
Survey of a National/Marine Park

Level

7-8+

Key questions

What are the natural attractions of this Park or Reserve? What facilities are provided for the public to utilise the area? How are the public using the area? What management issues arise from this utilisation?

Key outcome

Understand some of the characteristics of a national or marine park and how these features are managed.

Adapted from the Royal National Park Field Studies Centre and discussions at the Jervis Bay Field Workshop.

What you need

Field survey sheet, clip board, pen
Map of the Park

Many National Parks around the Australian coastline include access to the shore and beach, or are National Park Islands, surrounded by Marine Parks or Reserves. Many Marine Reserves also include some land, so the following field surveys are appropriate for a wide range of protected areas.

This study is divided into three parts:

- (a) Field survey of the Park or Reserve
- (b) Questionnaire for users of the Park
- (c) Analysis of field results and extension with research.

Field sheets are provided for sections (a) and (b).

What you do

(a) Field Survey

You could work in pairs or small groups or utilise the following survey as an individual field study.

(b) Questions to users of the Park

Many of the questions below could be the subject of interviews of Park users or Park Managers (such as Rangers or Interpretative Officers). It may also be necessary to get the Ranger's permission to interview user groups within the Park boundary.

(c) Classroom Research

Following your field survey, you may be able to investigate:

- the influence visitors have on the local economy
- physical, cultural and other features likely to attract tourists to Parks
- potential of a developed or undeveloped area
- implications of publicising and thus attracting larger numbers of visitors to Parks
- problems and management solutions to different issues in different Parks.

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Debate or discuss these statements:

- “Now that most National Parks charge admission, parks are no longer for all the people, just for those who can afford them”.
- “Marine Reserves and National Parks adjacent to the coast can always cope: after all, the ocean is just a big sink which can adjust to any pressure”.
- “The wilderness of many of our Parks has disappeared for ever now that we have put in showers and toilets”.
- “There should be some areas of Parks and Marine reserves where no one is allowed to go”.

Extension

Do the ‘Red Algae Bloom’ and the ‘Rock Platform’ activity units.

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Field sheet 1. Field survey

Once you are in the Park or Reserve, gather information on the following topics:

Accessibility

- distance from centres of population
- type of road surface entering the Park
- type of road surface in Park
- quality of road surface in park
- provision of signposts
- public transport services to the Park.

Parking

- location of parking facilities (if there are several car parks feeding into the Park, each group could select one to study)
- number of vehicles which can be accommodated
- surface of the car park
- its position relative to other facilities.

Facilities

- charge for entering the Park
- facilities within the Park
- facilities outside the Park
- availability of toilets and/or showers
- numbers and location of
 - picnic tables
 - shelter sheds
 - water taps
 - rubbish bins
 - barbecues (gas/wood) or pits
- which of these facilities have to be paid for by the user
- provision and adequacy of fuel supplies
- provision of information about the Park and the various walks or water trails
- quality of walking surfaces
- safety factor provision made with handrails, fences etc
- variety of walks based on:
 - interest
 - difficulty
 - length

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- provision and adequacy of sign posts and information about points of interest
- if in a Marine Reserve, you may also find out about:
 - provision for moorings and anchorages
 - underwater trails
 - special signage (e.g. for zoning use).

Maintenance

- parking area
- picnic areas (especially, fittings, fuel, & litter disposal)
- walks especially in relation to:
 - track surface
 - quality of sign or guide posts
 - alteration with reference to environmental presentation.

Natural attractions

- landforms, type and location
- unusual rock formations
- water – running, smooth, offshore
- flora – variety, quality, accessibility
- fauna – variety, frequency, ease of observation
- particular attractions of renown.

Usage statistics

You may have to request this information later from the Park Ranger or the Central office of the Department of Conservation/Environment.

- number of visitors (daily and seasonal)
- number of vehicles at different times of the day and year.

Use of the Park

- What are visitors doing?
- Where are most grouped?
- What signs are there that the Park is under visitor pressure (if any)?
- Are there any obvious problems about the Park and its visitors which you think might require action?
- Are there noticeable differences between use of the land Reserve and the adjacent Marine Park or protected waters?

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Field sheet 2. Interviews and questionnaires

A Ranger or Manager may address the group as a whole to answer questions on these topics:

Questions to the Rangers

- history of the Park, its controlling authority
- types of visitors
- from which locations
- seasonal peaks in numbers
- interpretation program or public contact program
 - illustrated talks
 - guided walks
 - displays
 - games
 - nature-based activities, etc
- how the Park is financed
- number of people employed in the Park
- type of work done
- any need for workforce expansion
- areas in need of improvement or expansion
- methods of improvement
- comparison between numbers using the Park and the facilities available for them
- management problems being addressed
- management problems not being addressed
- long term plans for this Park .

Use, abuse or mis-use

- litter survey or results
- cumulative records of flora and fauna – are there species lists
- prevalence of vandalism – deliberate, accidental
- risk of bushfire or floods or other hazards.

Development of Publicity

- existing sources
 - posters
 - photographs
 - booklets and leaflets
 - local newspaper stories
 - improved sign posting

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- campaign targeting major user groups and local accommodation outlets
- future plans?

Questions to individual users

Preface your interview with a polite request to ask the user a few questions. Try to select a range of people, of differing age groups who are using the Park in several ways.

Personal

- approximate age group, and sex structure
- where do you live
- how often do you visit this Park
- how did you get here
- how long do you intend to stay
- do you intend to return?

Reasons for visits

- why did you come here, accident or design
- recreational or educational use
- how did you get your information about the Park
 - word of mouth
 - signposting
 - local agency
 - state authority
 - magazine, newspaper or TV advertising
 - guide book
 - recommended by motoring or tourist agency.

Evaluation of the area

- good and bad features
- possibility of further visits and the reasons
- would you recommend this Park to your friends
- why?