

Essential Reading in Ecotourism: A personal selection of very important papers

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The fourth edition of The International Ecotourism Society's Bibliography contains information on just under 400 papers. These were gleaned, by the editors, from thousands of books, journal articles, conference proceedings and publications of many kinds. The International Ecotourism Society asked one editor, Paul Eagles, to select from the bibliography a personal selection of publications that he considered very important, enlightening and worthy of special emphasis. He ultimately chose 12. Each publication is first introduced, the reference is given and an abstract, directly from the published bibliography, is provided.

PRIVATE LODGES AND RESORTS

Private lodges and resorts are an important and rapidly spreading part of ecotourism. However, most of us only find out about them through advertising, which we often discount, and personal comment from friends, which we value highly. How many are there? What contribution do they make? Which ones do we want to visit? Claudia Alderman broke ground in this field with the 1990 study of privately-owned sites.

Her study was followed and paralleled by Jeff Langholz in 1996. These two valuable reports provide a glimpse of the role, status and success of private ecolodge developments around the world. We are still waiting for a world wide survey, though the World Conservation Monitoring Centre in Cambridge, England is looking for funding to conduct one. We still have no independent evaluation of these sites, so that as ecotourists we can safely choose based upon standard criteria.

Alderman, Claudia L. 1990. A Study of the Role of Privately Owned Lands Used for Nature Tourism, Education and Conservation. 66 pp. + appendices. Washington, D.C.: Conservation International.

This report examines the role that private nature preserves can play in providing opportunities for ecotourism, education, and conservation. The author briefly examines the definitions of nature tourism and ecotourism and reviews the range of economic, social, and ecological impacts of ecotourism. A survey of 93 private reserves from Latin America and Africa showed reserve characteristics, including mandate, size, visitation, revenues, profitability, employment, education, management, and problems. To illustrate some of these points, case studies from Costa Rica, Colombia, and Belize are used.

Langholz, Jeff. 1996. Economics, Objectives, and Success of Private Nature Reserves in Sub-Saharan Africa and Latin America. Conservation Biology 10, no. 1: 271-80.

Current efforts for habitat protection, based largely on government efforts to establish protected areas, are not keeping pace with biodiversity loss. The conservation community must explore means for in situ protection that supplement existing government efforts. One possibility is the privately owned nature reserve. In this study a written

survey of privately owned nature reserves in sub-Saharan Africa and Latin America was undertaken to identify their economic attributes, initial objectives, and factors necessary for attaining those objectives. Data from 32 private reserves revealed that reserves can be profitable. Over half were profitable, and profitability had risen 21% since 1989. Tourism revenues provided 67.4% of reserve income. Despite the economic success, most owners were motivated by conservation goals. The respondents ranked management factors as more important than geographic, social, political, financial, or stochastic factors for accomplishing reserves' objectives. The presence of interesting ecological attractions was rated the single most important factor. Government involvement was rated the least important factor in success.

ECOTOURISM PLANNING

Australia is a bee hive of activity in ecotourism. The national Labour government of the early 1990s encouraged the thoughtful development of ecotourism policies, guidelines and exemplary developments. One of the most important of these was the national ecotourism strategy. This was the first major national policy of its type ever developed. It was undertaken with broad public and stakeholder consultation, making it a solid and well-accepted document. It was followed by a modest funding regime that encouraged implementation.

The bad news is that a new government shelved the document, apparently not because it disagreed with its contents, but because it was developed by those other guys, a very unfortunate circumstance. However, the policy set actions in motion that are still moving forward and keeping Australia in the forefront.

Allcock, Alison and others. 1994. National Ecotourism Strategy. Canberra, Australia: Commonwealth Department of Tourism.

The Australian National Ecotourism Strategy is the first of its type. It outlines a vision and specific objectives for ecotourism in Australia. The paper develops a national framework to guide ecotourism operators, natural resource planners, and all levels of government. The goal of the strategy is to generate foreign exchange earnings and social benefits through the use of the natural competitive advantage of Australia's natural features, flora, fauna, and cultural heritage. The national government committed \$10,000,000 for the implementation of the strategy.

ECOTOURISM ECONOMICS

The economics of ecotourism is one of the most important areas now under the light of research. The outcome of this work in the last decade has been very enlightening. Two papers were chosen to represent important findings in different areas. Greg Lindberg is one of the most productive scholars in this area. His paper on Belize showed positive economic impacts from ecotourism, and showed positive social and community impacts. Sally Driml and Mike Common produced a startling paper on the financial impacts of ecotourism in Australia. The massive size of the impact was surprising and begged for policy action at the highest level. Driml, Sally and Mick Common. 1995. Economic and Financial Benefits of Tourism in Major Protected Areas. Australian Journal of Environmental Management 2, no. 2: 19-39.

Tourism has emerged as an important economic activity in Australia. Australia's parks and protected areas are among the nation's major tourism attractions. This article provides estimates of the financial value of tourism in five Australian World Heritage Areas (Great Barrier Reef, Wet Tropics, Uluru National Park, Kakadu National Park, and Tasmanian Wilderness). The five areas studied had tourism expenditures in 1991-1992 of Australian \$1,372,000,000. The total management budgets were \$48,700,000, and the user-fee income to the management agencies was \$4,160,000. Overall, the management budgets were 3.5% of the tourist expenditure in the World Heritage Areas. The revenue raised by government through user fees represented only 8.5% of the government expenditures. This study shows the very high financial value of tourism in the five studied World Heritage Areas.

It also reveals the low level of government expenditure for management and the very low level of government cost recovery. The authors question the ability of the existing management structure to maintain environmental quality in the face of large increases in tourism use. The authors point out that tourism research expenditures in Australia are very low compared to other economic generators, such as agriculture and mining, both of which have a smaller economic impact than tourism.

Lindberg, Kreg and Jeremy Enriquez. 1994. An Analysis of Ecotourism's Economic Contribution to Conservation and Development in Belize. Washington, D. C.: World Wildlife Fund.

The paper describes research on the economic impact of ecotourism in Belize. In addition, the linkage between protected area use and the associated ecotourism income with the local public attitude toward conservation is explored. Tourism is a major component of the Belizean economy. It is estimated that each year tourism generates US \$211,000,000 in sales, including US \$41,000,000 in payments to households. Positive experiences from contact with tourists are reported by many households, even by those who did not receive direct economic benefits. Increased economic benefits are possible with structural change in the industry. The study reports that in all case studies support for protected areas increased over time, due to ecotourism that provided benefits to the community. There is now overwhelming support for tourism in the case study community. The authors report that community benefits appear to be more important than household benefits, suggesting strong community cohesion. This significant study is important in its findings that positive conservation attitudes and protected area support increase as ecotourism benefits accrue to communities.

GUIDELINES FOR PLANNING, MANAGEMENT AND SITE DESIGN

Ecotourism is a good idea, tourism saving the environment and helping local people - accepted? Then how does one actually do it? Many guidelines have been produced, and I have chosen two. The Countryside Commission of England and Wales has decades of experience in combining tourism, local citizens and land owners in a cooperative enterprise. The agency's book is a unique, thoughtful and very useful treatise on practical methods of tourism management in rural and natural areas. The National Parks Service of the United States is the largest nature-tourism organization in the world. The design people in the agency at the Denver Service Center put together a book of ideas for the creation and management of facilities for park visitors. The book is the best and really the only one of its type available.

Countryside Commission, English Tourist Board, and Wales Tourist Board. Undated. Tourism in National Parks: A Guide to Good Practice. United Kingdom: Glasgow & Associates.

This guide is for individuals who have a tourism enterprise in a national park or who are developing one. It was developed specifically for parks in the United Kingdom, but the principles are applicable to most parks. It identifies ways in which one can make the most of a special location to benefit his or her business and at the same time help to support the objectives of national parks. The goal of this guide is not to encourage more tourism enterprises in national parks, but rather to help existing ones. The suggestions have implications for national park authorities and other public bodies in the way they work with tourism enterprises. The guide presents a challenge to be more active and positive in this field.

National Park Service. 1993. Guiding Principles for Sustainable Design. Denver, Colorado, U.S.: National Park Service, Denver Service Center.

This important book provides a policy guide to the development of park facilities that integrate with nature, are energy efficient, promote conservation and reduce resource use. The book is aimed at planners, architects, landscape architects, and managers. Sustainability principles are presented in nine areas: interpretation, natural resources, cultural resources, site design, building design, energy management, water supply, waste management, and facility maintenance. Extensive use of charts, diagrams, and examples make for a useful and attractive format.

Market Analysis Very few major market surveys are available. What is the size of the ecotourism market? Where do ecotourists live? What are they looking for? A major market survey of Canadian and American cities was undertaken by a consulting group hired by the governments of Alberta and British Columbia in Canada. The survey produced the most detailed market analysis ever undertaken in North America. It is not comprehensive, but sufficiently large to be taken seriously. The summary document is referenced below, but there are other documents giving details on specific findings.

HLA Consultants and ARA Consulting Group. 1995. Ecotourism Nature/Adventure/Culture: Alberta and British Columbia Market Demand Assessment: Main Report. 1st ed. Victoria, British Columbia: Ministry of Small Business, Tourism and Culture.

A tourism market demand study looked at select Canadian and United States markets. The main report, one of six, is an integration of the study results. Tourism implications and recommendations are included. The study found an ecotourism market of 13,200,000 travellers in only seven major cities. British Columbia and Alberta could see from 1,600,000 to 3,200,000 potential visitors from these markets. The study quantifies the market demand for ecotourism that is building in North America. Study implications are provided for private operators, park managers, and marketers.

ECOTOURISM ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT AND DESIGN

Wildlife is important to ecotourism. Many people travel specifically to view wildlife. Negative environmental impacts are common, and need to be dealt with. Two papers were chosen, from a very large number, to represent state-of-the-art studies on the complex social and environmental impacts of wildlife viewing and its management. David Duffus and Phil Dearden are

experts on the management of whale watching. Their paper on the Killer Whale observation off the coast of British Columbia in Canada is an excellent treatment of the subject. Chris Gakahu put together an interesting set of papers on the interrelationships of wildlife and their viewers in the Maasai Mara in Kenya. His booklet is one of the most insightful ever produced in Kenya, a country with a long history of research in the field.

Duffus, David A. and Philip Dearden. 1993. Recreational Use, Valuation, and Management of Killer Whales (*Orcinus orca*) on Canada's Pacific Coast. *Environmental Conservation* 20, no. 2: 149-56.

The nonconsumptive, recreational use of killer whales on Canada's Pacific Ocean coast is an example of management difficulties that are associated with oceanic species. Problems associated with jurisdiction and institutional arrangements are coupled to significant levels of biological uncertainty and restricted management options, as well as to management concerns associated with the human domain. The case is conceptualization as an interaction between the human and the more general ecological spheres, mediated by the history of the relationship between humans and the species in question. Two routines of regulation are presented, dealing respectively with the human and ecological aspects. This study suggests that if killer whales (a high-profile species) in Canada (a wealthy nation) have not warranted more substantial protection, then the outlook for less well-known marine species in areas of the world where resource management priorities involve more direct survival concerns, is not optimistic.

Gakahu, C. G. 1992. *Tourism Attitudes and Use Impacts in Maasai Mara National Reserve*. Nairobi, Kenya: Wildlife Conservation International.

These proceedings of a workshop held in March 1991 examine all aspects of the wildlife viewing and tourism in Maasai Mara National Reserve, Kenya. Papers by recognized experts deal with visitor motivations, government policy, sustainable use, ecological impacts, visitor attitudes, perceptions, norms, and use patterns, carrying capacity, planning, and management. This is an important summary of the state of management in this important reserve containing the northern portion of the Serengetti plains.

ECOTOURISTS' CHARACTERISTICS

Understanding the motives, demographics and behaviours of ecotourists is an important part of management. Stephen Kellert's early study was one the first to typify one group in detail, bird watchers. He used data from a nation-wide survey in the United States. Many similar studies, of a wide range of activity groups, have followed, but Kellert's 1995 study was one the earliest and is still one of the best.

Kellert, Stephen R. 1985. Birdwatching in American Society. *Leisure Sciences* 7, no. 3: 343-60.

This is a landmark study in the development of an understanding of the recreation activity group known as bird-watchers. Based on the results of a national study in the United States the attitudes, knowledge, and behaviours of citizens towards animals is described. The demographics, animal-related knowledge, and attitudes of bird-watchers are detailed. Participation motives are discussed, as are the differences between casual and committed bird-watchers. In the United States, 25% of the people

reported bird watching in the previous year, and 42% of that group (11% of population) participated more than 20 days of the year. Bird-watchers were highly educated and had higher incomes than those who did not participate. The bird-watchers had the highest knowledge of animal scores of any demographic group.

PLANNING FOR ECOTOURISM

What makes an ecotourism industry flourish in one area, but not in another? Gerald Sournia contributes an important piece to this discussion. He compares the ecotourism infrastructure between eastern and western Africa. The former has a world renowned system of national parks and tourism destinations. The latter has many parks, but a very small tourism industry. Sournia provides some very interesting comments on why he thinks these differences exist.

Sournia, Gerard. 1996. Wildlife Tourism in West and Central Africa. *Ecodecision* 20: 52- 4.

The paper compares wildlife tourism between eastern and western Africa. The high plains of east and southern Africa contain varied and observable wildlife. The protected areas in west and central Africa are located in zones of dense forest or in drier forests where wildlife viewing is unrewarding. The parks in eastern and southern Africa attract hundreds of thousands of visitors per year, while western Africa parks attract only 5,000 tourists annually. The paper discusses the reasons for the low numbers: poor hotel facilities, low levels of staff training, expensive airfares, low levels of visitor infrastructure in the parks, and poor marketing. The paper suggests that the basic needs for successful tourist development in protected areas include good basic information, good technical information, good tourist reception, good accommodation, good transportation facilities, and proper target marketing.