

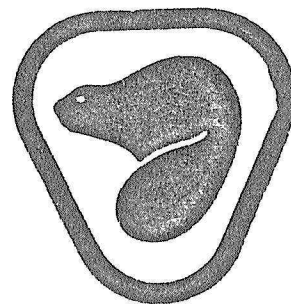
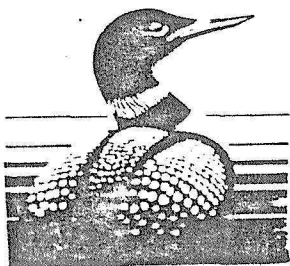
INTERPRETING CANADA'S ENVIRONMENT

A REVIEW OF PARKS CANADA AND CANADIAN WILDLIFE SERVICE  
INTERPRETATION PROGRAMS

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Parks Canada

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The purpose of interpretation is to provide a service to the public which aims at revealing meanings and relationships of Canada's cultural and natural heritages through a first hand experience with an object, artifact, landscape or site (after the Association of Canadian Interpreters). Parks and Wildlife define their "target" audience as being primarily the travelling public or urban persons who do not have many opportunities to experience, understand and enjoy their natural or historical heritage.

This report deals with the interpretation programs of Parks Canada and the Canadian Wildlife Service. Parks Canada really has two separate interpretation programs, a natural heritage program (of national significance) in National Parks and a nationally significant historic heritage program in National Historic Parks and Sites. The Wildlife Service interpretation program has two components, 1) the interpretation of wildlife and wildlife habitat in four of seven wildlife regions in Canada, and 2) interpreting a wildlife event or "spectacle". An example of this is the Greater Snow Goose migration of some 200,000 birds on the Cap Tourmente National Wildlife Area near Quebec City. The interpretation programs of both Wildlife and Parks are relatively recent, being in existence only 15 and 18 years, respectively.

The Task Force on Interpretation thought it might be useful to determine management's perception of the effectiveness of the interpretation programs via a questionnaire. This was done at the level of Regional Directors of both Parks and Wildlife. The response by Regional Directors of Parks and Wildlife was that the interpretation programs in their regions were "moderately" or "very effective". Most Parks Regional Directors opted for continuing the programs in their present forms or with minor modifications to improve effectiveness. Interestingly, several Wildlife Regional Directors suggested continuing the program but with reduced resources. That response might be considered surprising, but I believe it is a reflection of the CPG evaluation and various in-house priority exercises in which interpretation was considered to be an expensive program. A detailed analysis of the interpretation questionnaire is included in the report.

### COST-EFFECTIVENESS

I was unable to compare cost-effectiveness of Wildlife and Parks interpretation programs. Each agency compiles different visitor-use statistics which cannot be compared readily, and expenditure figures for Parks Canada were not obtained in time for use in this report. Parks Canada, Quebec Region, initiated a method of assessing "production" by measuring length of contact with visitors at visitor services and interpretation centres. This method might be usefully adapted to the cost per visitor contact-hour method (see report page 21 ).

As a crude index of cost-effectiveness, the Canadian Wildlife Service had 223,879 visitors at its five centres in 1981-82, at a cost of \$3.77 per visitor. That represented a 24.6% increase in visitors over the previous year and a 6.2% decrease in cost per visitor (not considering a 10% inflation factor). This compares favourably with \$3.70 per visitor for the Canadian Forestry Service, Petawawa, Dyer (1980).

The best measure of program effectiveness is visitor response, and this is best obtained by having the visitor rate the program in terms of his or her expectations of it. A visitor survey was conducted in all wildlife centres during the summer of 1982 and it will be reported on by the Canadian Wildlife Service in May of 1983. A preliminary review of the survey cards indicates a favourable visitor response and remarks were positive and enthusiastic.

### CONCLUSIONS

- 1) On the basis of the interpretation questionnaire, visitor surveys and personal observations, I concluded that the Canadian Wildlife Service interpretation program, and National Parks and National Historic Parks and Sites interpretation programs are satisfactory in meeting the stated objectives of the programs, and are favourably perceived by the public. The Wildlife Service has resolved one of the major problems identified by the CPG evaluation, and that is the provision of seasonal employees to staff wildlife interpretation centres by obtaining from Treasury Board 16 person-years for that purpose. The other problem noted by CPG was that the CWS interpretation facilities were under-utilized.



Wildlife is resolving that problem through a marketing program. In 1981-82 the number of visitors increased by approximately 44,000 over the previous year. Continued and increased marketing efforts will be required in all regions for two more seasons before the overall effectiveness of the marketing program can be evaluated.

- 2) The National Parks natural heritage interpretation program could be used to greater effect to attract visitors to the parks during the shoulder seasons and low season, and also to spread visitor load between over-utilized and under-utilized parks.
- 3) National and Historic Parks and Sites interpretation program is an essential component of its mandate to preserve and present Canada's historic heritage to Canadians. Unsolicited correspondence from visitors to that program has been extensive and expresses strong support and appreciation of it.
- 4) Although interpretation and information employ similar techniques, especially in the marketing and extension aspects, the background, training and mindset of the two professions is so different that I can see no real benefits or economies from integration of interpretation and information, although there should be greater coordination between the two programs. (see recommendation A1).
- 5) The review of Parks Canada and Wildlife's interpretation programs with a view to integration does not indicate that there would be any saving in person-years or funds. No benefit to either program would likely result, although there is room for more cooperation and stronger coordination of the programs. (see recommendation A7).
- 6) Integration or coordination of the National Parks and Historic Parks and Sites interpretation programs within Parks Canada should be considered. This would involve integration at the headquarters level since integration of the two programs already occurs in the regions.

- 7) The greatest need for Parks Canada's interpretation program is a marketing plan, it should start by establishing visitor profiles (collecting demographic data, visitor interests and expectations). The marketing plan should also include the extension program as part of its strategy (Parks Canada has recently recruited a marketing officer to initiate a marketing plan).
- 8) The Canadian Wildlife Service has a unique opportunity to make the public aware of the importance of preserving and protecting wetland and wildland habitats for wildlife, especially migratory birds, by conducting a low-cost interpretation program on selected National Wildlife Areas.
- 9) Because of fiscal restraint, the Canadian Wildlife Service should re-affirm its moratorium on constructing major interpretation centres in the three remaining wildlife regions in Canada (the boreal, Pacific and Arctic).

#### RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations relate to the conclusions above in part and to the general observations reported in the text. Detailed recommendations are included in the text for the use of the responsible program managers.

##### A) Recommendations - general

- 1) Wildlife and Parks should consult the Information Directorate with respect to departmental priority messages, such as acid rain and toxic substances, to see if those could be interpreted in wildlife or parks interpretation programs. Information Directorate should also be consulted to see if it can assist Parks Canada or the Wildlife Service with their marketing plans and messages (this might have special application during Parks' bi-centennial celebrations in 1985).

- 2) Both Parks Canada and the Wildlife Service should include extension as an integral part of their marketing plans.
- 3) Parks Canada and CWS should make special efforts to include the provincial tourist offices and the Canadian Government Office of Tourism in their marketing plans.
- 4) Parks Canada and Wildlife should initiate energy conservation plans for each interpretation or visitor centre.
- 5) Parks Canada and Wildlife should give high priority to ensuring visitor safety and comfort.
- 6) Parks Canada and the Wildlife Service should examine the possibility of using a cost per visitor contact-hour technique as a means of evaluating interpretation program components.
- 7) Parks Canada and the Wildlife Service should establish an Interpretation Steering Committee with representation from Corporate Planning Group, Canadian Forestry Service and Information Directorate. The objectives of the Steering Committee would be:
  - a) to avoid overlap of efforts in the various interpretation programs;
  - b) to make sure there is a sharing of expertise in terms of exhibit design and production;
  - c) to coordinate training programs for seasonal employees;
  - d) to coordinate evaluation techniques and establishing of operational standards; and
  - e) to ensure sharing of information on interpretation techniques, marketing and visitor surveys.

It is suggested that the committee be chaired on an alternate-year basis by the ADM Parks Canada and the ADM Environmental Conservation Service.

B) Recommendations - Parks Canada

- 1) Parks Canada should give first priority to developing and initiating a marketing plan.
- 2) Parks Canada should conduct a visitor survey to establish a visitor profile of its target audience as a prerequisite to its marketing plan.
- 3) Parks Canada's marketing plan should aim at increasing visitor-use of interpretation facilities and parks during the shoulder seasons for example, by using spring flowers or bird migration as attractions during spring and autumn seasons, or they might consider the possibility of using cross-country skiing on nature trails with special exhibits of winter natural history.
- 4) Parks Canada's marketing plan should establish realistic goals for the optimum number of visitors at park interpretation centres, trails and various on-site exhibits.
- 5) Parks Canada should adopt and initiate a standardized formal evaluation of its interpretation program components including exhibits, trails, audio-visuals, talks and roving naturalists.
- 6) Parks Canada should ensure that adequate and accurate visitor-use figures (attendance) of its interpretation centres and programs are obtained and recorded, and should also ensure that the new accounting system allows for the summation of expenditures on interpretation programs on a national as well as a regional basis.
- 7) Parks Canada should take steps to resolve the impasse concerning the classification of field interpreters.

NOTE: The above recommendations apply with equal force to both the National Parks and the National Historic Parks and Sites interpretation programs in Parks Canada.

C) Recommendations - Canadian Wildlife Service

- 1) The Canadian Wildlife Service should initiate a low cost interpretation program on selected National Wildlife Areas, stressing the message of habitat protection for wildlife.
- 2) The Canadian Wildlife Service should adapt the Loon symbol as a directional guide for wildlife interpretation centres and National Wildlife Areas in the same way that Parks Canada has used the beaver symbol.
- 3) The Canadian Wildlife Service should establish cooperating associations based on the Parks Canada model with the objective of creating program cost reductions.
- 4) The Wildlife Service should establish a school extension program based on the Parks Canada model and stressing the interpretation of habitat protection on National Wildlife Areas.
- 5) The Canadian Wildlife Service should complete and initiate marketing plans for interpretation in all five regions.

REPORT ON INTERPRETATION PROGRAMS OF  
PARKS CANADA AND THE CANADIAN WILDLIFE SERVICE

BY

A.G. LOUGHREY

INTRODUCTION

In June 1981, I was asked by the Deputy Minister to review the interpretation programs of Parks Canada and the Canadian Wildlife Service. The review was not to include the Canadian Forestry Service Interpretation Program. The terms of reference for the assignment are given in appendix I.

My review was seen as a follow up to the evaluation of the Canadian Wildlife Service Interpretation Program by the Corporate Planning Group (CPG) in 1980. The Corporate Planning Group evaluation noted that the Canadian Wildlife Service Interpretation Program was "under resourced" and that its interpretation facilities and wildlife centres tended to be under-utilized. The Canadian Wildlife Service was charged with developing a marketing plan with the objective of increasing visitor use of its interpretation facilities. It had also been suggested by CPG that the Wildlife Service could implement cost-reductions and operational efficiencies.

I believe the managerial perception of the Parks Canada Interpretation Program is that it is large, well established and resourced. It therefore seemed logical that economies of scale might be achieved through cooperation between the Wildlife Service and Parks. For example, Parks Canada Interpretation has been developing a concept of cooperating associations as a means of reducing program expenses. This approach has been well developed by Parks and was seen as a possible logical extension to the wildlife program. Although the possibility of integration of the Canadian Wildlife Service Interpretation Programs with Parks Canada was not included in the specific terms of reference of this study, it was certainly seen as a viable option by CPG (Gillespie, personal communication).

I had the opportunity to visit Prince Edward Island National Park in July of 1981. In August, a brief field trip was made to Parks and National Wildlife Areas in southwestern Ontario. Because my assignment did not start until September 1981, and since most interpretation programs closed on Labour Day, it was not possible for me to visit and observe many operational interpretation programs of either Parks or Wildlife during 1981. I therefore divided my time between background reading and interviews, and establishing a small advisory interpretation task force. I attended the annual Interpretation meetings of Parks Canada, in Ottawa January 25 to 29, 1982, and the Wildlife Service, at Midland November 17 to 19, 1981.

Additional trips were made to wildlife centres, national parks and historic parks in the summer of 1982. Unfortunately, a lack of time and other factors prevented a planned visit to the western parks. A questionnaire on the Interpretation Program, for managers at the level of regional directors for both Parks and Wildlife, was developed in December of 1981 and analyzed in the spring of 1982.

#### METHODS

My review is not intended to be a technical evaluation in the usual sense, although I did read extensively on evaluation techniques as applied to Interpretation Programs, and I have borrowed from that terminology and methodology. For example, I favour and use Screvens' (1976) definition of evaluation as "a systematic assessment of a product with respect to its goals". The concept of dividing evaluation into two major categories, the "summative" and "formative" as proposed by Shetel (1973) was useful. A summative evaluation being carried out to determine the necessity of major changes or termination of a program or product; a formative evaluation is done to look for specific changes to a product or a program component to improve its effectiveness or efficiency. Foley (1981), of the Wildlife Service, has had a useful bibliography of formative type evaluations prepared under contract. I found it useful to make a further subdivision of evaluations based on the agency undertaking the evaluation, namely: 1) evaluation by a peer group, a good example of this type of evaluation was done for the Federal-Provincial Parks Conference, the task force report on Interpretation (1975); 2) evaluation of a program by the managers of that program, I could not find any good example

of this type; 3) evaluation conducted by an outside consultant, an excellent example of this type is a formative evaluation carried out for Parks Canada under contract by Dr. W.S. Brown entitled "Evaluation Study Plan of Cave and Basin Centennial Centre " - (April 1982); or a further type (4) is a study conducted by an in-house specialist, for example, evaluation done by Corporate Planning Group of the Wildlife Service Interpretation Program. Categories (5) and (6) include the analysis of a visitor's evaluation of an interpretation program, and these are further subdivided into 5) those that are administered to the visitor and 6) those that are self-administered. A good example of the former type was carried out by Dutcher and Asmus (1970). The Wildlife Service is just now analyzing the results of a self-administered visitor survey.

I personally believe that the visitor or client survey yields the most useful results. In other words, is the visitor getting what he/she wanted and expected, or simply what the interpreters think the visitor wants? Although my preference is for the visitor survey, I did not carry one out because I was aware that the Wildlife Service was undertaking such a survey for each of its Interpretation Centres in 1982. I was also aware that Parks Canada was intending to conduct a visitor survey in the near future. Because I could not find any evaluation of the interpretation programs of either Parks or Wildlife that had been done by managers, the Steering Committee and I believed that such an approach, by questionnaire, might be a useful undertaking. It was also believed that the questionnaire would form a useful background to my own less formal and less intensive observations and interviews.

#### QUESTIONNAIRE

The material for a questionnaire dealing with the Interpretation Programs of Parks Canada and the Canadian Wildlife Service was drawn from discussions with regional interpretation staff of both agencies, who perceived that senior management did not appear to understand their interpretation programs, and further that the objectives of the programs were not clearly understood. The questionnaire attempted to deal with both of those notions. In addition, regional managers were asked to evaluate the interpretation programs in their regions, using a three-choice modified Likert scale. A summative evaluation was also required (question #5).



It was intended that the results of the questionnaire would complement the Eidsvik-Beaman study on priorities in Parks Canada. A simple two-page, "mail-back" questionnaire consisting of seven closed-end questions was developed with the help of the Socio-economic Division of Parks Canada. The draft questionnaire was reviewed by Interpretation Task Force members Sealey and Foley and D.G. Gillespie of Corporate Planning Group. The revised questionnaire (see appendix III) was sent to five regional directors of Parks Canada and five regional directors of Canadian Wildlife Service. Delays in response and non-response were followed up by telephone and by mail as required. Five regional directors of Wildlife and four of five regional directors of Parks completed and returned the questionnaire for a response rate of 90%. The responses were tallied by the Socio-economic Division of Parks Canada. The individual responses are summarized here and inferences drawn and made. Respondents' remarks that shed light or are pertinent have been paraphrased and included with the analysis.

#### CAVEAT

*The questionnaire and its questions do not adequately reflect the interpretation program of Historic Parks and Sites, and this was pointed out by several of the Parks Canada respondents. Any biases, real or perceived, are the responsibility of the author and result from a lack of experience with a questionnaire format.*

#### ANALYSIS OF THE QUESTIONNAIRE

##### Individual questions

Question 1: *Some interpretation specialists believe that the senior managers in their organization do not understand the role of interpretation and its contribution to departmental objectives. In your opinion is this true?*

This question attempts to deal with the notion alluded to in the previous section. Parks Regional Directors unanimously rejected this notion, as did the majority of Wildlife Directors. Since there was not complete agreement, on this question, it should be reviewed internally by the Wildlife Service to determine if there is a disparity, and if so, take steps to resolve it.

Question 2: *The following is a list of objectives that may be relevant to interpretation. Give your opinion in column No. I, indicate effectiveness in column No. II.*

This consists of 14 role statements, or potential objectives for interpretation programs. It is not intended to be exhaustive. Foley has compiled a list of 50 common objectives for interpretation programs. Not all of the objectives are equally relevant to National Parks, Historic Parks and Sites, and Wildlife Service. For example, Question 2(a) is intended as a Wildlife objective and 2(b) is a Parks Canada objective, while 2(c) is intended as a departmental objective. 2(h) and (k) are marginal and relate, in a minor way, to all three programs.

*2(a): To increase the public's awareness, understanding, appreciation and enjoyment of Canada's wildlife heritage and its environment.*

This was correctly identified as a relevant objective by all Wildlife Regional Directors; interestingly it was similarly identified as a relevant objective by Parks Regional Directors. Both Parks and Wildlife Directors rated the interpretation contribution to this objective as moderately to very effective.

*2(b): To encourage visitor understanding and enjoyment of the park's natural and historic values.*

Wildlife Regional Directors did not consider this to be a relevant Wildlife Service objective, while all Parks Regional Directors did. Three of the Parks Directors saw interpretation's contribution to this objective as "very effective".

*2(c): To promote a better understanding of the natural environment (its processes) and to develop an awareness of man's relationship to and dependency on the natural environment.*

This broad environmental or departmental objective was identified as relevant to the Wildlife interpretation program by all 5 Regional Directors. Parks Canada Regional Directors also saw it relevant to the Parks Canada interpretation

program. The majority of Park's and Wildlife's Directors saw their program's contribution to the objective as moderately to very effective.

*2(d): To promote better management of wildlife resources.*

Predictably, most Wildlife Directors saw this objective as relevant to the Wildlife Service interpretation program. Three rated the contribution as moderately effective, while two suggested that interpretation was not effective. This is an interesting difference of opinion which should be looked into by the Wildlife Service. The majority of Parks Canada Directors did not identify this objective as relevant to the Parks interpretation program and therefore tended to see any contribution as not effective.

*2(e): To explain park management programs (e.g. bears).*

All Parks Directors saw this as a relevant objective for the Parks interpretation program and noted its contribution as moderately effective. The majority of Wildlife Directors did not see this task as relevant to their interpretation program.

*2(f): To promote the conservation of natural and historic resources.*

All Parks Regional Directors saw this as a relevant objective for Parks interpretation and they judged it to be carried out in a moderately to very effective manner. Only three of five Wildlife Directors saw this as relevant to their programs, while two of five rated the contribution as moderately effective. The remainder rated it as either not relevant or not effective.

*2(g): To contribute to federal identity.*

Most Parks Canada Regional Directors did not see this as a task which was relevant to Parks interpretation, and they judged its contribution to the objective to be not effective, while three of the five Wildlife Regional Directors saw this as a relevant task with the interpretation program making a moderately effective contribution to it.

*2(h): To contribute to tourism.*

Parks Canada Regional Directors were evenly split between those who believe this to be a relevant role for interpretation and those who did not. The perception of effectiveness was also evenly split between not effective and moderately effective. Three of five Wildlife Regional Directors saw this as relevant and the contribution to it as being moderately effective.

*2(i): To demonstrate the federal concern for heritage protection.*

Parks Regional Directors were unanimous in selecting this as a relevant objective. Their views on effectiveness were positive, by rating the contribution as moderate to very effective. By a slight majority three out of five Wildlife Regional Directors considered the objective relevant and only two believed that the interpretation program makes a moderately effective contribution.

*2(j): To promote a conservation ethic.*

This task was judged as relevant to the Parks interpretation program by all Parks Regional Directors. The effectiveness of the contribution was positively noted with the majority rating it as moderately to very effective. The response of the Wildlife Directors was similar with all indicating the role as relevant and as making a moderate to very effective contribution.

*2(k): To contribute to the local economy.*

The majority of Parks Regional Directors did not see this objective as relevant to the Parks interpretation program, and judged the contribution as not effective. Only one Wildlife Director viewed this as a relevant task, yet two considered that the contribution of their programs to the objective was very effective.

*2(l): To provide entertainment for park visitors.*

Parks Regional Directors were evenly split concerning the relevance of this objective to interpretation programs, with one noting it was a "means to an end" rather than an objective or task. Views on effectiveness varied from not effective to very effective. The majority of Wildlife Regional Directors did not see this task as relevant to the Wildlife interpretation program.

*2(m): To help reduce vandalism in parks and wildlife areas.*

This was seen as a relevant task by all Parks Regional Directors, and opinions on effectiveness varied from not effective to very effective. The majority, three out of five Wildlife Regional Directors, did not view this task as relevant to the Wildlife interpretation program. Only one judged the contribution as moderately effective.

*2(n): To contribute to Departmental public awareness program.*

This task was unanimously seen as relevant to the Parks interpretation program. Opinions on effectiveness varied widely with the majority rating it moderately or very effective. Three Wildlife Regional Directors view this as a relevant task, while two did not. Of those who responded positively, the majority indicated a moderately to very effective contribution.

*2(o): Other (write in).*

Parks respondents added two objectives and rated their contribution as moderately effective. No. 1 "To improve Park community relations"; No. 2 "To promote a better understanding of Canadian history". Both of those contributions can be conceded as valid and useful tasks for the Parks interpretation program. Only one Wildlife respondent added to the objectives: "Répondre à ce besoin essentiellement humain de re-créer la relation avec la nature en tant que patrimoine". It was rated as relevant and very effective.

Question 3: *In summary, in terms of increasing the awareness, understanding, appreciation and enjoyment of the general public in the natural or historic heritage, would you say that the interpretation program was:*

- (a) not effective*
- (b) moderately effective*
- (c) very effective*

This question by stating a generalized objective for both Parks and Wildlife attempts to validate the individual responses to the separate objectives in question two. Both Parks and Wildlife Regional Directors responded positively and they all rated their respective interpretation program as either moderately effective or very effective.

Question 4: *In your view for which age group was the program most effective?*

- (a) 5 to 15 years*
- (b) 16 to 20 years*
- (c) 21 to 55 years*
- (d) 56+ years*

Parks Regional Directors' opinions on this question were split with two indicating the 5 to 15 year age group and one each for the 21 to 55 and the 56+ years. Three of the Wildlife Directors also selected the 5 to 15 year age group as the one for which the CWS interpretation program is most effective.

Question 5: *In your view should the interpretive program be:*

- (a) continued in its present form*
- (b) continued, but with decreased resources*
- (c) modified to increase its effectiveness ... examples*
- (d) terminated*
- (e) given increased resources*

This is the "key" or summative question of the survey. Parks Regional Directors' opinions were evenly split between (a) continuing the program in its present form and (c) modifying the program to increase its effectiveness. Suggested modifications were given by one respondent included: greater use of non-personal media, greater use of volunteer groups, and charging organized tours for

professional services as examples. Of the Wildlife Regional Directors, two opted for the status quo choice (a), and three for option (b) to continue the program, but with reduced resources. It was not clear whether they were thinking in regional or national terms for reducing of resources. On following it up by personal interview I was informed that the Regional Directors were thinking in terms of the program nationally, and not regionally. I suspect this may result from the initial CPG evaluation and subsequent CWS priority exercises, which had suggested reductions in funding of the interpretation program. All Wildlife Regional Directors see interpretation as a heavy user of resources, however, it is important to note that none of the Wildlife Regional Directors selected option (d) or the termination choice. I think it can be concluded that despite the perceived high cost Wildlife Regional Directors view the interpretation program as important and useful.

Question 6: *I have been to an interpretation centre or an interpretive event the following number of times in the calendar year 1981:*

- (a) not at all*
- (b) 1 to 5 times*
- (c) 6 to 10+ times*

All of the Parks Regional Directors indicated that they had visited an interpretation centre or an interpretation event a minimum of 1 to 5 times, and some 6 to 10 or more times; thus they should have an adequate basis for making their own objective judgements on the interpretation program in their region. Regional Directors of the Wildlife Service had a similar familiarity with the regional interpretation programs and it can be assumed that their views are based on first-hand experience.

Question 7: *This response applied to which of the following, the interpretation program of:*

- (a) Canadian Wildlife Service*
- (b) National Parks*
- (c) National Historic Parks and Sites*
- (d) Other*

This question simply identified which interpretation program the respondent is answering questions about. Although one Wildlife Regional Director indicated familiarity with National Parks and Provincial Parks interpretation programs. It is clear that his answers apply only to the Wildlife Service interpretation program in his region, as requested.

#### OBSERVATIONS AND GENERAL COMMENTS

The following observations and comments are based on my experiences visiting Parks and Wildlife interpretation centres, interpretation events and interviews with people in the field of interpretation in both Parks Canada and the Wildlife Service.

Interpretation is a relatively new art and, perhaps as a consequence, it has some built-in problems. One of these problems stems from its roots and is largely semantic. In the beginning, most interpretation programs were essentially nature studies and were run by naturalists. The natural history type of interpretation tended to have an emphasis on identification and occasional "balance of nature" themes. That approach still exists and has expanded or evolved to become "environmental studies" or "outdoor education". About mid-way in the development of interpretation programs in Parks, the concept that interpretation was really a form of communication, developed. The Shannon-Weaver communications model was used extensively to define the "sender/message/receiver" concept. That led to the, not unreasonable, assumption that interpretation in the communication mode was similar to information. It is not. Information is the communication or relaying of facts while interpretation is intended to expose the visitor to an experience. Perhaps the best definition of interpretation is provided by Edwards (1965) as follows:

"an information service ... a guiding service ... an educational service ... an entertainment service ... a propaganda service ... an inspirational service ... interpretation aims at giving people new understanding, new insights, new enthusiasm, new interests ..."

Although interpretation is not information, it does use information techniques, particularly in the extension and marketing aspects.



The term interpretation was largely an American invention and seems to be widely used and accepted in North America now. Although there are still field officers who feel more comfortable with the words natural history studies and naturalist. Parks has appended Visitor Services and visitor centres to the interpretation program and this has added somewhat to the confusion. National Historic Parks and Sites uses primarily the "living history" approach, with seasonal naturalists dressed in period costumes to demonstrate mode of dress and crafts in various historic periods. This technique is well done and is one of the most effective in dealing with the public since the visitor has an opportunity to interact with the living history scenario.

I observed that modern interpreters and interpretation centres tend to shy away from exhibits of live animals. From discussions, I gathered that this was considered "tacky" or degrading for the wildlife. It was therefore interesting to note that the turtle ponds at Algonquin Park Provincial Museum and the Wye Marsh Interpretation Centre were one of the most popular exhibits with the public. It was also true at the interpretation centre at Rondeau Provincial Park that children invariably made a beeline for the exhibits of live snakes, salamanders and frogs. I am not advocating the expansion of live animal exhibits, but I do suggest that interpretation centres could provide more bird nest boxes or nest structures and feeding stations for birds around the centres. It is not only interesting to the public, but it seems to be interesting to the staff where these have been established.

I observed that the identification of plants along interpretation trails by individual signs was not as enthusiastically carried out as it had been in previous decades, since the identification does not provide an opportunity for the visitor to learn or become aware of ecological relationships.

During my visits to interpretation centres and programs, I kept looking for a simple means of judging the effectiveness of the program. I tried timing people to see how long they spent at or in an interpretation centre, or on trails, and I also questioned a number of them. I talked to two young boys who appeared to be spending several days at the Wildlife Interpretation Centre at Creston, B.C.. I asked them why they came to the Wildlife Interpretation Centre and they said "because there isn't one in Nelson, B.C." where they lived.

In general, adults appeared to spend an average of 30 minutes at an interpretation centre, regardless of its size and the complexity of its exhibits, and the length of time spent seemed to depend more on the timetable of the individuals and their need to press on to a new location than on the interest in the Centre or its exhibits. Several couples had packed lunches and made a full day of their visit at an interpretation centre. It also appeared that visitors were attracted by pleasant and restful facilities such as picnic tables or benches and appeared to enjoy their outdoor experience in this way as much as in trudging around trails or boardwalks. In fact, Wye Marsh Wildlife Interpretation staff found that the length of stay of visitors at the Centre was increased by several minutes as a result of the addition of picnic tables near the building.

The availability of soft drinks and/or coffee machines seemed to be an attractive feature in those Centres that had them. I was very impressed by the response of visitors to the availability of binoculars and telescopes for viewing. In some cases visitors were loaned binoculars, free of charge, and they were asked to leave their driver's licence with the desk attendant when they picked up the binoculars. It seemed to work very well and was appreciated by the visitors. I found that the provision of viewing scopes on towers or platforms was a very attractive feature, and where these were close to the Interpretation Centre staff there did not appear to be any vandalism.

I was surprised by the number of visitors that carried expensive and sophisticated camera equipment. I think that most centres and programs could provide benefits to the visitors by establishing photographic blinds enabling them to take pictures of shy wildlife species.

One general conclusion I came to was that successful interpretation tends to be a "hands-on" experience for the visitor. It may be as simple as looking at drops of pond water under a microscope or as complex as a paddle through a marsh. The benefit to the visitor was definitely increased in proportion to the availability of an enthusiastic interpreter. I cannot stress this point strongly enough, the seasonal staff are often the only contact that the general public may have with departmental staff, either at a Wildlife Service Centre or in a National Park. If the staff are bored and unenthusiastic, it seems to be a general "turn-off" for the visitor. The best and most effective

interpretation that I witnessed was being done by enthusiastic seasonal naturalists with an interested family group. There is no easy way to ensure that staff will be enthusiastic when they are hired, but it should be kept in mind during the hiring process (see Edwards 1979).

The problem of "August burn-out" is well known amongst interpretive staff, I only witnessed it in one location. I think that supervisors must be aware of it and be prepared to shift staff from one duty to another so they do not become bored by repetitious jobs or assignments.

One means of ensuring staff enthusiasm is to give them their own project; it may be as simple as making a plant collection for the centre or it could involve a research project on bird nesting, an insect collection, a wildlife population census, or any number of other minor studies. The seasonals should be allowed one half-day per week to spend on their research project. Even though the research project has no immediate use or benefit to the interpretation program I noted that the interpreters were much more enthusiastic when talking to visitors about their research projects than any other subject, and in many cases they were able to enlist help from the general public either in making collections or a census. If there is any one simple index of the effectiveness of an interpretation program in my view it would be based on the "enthusiasm quotient" of the seasonal interpreters.

#### EVALUATION TECHNIQUES

A further problem of interpretation programs in general is that as a relatively new field, methods and techniques for evaluation have not been thoroughly developed or rigourously practised. One of the more promising cost-effective techniques has been developed recently and employed in some American programs is the cost per visitor contact hour. This technique is described by Knudson and Morfoot (1979) and it was alluded to by Foley (1981) in his paper on Evaluation and Interpretation. The technique is useful for comparing various interpretation program components or events, for example, guided walks, talks, and junior naturalists programs. It involves a simple ratio of input (costs) to output (visitor contact hours). The costs include the salary of the interpreter including his preparation time, travel time and the event time. Other direct

operational costs can be added, but support costs and administrative costs and capital costs should probably be excluded for all events. The visitor contact hours are calculated by multiplying the number of visitors attending the event times the length of the event. This technique is not particularly useful for such events as self-guiding trails or exhibit halls which are not labour intensive. However, it might be possible to analyze these by calculating preparation costs and pro-rating capital costs over a five year period. This technique is probably more useful for comparing components within a program than for comparing one program with another, since costs are often treated differently by the various programs. The cost per visitor contact hour is probably a more useful approach than using the simple cost per visitor contact or measuring the cost per visitor, since in some programs, as previously noted, a visitor may be contacted and counted several times during the course of his/her visit to an interpretation centre, trail or audio-visual program.

I understand that the Quebec Region of Parks Canada is producing a study of length of visitor contact in minutes at historic sites and National Parks in the region. The Wildlife Service is reviewing the technique for possible application to its program.

Expenditure data for Parks Canada interpretation programs in 1981-82 are given in appendix IV.

#### THE CLIENT

It is important for the interpretation managers to know who their clients are. Different age groups have different activity levels and people from various centres have different types of interests. For example, children are very keen on "hands-on" type exhibits where they can do something active. Young adults are more interested in activities that include hiking, climbing and canoeing. Mature adults tend to be less active and more interested in photography, their children and asking questions which display their knowledge of the subject, or add to it. Seniors, as might be expected, tend to enjoy an interpretive experience that is more relaxing and contemplative. These are generalizations, but probably hold true for 70% of the visitors to interpretive centres.

It is useful for interpreters to develop empathy with the visitors arriving by auto on a hot day, after a long drive. They usually want to refresh themselves, relax and may require washroom facilities and refreshments such as coffee or soft drinks. They also may require picnic facilities and comfortable places to rest. Visitors do not want to be inconvenienced by biting insects, stinging nettles, burrs, or poison ivy. I was impressed that the staff at the Interpretation Centre at the Canadian Forestry Experimental Centre at Petawawa had insect repellent which they sprayed visitors with if they were taking one of the woodland trails.

I noted that several interpretation centres in southern Ontario had growths of poison ivy near or along some of the nature trails. It is important to correct that. Naturalists appear to develop a psychological immunity to poison ivy and are adverse to spraying or killing it. This may be commendable, but not as far as the visitor is concerned. I strongly urge all agencies to rid their visitor-use areas of poison ivy, by spraying or other means.

#### SPREADING THE LOAD

Certain parks in the Parks Canada system may receive too many visitors during the peak summer season, the interpretation and extension programs should assess the problem and through a marketing strategy either increase the visitor use of park facilities during the shoulder seasons of spring and fall and perhaps even including the winter season by featuring special events, for example natural history during the winter which could be successfully handled from a cross-country ski trail and perhaps using portable trailers which could have special exhibits featuring ecological aspects of winter-time adaptations by various animals. Another strategy could involve spreading visitors throughout the park from the heavily utilized to the less utilized areas during peak periods by stressing back country, nature trails and making use of relocatable exhibits in trailers for more remote locations.

#### UNIFORMS

A word about uniforms. If uniforms are issued to seasonal staff, then the word "uniform" should be applied. That means that all seasonal staff are required to wear the uniform when on duty and should not mix clothing items of their own selection at their discretion.

### PHOTOGRAPHY

I have already mentioned the use of photographic equipment by visitors. Perhaps the various centres might consider a contest with prizes for the best pictures in various categories; they might be used in the interpretive displays. I believe most people would react positively to something inexpensive like a crest or scroll award. The Canadian Forestry Service's use of a small printed diploma, given to children who had used a swede saw to cut through a log, was original and effective.

### HANDICAPPED

Few of the centres that I visited seemed to have made special provisions other than washrooms for the handicapped. All that is usually required is a reserved area for parking for handicapped, or vehicles transporting the handicapped, and an access to an interpretation centre which is convenient for wheelchairs. This may involve removing curbs or installing ramps. It may also mean fairly expensive interior modifications. It is possible to make interior exhibits that are available to the wheelchair handicapped when they are initially designed and when the traffic pattern is established. Outdoor exhibits, and perhaps short trails, could be made accessible to the handicapped. Sharp (1976) and Beechel (1975) provide most useful guidelines in providing interpretive facilities to the handicapped.

### APPROACHES TO AN INTERPRETATION CENTRE

I was impressed by the effectiveness of the approach to the Interpretation Centre at Creston Valley, British Columbia. It has a fairly lengthy raised walkway from the parking lot through the marsh and ponds. It took the visitor about 10 to 15 minutes, so that the visitor's curiosity had not only been stimulated en route to the interpretation centre, but the visitor usually was relaxed and refreshed by having a chance to stretch en route from his automobile to the centre. I realize that in most cases it is not possible to have a parking lot located too remotely from the interpretation centre, however, in planning new centres I believe this concept should be kept in mind. Comfortable seating inside the wildlife centre seems to enhance its use by visitors. That was particularly true of those areas that had active bird feeders or wildlife that could be viewed from inside the building.

#### VISITOR COMMENTS

As a final suggestion, I think it would be useful if interpretation centres used suggestion boxes and solicited suggestions from their visitors. The visitor handbook or register, which invites comments, is not, in my view, useful because very few people are prepared to make negative comments opposite their name. Something as simple as a wood duck nest-box to receive suggestions with a notebook and pencil available should be tried.

#### ADVERTISING

Most Parks and wildlife interpretation centres could advertise the programs of each other in a mutually satisfactory way, since by-and-large people who go to one interpretive centre are the kind of people that are prepared to visit another location.

I think that both Parks Canada and the Wildlife Service should look into the possibility of marketing of such things as pins, decals, posters, badges, T-shirts, and place mats which not only advertise the programs but could produce funds for the operation of the program.

#### BILINGUALISM

Both Parks Canada and CWS should ensure, by careful monitoring, that all trails, exhibits and centres have appropriate bilingual signage, literature and staff as required.

#### COMPARISON OF THE PARKS CANADA AND CANADIAN WILDLIFE SERVICE INTERPRETATION PROGRAMS

I found it difficult to compare the Wildlife and Parks Interpretation Programs, but it is probably useful to at least look at some of the similarities and differences of the two. Both programs use interpretation centres or exhibit halls and employ seasonal interpreters to guide the public. They both make use of self-guiding trails, audio-visual programs, roving naturalists, campfire talks, board walks and observation towers. This is not surprising since similar techniques and structures have been employed in interpretation programs throughout North America, for example by the U.S. National Parks and State Parks as well as by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the Corps of Engineers and municipal



agencies. There has been a useful and continuing exchange of both seasonal and permanent personnel between Parks Canada and the Wildlife Service. As well, there has been an interchange of ideas through jointly sponsored workshops and seminars, although there is room to do more.

The most obvious difference between the two programs is undoubtedly the size, as reflected by the Parks Canada staff complement of 390 and the Wildlife Service of 20 person-years. Parks Canada's Interpretation Program budget is not available at headquarters and is submerged in regional and individual Park estimates, budget comparisons are difficult because capital facilities may be provided out of a general Parks budget rather than the interpretation program. It is to be hoped that the new budget system being initiated by Parks Canada will be on a program basis which will make comparisons and evaluations much easier. One of the other major differences has been that Parks Canada has a number of person-years assigned which enables them to recruit seasonal naturalists early in the calendar year. This allows them to hire the best people available. While the Wildlife Service has had to rely on hiring a contract firm to provide the naturalists, the situation has recently been corrected and will not occur in 1983.

#### TRAINING

In Parks Canada, the training and familiarization courses for seasonal interpreters are carried out in individual regions and are quite comprehensive. This is important because, as previously noted, often the only contact a visitor may have with a departmental staff member is with a seasonal employee. However, in some regions there is a feeling that the training program, often as long as three weeks, is too long for two-month employees. If the Wildlife Service initiates its own training program, I would suggest that it reviews very carefully the Parks interpretive training program. I am sure they could profit by an exchange of information and possibly take part in Parks Canada's training program.

#### HISTORIC PARKS

At first glance, the interpretive program of Historic Parks and Sites appears to be quite different in many ways to the interpretive program of either National Parks or the Wildlife Service. By its nature, it is much more concerned



with the historical side and museology than interpretation in the sense that is usually employed by natural scientists, since the protection, restoring and cataloguing of artifacts is a very important and essential part of the work in historic parks. However, the use of the "living history" technique for Historic Parks and Sites appears to be very successful. I also heard very favourable comments concerning audio-visual presentations at several historic parks. My one concern is that the opportunity for natural history interpretation seems not to be exercised at the historic parks that I did visit. It is possibly equally true that some of the historic aspects of National Parks or Wildlife Centres are not being presented or explained.

OBSERVATIONS AND COMMENTS ON THE CWS INTERPRETATION PROGRAM

The CPG evaluation of the CWS Interpretation Program noted that its interpretation facilities were under-utilized. CWS proposed to remedy that situation by initiating a marketing strategy and marketing plan to increase the number of visitors to its Centres. The number of visitors to Wildlife Interpretation Centres for 1980 and 1981 is shown in Table 1 and provides a baseline against which the marketing plan called for an increase of 25% in visitors and 100% increase in the use of Wildlife Interpretation Centres by tour buses.

TABLE 1  
NUMBER OF VISITORS TO WILDLIFE INTERPRETATION  
CENTRES IN 1980 AND 1981

<u>CENTRES</u>	<u>1980</u>	<u>1981</u>
Percé	37,800	67,603
Cap Tourmente	55,600	71,991
Wye Marsh	40,600	81,499
Prairie	16,400	19,245
Creston	23,300	26,958
TOTALS	<u>173,700</u>	<u>231,286</u>

The marketing strategy and an overview for a marketing plan were produced in 1980 and 1981. The marketing strategy was prepared by Mr. Foley and the report on the marketing plan was prepared under contract by Mr. E. Salter. The marketing plan called for individual regions to prepare their own regional marketing plan. That was carried out for some but not all CWS regions by 1982. Although I believe marketing strategies such as road-side signs and displays were erected in all regions by the summer of 1982.

In addition to the marketing strategy, the Canadian Wildlife Service also initiated in 1982 a self-administered survey of visitors to the Wildlife Centres (see appendix II). The answers to questions 4 to 17 of that survey provide demographic information which will be very useful to the overall marketing plan. It is important for the Wildlife Service to identify its potential clients and whether or not they are being contacted by the marketing plan, and if they are responding. It is equally important to determine who is not coming to wildlife interpretation centres and why. Care should be exercised that the quest for increased quantity is not achieved at the cost of the quality of the interpretation program.

In this current period of restraint I think it is time for the Wildlife Service to acknowledge that it will not be able to build major new Wildlife Interpretation Centres in the remaining wildlife regions across the country, which are not represented in its program. This would include the Pacific, boreal and Arctic regions. The Service does not have capital funds in its budget which would permit this, and is unlikely to receive them. Also the continuing operational costs of the existing centres is a sufficient drain on their limited resources. The Wildlife Service should accept a moratorium on the building of additional major wildlife centres. The problem of staffing appears to have been overcome by a submission to Treasury Board in the Fall of 1982. It received a favourable response and the Wildlife Service was given an additional 16 person-years to allow them to regularize the contract situation of hiring seasonal employees to staff wildlife centres.

UNDERWATER WINDOW

Based on the tenet that no exhibit is better than a poor one, the underwater window at Wye Marsh should be closed until it can be repaired. References to it should be removed from all advertising and promotional literature.

I think most interpreters would agree that a useful and satisfying interpretive experience can be provided to the general public without using an expensive interpretation centre. The Canadian Wildlife Service owns approximately 40 National Wildlife Areas across Canada. Although it is true that many of these National Wildlife Areas involve wetlands or marshes and there is a certain similarity in their habitat to the habitat available at Wye Marsh and Creston Valley, British Columbia. If the Wildlife Service is to explain the need to protect and preserve wildlife habitat especially wetlands to the general public and to obtain support for such efforts, then they should make use of the National Wildlife Areas through an interpretation program carrying that message to the public. I know that some National Wildlife Areas are already used extensively by the public such as Cap Tourmente National Wildlife Area, and useful pamphlets and information publications have been made available to the public for a number of others such as Prince Edward Point National Wildlife Area. I am also aware that there are conflicting views concerning the desirability of an interpretation program or public awareness program involving National Wildlife Areas within the Wildlife Service. I think that difference of opinion must be resolved.

If the Wildlife Service believes that the protection of important wildlife habitat is essential to the continued welfare of wildlife, then it must explain the necessity to the public and seek its support. I am aware that by opening National Wildlife Areas to the public and encouraging public use of them can create very real problems of public control, and could indeed have an impact on the prime purpose for which the areas were established. However, I think that by employing innovative techniques such as the control of public access by opening an area for a limited time, or on an advance reservation basis, that those problems can be overcome. It would probably be worthwhile to investigate the European experience in that regard. The Wildlife Service has experimented with waterfowl viewing weekends at Long Point National Wildlife Area, and open-house weekends at the St-Clair Lake National Wildlife Area, which are very successful.

Not all National Wildlife Areas, such as those that are too small or in remote locations, need be candidates for public interpretation programs. Those close to major population centres, or transportation corridors, should have first priority for an interpretation program. Obvious choices would be the Mississippi, Prince Edward Point, St-Clair and Long Point National Wildlife Areas in Ontario, Aleksen and Marshall Stevensen National Wildlife Areas in B.C. and Last Mountain Lake National Wildlife Area in Saskatchewan. Interpretation programs on such areas should be of the non-personal or self-guiding type as much as possible. This could include signs and outdoor displays and self-guiding trails. The outdoor display at the CFS Petawawa Experimental Station might provide a useful model.

I was interested to note in the National Surveys on the Participation of Canadians in Outdoor Activities by the Socio-Economic Research Division of Parks Canada (1978) found an increasing interest of Canadians in outdoor activities, such as walking or hiking, and that picnicking is an increasingly popular past-time with 56.7% of population over 18 years of age involved. As previously noted, most wildlife interpretation centres have added picnic tables and minimal facilities in the past few years. I suspect that the addition of similar types of picnicking facilities at National Wildlife Areas could be most beneficial. Some measure of public use of National Wildlife Areas should be made by installing traffic counters on access roads.

I am particularly concerned that some form of wildlife interpretation be made available to the public at the Long Point National Wildlife Area. I am well aware that this unique, natural area is extremely fragile, but I believe that imaginative ideas might be applied. Similar fragile areas have been developed for interpretation in the United States, and it would be worthwhile to look at some of those techniques.

#### OBSERVATIONS AND COMMENTS ON PARKS CANADA INTERPRETATION PROGRAMS

My observations are based on limited experience and interviews. The history, growth and successes of Parks Canada's interpretation program have been chronicled by Lothian (1981).

All of the centres and historic sites I visited had excellent parking facilities, but I was concerned that there did not seem to be adequate handicapped parking areas. The grounds around interpretation centres, visitor centres and historic sites were well cared for in the usual parks manner. However, they would benefit by having bird houses and feeders in the vicinity. The displays that I saw in Parks interpretation centres were very professional and well done. In fact, most of them looked better than the displays in the wildlife interpretation centres. However, the Wildlife centres made up for this, in my view, by the use of current or seasonal displays which I thought were sadly lacking in some Parks interpretation centres.

Several of the Parks interpretation centres that I visited had access from both sides of the building, and this presented problems in terms of circulation of the visitors through the display area. I thought that interpretation centres in areas where bird watching was one of the prime interests could benefit by having binoculars available on loan to the public in exchange for the borrower's driver's licence, or some such security. As noted, this was successful at the Wildlife centre at Creston, B.C. and appeared to be much appreciated by the public. I think greater use could be made of permanently mounted telescopes on towers or along boardwalks where there is something of interest to view. It struck me as being useful to label all self-guiding trails with the length and also the approximate time it might take to complete the trail. This observation would apply equally to the Wildlife Service self-guiding trails. Again, greater use might be made of benches, or rest sites, along the trails for elderly people, or for just contemplative use on hot days.

Parks Canada seems to have well developed objectives, especially for each park and National Historic Parks and Sites, use of themes is very effective. However, I think it would be useful to develop a hierarchy of objectives. Such a hierarchy might include the federal objectives of an interpretation program in national parks, the departmental objective, general objectives as well as National Parks objectives, then the regional or individual Park objectives.

It was brought to my attention that the permanent interpretive staff were sometimes interested in taking courses in middle management, but there seemed to be little opportunity for them to take part in such courses. There seemed to be a feeling that there was a limitation and a lack of interest in their attending conferences on interpretation.

#### EXTENSION PROGRAM

I spent some time reviewing Parks Canada's extension program and was favourably impressed by it. It is in fact partly a marketing scheme, and a very successful one where it has been applied. Notably, in St-Lawrence Islands National Park and Point Pelee National Park, and also Elk Island National Park. I am also aware that some parks, and park staff, believe that they already have too many visitors and it is not necessary to encourage more people to attend, or visit the parks. If that observation is valid, then the divergence of views should be resolved. I would suggest that the Wildlife Service could learn a good deal about extension by reviewing Parks Canada's reports.

There is always the danger of complacency developing in any organization, Wildlife or Parks, where the staff are located in a regional office, park or interpretive centre, for any length of time. One of the obvious ways to overcome such complacency, and revitalize a program, is to move staff around and encourage the exchange of ideas. I believe that both Parks Canada and the Wildlife Service could benefit by moving people from the regions to headquarters and vice versa, even if only for short periods of time.

#### COORDINATION OF PROGRAMS

It occurred to me that there was an excellent opportunity to conduct natural history interpretation on some of the National Historic Parks and Sites areas, as well as on the historical canal sites where historic interpretation is taking place. Perhaps that could be accomplished by coordination or integration of the programs within Parks Canada.

#### MARKETING

I would also suggest that Parks Canada should become more involved in a marketing study and visitor surveys, they should review the work being done by the Wildlife Service to see if it has any application in their program.

I am aware that Parks Canada headquarters staff are involved in evaluation of interpretation plans, but I do not think there is any headquarters involvement in evaluation of individual centres and programs within the regions and parks themselves. This, I think, needs to be initiated rigorously as soon as possible.

I was surprised to learn that seasonal interpreters in Parks Canada are not encouraged to initiate research projects during their employment. I think that they are missing a good opportunity. It is unlikely that the research itself would be that useful, but it does serve a purpose in keeping the seasonal employees interested in their work, and more enthusiastic. There is probably a need to indicate that at least one half-day per week of "company time" is available to seasonal staff to work on a mutually agreed upon research project or study.

#### RECOMMENDATIONS

The following simple recommendations, some of which have already been alluded to in the preceding text, can be initiated by the various agencies, Parks Canada or Wildlife Service at their discretion. They are annotated for convenience.

##### Recommendations - Parks Canada

- 1) It is recommended that Parks Canada develop a hierarchy of objectives from federal objectives for Parks interpretive programs, including increasing tourism and the federal identity through departmental objectives to regional and individual Park objectives. These objectives should be widely circulated throughout the parks and regions.
- 2) Conduct a visitor survey to determine visitor profiles, and characteristics of people who come to parks and make use of interpretive facilities. This would be a useful background for a marketing study.
- 3) Establish realistic numerical goals for the number of visitors to take part in interpretive activities (for example, would 10% of the total number of visitors attending National Parks be a reasonable goal? i.e. about 2.5 million people).
- 4) As a further refinement establish realistic goals for the optimum number of visitors to each park, interpretive or visitor centre and trails or exhibits.



- 5) Prepare a marketing strategy and marketing plan, including extension services for each individual park which would help to meet the above goals.
- 6) Monitor results closely and carefully especially with regard to measuring the number of people visiting and using interpretive centres and facilities.
- 7) Evaluate the effectiveness of the marketing plan and strategy in 1984-85.
- 8) Establish separate budgets for the interpretation program. This should include salaries, O&M costs and capital costs for each interpretive centre and its program.
- 9) Establish a headquarters group to carry out formative evaluations of interpretation centres, exhibits and trails. These should be carried out at least once per season.
- 10) Establish a policy of sending copies of regional interpretation program evaluations to each region.
- 11) Ensure that plans are followed and carried out and monitor as required.
- 12) Develop a curriculum for training of seasonal interpreters. Stress Parks policies, interpretation methods and techniques and the importance of courtesy and enthusiasm.
- 13) Establish a budget of half of one percent of salaries to cover costs of conference travel for regional interpretation staff.
- 14) Establish a budget of half of one percent of salaries for training and development courses for permanent interpretation employees.
- 15) Check all interpretive centres and facilities for their ease of access and use by the handicapped.
- 16) Examine the feasibility of having temporary exhibits of seasonal natural events of interest (for example, late summer Monarch butterfly migration, Point Pelee National Park).



- 17) Look into the possibility of providing photographic opportunities for amateur photographers to use photographic blinds at points of interest.
- 18) Examine the feasibility of establishing naturalist conducted boat excursions in suitable parks, for example Point Pelee.
- 19) Proceed with developing cooperating associations so that funds generated by these associations can be used by the interpretation program.
- 20) Assign to the interpretation/extension services some responsibility for establishing and maintaining good public relations between Parks and the local communities.
- 21) Establish a policy of research projects for seasonal interpreters.
- 22) Give consideration to coordinating or integrating natural history interpretation with historic interpretation on National Historic Parks and Sites and also Historical canals.

#### Recommendations - Canadian Wildlife Service

- 1) Complete the analysis of Visitor Surveys for each wildlife interpretation centre.
- 2) Develop a visitor profile of the types of people visiting wildlife interpretation centres.
- 3) Implement regional marketing plans in all five regions for 1983, with the goal of an increase of 35% in number of visitors by 1984 over 1980, and an increase of tour groups using the wildlife interpretation centres of 50% by 1985.
- 4) Develop and initiate passive interpretation programs on at least two National Wildlife Areas by 1985 and evaluate.
- 5) Develop objectives and plans for interpretation programs on 8 selected National Wildlife Areas by the end of 1983.

- 6) Establish and develop cooperating associations at two wildlife interpretation centres by 1984.
- 7) Develop and coordinate a training course for seasonal interpreters with Parks Canada for 1984.
- 8) Undertake and evaluate the use of a cost per visitor contact hour method of evaluating cost-effectiveness of interpretation events and exhibits.
- 9) Develop and test feasibility of photographic contests for visitors at one wildlife interpretation centre in 1984.
- 10) Make greater use of the Creston Valley Duck Lake observation tower in the interpretation program.
- 11) Eradicate poison ivy from interpretation trails and in any other interpretation areas where it is a problem.
- 12) Establish a policy of supporting research projects by seasonal interpreters by allowing one half-day per week to work on their project.
- 13) Study the successful Parks Canada model for extension in schools.
- 14) Initiate extension programs for contacts to be used in schools in the proximity of the interpretation centre or suitable National Wildlife Areas.
- 15) Check all interpretation centres and facilities for access by the handicapped, including parking lots.
- 16) Investigate the possibility of using the Loon symbol as a directional sign, as the beaver is used by Parks Canada (if a stylized Loon symbol could be used it would obviate the need for a bilingual format).
- 17) Close the underwater window at Wye Marsh until repaired.

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## APPENDIX I

### TERMS OF REFERENCE

- a) To conduct an objective review of the Interpretation Programs of Parks Canada and the Canadian Wildlife Service with a view to determining the effectiveness of these programs in delivering the appropriate message or experience to the general public.
  
- b) To look for possible efficiencies or economies of scale in: staffing, staff training and development, overall planning, exhibit design and manufacture, signage, including the use of bilingual signs, audio-visual programs and techniques, the use of passive systems or self-guiding systems, visitor facilities and possibilities for cost recovery.

## CANADIAN WILDLIFE SERVICE

## WILDLIFE INTERPRETATION CENTRE - VISITOR SURVEY

In order to plan, operate and evaluate this centre, there is certain information we need about you - our visitors. Would you please take a few moments and complete this questionnaire.

Please answer for yourself and not for your group, and do not tick in the space for others.

Please write your answer in the space provided or check the appropriate circle.

1. What was the highlight of your visit to the centre?

NPM	
PLS	
OW	
OTH	

2. Was there anything here you found uninteresting, or could not understand?

NPM	
PLS	
OW	
OTH	

3. Do you have any comments or suggestions for improvement?

NPM	
PLS	
OW	
OTH	

THE ANSWERS TO THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS WILL HELP US WHEN ADVERTISING THE PROGRAM.

4. In or near what town or city did you stay last night?

Do not know ☐

--	--	--

5. What type of accommodation did you use?

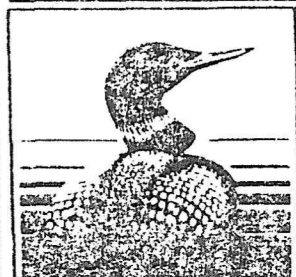
Motel/Hotel ☐

Campsite ☐

Other

(Specify)

Private residence ☐



Serial No.	00254			
Location				
Sample No.				
Remarks				

Passing by ☐

3-10 days ☐

1-2 days ☐

11-60 days ☐

Resident ☐

7. What form of advertising made you decide to visit the centre? (Choose one only)

Radio/Television ☐

Travel bureau ☐

Newspaper ☐

Word of mouth ☐

Other (Specify) ☐

Brochure/Sign Board ☐

8. Did you have information about the centre before you arrived in this area? (within 200 km of the centre)

Yes ☐

No ☐

9. Other than this wildlife centre, which of the following have you visited?

Creston Valley Wildlife Centre (B.C.) ☐

Prairie Wildlife Centre (Sask.) ☐

Wye Marsh Wildlife Centre (Ont.) ☐

Cap Tourmente Wildlife Centre (Que.) ☐

Pared Valley Centre (Que.) ☐

10. Assuming that you have visited the centre, how many times have you visited the centre?

1 ☐

2-5 ☐

6 or more ☐

11. How long were you at the centre (average)?

0-30 min (1/2 hr) ☐

61-120 min (1 1/2 hrs) ☐

31-60 min (1/2-1 hr) ☐

over 120 min (2 hrs +) ☐

12. Check all the following activities offered by the centre in this area which you participated in, or definitely plan to participate in.

walking/hiking ☐

guided nature hikes ☐

photography ☐

display hall ☐

self-guiding nature trails ☐

films or slides ☐

naturalist talks ☐

none ☐



Y	
100	
101	
85	
01	

Child 2

14. Where do you live?

City/ Town
Province/ State
Country

77	78
80	
82	

15. Which age category are you in?

Under 15 yrs ☐ 84      21-35 yrs ☐ 86  
 16-20 yrs ☐ 85      36 and over ☐ 87

16. including yourself, how many are in your group?

1-5 ☐ 88      6-30 ☐ 89  
 31 - ☐ 90

17. Which of the following best describes your group? (Choose one only)

family and/or friends ☐ 91      self-help group ☐ 93  
 commercial group ☐ 92      special interest group ☐ 94

Other (Specify) ☐ 95

18.

Date of visit	Time	Y	Mo	Day	Time

# APPENDIX III

1. Some interpretation specialists believe that the senior managers in their organization do not understand the role of interpretation and its contribution to departmental objectives. In your opinion is this true?

YES \_\_\_\_\_, NO \_\_\_\_\_, OTHER \_\_\_\_\_.

2. The following is a list of objectives that may be relevant to interpretation. Give your opinion in column No. I, indicate effectiveness in column No. II.

I  
Is this a  
relevant  
task for  
interpreta-  
tion

II  
On a scale of 1 (not  
effective), 2 (mode-  
rately effective),  
3 (very effective)  
how effective is  
interpretation in  
contributing to this  
objective?

- |  | YES   | NO    |       |
|--|-------|-------|-------|
| (a) To increase the public's awareness, understanding, appreciation and enjoyment of Canada's wildlife heritage and its environment.   | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| (b) To encourage visitor understanding and enjoyment of the park's natural and historic values.  | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| (c) To promote a better understanding of the natural environment (its processes) and to develop an awareness of man's relationship to and dependency on the natural environment. | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| (d) To promote better management of wildlife resources.  | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| (e) To explain park management programs (e.g. bears).  | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| (f) To promote the conservation of natural and historic resources.   | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| (g) To contribute to federal identity.   | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| (h) To contribute to tourism.  | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| (i) To demonstrate the federal concern for heritage protection.  | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| (j) To promote a conservation ethic.   | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| (k) To contribute to the local economy.  | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| (l) To provide entertainment for park visitors.  | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| (m) To help reduce vandalism in parks and wildlife areas.  | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| (n) To contribute to Departmental public awareness program.  | _____ | _____ | _____ |

Please check (✓) appropriate space in numbers 3 to 6.

3. In summary, in terms of increasing the awareness, understanding, appreciation and enjoyment of the general public in the natural or historic heritage, would you say that the interpretation program was:
- (a) not effective \_\_\_\_\_
  - (b) moderately effective \_\_\_\_\_
  - (c) very effective \_\_\_\_\_
4. In your view for which age group was the program most effective?
- (a) 5 to 15 years \_\_\_\_\_
  - (b) 16 to 21 years \_\_\_\_\_
  - (c) 21 to 55 years \_\_\_\_\_
  - (d) 56+ years \_\_\_\_\_
5. In your view should the interpretive program be:
- (a) continued in its present form \_\_\_\_\_
  - (b) continued, but with decreased resources \_\_\_\_\_
  - (c) modified to increase its effectiveness \_\_\_\_\_ examples \_\_\_\_\_
  - (d) terminated \_\_\_\_\_
  - (e) given increased resources \_\_\_\_\_
6. I have been to an interpretation centre or an interpretive event the following number of times in calendar year 1981:
- (a) not at all \_\_\_\_\_
  - (b) 1 to 5 times \_\_\_\_\_
  - (c) 6 to 10+ times \_\_\_\_\_
7. This response applies to which of the following, the interpretation program of:
- (a) Canadian Wildlife Service \_\_\_\_\_
  - (b) National Parks \_\_\_\_\_
  - (c) National Historic Parks and Sites \_\_\_\_\_
  - (d) Other \_\_\_\_\_

Please check (✓) appropriate space.

NOTE: Space is available on the back page for additional comments.

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

DATE: \_\_\_\_\_

## APPENDIX IV

PARKS CANADA VISITOR SERVICES AND  
INTERPRETATION EXPENDITURES  
FOR 1981-82

	PY	SALARIES	O&M	CAPITAL	TOTAL
<u>Atlantic Region</u>					
Regional Office - V.S.	8.00	191.6	23.8	713.0	928.4
- Int.	19.00	539.9	52.6	-	592.5
National Parks - V.S.	41.72	739.8	259.7	66.8	1066.3
- Int.	25.59	563.3	196.5	169.8	929.6
Historic Sites - V.S.	26.92	466.3	490.2	11.8	968.3
- Int.	27.20	472.8	165.3	543.8	1181.9
TOTAL Atlantic	<u>148.43</u>	<u>2973.8</u>	<u>1188.1</u>	<u>1505.2</u>	<u>5667.1</u>
<u>Ontario Region</u>					
Regional Office - V.S.	5.27	112.1	38.3	439.4	589.8
- Int.	12.72	406.4	48.2	106.4	561.0
National Parks - V.S.	12.16	237.9	302.2	113.7	653.8
- Int.	13.12	289.2	138.7	103.7	531.6
Historic Sites - V.S.	1.34	28.7	19.4	-	48.1
- Int.	28.03	542.8	167.9	5.2	715.9
TOTAL Ontario	<u>72.64</u>	<u>1617.1</u>	<u>714.7</u>	<u>768.4</u>	<u>3100.2</u>
<u>Western Region</u>					
Regional Office - V.S.	4.31	115.3	41.9	-	157.2
- Int.	11.50	328.3	96.6	486.1	911.0
National Parks - V.S.	182.65	3670.6	1370.1	219.3	5260.0
- Int.	48.15	1121.4	229.7	755.5	2106.6
Historic Sites - V.S.	10.16	208.0	105.7	0	313.7
- Int.	27.79	549.9	63.4	0	613.3
TOTAL Western	<u>284.56</u>	<u>5993.5</u>	<u>1907.4</u>	<u>1460.9</u>	<u>9361.8</u>
<u>Prairie Region</u>					
Regional Office - V.S.	5.00	131.1	19.2	76.3	226.6
- Int.	15.70	355.2	49.4	219.1	623.7
National Parks - V.S.	21.65	388.1	203.1	297.0	888.2
- Int.	14.56	446.3	102.1	134.4	682.8
Historic Sites - V.S.	17.62	275.9	224.9	10.7	511.5
- Int.	29.86	678.8	79.6	116.5	874.9
TOTAL Prairie	<u>104.39</u>	<u>2275.4</u>	<u>678.3</u>	<u>854.0</u>	<u>3807.7</u>
<u>Quebec Region</u>					
Regional Office - V.S.	9.24	344.9	71.3	1081.2	1497.4
- Int.	16.63	421.9	40.3	-	462.2
National Parks - V.S.	17.14	325.2	145.3	45.0	515.5
- Int.	5.63	195.7	52.0	8.5	256.2
Historic Sites - V.S.	-	-	-	-	-
- Int.	41.72	866.2	296.8	7.1	1170.1
TOTAL Quebec	<u>90.36</u>	<u>2153.9</u>	<u>605.7</u>	<u>1141.8</u>	<u>3901.4</u>

		PY	SALARIES	O&M	CAPITAL	TOTAL
<u>NCR</u>						
National Parks	- V.S.	13.91	369.9	232.3	-	602.2
	- Int.	6.25	219.6	147.1	-	366.7
Historic Sites	- V.S.	-	-	-	-	-
	- Int.	38.50	1081.9	125.1	-	1207.5
TOTAL NCR		<u>58.66</u>	<u>1671.4</u>	<u>504.5</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>2175.9</u>

TOTAL PARKS

- V.S.	369.43	7455.10	3462.20	3074.2	13991.5
- Int.	<u>389.61</u>	<u>9230.00</u>	<u>2136.50</u>	<u>2656.1</u>	<u>14022.6</u>
	<u>759.04</u>	<u>16685.10</u>	<u>5598.70</u>	<u>5730.30</u>	<u>28014.1</u>

Explanatory Notes

- 1) Financial data on expenditures by Parks Canada on interpretation and visitor service were obtained too late for detailed analysis.

1981-82 expenditures by region are summarized in Appendix IV. Because National Parks records number of visitor contacts rather than the number of daily visitors (attendance) an index for cost of daily visitors is not possible. The information for Historic Parks and Sites presents problems because they record the total number of visitors per park regardless of whether or not an interpretation program is offered. Since the total 1981-82 expenditures on interpretation of \$14,022,600 is sufficiently large some measure of efficiency or cost-effectiveness should be undertaken.

- 2) The distribution of person-years in the regional offices and headquarters for interpretation in Parks Canada suggests a rather heavy concentration of supervisory, research or support staff in those offices relative to the number in the Parks interpretation program; a ratio of 165.8 over 866, or 19.1%. There may be valid reasons for this, but it should be examined.