

JOHN FORREST NATIONAL PARK

USER SURVEY
June - September 1990



Department of Conservation and Land Management



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for the
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INTRODUCTION

John Forrest National Park is a popular Park of 1508 ha located on the Darling Scarp on the outskirts of Perth. The Park contains jarrah (*Eucalyptus marginata*) and wandoo (*E. wandoo*) forests and offers panoramic views across the Swan Coastal Plain overlooking the city.

The Park is managed by the Department of Conservation and Land Management (CALM) and is vested in the National Parks and Nature Conservation Authority (NPNCA). CALM began the preparation of a draft management plan in December, 1989, with a high degree of public involvement in the planning process. This participation included obtaining public comments and submissions through the distribution of flyers and advertising in local and Statewide newspapers. In addition, two workshops were organised to discuss general management issues and, more specifically, the issue of horse riding in the Park, and a user survey was conducted (this report). Gathering information on users of the Park and their perceptions for future Park management is considered an essential part of the planning process.

OBJECTIVES

The objectives of the user survey were to obtain information and points of view from a representative sample of people that visit John Forrest National Park. Specifically, the survey aimed to determine:

- a profile of Park users;
- patterns of usage;
- the attitudes and expectations of Park users about the Park and specific issues; and
- implications for Park management.

METHODS

Survey Instrument

A user survey based on a detailed questionnaire was conducted between June and September, 1990. The questionnaire was developed from the standard CALM visitor questionnaire which has been used previously (Colreavy and Cavana, 1988; Cavana and Moore, 1988; Albone *et al*, 1990). Advice was sought from the Australian Bureau of Statistics and CALM's social research scientist. The questionnaire and survey

techniques were pilot tested in May, 1990, and alterations were made to some of the items after preliminary observations were made.

The questionnaire included questions on the origin of the user, the age of the user, locations visited, and activities undertaken during their visit. There were also opportunities for people to indicate what they liked most and least about the Park, and how they thought it could be improved. An example of the questionnaire and a summary of the results from the survey are given in Appendix 1.

Procedure

The survey was conducted between 9-16 June, 17-21 July and on 2 September, 1990. Survey efforts were hampered occasionally by winter rains, which may have kept the numbers of visitors down, particularly during the July survey period. The September survey occurred over the Father's Day long weekend to sample visitors coming to the Park on public holidays.

The most appropriate method of distributing and collecting questionnaires was considered to be through a person-to-person interview technique. The advantages of this technique compensated for any extra effort required to attain a representative sample of Park users. The advantages include:

- minimising bias resulting from more than one person answering the questions;
- overcoming the intimidation often encountered by people not familiar with paper work;
- providing motivation for the person completing the questionnaire to give more thought to the answers;
- clarifying any misunderstanding in the interpretation of certain questions;
- improving public relations by providing a 'human face' to park management and the management plan; and
- increasing the response rate to the questionnaire.

Interviews were carried out by volunteers and CALM staff based at different locations in the Park to ensure as broad a spectrum of Park users were sampled as possible. These included the main picnic area, Rocky Pool, Glen Brook Dam, the scenic drive, and the lookout over the city. In general, one person per vehicle was selected to be interviewed, or one person in four for larger groups of people. A brief explanation of the survey and the necessity for user information in Park management was given to each person. Interviews took about fifteen minutes each to conduct.

The information gathered from the questionnaires was entered onto a Cleveland PC-II computer and analysed using dBase III+ software. Graphs were prepared using Cricket Graph software on an Apple Macintosh SE computer.

RESULTS

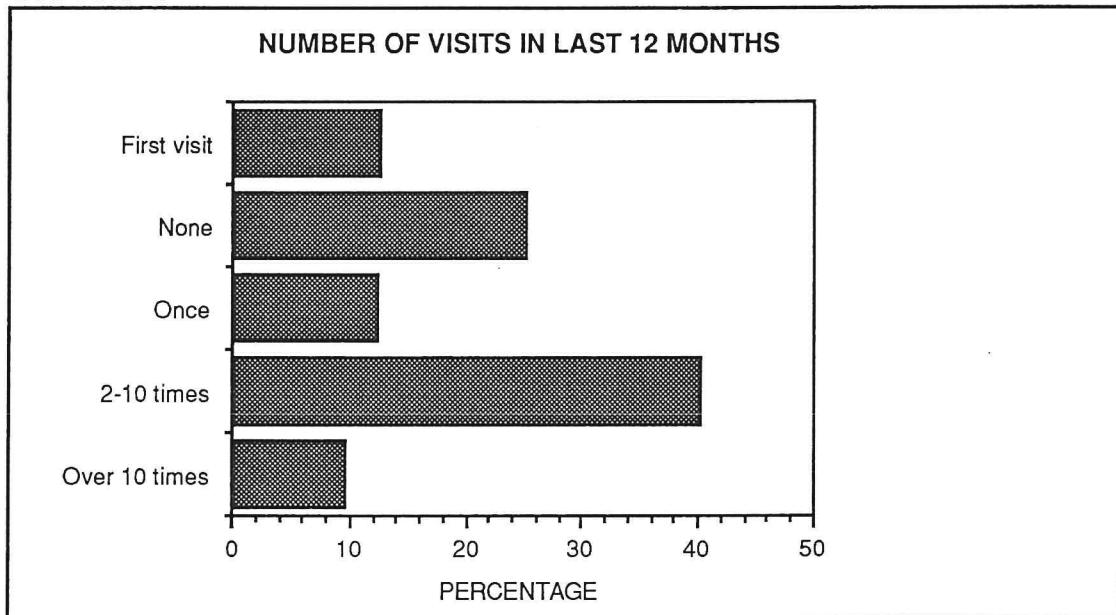
A total of 383 questionnaires were collected over the survey period between June and September, 1990. The sample size from the survey satisfied the recommended levels advised by the Australian Bureau of Statistics, and so the results are considered to be statistically valid. As the questionnaires were distributed and collected 'on-the-spot', this figure represents a 100% response rate to the survey.

The survey information is representative of visitation to the Park over winter and spring. Owing to Departmental constraints, the survey could not be extended to include summer and autumn when visitation levels and demands on recreation sites are likely to vary. The results to each question are presented in the order of presentation on the questionnaire.

1. NUMBER OF VISITS IN LAST 12 MONTHS

The majority of people surveyed had visited the Park between two and ten times in the past 12 months (40%). This is an indication of the popularity and level of use of the Park as most users return at least once each year to the Park. Over 25% of visitors hadn't visited the area in the last year but had returned on this occasion. About 13% of people surveyed were visiting the Park for the first time (Figure 1).

FIGURE 1.



2. LENGTH OF STAY IN THE PARK

Most people stayed in John Forrest National Park for under three hours (70%) and no longer than six hours (98%). This is most likely due to its proximity to the city which enables people to make short day trips with minimal effort (Figure 2).

3. SITES VISITED IN THE PARK

The most popular places in the Park were the main picnic area (66%), the railway formation (54%), the National Park Falls (42%), and the Rocky Pool picnic area (32%). All these sites are easily accessible to the public. Nearly 13% of people surveyed indicated other sites visited in the Park. These were predominantly the walk trails, lookouts and Glen Brook Dam (Figure 3).

FIGURE 2.

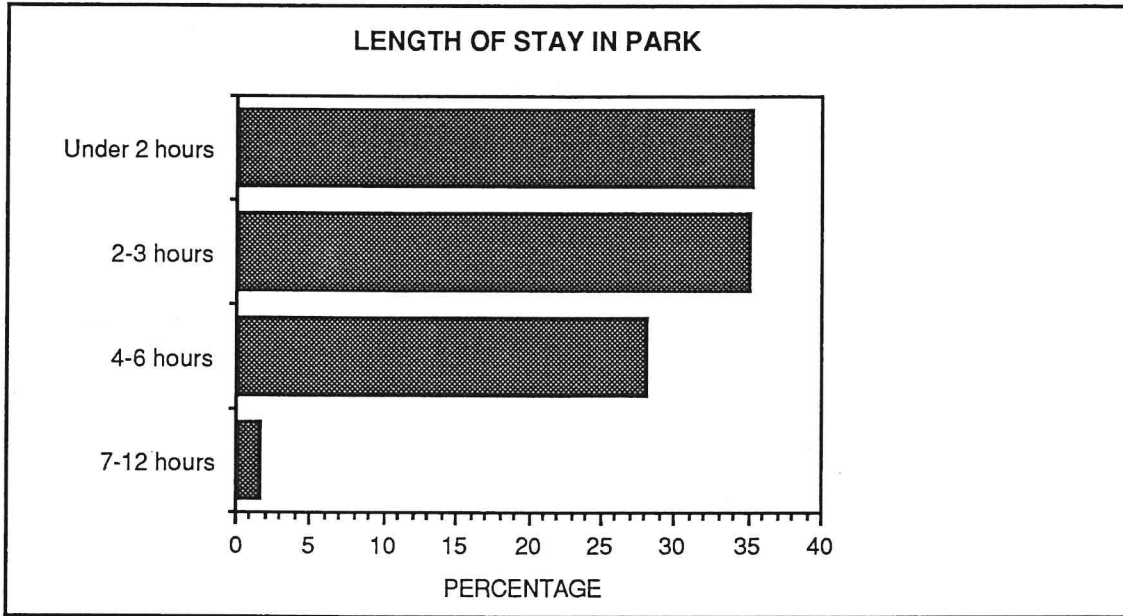
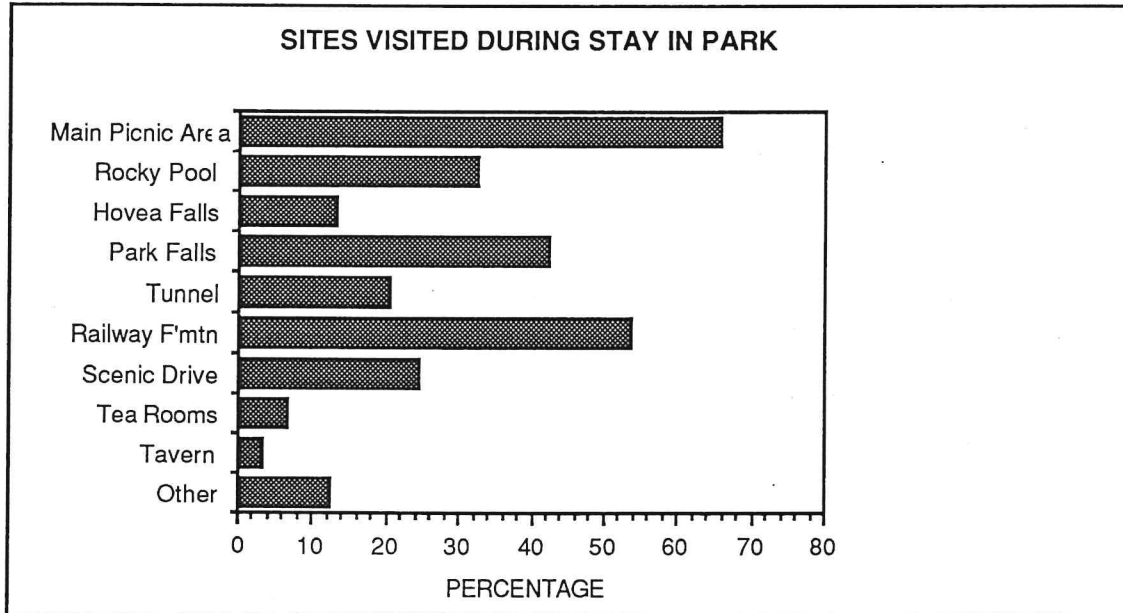


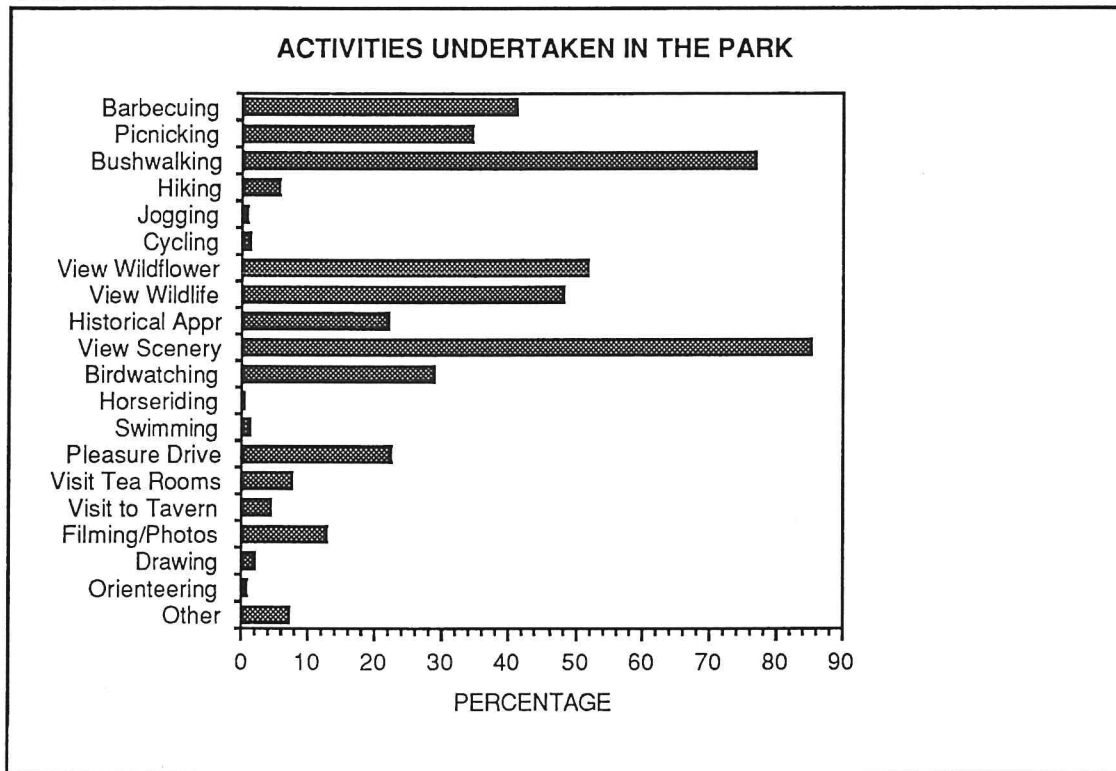
FIGURE 3.



4. ACTIVITIES UNDERTAKEN BY PARK USERS

The majority of people surveyed indicated that scenery appreciation was the most popular activity or pastime (85%). The Park offers visitors splendid views across the Darling Scarp to the city skyline and the Swan Coastal Plain as well as along the hilly terrain of the Scarp itself. Bushwalking was the next most popular activity (77%) followed by wildflower appreciation (52%), wildlife appreciation (48%), barbecuing (41%) and picnicking (34%) (Figure 4). Other popular activities include birdwatching, pleasure driving and historical appreciation. Only two respondents (less than 1%) indicated they went horse riding.

FIGURE 4.



5. PROVISION OF PARK FACILITIES

Park visitors were asked to rate the importance of certain facilities and issues, and their level of satisfaction with each of them. The responses to this question are discussed individually.

5.1 Vehicle access into and within the Park

Access into the Park was considered important - very important to 90% of people surveyed. This comes as no surprise considering over 91% of visitors use a car or van to get to the Park (see 8. Method of Transport). Over 80% of people felt more than satisfied with the present access network into and within the Park.

5.2 Vehicle parking space

A similar proportion of visitors felt the provision of parking was important - very important (93%). Nearly 77% of people surveyed were more than satisfied with the present parking arrangements.

5.3 Provision of barbecue facilities

The majority of people surveyed indicated that the provision of barbecues was important - very important (76%). The importance of barbecues is also highlighted in 4. Activities Undertaken by Park Users, in which 41% of visitors participated in this activity. Barbecues are an essential part of many people's experience in the Park and over 53% were more than satisfied with the present supply of barbecues. Nearly 15% of visitors felt dissatisfied with the barbecues for various reasons, and 18% felt they were not important at all.

5.4 Provision of picnic shelter facilities

Over 72% of park visitors indicated that picnic shelters were important - very important. This is in accord with the main use of the Park as a day use recreation area. Picnic shelters offer some protection from the weather allowing visitors to enjoy their day more. About 52% of people surveyed were more than satisfied with the current shelters. Nearly 23% felt the provision of this facility was not important.

5.5 Provision of picnic tables and seating facilities

Over 78% of people surveyed felt that picnic tables and seats were important - very important. As with the provision of picnic shelters, these facilities are an essential part of a visitor's recreation experience in the Park. Most people were satisfied with the provision of tables and seats (62%). About 18% felt that they were not important.

5.6 Walk trails

The majority of Park visitors indicated that walk trails were important - very important (92%). This result is in line with the popularity of bushwalking indicated

in 4. Activities Undertaken in the Park, in which 77% of visitors participated in this activity. Over 73% of visitors were more than satisfied with the current walk trail network in the Park although some people (3%) felt there should be more information on points of interest along the trails.

5.7 Interpretive information

The provision of interpretive information was regarded as being important - very important to nearly 85% of people surveyed. Only 40% indicated they were satisfied with the present availability of interpretive information while 37% were dissatisfied. There is a clear need for more information on the Park and its environment as illustrated in 13. Suggested Improvements and 14. Visitor Information Centre. Over 63% of people surveyed thought there should be a visitor information centre in the Park.

5.8 Tavern

The tavern was regarded as being not important or not required by 76% of Park visitors. The presence of a tavern in the National Park is considered by most people as contrary to the purpose of the Park. Over 68% of people surveyed felt that satisfaction with the tavern was not relevant which is an indication of the proportion of people not using it.

5.9 Tea rooms

Opinions on the tea rooms were evenly divided with nearly 47% of Park visitors rating them as important - very important, and 45% rating them as not important or not required. Visitor satisfaction was also divided with 24% of people indicating they were satisfied, 22% uncertain and 46% as not relevant. As with the tavern, the presence of this facility may be regarded as contrary to the purpose of the Park. Nevertheless, the tea rooms do serve a legitimate function in the recreation experience of some Park visitors.

5.10 The quiet, peaceful atmosphere

The peaceful atmosphere of the Park was considered to be important - very important by 98% of people surveyed. The tranquillity of the bush is undoubtedly one of the major attractions of the Park (see also 6. Most Liked Features of the Park). The Park's proximity to the city allows people to escape from suburbia with minimal effort. Over 97% of Park visitors were more than satisfied with the peace and quiet afforded by the Park.

FIGURE 5.

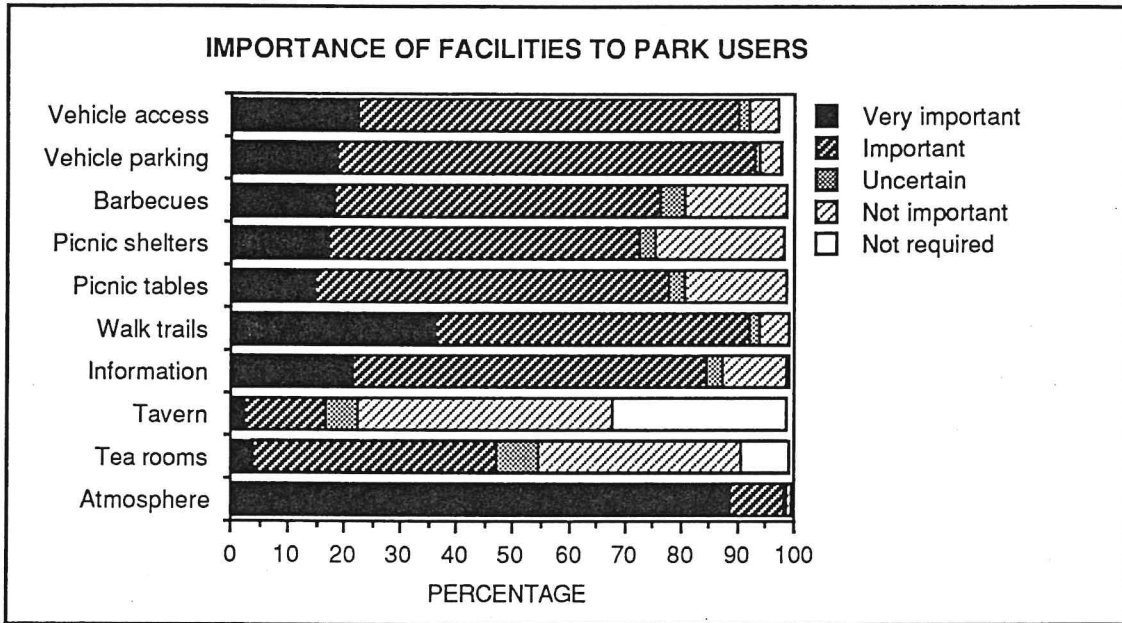
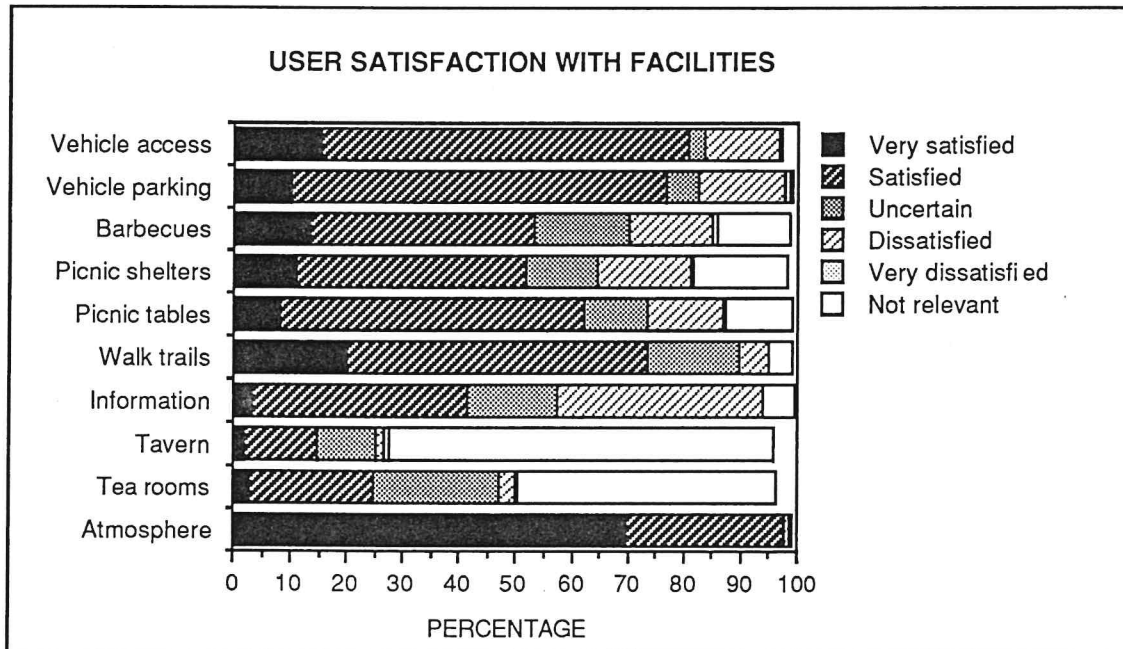


FIGURE 6.



6. MOST LIKED FEATURES OF THE PARK

Visitors were asked what they liked most about John Forrest National Park. Comments of a similar nature were grouped together and the responses were coded to allow analysis. Seventy-three various comments from 99% of people surveyed were coded and the most popular six are listed below.

<u>MOST LIKED FEATURES</u>	<u>PERCENTAGE</u>
1. Naturalness, bush, forest	44 %
2. Peaceful atmosphere, tranquillity	36 %
3. Water - creek, river, stream, falls	20 %
4. Scenery, scenery at night	13 %
5. Wildlife - birds, kangaroos	13 %
6. Location - proximity to Perth	10%

7. LEAST LIKED FEATURES OF THE PARK

Visitors were asked what they liked least about John Forrest National Park. Comments of a similar nature were grouped together and the responses were coded to allow analysis. Sixty-five various comments from 77% of people surveyed were coded and the most frequent six are listed below.

<u>LEAST LIKED FEATURES</u>	<u>PERCENTAGE</u>
1. Nothing	37 %
2. Admittance fee	6 %
3. Crowds of people	5 %
4. The tavern - presence, prices	3 %
5. Insufficient barbecues	3 %
6. Rubbish/litter	3 %

8. METHOD OF TRANSPORT

The majority of people surveyed used a car or van to visit the Park (92%). This was expected given the proximity of the Park to the city. A small percentage of visitors walked to the Park (2%), most likely residents from nearby, or arrived by coach (1%).

9. ORIGIN OF PARK VISITORS

Nearly 95% of people surveyed live within Western Australia, 2% came from interstate and 3% came from overseas. Of those that live in W.A. only 2% came from outside the Perth metropolitan area. This highlights the fact that the Park is predominantly a local park catering for local recreation needs.

Visitors were asked to record the town or suburb they live in (or country if from overseas) in order to profile the distribution of visitors from around the metropolitan area. It was found that people came from between Wanneroo and Rockingham to use the Park. Higher numbers of people came from Swan View, Glen Forrest, Darlington and Midland which are all in the immediate vicinity of the Park. There was also a tendency for more people from the northern suburbs than the southern suburbs to visit the Park. This may be a function of travelling time and/or ease of access. It is of interest to note that relatively few people from other Darling Scarp areas such as Mundaring, Kalamunda and Lesmurdie make the effort to visit John Forrest National Park. This is probably due to the fact that the recreation needs of people in these areas are catered for in other closer reserves.

10. GROUP COMPOSITION

Most people surveyed were part of a family group (66%). Others were with their partner (15%), by themselves (7%) or with friends (7%) (Figure 7). Nearly 3% indicated they were with a group of family and friends, and 3% were part of an organisation or club. Among this 3% were a group for the intellectually handicapped and a bushwalkers club.

11. GROUP SIZE

Based on this visitor survey, it is estimated that 1 637 people were present in the Park during survey periods. That is, the total number of people surveyed (383) was representative of 1 637 Park users. On average, user groups were comprised of four or five people (average 4.18). These generally included one or two children under 15 years of age (Figure 8). These results are in line with the fact that most people surveyed were part of a family group.

FIGURE 7.

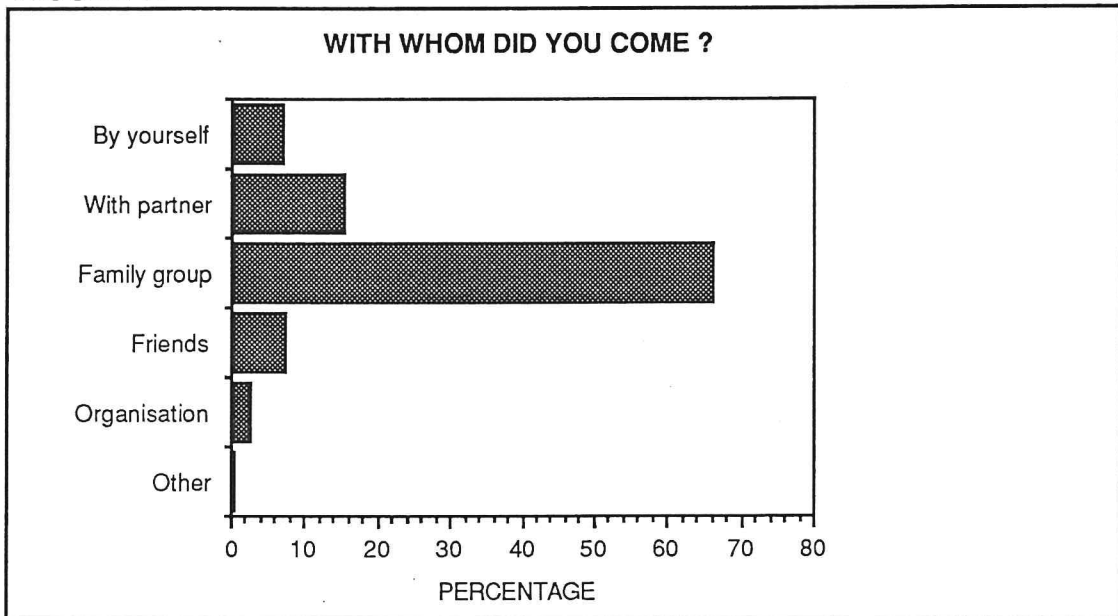
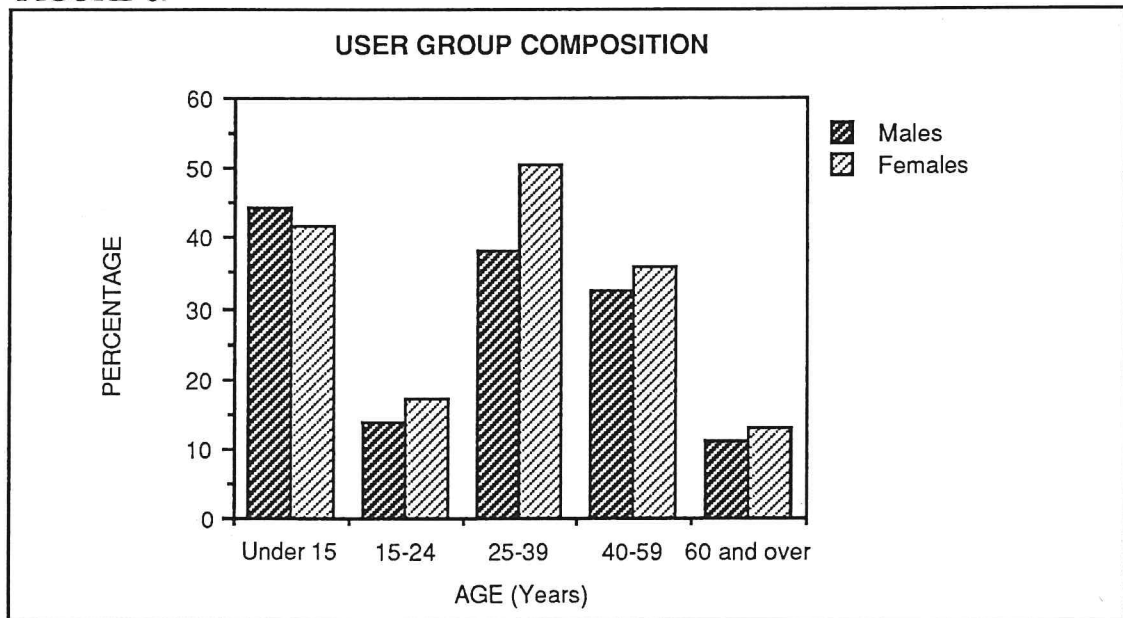


FIGURE 8.



12. AGE OF PARK VISITORS

Respondents were asked their age in order to produce a profile on Park users. The majority of people surveyed were between 25 and 39 years of age (47%) or between 40 and 59 years of age (31%). These results are in accord with other results from the survey which indicate that family groups are the most popular Park users.

13. SUGGESTED IMPROVEMENTS

People were asked for additional comments on how they thought the Park could be improved. One hundred and sixty-one suggestions from 84% of the people surveyed were coded for analysis. The most frequent suggestions for improving the Park are listed below.

<u>SUGGESTION</u>	<u>PERCENTAGE</u>
1. Leave as it is, keep natural	27 %
2. More information on flora etc.	11 %
3. Natural looking playground	7 %
4. Increase parking	6 %
5. More signs	5 %
6. Reduce admittance fee	5 %

14. VISITOR INFORMATION CENTRE

Over 63% of people surveyed felt there should be a visitor information centre in the Park. The need for an expanded interpretation and information facility was also expressed among the improvements suggested by Park visitors. Of those people who commented, most felt that a visitor centre should be aimed at tourists. The sort of information available should include a video of the Park's attractions, and plant and animal life, and information boards with a Park map. There were also suggestions for more information on walk trails to include lengths and times of walks, and appropriate information on points of interest along the trails.

It was generally felt by those people who opposed a visitor information centre, that this facility was not necessary. An information board detailing a Park map with walk trails, or brochures and leaflets would be sufficient enough for people to obtain information

on the Park. Concern was expressed against commercialisation in favour of discovering the Park for one's self.

CONCLUSIONS

The survey sought to gather information about the people using John Forrest National Park and their perceptions for future management of the Park. This purpose was largely achieved.

The main users of the Park are family groups of four or five people who come from the metropolitan area to enjoy the peace and quiet afforded by the Park and its natural features. The Park's proximity to the city and its developed facilities area allows people to escape suburbia for a leisurely few hours while they enjoy a bushwalk, barbecue or picnic amongst some of the most scenic parts of the Darling Scarp. The scenic drive provides panoramic views across the coastal plain and the city as well as Jane Brook valley.

The survey revealed that most Park users are satisfied with the facilities and opportunities in the Park although there is scope for improving the quality of their experiences. In particular, concern was expressed at the present availability of interpretive information on the Park and its environment. It was generally felt that more information is needed on the Park's flora, fauna and walk tracks including lengths and times of walks as well as appropriate information on points of interest along the tracks. The suggestion of a visitor information centre in the Park was well received by those people surveyed.

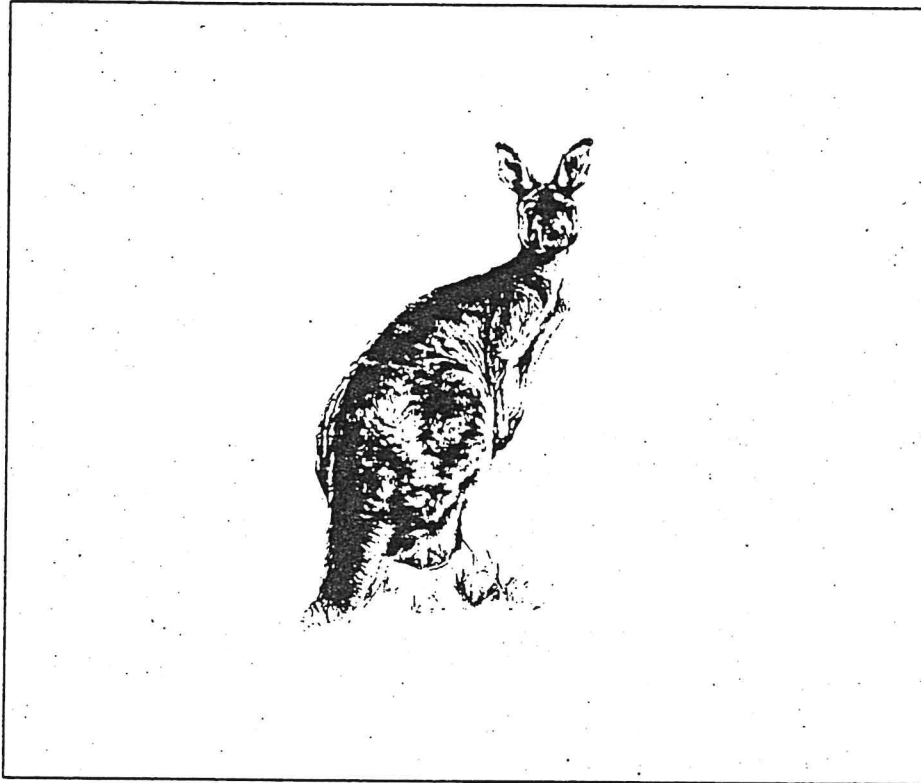
It is quite evident that the tranquility of the bush is one of the major values of the Park given that the most suggested improvement was to keep the Park as natural as possible. The challenge for Park management is to minimise the impacts of increasing urbanisation in order to maintain the Park's values while providing appropriate recreation and education opportunities, and promoting responsible behaviour in natural environments.

This user survey constitutes part of the public participation engaged in the preparation of a management plan for John Forrest National Park. The information gathered on people's perceptions for the Park's future management has been incorporated into the draft management plan (CALM, 1992).

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APPENDIX 1.



**JOHN FORREST NATIONAL PARK
USER SURVEY**

Welcome to JOHN FORREST NATIONAL PARK.

The Department of Conservation and Land Management is preparing a Management Plan for the Park. This questionnaire asks you for information and suggestions.

The questionnaire is completely anonymous.

Thank you for your help. Enjoy your visit.

Form No.

office use only

1. In the last 12 months how many times have you visited JOHN FORREST NATIONAL PARK ?

	(tick one)	Not stated
First visit ever	12.5 1.	0.5
Haven't visited in last 12 months	25.1 2.	
Once	12.3 3.	
2-10 times	40.2 4.	
10 times or more	9.7 5.	
Comment	8.4	

2. How many hours did you stay or plan to stay in the Park ?

	(tick one)	Not Stated
Less than 2 hours	35.2 1.	-
2-3 hours	35.0 2.	
4-6 hours	28.2 3.	
7-12 hours	1.6 4.	
Other (please specify)	- 5.	

0.5

3. On this occasion which of the following sites did you visit or do you expect to visit ?
Please refer to the attached map for location of sites.

(tick one or more)

Main Picnic Area	65.8 1.
Rocky Pool Picnic Area	32.4 2.
Hovea Falls	13.1 3.
National Park Falls	42.3 4.
Tunnel	20.4 5.
Railway Formation	53.8 6.
Scenic Drive	24.5 7.
Tea Rooms	6.5 8.
Tavern	3.4 9.
Other (please specify)	12.5 10.

18.0

Please turn over

4. In which of the following activities will/have you participate(d) ?

(tick one or more)

Barbecuing	41.0	1.
Picnicking	34.2	2.
Bushwalking	77.0	3.
Hiking	5.5	4.
Jogging	0.8	5.
Cycling	1.3	6.
Wildflower Appreciation	51.7	7.
Wildlife Appreciation	48.3	8.
Historical Appreciation	21.9	9.
Scenery Appreciation	85.4	10.
Birdwatching	28.5	11.
Horseriding	0.5	12.
Swimming	1.0	13.
Driving for Pleasure	22.2	14.
Visit to Tea Rooms	7.6	15.
Visit to Tavern	4.4	16.
Filming/Photography	12.8	17.
Drawing/Painting/Sketching	1.8	18.
Orienteering	0.8	19.
Other (please specify)	7.0	20.

11.0

Please turn over

5. For each facility/service/issue listed below please tick

- * how important you feel the provision is to you and,
- * how satisfied you are with each facility/service on this visit

Use these rating scales

Very important -	VI
Important -	I
Uncertain -	U
Not important -	NI
Not required -	NR

Very satisfied -	VS
Satisfied -	S
Uncertain -	U
Dissatisfied -	D
Very dissatisfied -	VD
Not relevant -	NR

Importance

Satisfaction

	Not Stated	VI	I	U	NI	NR	Not Stated	VS	S	U	D	VD	NR
A. Vehicle access into and within the Park	2.6	22.4	67.6	2.1	5.2	-	2.9	15.1	65.3	2.9	13.3	-	0.5
B. Vehicle parking space	2.3	18.3	74.7	1.0	3.7	-	0.8	9.9	66.8	5.7	15.1	1.0	0.5
C. Provision of barbeque facilities	1.6	18.0	58.5	3.9	18.0	-	1.6	13.1	40.2	17.0	14.6	1.0	12.5
D. Provision of picnic shelter facilities	1.8	17.2	55.1	3.1	22.7	-	1.8	11.0	40.7	12.8	16.4	0.5	16.7
E. Provision of picnic tables and seating facilities	1.3	14.9	62.7	2.9	18.3	-	0.8	8.1	53.8	11.7	13.3	0.5	11.7
F. Walk trails	1.0	35.8	56.1	1.8	5.2	-	1.0	20.1	53.5	15.9	5.5	-	3.9
G. Interpretive information (eg.signs,brochures)	1.0	21.1	63.4	2.9	11.2	0.3	0.5	3.1	37.9	16.4	36.6	-	5.5
H. Tavern	0.3	2.3	14.4	5.7	45.2	30.8	4.2	2.1	12.5	10.7	1.3	0.8	68.4
I. Tea rooms	0.8	3.9	42.8	7.8	36.0	8.6	3.9	2.9	21.7	22.2	3.1	0.5	45.7
J. The quiet peaceful atmosphere	0.5	88.5	9.7	0.3	0.8	0.3	1.0	69.7	27.7	0.3	1.0	-	0.3
		1	2	3	4	5		1	2	3	4	5	6

6. What did you like most about JOHN FORREST NATIONAL PARK ?

1. Naturalness, bush, forest	44%
2. Peaceful atmosphere, tranquility	36%
3. Water - creek, river, stream, falls	20%
4. Scenery, scenery at night	13%
5. Wildlife - birds, kangaroos	13%
6. Location - proximity to Perth	10%

Office Use
Only

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7. What did you like least about JOHN FORREST NATIONAL PARK ?

1. Nothing	37%
2. Admittance fee	6%
3. Crowds of people	5%
4. The tavern - presence, prices	3%
5. Insufficient barbecues	3%
6. Rubbish, litter	3%

Office Use
Only

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8. What method of transport have you used to visit JOHN FORREST NATIONAL PARK ?

(tick one or more)

Car or Van	<input type="checkbox"/> 91.6	1.
Walked	<input type="checkbox"/> 1.6	2.
Motorbike	<input type="checkbox"/> -	3.
Coach	<input type="checkbox"/> 0.8	4.
Public transport	<input type="checkbox"/> -	5.
Horseback	<input type="checkbox"/> -	6.
Other (please specify)	<input type="checkbox"/> 0.5	7.
	<input type="checkbox"/> 0.8	

Please turn over

9. Where do you usually live ?

(tick one)

- Within WA 94.8 1.
- Interstate 2.3 2.
- Overseas 2.6 3.

10. Name of town and postcode

Town

Postcode

Country (if overseas)

office use only

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office use only

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11. On this visit, with whom did you come ?

(tick one)

By yourself 7.0 1. *go to Q13*

With partner 15.4 2.

Family group 66.3 3.

Friends 7.3 4.

Organisation/club 2.6 5.

Please give name

3.9

Other (please specify) 0.5 6.

3.4

Please turn over

12. How many people in your group are within the following age groups ?

	Males	Females
Under 15	44.4	41.5
15-24	13.6	17.2
25-39	38.1	50.4
40-59	32.6	36.0
60 and over	11.2	13.1

13. What was your age last birthday ?

(tick one)

- Under 15 years 1.6 1.
- 15-24 years 10.7 2.
- 25-39 years 46.7 3.
- 40-59 years 31.1 4.
- 60 years and over 8.4 5.

14. Additional comments - Have you any ideas on how the Park can be improved ?

Please let us know.

1. Leave as it is; keep natural	27%
2. More information on flora etc.	11%
3. Natural looking playground	7%
4. Increase parking	6%
5. More signs	5%
6. Reduce admittance fee	5%

office use only

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15. Do you think there should be a visitor information centre in the Park ?

(tick one)

- Yes 63.4 1.
- No 35.5 2.

Comments

	41.0
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16. Thank you for your help