Ecotourism at Big Bone Lick State Park, Kentucky: A Service-Learning Project

2009-10

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An independent study by Michael Washburn from the summer 2009 to summer 2010.

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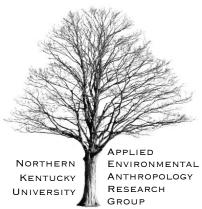


Table of Contents

Introduction	1
Methods	1
Findings	1
Demographics	1
Why people come to Big Bone Lick	2
What people like about Big Bone Lick	2
What the people would like at Big Bone Lick	2
What is conservation?	2
What is nature?	3
Recommendations	4
Appendices:	
Appendix 1: Institutional Review Board Approval and Informed Consent Statement	5
Appendix 2: Memorandum of Understanding	7
Appendix 3: Questionnaire Results	9

Introduction

This report documents an ethnographic research project on ecotourism at Big Bone Lick State Park (BBLSP), as collected by the Applied Environmental Anthropology Research Group (AEARG) at Northern Kentucky University (NKU) from June 2009 to June 2010. This report describes the data collection methods, data analysis, results, and makes general recommendations for improvements as suggested by visitors to BBLSP.

Methods

In the summer of 2009, Douglas Hume (Assistant Professor of Anthropology and Director of AEARG) submitted and received approval by the NKU Institutional Review Board that the planned research project did not present any unnecessary risks to the participants (see Appendix 1). Douglas Hume and Michael Washburn (undergraduate student at NKU and member of AEARG) met with Todd Young (BBLSP Naturalist) during the summer of 2009 to discuss an ecotourism research project at BBLSP and secure a Memorandum of Understanding (see Appendix 2) between BBLSP and AEARG. After completing an application and approval, Michael Washburn was given volunteer status at BBLSP and a uniform that would identify him to the visitors as member of the park volunteer staff.

Michael Washburn conducted approximately 30 interviews with visitors at various locations at BBLSP during the summer and fall of 2009. Informants were asked to comment on features they did and did not like about the park as well as anything the informant thought would enhance their experience at BBLSP in the future. In addition, informants were asked to share their thoughts on what the terms nature and conservation meant to them.

The interview notes were analyzed to extract common themes, which were then arranged into propositional statements used to construct a survey instrument. In the spring of 2010, Michael Washburn collected the responses to the survey from visitors at BBLSP. Thirty-two individuals participated in the survey. Data from the surveys were analyzed using frequency analysis in MYSTAT 12.02 (see Appendix 3).

Findings

Demographics

The survey participants are mostly from Kentucky (61.29%). The remaining participants are from Ohio (22.58%), Michigan (9.69%), and Indiana (3.23%). While the survey participants accounted for only four states, visitors from other states (Florida, Tennessee, Georgia, and Wisconsin) were interviewed during the qualitative phase of this research. Of the survey participants from Kentucky, most are from Lexington. Twenty-one of the participants reside within an hour's drive of BBLSP. Five of the informants live just over one hour from BBLSP. Only three of the survey participants were visiting from farther away. A small majority (51.61%) of the participants are male and the average age is 37.65. Note that participants could be no younger than 18 years of age, as per the informed consent agreement. On average, participants visited BBLSP one to two times in the last year.

Why people come to BBLSP

Everyone agrees that they come to BBLSP to get away and relax because it is a nice place to visit when the weather is nice. Most of the participants (87.09%) come to BBLSP because it is a good place to bring children. Most visitors (83.87%) also report that they use BBLSP for hiking and picnicking. Several (32.26%) of visitors initially came to BBLSP because of the sign on the highway. About the same amount of people initially visited BBLSP because they found it on the Internet (35.48%). Of the campers visiting BBLSP, about half (54.84%) are also visiting the Creationism Museum. The bison are a popular attraction with many (77.42%) of the participants stating that the bison are one of the reasons they came to BBLSP. Many (64.52%) of the participants came to BBLSP to fish.

What people like about BBLSP

While there are multiple aspects of BBLSP that people like, the top 15 answers from the qualitative interviews were used in the survey. All participants agree that they like the scenery and trees at BBLSP as well as finding it a peaceful place to visit. Visitors also are in unanimous agreement that they like BBLSP because it preserves history. All of the participants also agreed that they liked BBLSP because it is clean. All but one participant agrees that they like BBLSP because it is not crowded (96.77%) and all but two participants think that BBLSP was well organized (93.55%). Most (87.1%) of the participants like BBLSP because of the activities available for children. Another quality that people like about BBLSP is the hiking trails (93.55%). Many (83.87%) of the visitors report that they like the lake at BBLSP and that they like the fishing areas (70.97%).

What the people would like to have at BBLSP

A majority of what people would like to have at BBLSP is linked to the lake area. The majority of the survey participants want benches by the lake (90.32%). A large majority of the participants report that they would like to have better access to the lake (70.97%). Less than half of the participants want general boat access (45.16%), while more than half of the participants state that they would like to have canoe access (61.29%). Many participants stated that they would like to have a trail around the lake (74.19%). About half of the participants would like to see the current trails marked better (58.07%). Most of the participants would like more kinds of fish in the lake (67.74%) and a little over half would like the lake to be better stocked (58.07%). Just over half of the participants would like to see portable toilets by the lake (58.07%). Many of the visitors said they would like to be able to camp by the lake (70.97%). Most of the participants state they would like to see full hook-ups in the camping area (77.42%). Many of the visitors would also like more supplies in the camping store (70.97%).

What is conservation?

The topic of conservation was broached to the participants in the qualitative interviewing phase of this research by asking them what they thought, in general, about conservation. All participants agree that conservation is preserving what God put on this earth. Nearly all of the participants agree that conservation is keeping nature as it is, respecting it, and taking care of the earth for future generations (96.77%). A majority of the participants (93.55%) agree that conservation is leaving nature alone and trying to leave a place better than you found it. Most participants also define conservation as stopping urban sprawl (77.42%),

preserving lakes and rivers (90.32%), conserving resources to stop global warming (80.65%), recycling (83.87%), and changing our behavior to save the earth (80.65%). A little less than half of participants agree (45.16%) that conservation is bad without thinking of people's needs.

What is nature?

Due to the abstract quality of the question, informants had difficulty describing what nature was to them. From the interviews, only five quotes could be adequately used for the survey due to the ambiguity of the answers from the informants. The majority of the participants agree that nature is a place not manipulated by man (80.65%), undisturbed (70.97%), or anywhere there are not houses, cities, and shopping malls (83.87%). Many also link nature with God the creator and the holy trinity (77.42%) or with God's given beauty (93.55%).

Recommendations

Everyone interviewed during the qualitative interviews and the surveys had much praise for BBLST and the BBLST staff. The only critical comments were concerning ways to improve an already well-regarded park. The following are ten recommendations to improve BBLSP that address the critiques and suggestions found in this research:

- 1. The majority of the visitors of BBLST support conservation efforts, so highlighting these strategies may help inform the public on the specific tactics used at BBLST. Most of the participants believe that humans need to change their behaviors to preserve nature for future generations. Examples of how individuals can change their behavior to help conservation efforts may be useful to BBLST and the general public.
- 2. Most of the visitors also believe that recycling is an act of conservation, so an increased number of recycling receptacles and/or signage that trash from the park is recycled should be placed throughout BBLST.
- 3. Using solar power may appeal to BBLST visitors due to their association with conservation efforts and alternative energy usage. Solar power use at the park would also serve as an educational tool with signage and informational flyers.
- 4. Fishing is a major attraction of BBLST and available information concerning fish stocking practices of the lake would help clarify fish population levels and species varieties to visitors.
- 5. A majority of the visitors would like to have benches by the lake upon which to sit.
- 6. A better map of the grounds and, more specifically, for the hike trails would satisfy an expressed need of many visitors.
- 7. Campers and recreational vehicle visitors reported to be extremely happy with the facilities at BBLST. Many of the recreational vehicle visitors would like to have full hook-ups available and more supplies in the camping store.
- 8. Catering to children should continue to be of importance since a majority of the visitors come to BBLST due to the activities available to children.

- 9. Many people come to BBLST to see the bison, a majority of the visitors would like more information concerning the bison.
- 10. Of little mention was the museum and nature center, so better promotion of the two sites might provide more interest.

Appendix 1: Institutional Review Board Approval and Informed Consent Statement

The 10-

Northern Kentucky University Institutional Review Board (IRB)

For IRB Office Use Only
Assignment Number: 09-224
Date Received: 0.76/09

for the Protection	on of Human Subjects	•		-	·
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Campus Address	(Bldg/Room):LA 228	Daytime Phone:	572-5702 Email; wa	shburnm1@nku.edu	N 8
Rank: Facu	alty or Staff				
⊠ Stud	lent (if Student, please li	st your Faculty Ad	visor as Project Direc	stor and complete the sec	tion below.)
Project Director	(if different) or Faculty	Advisor: Douglas	Hume Department: Se	ociology, Anthropology	and Philosophy
Campus Address	LA 228 Daytime Pl	one: <u>572-5702</u> Br	nail: <u>humed1@nku.ed</u>	l <u>u</u>	
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Department of Sociology, Anthropology,
and Philosophy
Landrum Academic Center 217C
Nunn Drive
Highland Heights, Kentucky 41099
tel 859.572.5259 | fax 859.572.6086
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INFORMED CONSENT STATEMENT

Principal Investigator (PI): Michael Washburn, Northern Kentucky University

Faculty Advisor: Dr. Douglas Hume, Northern Kentucky University

Title of Study: Ethnography of Ecotourism at Big Bone Lick State Park

Introduction

You are invited to participate in a study of ecotourism, nature and conservation as a visitor of Big Bone Lick State Park. The interview is estimated to last approximately fifteen minutes.

Your participation in this study is voluntary. You may choose to stop participating (withdraw) at any time without penalty. You will not be paid for being in this study.

Confidentiality

Data collected in this study are anonymous. Your interview data will be made available to Big Bone Lick State Park and published on the Internet, journals and conference proceedings.

Contact

If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to contact the Faculty Adivsor, Douglas Hume, Ph.D., Assistant Professor of Anthropology, Northern Kentucky University, at humed1@nku.edu or 859-572-5702.

Questions about your rights as a participant of this research may be directed to Philip J. Moberg, Ph.D., IRB Chair, Northern Kentucky University, at either mobergp1@nku.edu or 859-572-1913 The IRB is a group of people that reviews research studies and protects the rights of people involved with research.

Appendix 2: Memorandum of Understanding

Applied Environmental Anthropology Research Group Scripps Howard Center for Civic Engagements Northern Kentucky University Highland Heights, KY 41099

MEMORANDUM of UNDERSTANDING BETWEEN THE APPLIED ENVIRONMENTAL ANTHROPOLOGY RESEARCH GROUP AND BIG BONE LICK STATE PARK

SUBJECT: The MEMORANDOM OF UNDERSTANDING is hereby entered into by and between the Applied Environmental Anthropology Research Group, hereinafter referred to as AEARG, and Big Bone Lick State Park, hereinafter referred to as BBLSP.

- PURPOSE. The purpose of this MOU is to continue to develop and expand a framework of
 cooperation between AEARG and BBLSP to develop mutually beneficial programs and
 projects, which provide needed services and knowledge to ecotourism in Northern Kentucky.
- 2. PROBLEM. Ecotourism is a complex human behavior situated within knowledge about the relationship of humans and their environment. Ecotourists at BBLSP are a diverse population that varies both in their behavior and knowledge. The AEARG plans to examine ecotourism at BBLSP by applying anthropological methods (ethnography), with the goal of providing BBLSP with an analysis of the variation of ecotourism that exists at BBLSP.
- 3. UNDERSTANDINGS, AGREEMENTS, SUPPORT AND RESOURCE NEEDS. The AEARG, being comprised of students enrolled in courses at Northern Kentucky University, will interview ecotourists, state park employees, volunteers, and other individuals as needed to fulfill the purpose of this MOU. The AEARG will retain intellectual property rights for the data collected and reserves the right to publish the results on the Internet, at professional conferences and in scholarly journals.
 - The BBLSP will act as a liaison to the visitors of BBLSP by providing students that have met the requirements for a volunteer with volunteer uniforms as deemed appropriate by BBLSP. The BBLSP is not responsible for any AEARG fees associated with any services provided by AEARG.
- COMMENCEMENT/EXPIRATION. This instrument is executed as of the date of last signature and is effective through June 30, 2010, but will renew automatically on July 1 of subsequent years unless either party requests termination.
- TERMINATION. Any of the parties, in writing, may terminate the instrument in whole, or in part, at any time before the date of expiration
- MODIFICATION. Modifications within the scope of the instrument shall be made by
 mutual consent of the parties, by the issuance of a written modification, signed and dated by
 all parties, prior to any changes being performed.

- PARTICIPATION IN SIMILAR ACTIVITIES. This instrument in no way restricts the AEARG or BBLSP from participating in similar activities with other public or private agencies, organizations, and individuals.
- 8. NON-FUND OBLIGATING DOCUMENT. This instrument is neither a fiscal nor a funds obligation document. Any endeavor or transfer of anything of value involving reimbursement or contribution of funds between the parties to this instrument will be handled in accordance with applicable laws, regulations, and procedures. Such endeavors will be outlined in separate agreements that shall be made in writing by representatives of the parties and shall be independently authorized by appropriate statutory authority. This instrument does not provide such authority. Specifically, this instrument does not establish authority for noncompetitive award to the cooperator of any contract or other agreement. Any contract or agreement for training or other services must fully comply with all applicable requirements for competition.
- 9. PRINCIPAL CONTACTS. The principal contacts for this instrument are:

AEARG

BBLSP

Douglas Hume, Ph.D., Director Applied Environmental Anthropology

Erin Wright, Volunteer Coordinator 500 Mero Street-10th floor CPT Frankfort, KY 40601

Research Group Northern Kentucky University 228 Landrum, Nunn Drive Highland Heights, KY 41099

Phone: 859.572.5702 Fax: 859.572.6086

Phone: Fax:

E-Mail: humed1@nku.edu

E-Mail:

IN WITNESS WHEREOF	the parties hereto have executed this agreement as of the last written
date below.	

AEARG	BBLSP	
Douglas Hume, Ph.D., Director	Erin Wright, Volunteer Coordinator	
12	Erii V. Wheth	
5/29/09	5-27-09	
(Date)	(Date)	

Appendix 3: Questionnaire Results

A. Demographics

1. Age:

Average Minimum Maximum

37.65 18 78

2. Sex:

Female Male

15(48.39%) 16 (51.61%)

3. State of residency:

Kentucky Ohio Michigan Indiana Florida 19 (61.29%) 7 (22.58%) 3 (9.69%) 1 (3.23%) 1 (3.23%)

4. How many times have visited in the last year?

Average Least Most 1.57 0 5

B. I come to Big Bone Lick:

1. because I can bring my dogs.

Agree Disagree Not Answered 17 (54.84%) 4 (12.90%) 10 (32.26%)

2. because I found it on the internet.

Agree Disagree Not Answered 11 (35.48%) 9 (29.03%) 11(35.48%)

3. because it is a good place to bring children.

Agree Disagree Not Answered 27 (87.1%) 1 (3.23%) 3 (9.68%)

4. because it's a nice place to visit when the weather is nice.

Agree Disagree Not Answered 30 (96.77%) 0 (0%) 1 (3.23%)

5. because it's close.

Agree Disagree Not Answered 23 (74.19%) 6 (19.36%) 2 (6.45%)

6. because it's free.

Agree Disagree Not Answered 20 (64.52%) 5 (16.13%) 6 (22.58%)

7. because we saw the sign on the highway.

Agree Disagree Not Answered 10 (32.26%) 13 (41.94%) 8 (25.81%)

8. to camp (not visiting the Creationism Museum).

Agree Disagree Not Answered 14 (45.16%) 6 (19.36%) 11(35.48%)

9. to camp (visiting the Creationism Museum).

Agree Disagree Not Answered 17 (54.84%) 5 (16.13%) 9 (29.03%)

10. to get away.

Agree Disagree Not Answered 29 (93.55%) 0 (0%) 2 (6.45%)

11. to go fishing.

Agree Disagree Not Answered 20 (64.52%) 5 (16.13%) 6 (19.36%)

12. to hike trails.

Agree Disagree Not Answered 26 (83.87%) 1 (3.23%) 4 (12.90%)

13. to picnic.

Agree Disagree Not Answered 26 (83.87%) 1 (3.23%) 4 (12.90%)

14. to relax.

Agree Disagree Not Answered 31 (100%) 0 (0%) 0 (0%)

15. to see the bison.

Agree Disagree Not Answered 24 (77.42%) 2 (6.45%) 5 (16.13%)

C. Conservation is:

1. bad without thinking of people's needs.

Agree Disagree Not Answered 14 (45.16%) 10 (32.26%) 7 (22.58%)

2. changing our behavior to save the earth.

Agree Disagree Not Answered 25 (80.65%) 1 (3.23%) 5 (16.13%)

3. conserving energy by using alternative energy sources.

Agree Disagree Not Answered 27 (87.1%) 0 (0%) 4 (12.90%)

4. conserving resources to stop global warming.

Agree Disagree Not Answered 25 (80.65%) 3 (9.68%) 3 (9.68%)

5. conserving trees and country for the next generations.

Agree Disagree Not Answered 28 (90.32) 0 (0%) 3 (9.68%)

6. keeping nature as it is and respecting it.

Agree Disagree Not Answered 30 (96.77%) 0 (0%) 1 (3.23%)

7. leaving a lot of nature alone.

Agree Disagree Not Answered 29 (93.55%) 1 (3.23%) 1 (3.23%)

8. preserving lakes and rivers.

Agree Disagree Not Answered 28 (90.32%) 1(3.23%) 2 (6.45%)

9. preserving things for the future to enjoy in its natural state.

Agree Disagree Not Answered 28 (90.32%) 0 (0%) 0 (0%)

10. preserving what God put on earth.

Agree Disagree Not Answered 31 (100%) 0 (0%) 0 (0%)

11. recycling.

Agree Disagree Not Answered 26 (83.87%) 3 (9.68%) 2 (6.45%)

12. saving what little space we have left.

Agree Disagree Not Answered 28 (90.32%) 1 (3.23%) 2 (6.45%)

13. stopping urban sprawl.

Agree Disagree Not Answered 24 (77.42%) 4 (12.90%) 3 (9.68%)

14. taking care of the earth for future generations.

Agree Disagree Not Answered 30 (96.77%) 0 (0%) 1 (3.23%)

15. trying to leave a place better than you found it.

Agree Disagree Not Answered 29 (93.55%) 0 (0%) 2 (6.45%)

D. I like Big Bone Lick because:

1. it is clean.

Agree Disagree Not Answered 31 (100%) 0 (0%) 0 (0%)

2. it is dog friendly.

Agree Disagree Not Answered 24 (77.42%) 2 (6.45%) 5 (16.13%)

3. it is not crowded.

Agree Disagree Not Answered 30 (96.77%) 1 (3.23%) 0 (0%)

4. it is organized.

Agree Disagree Not Answered 29 (93.55%) 2 (6.45%) 0 (0%)

5. it is _]	peaceful. Agree 31 (100%)	Disagree o (o%)	Not Answered o (o%)
6. it is]	preserving histor Agree 31 (100%)	ry. Disagree o (o%)	Not Answered o (o%)
7. of th	e activities for ki Agree 27 (87.1%)	ds. Disagree 2 (6.45%)	Not Answered 2 (6.45%)
8. of th	e bison. Agree 28 (90.32%)	Disagree 1 (3.23%)	Not Answered 2 (6.45%)
9. of th	e fishing areas. Agree 22 (70.97%)	Disagree 3 (9.68%)	Not Answered 6 (19.36%)
10. of th	e hiking trails. Agree 29 (93.55%)	Disagree o (o%)	Not Answered 2 (6.45%)
11. of th	e lake. Agree 26 (83.87%)	Disagree 2 (6.45%)	Not Answered 3 (9.68%)
12. of th	e scenery. Agree 31 (100%)	Disagree o (o%)	Not Answered o (o%)
13. of th	e staff. Agree 27 (87.1%)	Disagree 2 (6.45%)	Not Answered 2 (6.45%)
14. of th	e trees. Agree 31 (100%)	Disagree o (o%)	Not Answered o (o%)
15. of th	e various activiti Agree 25 (80.65%)	es. Disagree 2 (6.45%)	Not Answered 4 (12.90%)
Nature i	s:		

E. Nature is:

1.	a place not manipulated by man.				
	Agree 25 (80.65%)	Disagree 4 (12.90%)	Not Answered 2 (6.45%)		
2.	a place that is undisturbed.				
	Agree	Disagree	Not Answered		
	22 (70.07%)	7 (22 58%)	2 (6.45%)		

3. anywhere there are not houses, cities, and shopping malls.

Agree Disagree Not Answered 26 (83.87%) 3 (9.68%) 2 (6.45%)

4. god, the creator; the holy trinity.

Agree Disagree Not Answered 24 (77.42%) 3 (9.68%) 4 (12.90%)

5. god's given beauty.

Agree Disagree Not Answered 29 (93.55%) 0 (0%) 0 (0%)

F. I would like Big Bone Lick to have:

1. a better map of the grounds.

Agree Disagree Not Answered 17 (54.84%) 9 (29.03%) 3 (9.68%)

2. a petting zoo.

Agree Disagree Not Answered 21 (67.74%) 7 (22.58%) 3 (9.68%)

3. a porta-potty by the lake.

Agree Disagree Not Answered 18 (58.07%) 8 (25.81%) 5 (16.13%)

4. a trail around the lake.

Agree Disagree Not Answered 23 (74.19%) 2 (6. 45%) 6 (19.36%)

5. benches by the lake.

Agree Disagree Not Answered 28 (90.32) 1 (3.23%) 2 (6.45%)

6. better access to the lake.

Agree Disagree Not Answered 22 (70.97%) 4 (12.90%) 5 (16.13%)

7. better marked trails.

Agree Disagree Not Answered 18 (58.07%) 9 (29.03%) 4 (12.90%)

8. boat access.

Agree Disagree Not Answered 14 (45.16%) 9 (29.03%) 6 (19.36%)

9. camping places near the water.

Agree Disagree Not Answered 22 (70.97%) 5 (16.13%) 4 (12.90%)

10. canoe access.

Agree Disagree Not Answered 19 (61.29%) 4 (12.90%) 8 (25.81%)

11. full hookups at the campground. Agree Disagree Not Answered 24 (77.42%) 3 (9.68%) 4 (12.90%) 12. more information on the bison. Not Answered Agree Disagree 23 (74.19%) 5 (16.13%) 0 (0.%) 13. more kinds of fish. Disagree Agree Not Answered 21(67.74%) 3 (9.68%) 7 (22.58%) 14. more supplies in the camping store. Not Answered Agree Disagree 22 (70.97%) 3 (9.68%) 6 (19.36%)

Disagree

5 (16.13%)

Not Answered

o (o%)

15. the lake stocked better.

Agree 18 (58.07%)