1,280 m 4,200'
Bikes not allowed past this point.
1.2 km
Bertha Peak 2,440 m 8,005'
Bertha Lake and Bertha Falls Trail
2.6 km
1.1 km
0.9 km
1.5 km
2 km
Bertha Lake
Bertha Bay
Crypt Landing
0.4 km
2.6
3.0
4.6 km
Lakeshore Trail
3.4 km
Waterton
Mount Richards 2,416 m 7,926'
Boundary Bay
5.6 mi
9.0 km
0.4 mi
0.6 km
6.6 km
4.1 mi
Street Point
Campbell Mountain 2,513 m 8,245'
Goat Haunt Boat Dock
Interpretive Centre
Goat Haunt Ranger Station
Hikers' Shelters
4.5 km
Waterton River
Olson Mountain 2,412 m 7,913'
Boulder Pass Trail
Lake Janet Trail
Rainbow Falls Trail
1.6 km
1.0 mi
Goat Haunt Lookout Trail 1.0 mi 1.6 km

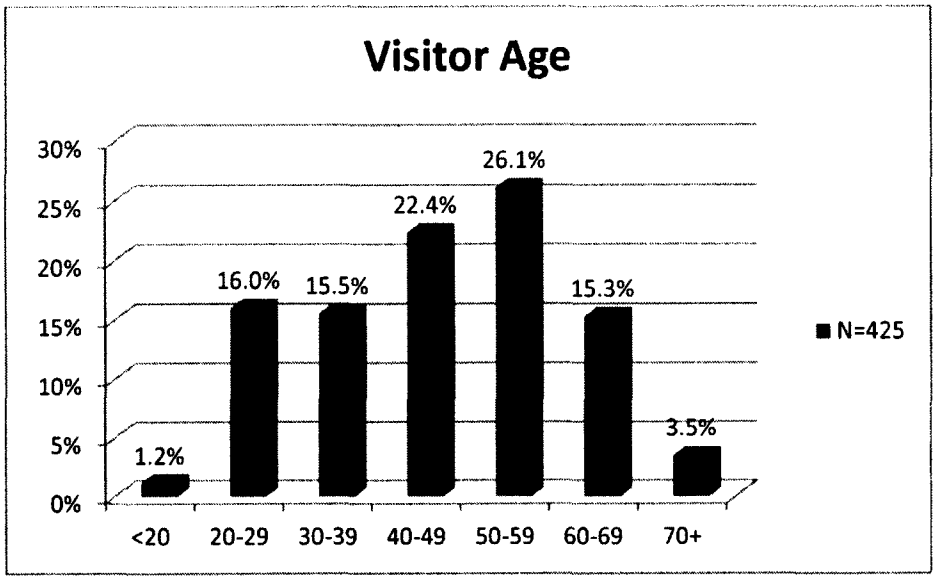
Yoho National Park Trail Information

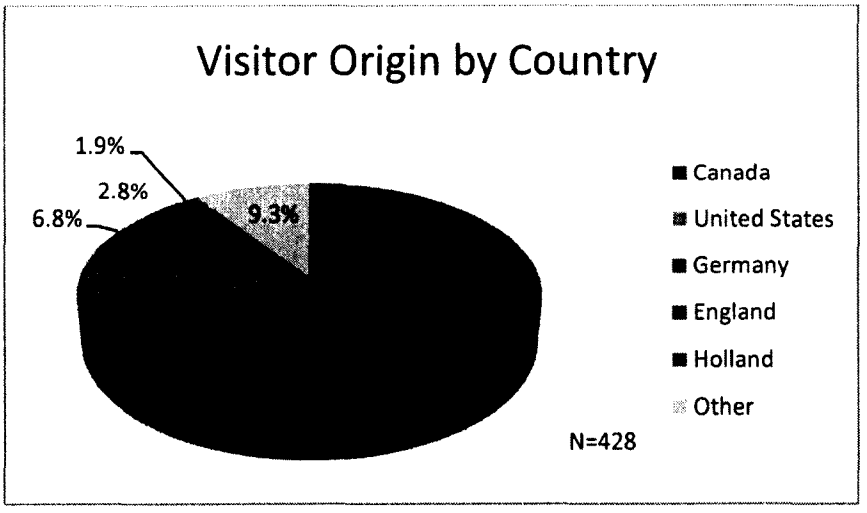


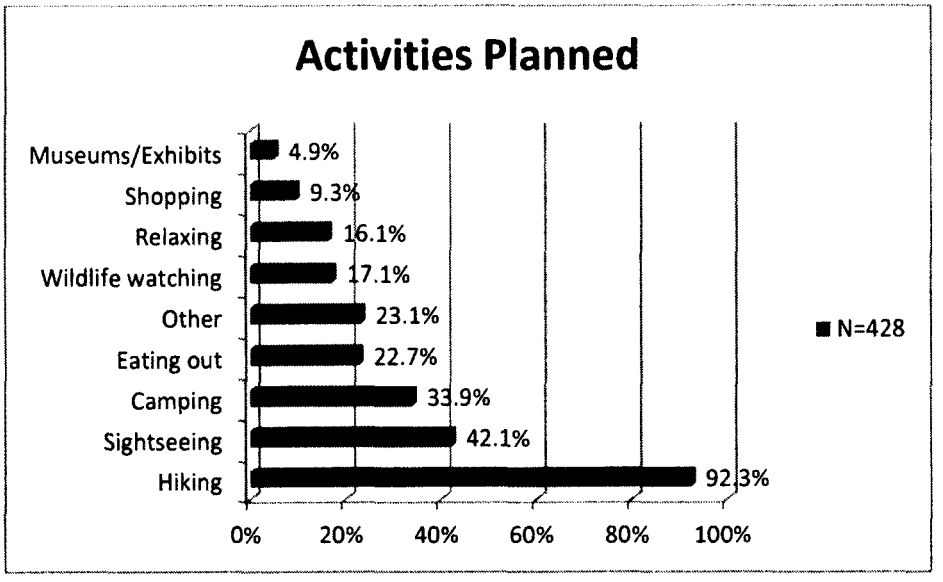
Appendix III: Demographic Profile of Backcountry Day-use Visitors






Visitor Age
30%
25%
20%
15%
10%
5%
0%
1.2%
16.0%
15.5%
22.4%
26.1%
15.3%
3.5%
<20
20-29
30-39
40-49
50-59
60-69
70+
N=425


Visitor Origin by Country
1.9%
2.8%
6.8%
9.3%
Canada
United States
Germany
England
Holland
Other
N=428


Activities Planned
Museums/Exhibits
Shopping
Relaxing
Wildlife watching
Other
Eating out
Camping
Sightseeing
Hiking
4.9%
9.3%
16.1%
17.1%
23.1%
22.7%
33.9%
42.1%
92.3%
0%
20%
40%
60%
80%
100%
N=428