

Brooks Camp Visitor Survey 2023: Perceptions on Bear Viewing, Congestion, Webcams, and the Value of Individual Brown Bears

Lynne Lewis¹, Michael Fitz², Leslie Richardson³, Sandra Goff⁴, and Laura Taylor⁵



¹ Bates College, Lewiston, ME and Colorado State University, Fort Collins, CO

² Explore.org, Santa Monica, CA

³ National Park Service, Fort Collins, CO

⁴ Bates College, Lewiston, ME

⁵ Georgia Institute of Technology, Atlanta, GA

Table of Contents

| | |
|---|----|
| Background and Motivation..... | 3 |
| Executive Summary | 5 |
| Detailed Survey Results..... | 7 |
| Trip Characteristics | 7 |
| Congestion and Visitor Experience | 10 |
| Bear Viewing..... | 17 |
| Bear Cams..... | 21 |
| Willingness to Pay..... | 25 |
| Respondent Demographics..... | 30 |
| Summary, Limitations, and Recommendations | 35 |
| References | 41 |
| Appendix A: Respondent Comments | 42 |

Acknowledgements

The authors would like to thank the Katmai Conservancy for generous travel funding, the Goff Lab for Experimental Economics for sharing survey equipment and Qualtrics license, WE@Bates, the Joan Blanchard Fund and the School of Economics at Georgia Institute of Technology for additional funding, and Katmai National Park and Preserve for permitting on-site research and providing on-site lodging.

Background and Motivation

This report summarizes the results of a 2023 visitor survey at Brooks Camp, Katmai National Park, Alaska, one of the most famous and popular bear-viewing destinations in the world. Like many other U.S. national park areas, visitation at Brooks Camp has increased substantially in recent years. Additionally, webcams (hereafter, bear cams) at Brooks Camp have a large, devoted, and passionate fan base. Hosted online by [explore.org](https://www.explore.org) in partnership with the National Park Service (NPS) the bear cams receive millions of views annually, while the virally popular Fat Bear Week draws attention to Katmai National Park, new viewers to the bear cams, and new visitors to the park.

Visitation at Brooks Camp has more than doubled since the late 2000s (Figure 1). Increased visitation can tax the ability of NPS staff to protect wildlife, flora, sensitive archeological resources, park infrastructure, and a high-quality visitor experience. Rangers, NPS management, other staff, and visitors speak of greater levels of crowding and human-wildlife conflicts at Brooks Camp. Yet, there is a dearth of data regarding the challenges posed by increased visitation at Brooks Camp and visitor perceptions of crowding and congestion. The economic value of individual animals is also understudied.

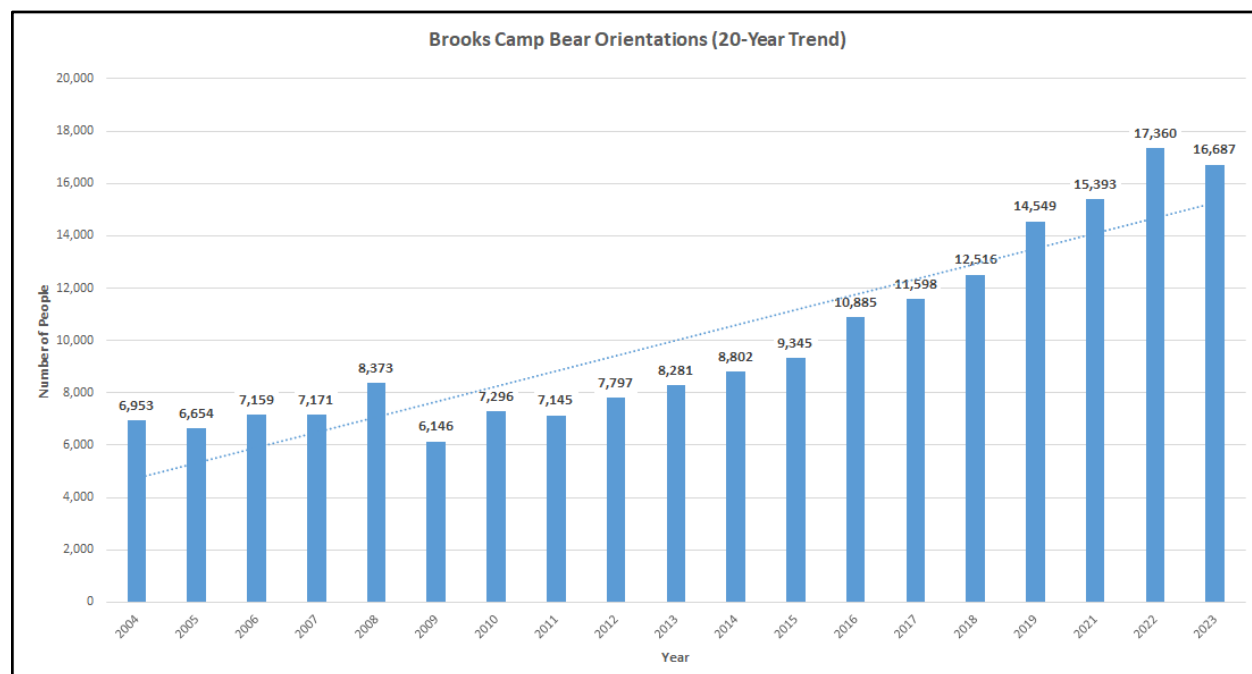


Figure 1: Brooks Camp Bear Orientations 2004 - 2023. This chart shows the 20-year trend in Brooks Camp visitation from 2004-2023. Every person who visits Brooks Camp is required to attend a mandatory, National Park Service bear orientation and safety talk. We used the attendance of the mandatory Brooks Camp bear orientation as a proxy for site visitation. The year 2020 was excluded due to pandemic restrictions and closures which limited visitation to 3,474 people that summer. The vertical blue bars represent the number of people who were given orientations. The dotted line represents the 20-year trend. The 20-year average is 10,006. The 10-year (2014-2023) average is 13,015. The 5-year (2019-2023) average is 15,997. Sourced from unpublished NPS Brooks Camp visitation statistics.

Bear-viewing at Brooks Camp also is unique because most bears at Brooks River are individuals who were identified in previous years. The bears' life histories, behaviors, and physical characteristics are used by NPS and explore.org staff to interpret the lives of individual bears and the Katmai bear population. Many bears garner a fan base and some visitors come, in part, to try to see specific bears.

Given the increase in visitation at Brooks Camp and the popularity of the bear cams, our survey sought to understand:

- The demographic and trip characteristics of Brooks Camp visitors.
- Visitor perceptions regarding elements of the Brooks Camp experience such as congestion/crowding on platforms and overall visitation levels and experiences with rangers.
- Visitor support for access restrictions at Brooks Camp to further protect bears, human safety, and the visitor experience.
- The influence of the bear cams and the opportunity to watch specific, individual bears on the visitor experience.
- The value visitors place on the preservation of individual bears.

Our results offer National Park Service staff and leadership information to help evaluate and implement management decisions at Brooks Camp. Survey results also allow comparisons with online surveys of the bear cam audience in 2019 and 2020 (Fitz et al 2021), previous willingness-to-pay studies (Richardson and Lewis 2022), and older visitor surveys conducted when visitation was at lower levels (NPS 2014, Sharp et al 2017, Skibins and Sharp 2018). The survey results add valuable insight into the perceptions and experiences of Brooks Camp visitors during a year of near-record high visitation.

This report was prepared by the authors on March 27, 2024 in fulfillment of permits KATM-2023-SCI-0004 and KATM-2023-SCI-0008.

Executive Summary

The visitor survey was distributed at Brooks Camp during two survey periods—July 5-13 and September 11-17, 2023—that correspond with historic visitation peaks at Brooks Camp. For comparative purposes, the survey was designed to be consistent with the 2019 and 2020 on-line surveys of webcam viewers on explore.org with the inclusion of additional questions about visitor experience and congestion. Most respondents (69%) were surveyed at Brooks Falls, while 30% were surveyed at Brooks Lodge. The remaining 1% were contacted at other locations. Surveys were administered using Qualtrics survey software on iPad tablets. Six hundred and sixty-seven respondents completed the survey (487 in July and 180 in September).

Trip Characteristics: Eighty percent of July respondents and 64% of September respondents were first time visitors. Seventy-three percent of July respondents and 30% of September respondents were on a day trip. Of the overnight visitors, most respondents (July: 81%; September: 70%) spent three nights or fewer at Brooks Camp. A large majority of respondents (July: 92%; September: 75%) had visited Brooks Falls on the day that they took the survey. Most respondents stated the primary reason for visiting was bear viewing (July: 85%; September: 73%).

Congestion: Most July respondents (79%) reported spending 30 minutes or less waiting to access the Brooks Falls wildlife-viewing platform with 24% experiencing no wait time. Fifty-five percent of July respondents and 64% of September respondents noted that the number of people at Brooks Camp negatively or very negatively affected their experience. Only 18% of July respondents and 12% of September respondents stated the number of people added positively to the experience. September visitors (56%) were more supportive of limiting the number of day visitors to the park to reduce congestion and crowding compared to July (44%). However, 40% and 33% of July and September visitors, respectively, stated there was no need to reduce congestion/crowding. Support for options to reduce congestion/crowding varied between respondents on overnight visits compared to day trips. Sixty-six percent of overnight visitors selected “limit the number of people visiting during the day,” while 34% of day trip visitors preferred that choice. Majorities of respondents in both survey periods agreed that the number of people at Brooks Camp should be limited to protect visitors’ experiences (July: 61%; September: 66%), to protect visitor safety (July: 51%; September 57%), to reduce environmental impacts (July: 67%; September: 72%), and to protect brown bears and other wild animals (July:73%; September 78%).

Visitor Experience: The most cited factors that contributed positively to a visitor’s experience were the number of bears (July 88%; September 95%), the variety of places to view bears (July: 77%; September: 87%), the bear school orientation (July: 68%; September: 69%), and interactions with rangers (July: 77%; September 79%). The most cited factors that contributed negatively to a visitor’s experience were the number of visitors (July: 38%; September: 25%) and the number of people on the platforms (July: 43%; September: 22%).

Bear Viewing: Seventy percent of July and 91% of September respondents knew that many of the bears at Brooks River have been identified with numbers/nicknames. The ability to see

specific bears at Brooks Camp was an influential motivator to visit for 33% of July respondents and 32% of September respondents. However, a larger number of respondents (July: 52%; September: 58%) agreed that the ability to watch specific bears enhanced the quality of the visit.

Bear Cams: Most respondents (July: 83%; September: 84%) knew about the bear cams before they arrived. Similar numbers also had watched the bear cams (July 83%; September: 90%) before they arrived. Eighty-one percent of July respondents and 79% of September respondents planned to watch the webcams after they returned home. The amount of time respondents had been watching the bear cams was evenly distributed among September visitors (with 24% watching for more than four years), but 44% of July visitors had watched for less than one month. When asked why they started watching the bear cams, respondents chose 'to learn about Katmai' most often among six possible choices (July: 42%; September: 39%). When asked a series of questions on a Likert-type 5-point scale to evaluate the bear cams' influence on the quality of a person's visit to Brooks Camp, respondents generally agreed the bear cams contributed positively to their experience.

Willingness to Pay: The survey asked respondents about their willingness to donate money to prevent the loss of an individual bear in a hypothetical scenario. Willingness to pay amounts were randomized between \$5 and \$500. These responses will be used to assess the value that Brooks Camp Visitors place on the preservation of Katmai's brown bears. Results from these questions need further analysis. Economists Richardson and Lewis will be analyzing the willingness to pay data similarly to Richardson and Lewis (2022).

Demographics: Ninety-two percent of July respondents and 94% of September respondents were from the United States.⁶ Fifty-four percent of July respondents stated their gender was female and 42% stated they were male. Fifty-seven percent of September respondents stated their gender was female and 41% stated they were male. Most respondents (July: 56%; September: 69%) are 45 years old or older. Most respondents (July: 78%; September: 80%) had a bachelor's degree or higher level of education. Most respondents (July: 55%; September: 56%) reported annual household incomes of \$100,000 or greater. Twenty-two percent of July respondents and 25% of September respondents reported annual household incomes of \$200,000 or greater. Forty-three percent of July respondents and 38% of September respondents traveled in groups of two.

⁶ The survey was in English and some visitors declined due to language barriers.

Detailed Survey Results

Trip Characteristics

This information presents respondents' trip characteristics, separated by time of visit (July or September). We defined a day trip as a visit that originated and ended outside of Brooks Camp on the same day, regardless of origin. We defined an overnight trip as a visit that spent one or more nights at Brooks Camp (campground or Brooks Lodge).

In July 80% of respondents were first time visitors. In September this percentage dropped to 64%, with a striking 36% of those having visited two or more times in the past five years (Figures 2-3). More than 70% of July visitors were on a day trip, while 30% of September respondents were on a day trip. When the results of both survey periods are combined, 59% of respondents were on a day trip and 41% were on overnight trips.

Among overnight visitors in July, 81% spent 1-3 nights at Brooks Camp with 22% spending one night, 23% spending two nights, and 36% spending three nights. Among overnight visitors in September, 70% spent 1-3 nights at Brooks Camp with 3% spending one night, 17% spending two nights, and 50% spent three nights. Campers are limited to seven nights in July and 14 nights total per calendar year. Lodge guests are limited to three nights maximum per trip. The campground hosted 49% of July respondents and 44% of September respondents. Brooks Lodge hosted 35% of July respondents and 50% of September respondents. 'Other' overnight location was chosen by 20% of July respondents and 6% of September respondents.

Figure 2: Is this your first visit to Katmai?

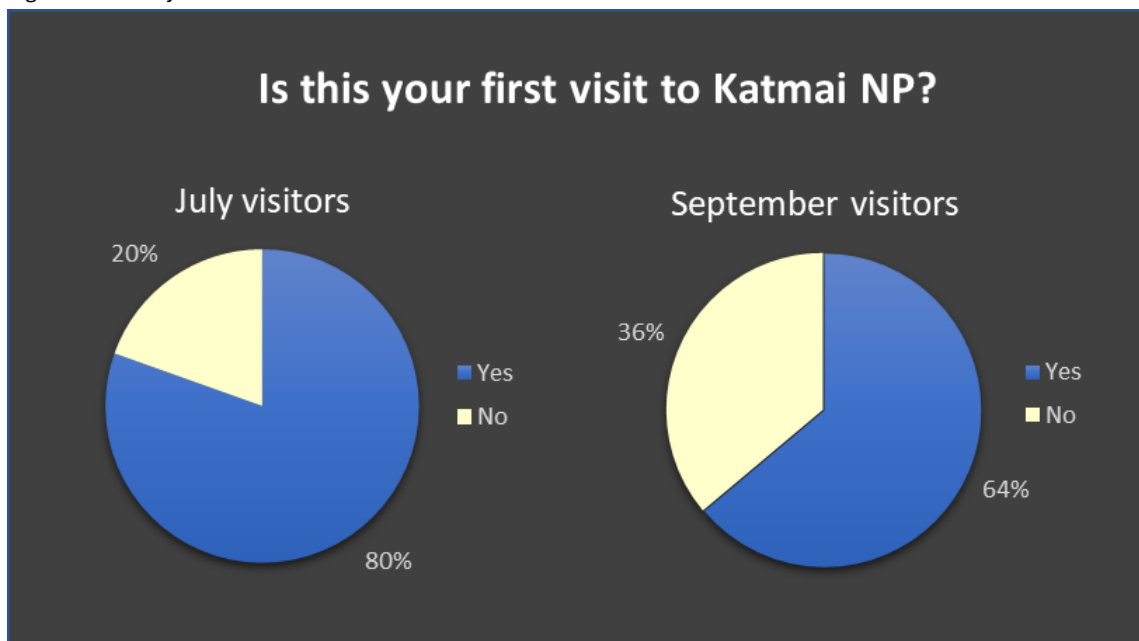


Figure 3: How many times have you visited [Katmai] in the last 5 years?

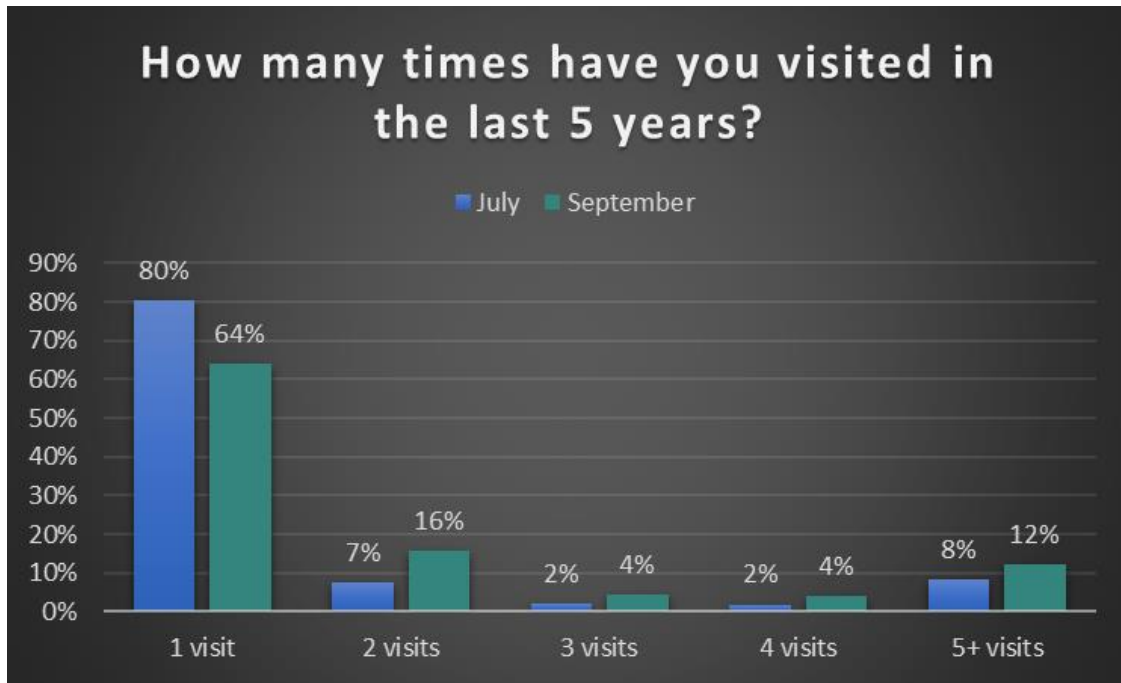


Figure 4: Are you currently on a day trip to Brooks Camp?



Figure 5: How many nights do you plan to spend at Brooks Camp.

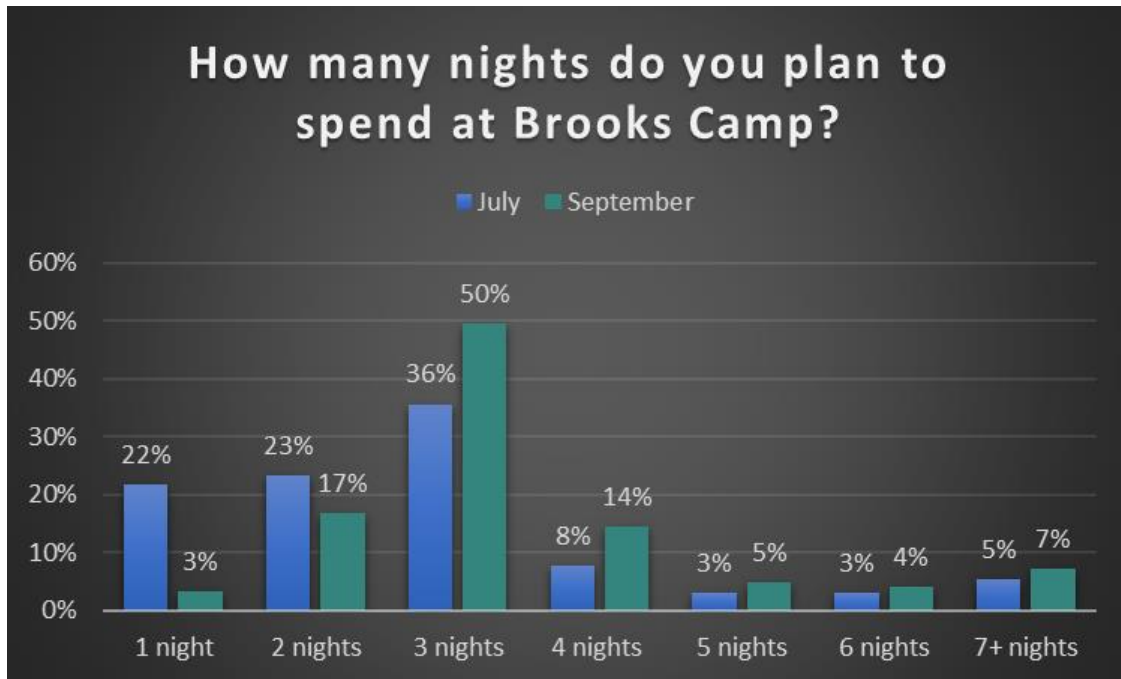
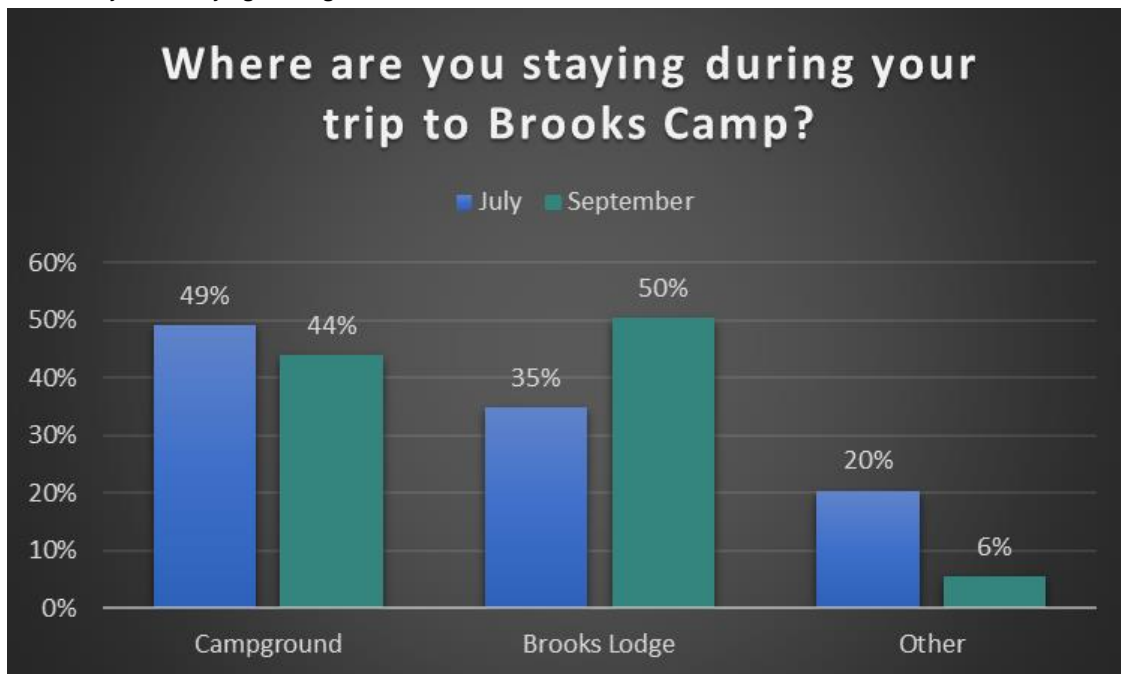


Figure 6*: Where are you staying during your trip to Brooks Camp?

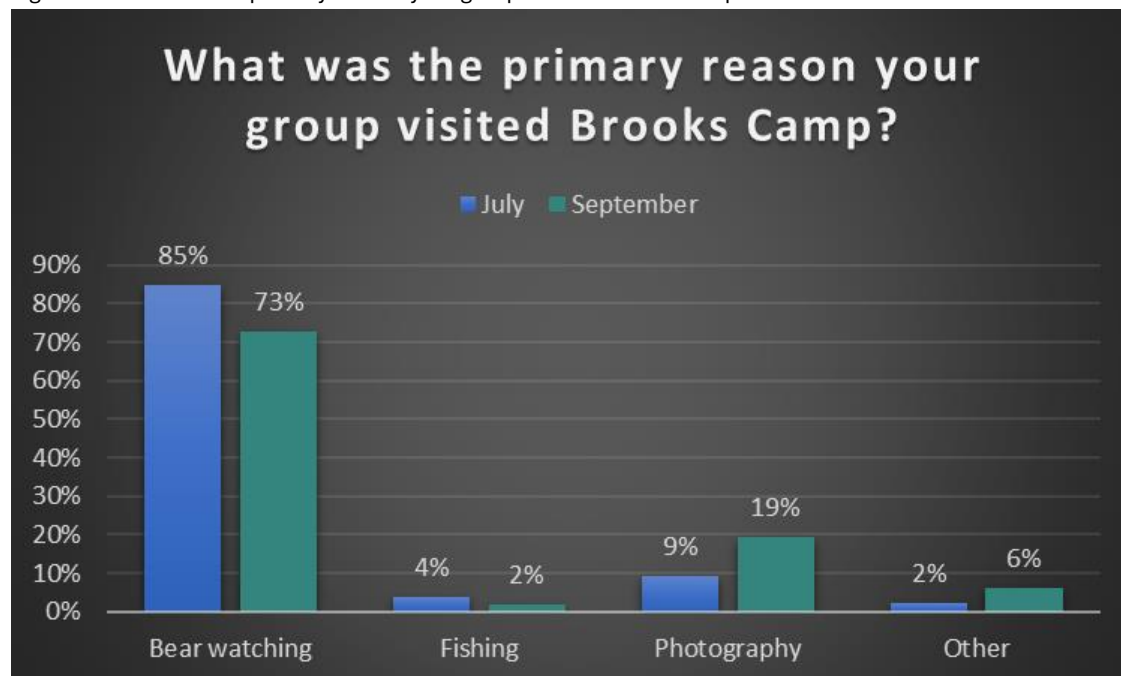
*Respondents could select more than one option, so the total may not sum to 100%. “Other” responses were from visitors staying in the nearby backcountry, NPS housing, and NPS administrative facilities. Most who chose “other” did not specify where they were staying overnight.



We then asked why respondents visited Brooks Camp and how often they visited the Brooks Falls wildlife-viewing platform. The majority of respondents stated the primary reason for visiting was bear viewing (July: 85%; September: 73%) though it must be noted that in July, most visitors were

intercepted at the “Treehouse” where bear-viewers congregate. Visitors participating in other activities may not frequent the Treehouse as much as other locations. Almost all respondents had visited the Falls Platform the same day they took the survey.

Figure 7: What was the primary reason your group visited Brooks Camp?



Congestion and Visitor Experience

Given the increased visitation at Brooks Camp during the last 10 years (Figure 1) and with most visitation at Brooks Camp occurring in July (unpublished National Park Service statistics), we asked a series of questions about perceptions of congestion. Some questions focused on management options and tradeoffs to address congestion. The questions about waitlists and wait times for the Brooks Falls Wildlife-Viewing Platform were only asked in July, since there was no managed waitlist for the platform in September. All other questions regarding congestion and crowding were asked during both survey periods.⁷

Forty-five percent of July respondents were on the waitlist for the Brooks Falls Platform when they filled out the survey. Seventy-eight percent of those expected to wait between 15 minutes to 1 hour for access to the platform. Among respondents who had visited the platform at Brooks Falls on this trip previously, 79% reported the longest they waited for access was 30 minutes or less. When asked to choose from several potential management strategies to provide visitor access to the Brooks Falls Wildlife-Viewing Platform, 50% of July respondents and 45% of September respondents selected ‘keep it the same’ (Figure 10).

⁷ Congestion questions were drawn from the “Programmatic clearance for NPS-sponsored public surveys: Pool of known questions.” and adapted to the context of Brooks Camp.

Figure 8*: How long do you expect to wait today to get on the Brooks Falls Platform?
*July respondents only.

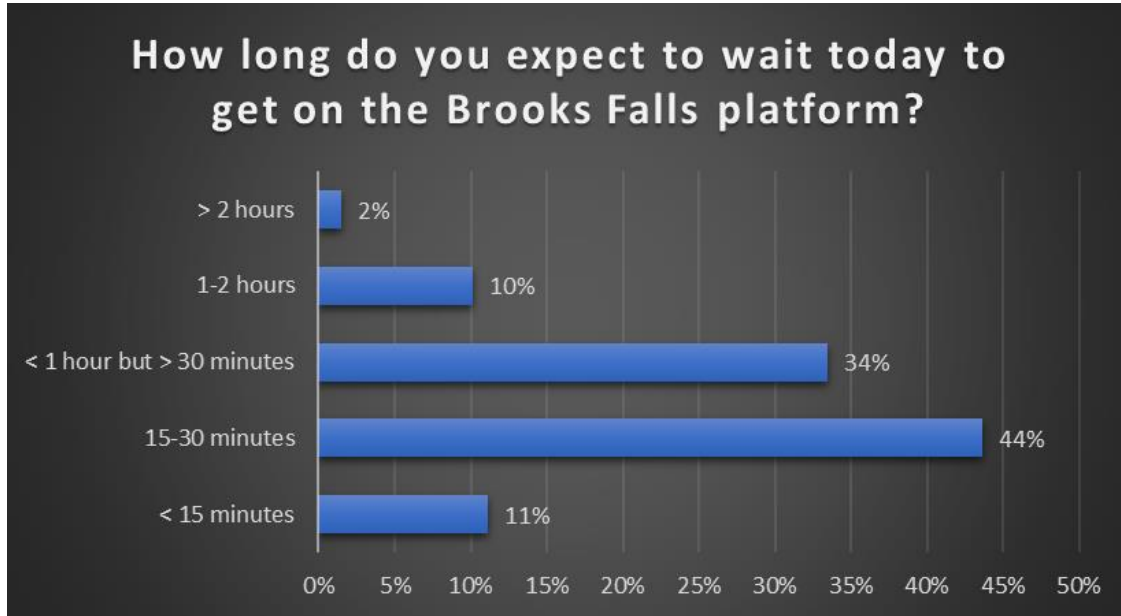


Figure 9*: What is the longest amount of time you have waited to get on the Brooks Falls platform during this trip?
*July respondents only.

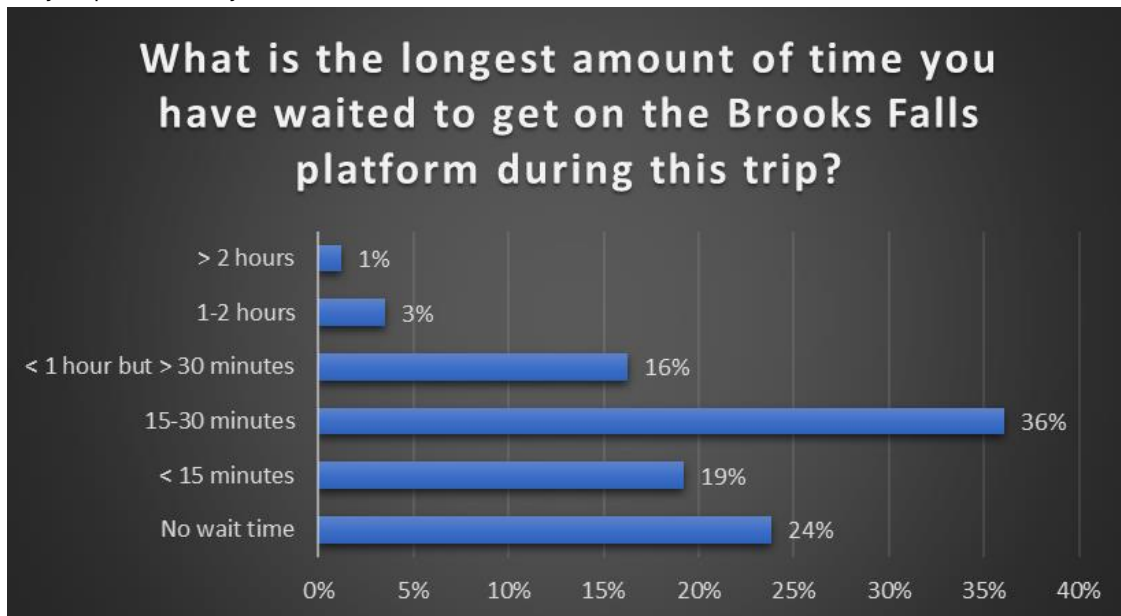
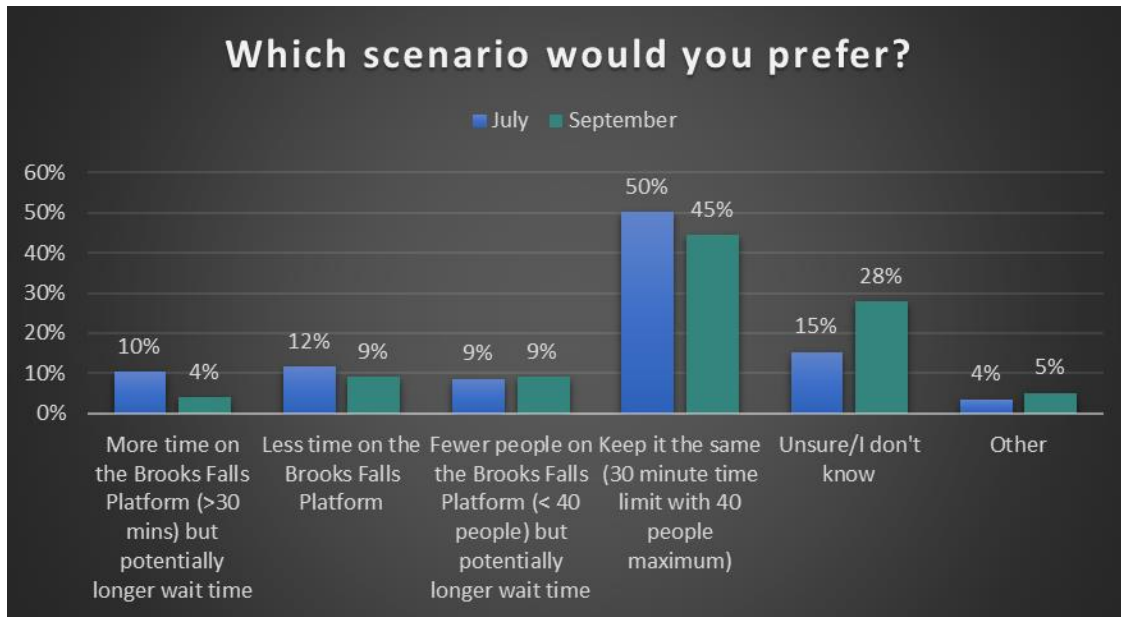


Figure 10: Which scenario would you prefer [to manage crowds at the Brooks Falls platform]?



All respondents were asked how various aspects of Brooks Camp affected their experience (Figures 11-13). The factors selected by respondents that contributed most positively to their experiences were:

- The number of bears (July: 88%; September: 95%),
- The variety of places to view bears (July: 77%; September: 87%),
- Interactions with rangers (July: 77%; September: 79%), and
- The bear school orientation and safety talk (July: 68%; September: 69%).

The factors selected by respondents that contributed most negatively to their experiences were:

- The number of people on the platforms (July: 43%; September: 22%), and
- The number of visitors (July: 38%; September: 25%).

The factors selected most often by respondents that had no effect on their experiences were:

- The number of visitors (July: 42%; September: 46%),
- The number of people on the platforms (July: 34%; September: 49%), and
- The bear school orientation and safety talk (July: 22%; September: 23%).

Figure 11*: The following contributed positively to my experience at Brooks Camp.

*Check all that apply.

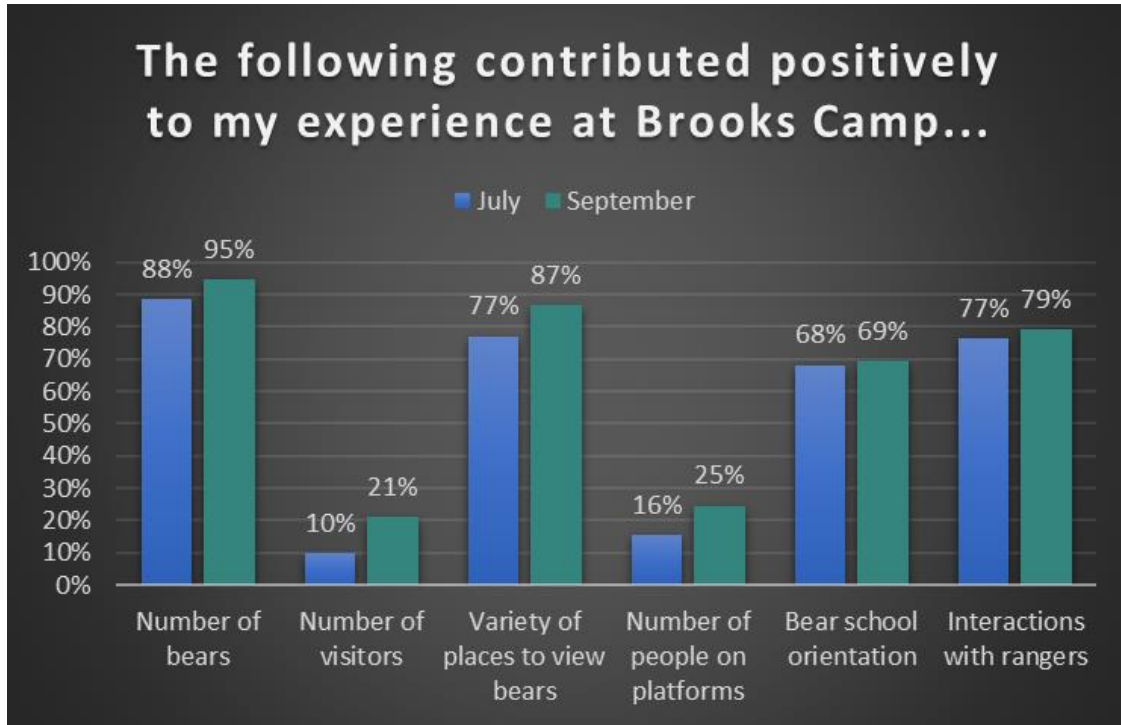


Figure 12*: The following contributed negatively to my experience at Brooks Camp.

*Check all that apply.

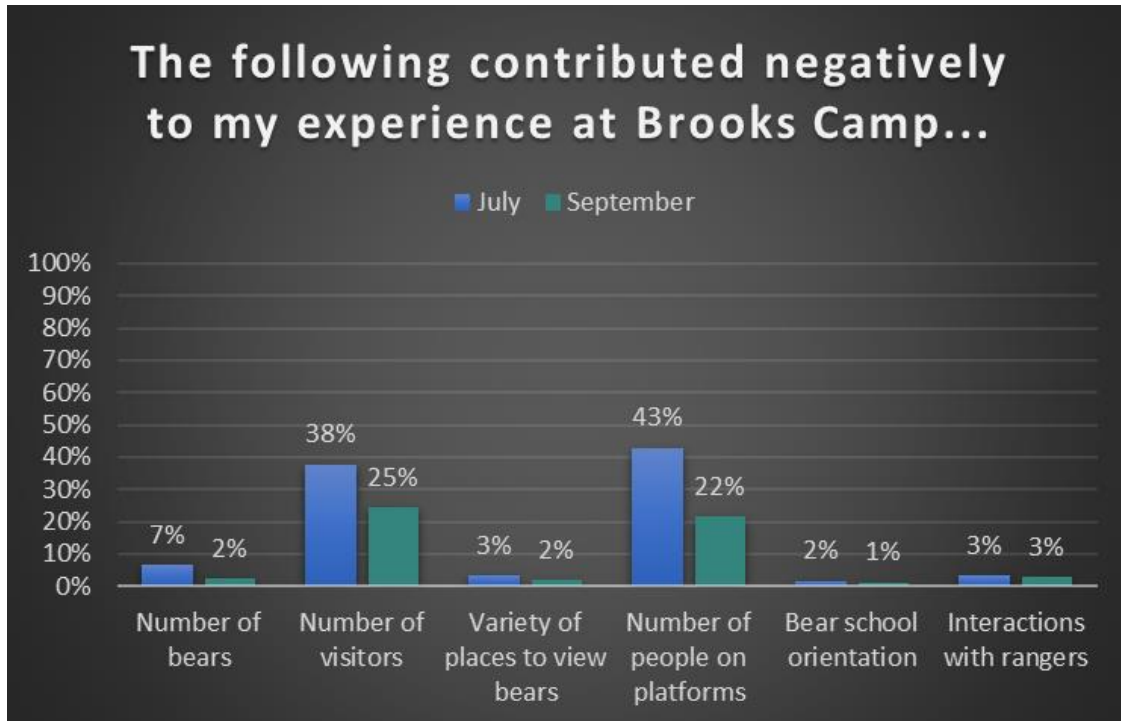
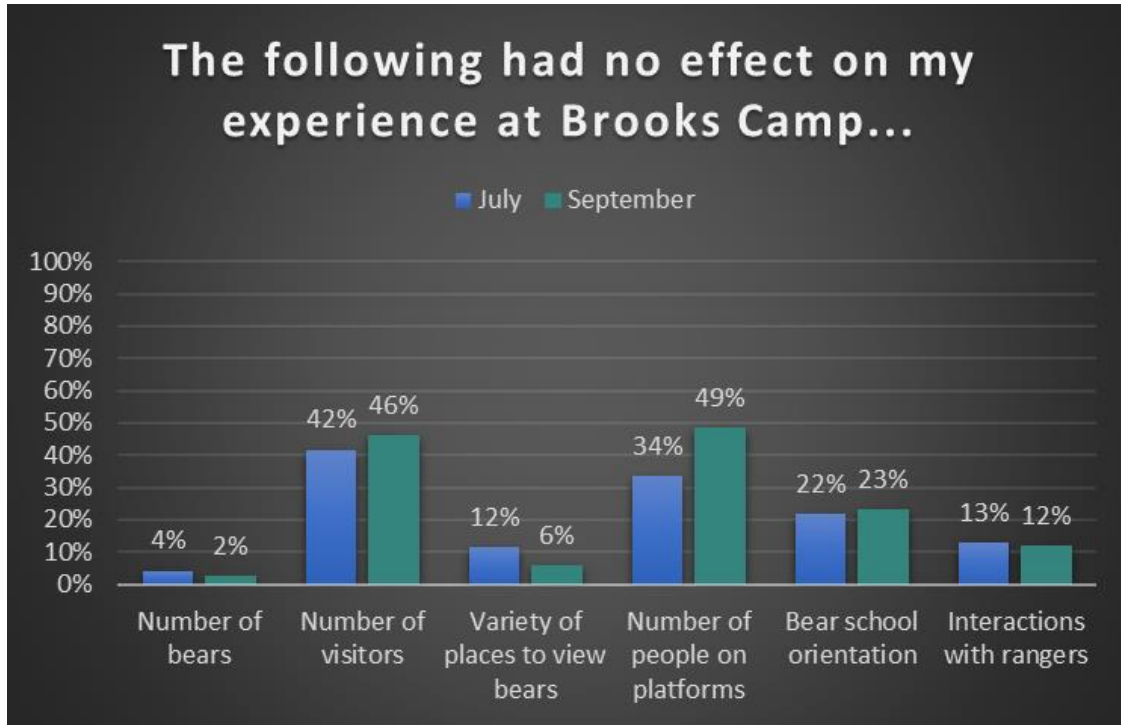


Figure 13*: The following had no effect on my experience at Brooks Camp.

*Check all that apply.



Most respondents reported that the number of other visitors at Brooks Camp affected them either negatively or very negatively (July: 55%; September: 64%; Figure 14). Among the options presented to reduce congestion/crowding at Brooks Camp, 44% of July visitors and 56% of September visitors preferred to limit the number of people visiting just for the day, while 40% of July visitors and 33% of September visitors selected 'there is no need to reduce congestion/crowding' (Figure 15).

A different pattern emerges when responses to this question are separated between day trip and overnight respondents. Sixty-six percent of overnight respondents would prefer to limit day trips, while 34% of day trip respondents chose that option. Forty-seven percent of all respondents combined chose the 'limit day trip' option while 38% chose 'There is no need to reduce the number of visitors' (Table 1).

Figure 14: How has the number of people at Brooks Camp affected your overall experience?

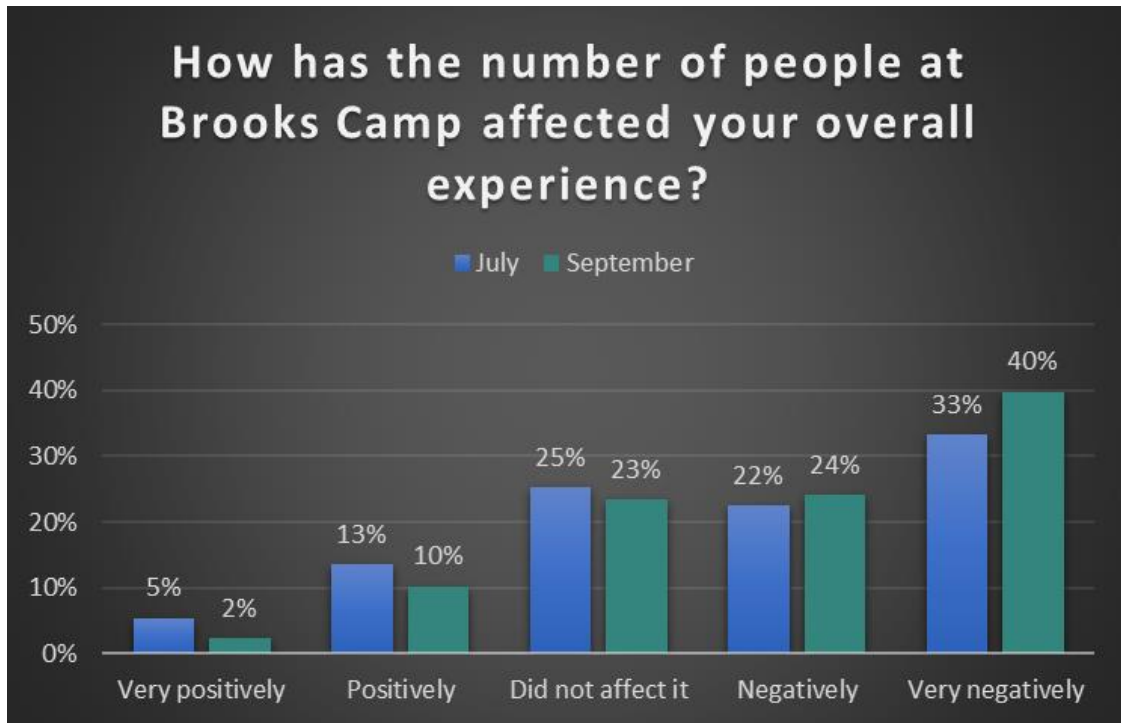


Figure 15: Which option to reduce congestion/crowding at Brooks Camp would you most prefer?

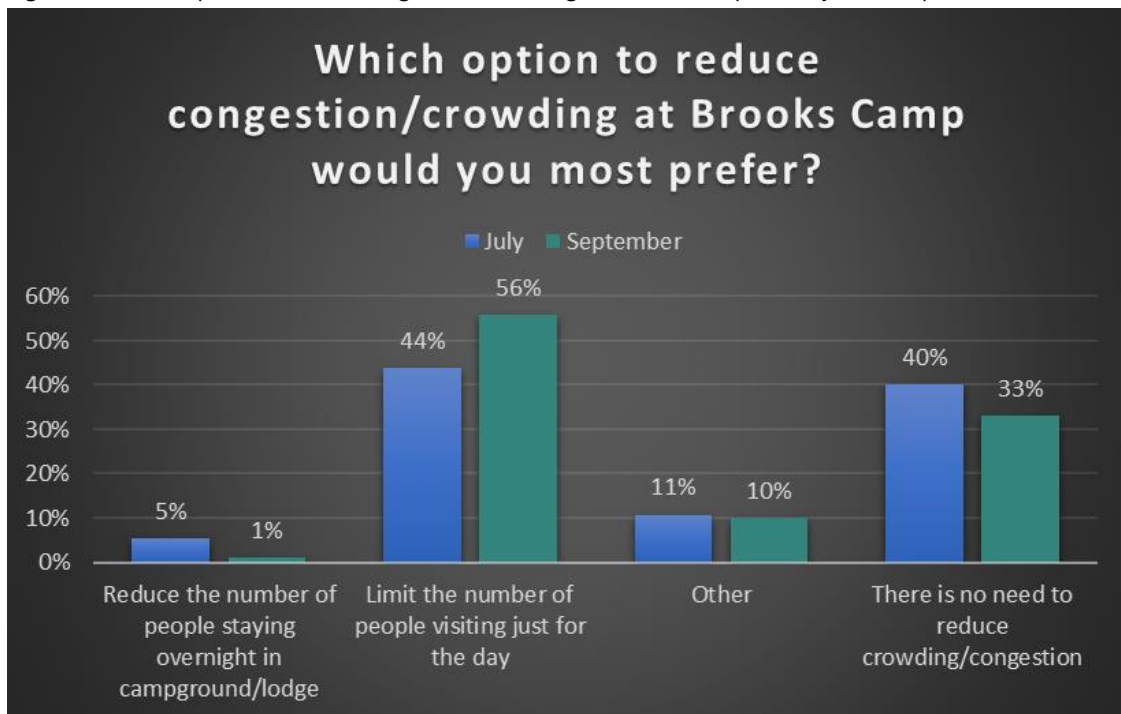


Table 1: Support for options to reduce congestion/crowding among respondents on overnight and day trip visits to Brooks Camp.

| | Reduce overnight visitors | Limit day trips | Other* | There is no need to reduce the number of visitors |
|----------------------------|---------------------------|-----------------|--------|---|
| Overnight Visitors (n=250) | 1% | 66% | 6% | 28% |
| Day Trip (n=361) | 7% | 34% | 14% | 45% |
| All Respondents (n=611) | 4% | 47% | 10% | 38% |

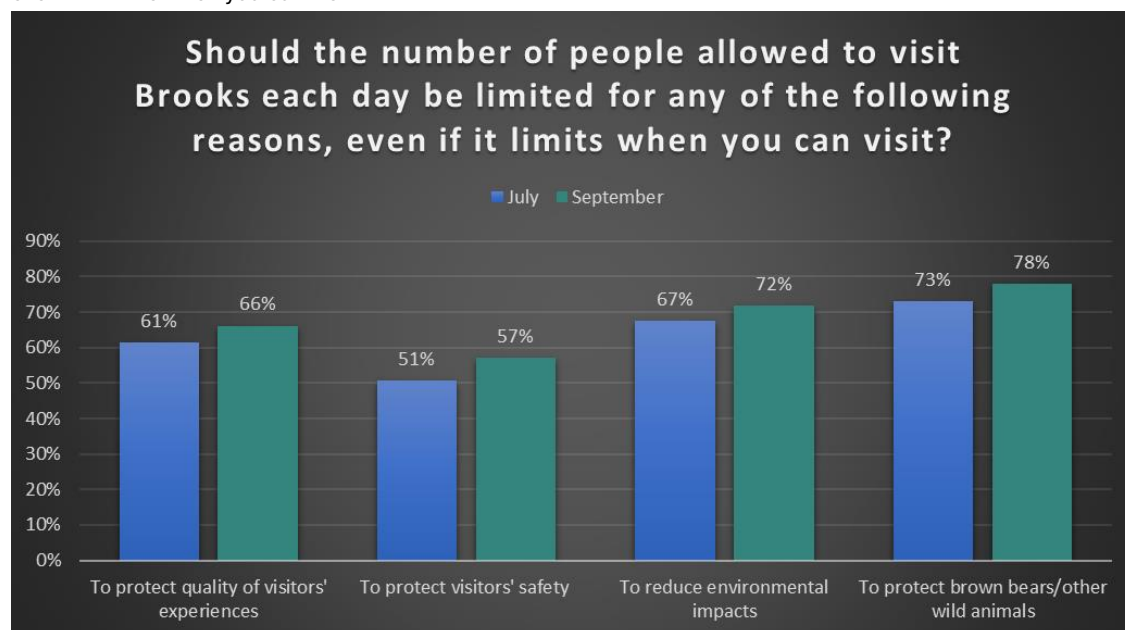
*See Appendix A, Table A1.

Respondents were broadly supportive of limiting the number of people at Brooks Camp each day (Figures 16) if needed to:

- protect visitors' experiences (July: 61%; September: 66%),
- to protect visitors' safety (July: 51%; September: 57%),
- to reduce environmental impacts (July: 67%; September: 72%), and
- to protect brown bears and other wild animals (July: 73%; September: 78%).

Please see the appendix for written responses for the "other" category listed in Table 1 and for additional respondent comments about congestion/crowding that appeared at the end of the survey.

Figure 16: Should the number of people allowed to visit Brooks Camp each day be limited for any of the following reasons, even if it limits when you can visit?



Compared with day visitors, overnight visitors were much more likely to support limitations on visitation to protect the quality of visitors' experience, visitors' safety, the environment, and bears and other wildlife (Table 2).

Table 2: Support to limit visitation to protect the quality of the visitors' experience, visitors' safety, reduce environmental impacts, and protect brown bears and other wild animals.

| | Quality of Visitors' Experience | Visitors' Safety | Reduce environmental impacts | Brown bears / other wild animals |
|----------------------------|---------------------------------|------------------|------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| Overnight Visitors (n=253) | 66% | 59% | 78% | 82% |
| Day Trip (n=382) | 61% | 48% | 62% | 69% |

Bear Viewing

A large percentage of respondents (July: 86%; September 88%) had seen a bear in the wild before their trip. On the day they took the survey, fifty percent of July respondents had seen 1-5 bears and 35% had seen 6-10 bears. Thirty-four percent of September respondents had seen 6-10 bears and 54% had seen more than 10 bears on the day they took the survey. September respondents spent more time watching bears on the day they took the survey compared to July respondents.

Figure 17: Before this trip, had you ever seen a bear in the wild?



Figure 18: How many bears have you seen so far today?

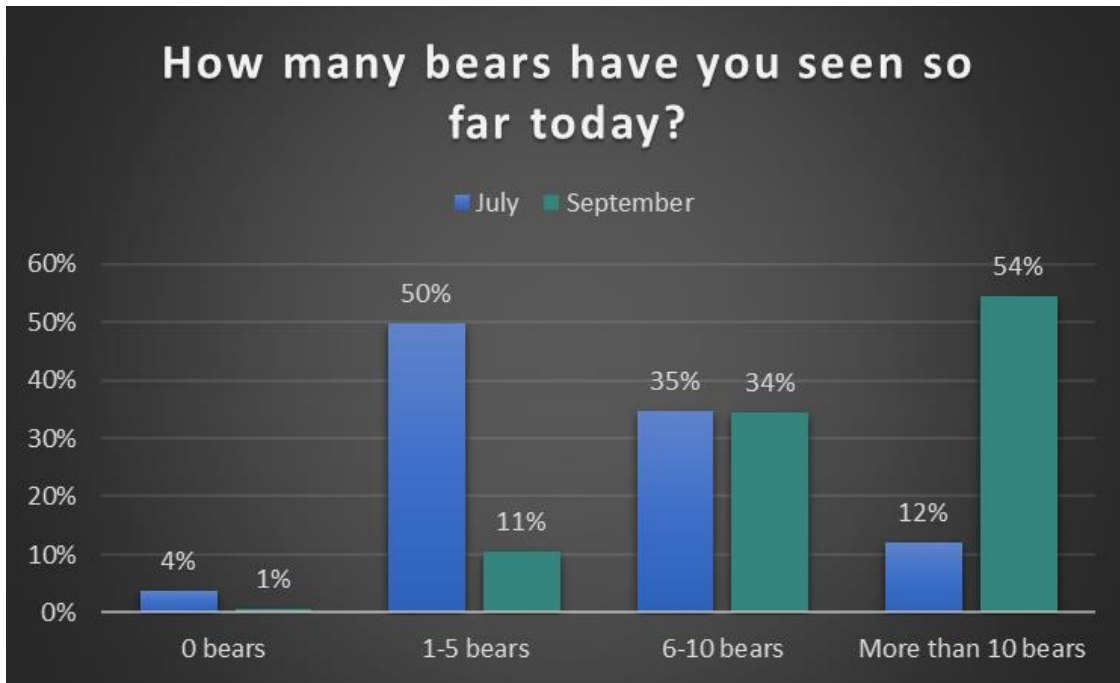
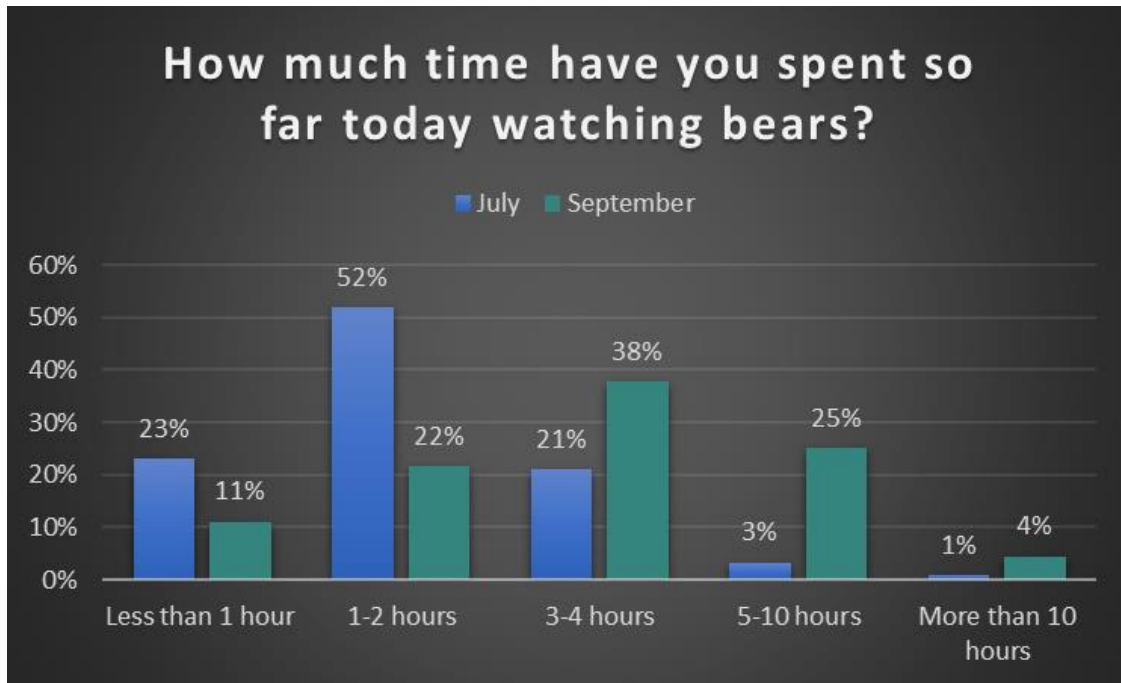


Figure 19: How much time have you spent so far today watching bears?



Seventy percent of July and 91% of September respondents knew that many of the bears at Brooks River have been identified with numbers/nicknames (Figure 20). Comparing overnight and day trip respondents, 91% of overnight respondents and 66% of day trip respondents knew that bears at Brooks River have been identified with numbers/nicknames (Table 3).

Figure 20: Did you know that many of these bears have been identified with numbers/nicknames?

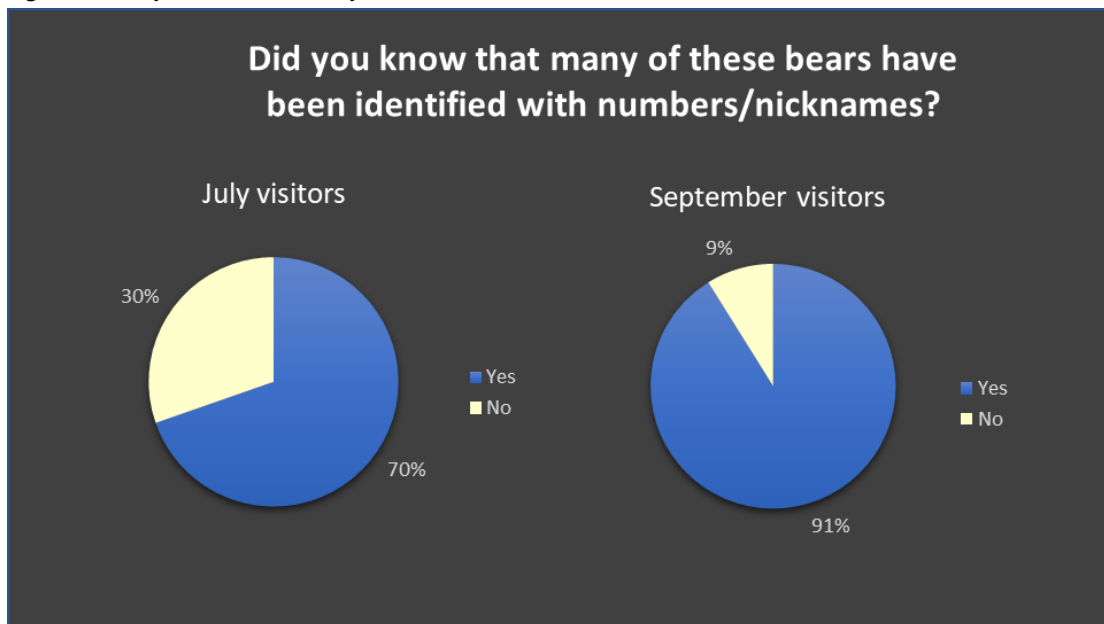
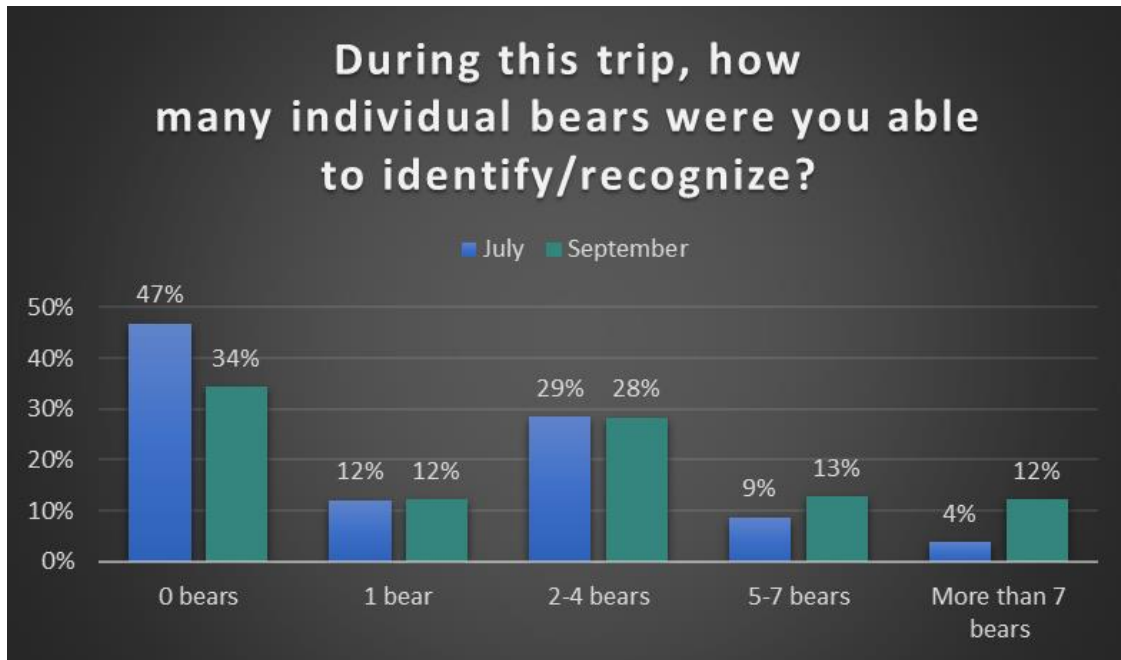


Table 3: Did you know that many of these bears have been identified with numbers/nicknames? Compare with Figure 20.

| | Yes | No |
|----------------------------|-----|-----|
| Overnight Visitors (n=250) | 91% | 9% |
| Day Trip (n=361) | 66% | 34% |

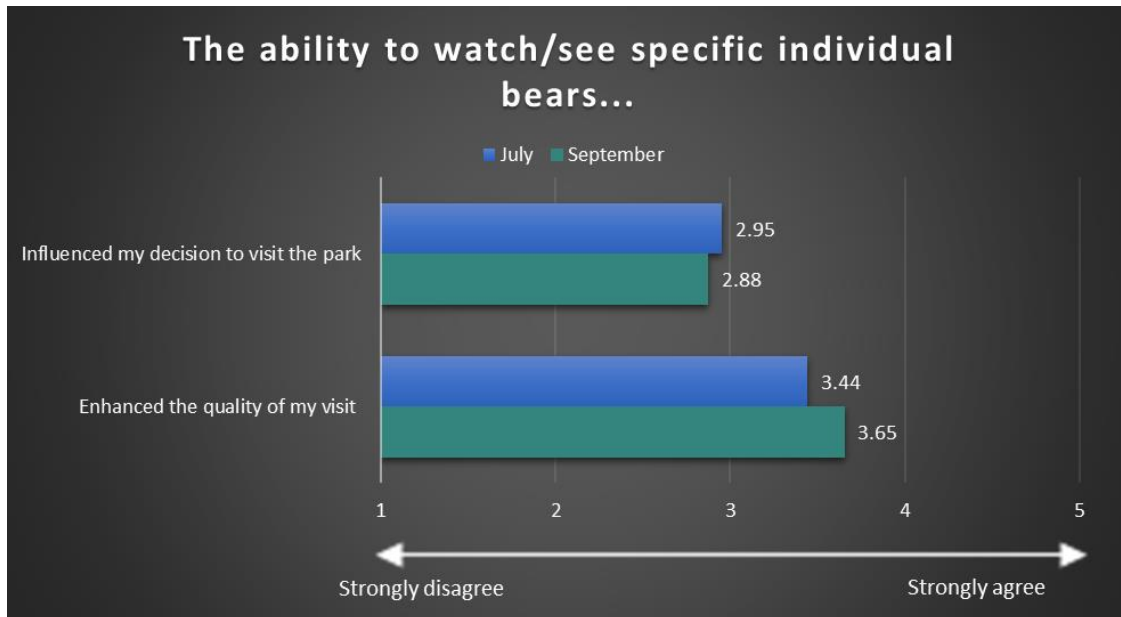
Figure 21: During this trip, how many individual bears were you able to identify/recognize?



On a 5-point Likert-type scale with 1 denoting strongly disagree, 3 denoting neither agree nor disagree, and 5 denoting strongly agree, we asked respondents to report their agreement with two statements:

- The ability to watch/see specific individual bears influenced my decision to visit the park. July: Mean = 2.95; September: Mean = 2.88.
- The ability to watch/see specific individual bears enhanced the quality of my visit. July: Mean = 3.44; September: Mean = 3.65.

Figure 22: Did the ability to watch or see specific individual bears at Brooks Camp influence the decision to visit or enhance the quality of the visit?



Bear Cams

This survey provided a rare opportunity to document how Brooks Camp visitors utilize the bear cams and whether the bear cams have an influence on their visit. Figures 23 - 28 display results of questions concerning the bear cams at Brooks River.

Most respondents (July: 83%; September: 84%) knew about the bear cams before they arrived. Similar numbers also had watched the bear cams (July 83%; September: 90%) before they arrived. Among September visitors, the amount of time respondents had been watching the bear cams was somewhat evenly distributed and ranged from 18% who had watched for less than one month to 24% who had watched for more than four years. Among July visitors, however, 44% had watched for less than one month. High numbers of respondents planned to watch the webcams after they returned home (July: 81%; September: 79%). When asked why they started watching the bear cams, respondents chose 'to learn about Katmai' (July: 42%; September: 39%) and 'due to friends and family' (July: 29%; September: 26%) most often among six possible choices.

Figure 23: Before arriving here, did you know you could watch these bears live online?



Figure 24: Have you watched these live webcams?

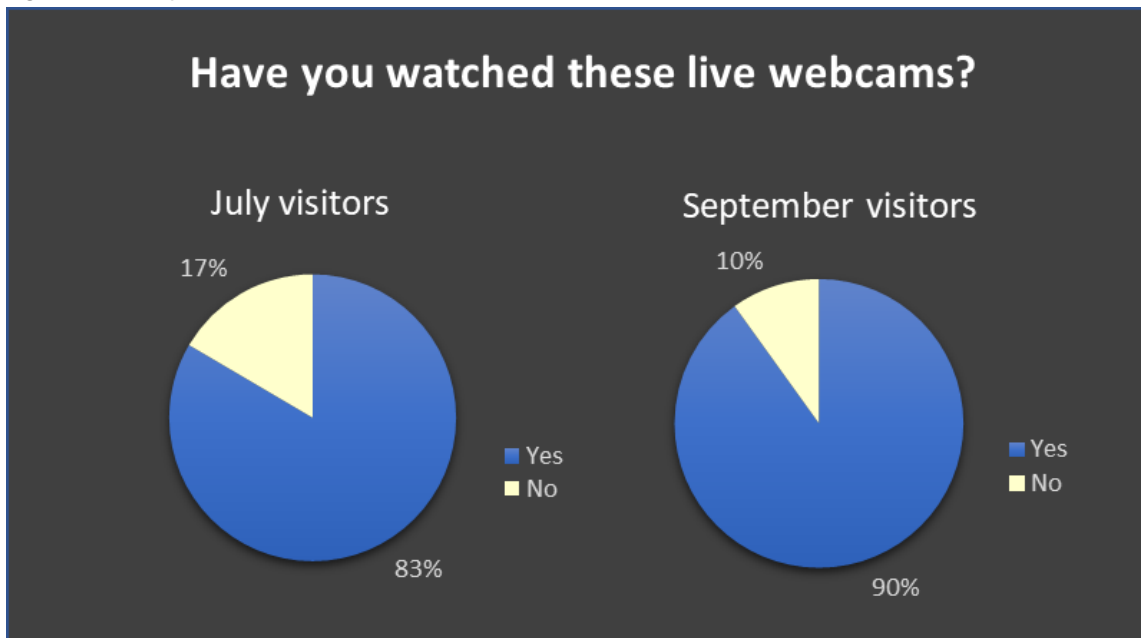


Figure 25: How long have you been watching the webcams?

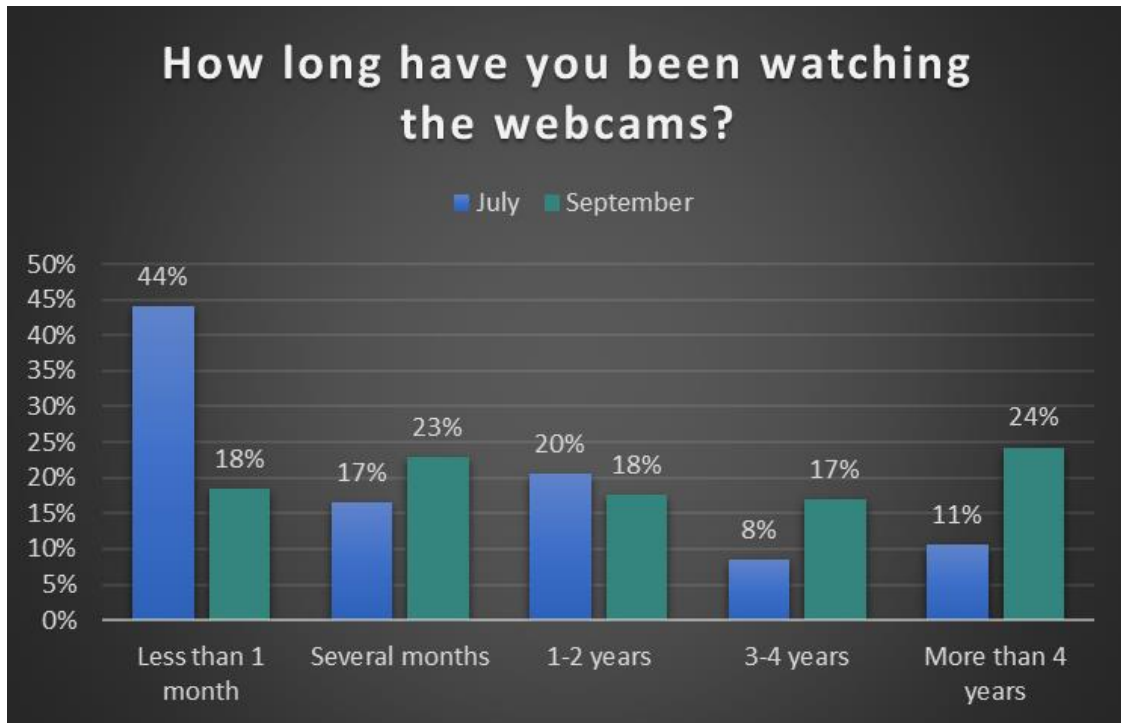


Figure 26: Do you plan to watch the webcams after you return home?

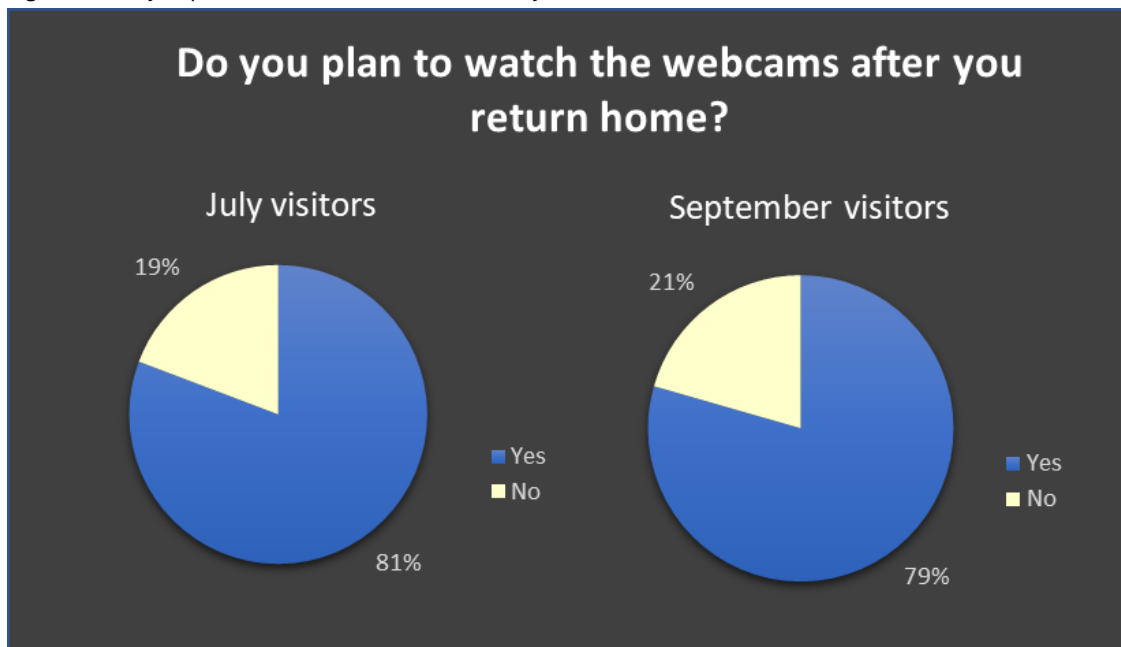
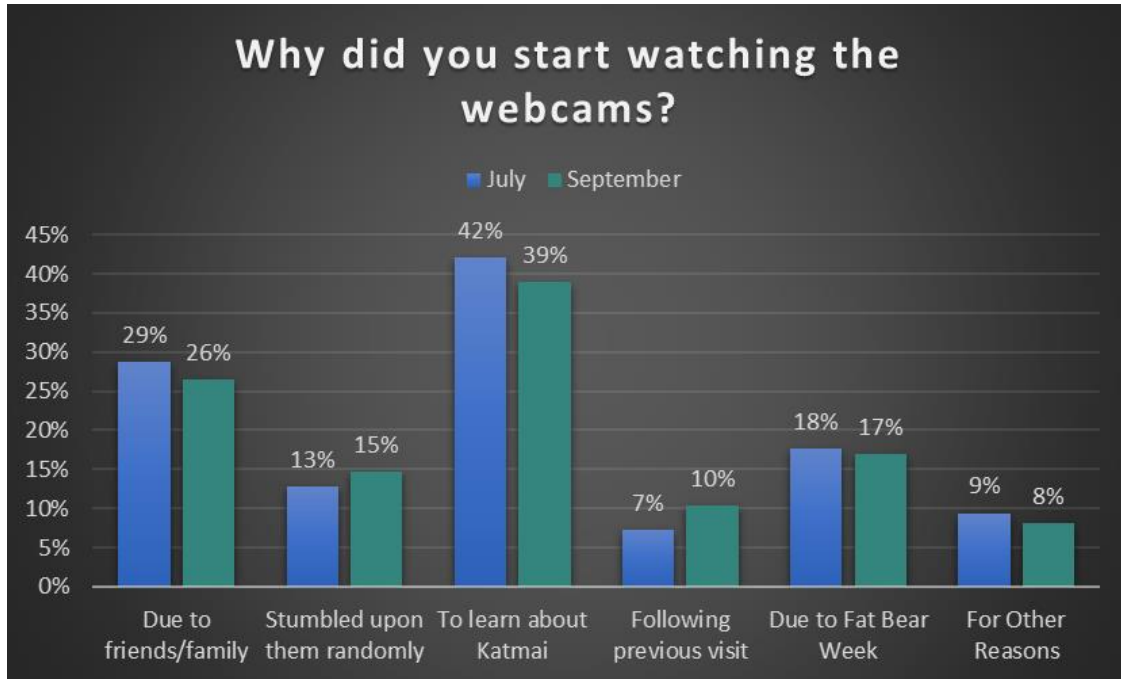


Figure 27*: Why did you start watching the webcams?

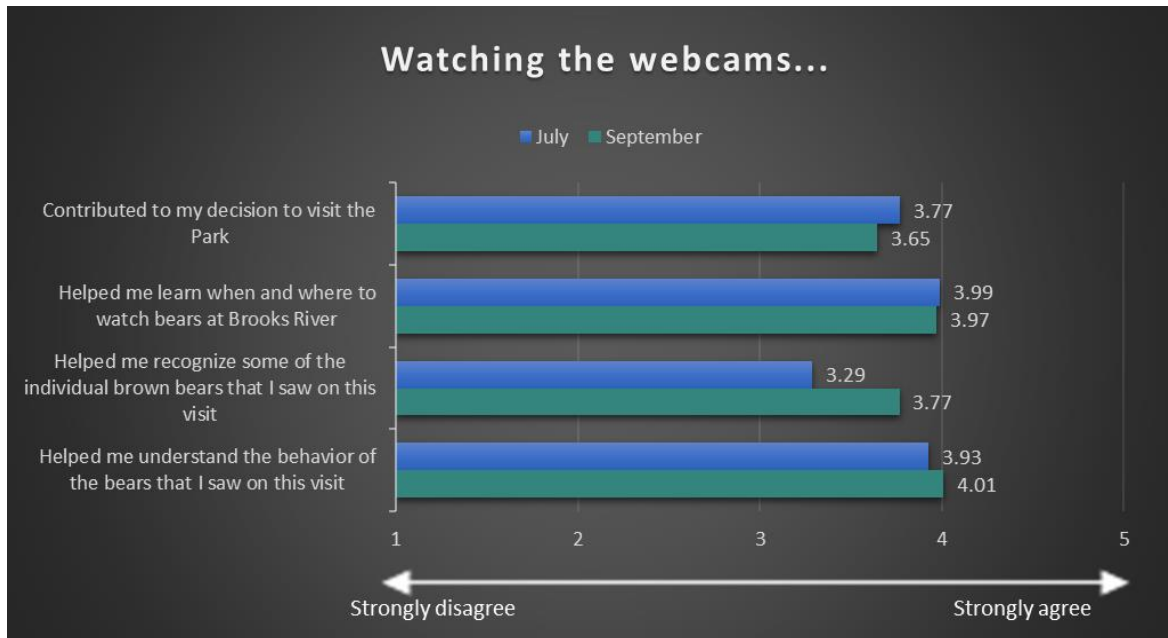
*Check all that apply



We also asked a series of questions to evaluate whether watching the bear cams influenced the quality of a person's visit to Brooks Camp (Figures 28). Respondents were asked to rank their agreement with statements on a Likert-type 5-point scale with 1 denoting strongly disagree, 3 denoting neither agree nor disagree, and 5 denoting strongly agree.

- Watching the webcams contributed to my decision to visit the park. July: Mean = 3.77; September: Mean = 3.65.
- Watching the webcams helped me learn when and where to watch bears at Brooks River. July: Mean = 3.99; September: Mean = 3.97.
- Watching the webcams helped me recognize some of the individual bears I saw on this visit. July: Mean = 3.29; September: Mean = 3.77.
- Watching the webcams helped me understand the behavior of the bears I saw on this visit. July: Mean = 3.93; September: Mean = 4.01.

Figure 28: How does watching the webcams (bear cams) affect the Brooks Camp visitor experience?



Willingness to Pay

Survey participants were asked a series of questions to determine the value they place on the preservation of Katmai’s brown bears. Using a well-accepted economic technique referred to as the contingent valuation method, respondents were asked a hypothetical scenario about their willingness to donate money to prevent the loss of an individual bear. The intention is not to make people actually pay money, but rather to determine the value of a non-market resource that people don’t pay for directly, such as the preservation of brown bears. The goal is to estimate the value of a good or service that is not traded in an actual market. Results can be used to help make decisions on how to use scarce financial resources for conservation. This report summarizes the survey questions used to capture the valuation data. Further analysis is necessary to evaluate the results.

Respondents were first asked a series of awareness questions.

Figure 29: Did you know that around 2,200 bears inhabit the park and 80 use the Brooks Camp area every summer?

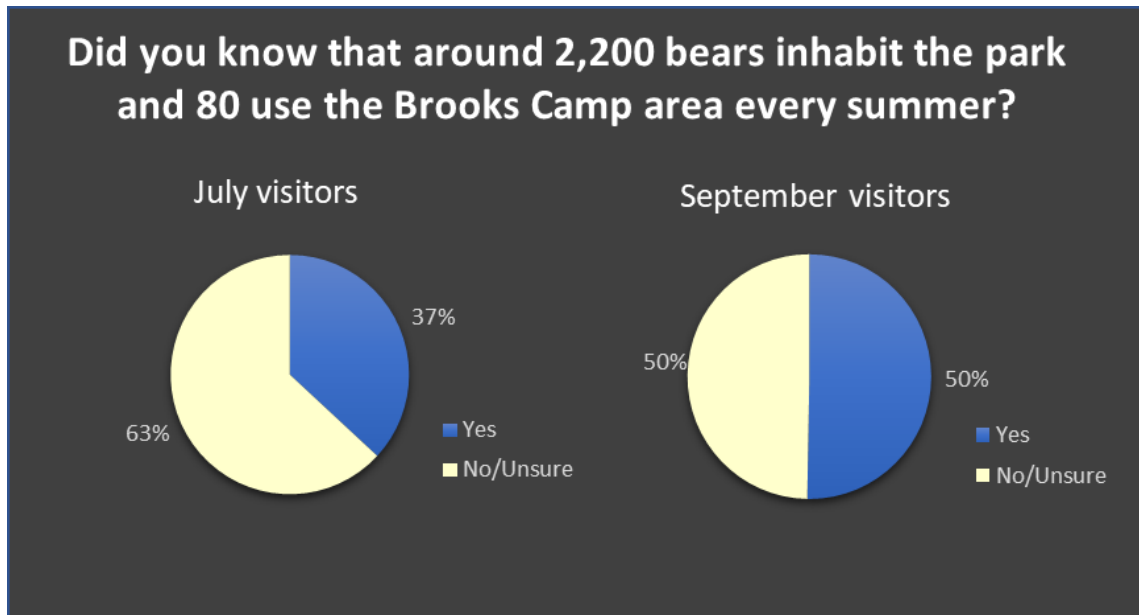
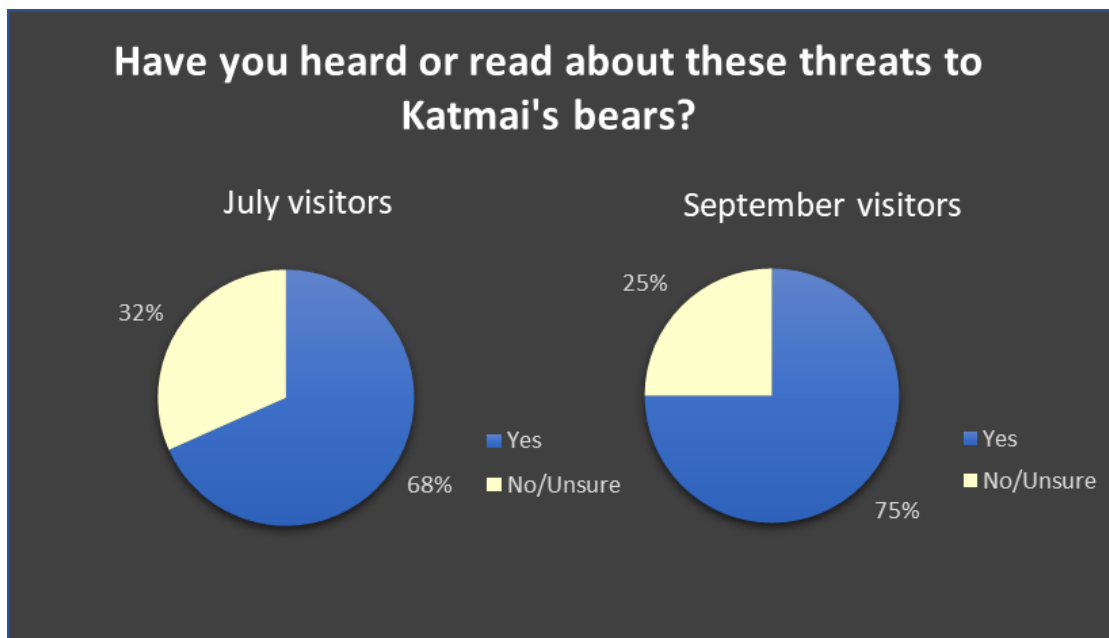


Figure 30: Katmai’s brown bear population is currently abundant and healthy. They are sustained by some of the largest wild salmon runs in the world. However, individual bears at Brooks River still face various threats. Climate change can negatively impact salmon runs through drought and high water temperatures. With fewer salmon to eat, some bears may experience greater difficulty building the body fat necessary to survive winter hibernation. Mother bears can also experience smaller litters of cubs and reproduce less often with less food such as salmon. Further, although it is rare, bears are sometimes poached or killed in defense of human life or property in and around the park. Have you heard or read about these threats to Katmai’s bears?



Respondents were then given a hypothetical scenario about brown bear preservation and asked if they would be willing to pay \$X annually for the next 5 years to protect one brown bear per year

on average. \$X ranged from \$5 to \$500 and was randomly assigned. Each respondent received one value. This is the scenario presented to respondents:

To address and reduce these threats, suppose a Katmai Bear Preservation Trust Fund is established to pay for activities to minimize threats to individual bears. These include:

- an expanded habitat monitoring program,
- more ranger patrols in Brooks River to enforce wildlife distance regulations and protect fishing access for bears, and
- research and education efforts focused on minimizing threats to the individual bears that frequent Brooks Camp.

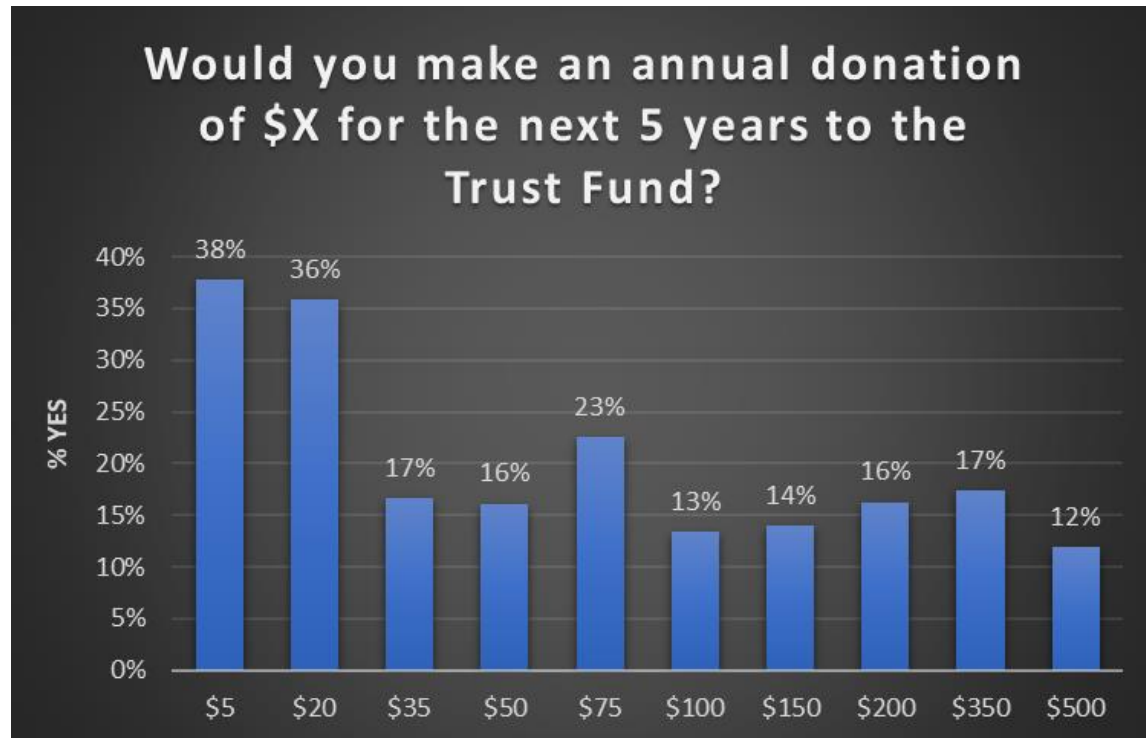
If the Trust Fund were established, we expect it would prevent the loss of one bear per year, on average.

The Trust Fund would only be financially viable and established if \$1,000,000 in donations are raised. If the total amount is not raised, the Trust Fund would not be established and individual donations would be refunded. If donations are greater than this amount, the extra money would be used for additional research activities. Would you make a donation of \$X annually for the next 5 years to the Katmai Bear Preservation Trust Fund? When making this decision, please consider your budget, what you can afford, and other items you may want to spend your money on. Also, remember that many of the bears in Katmai National Park and Preserve are never seen by park visitors.

July Visitors

Figure 31*: Would you make an annual donation of \$X for the next 5 years to the Trust Fund?

*July respondents only.



September Visitors

Figure 32*: Would you make an annual donation of \$X for the next 5 years to the Trust Fund?

*September respondents only.

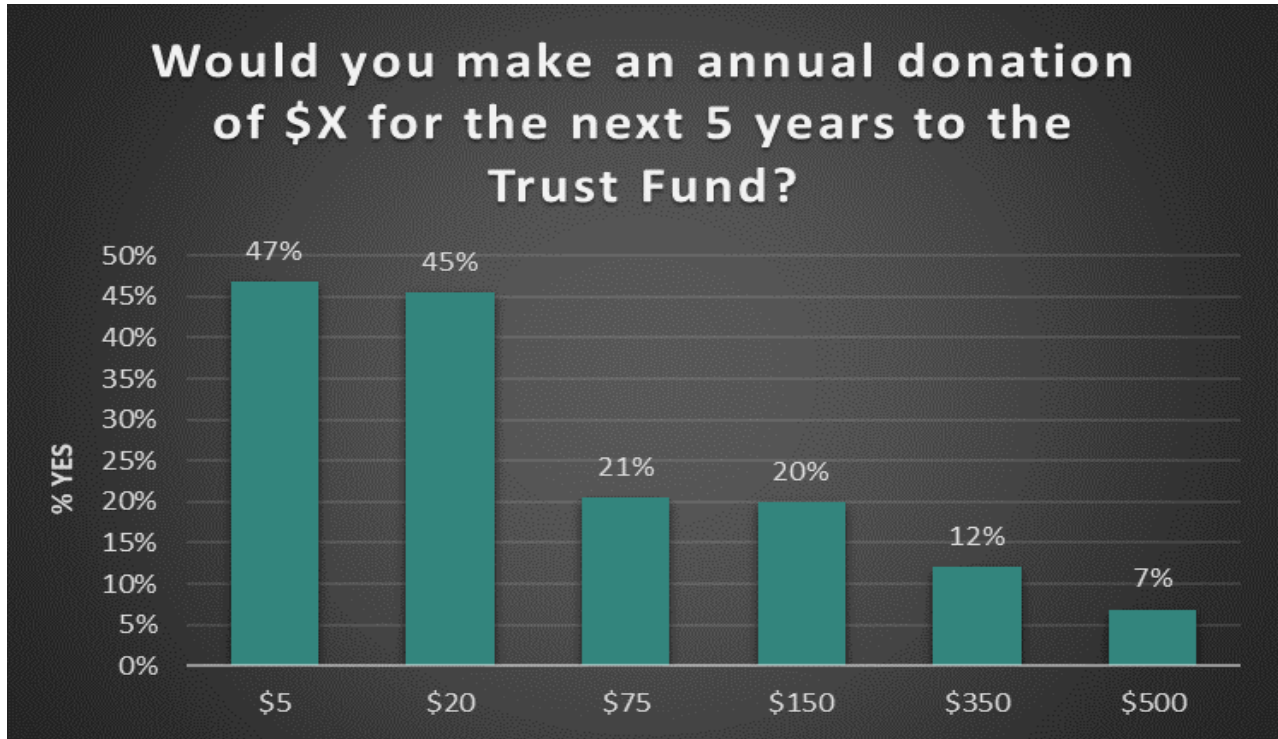
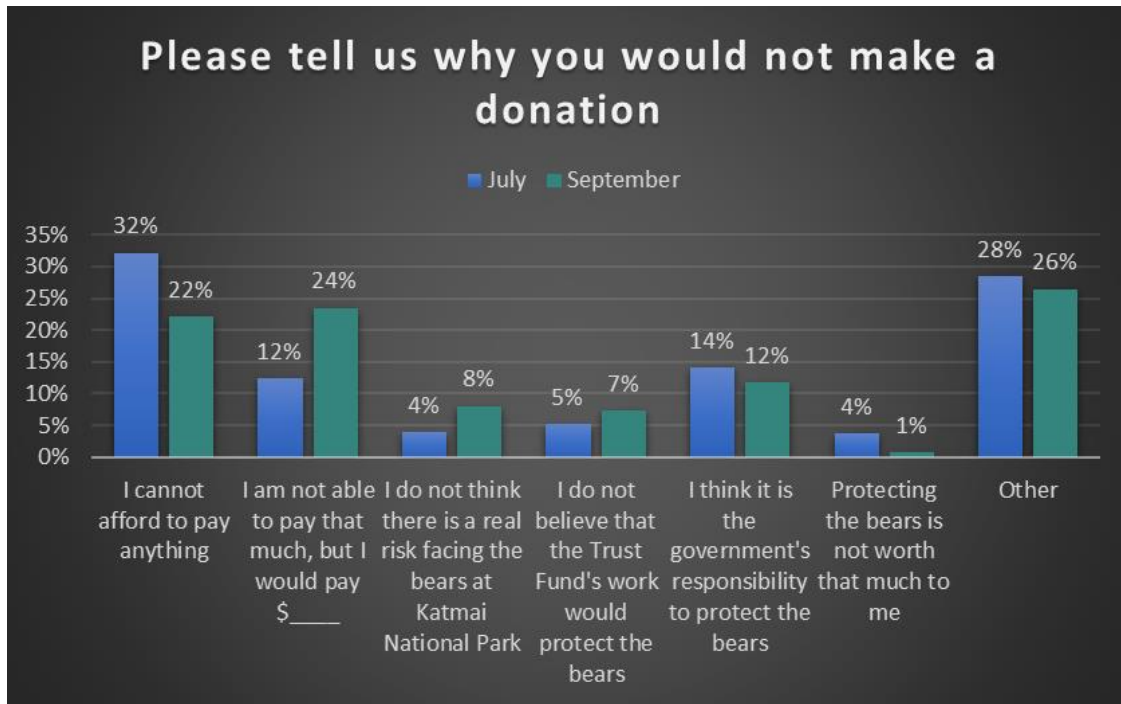


Figure 33: Please tell us why you would not make a donation.



The willingness to pay question was followed by questions that asked whether respondents understood the questions and trusted that the Trust could achieve the goals outlined. Answers that suggested that respondents did not understand or did not take the question seriously were removed as is best practice.

Figure 34: I have confidence that the Trust Fund could achieve the goals outlined.

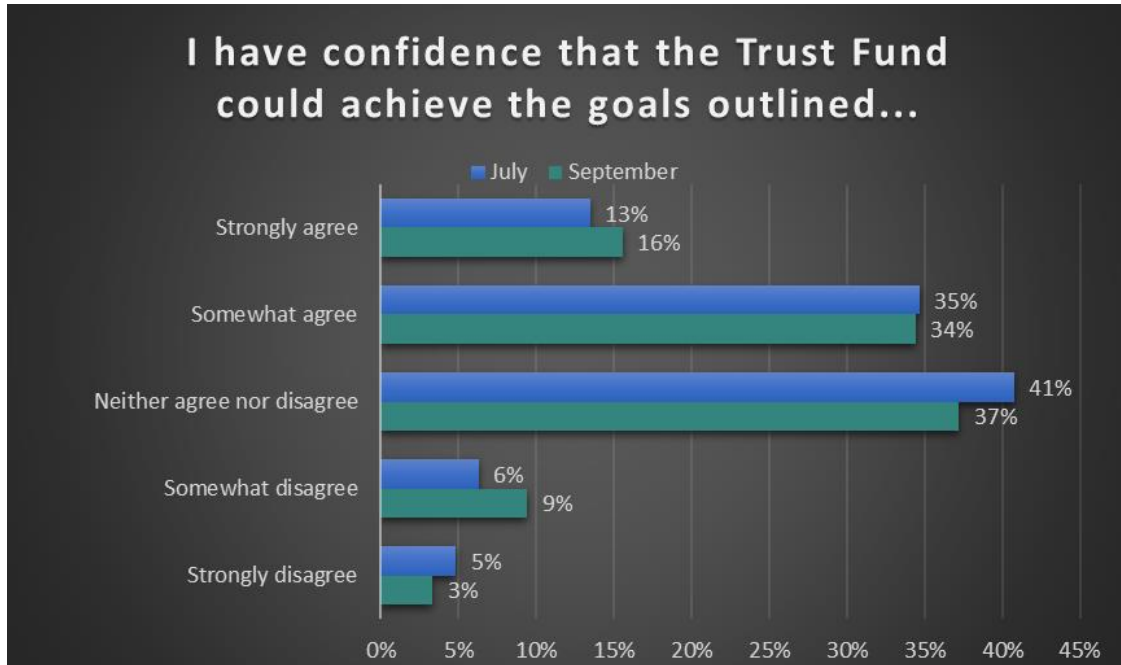


Figure 35: I understand all of the information presented to me.

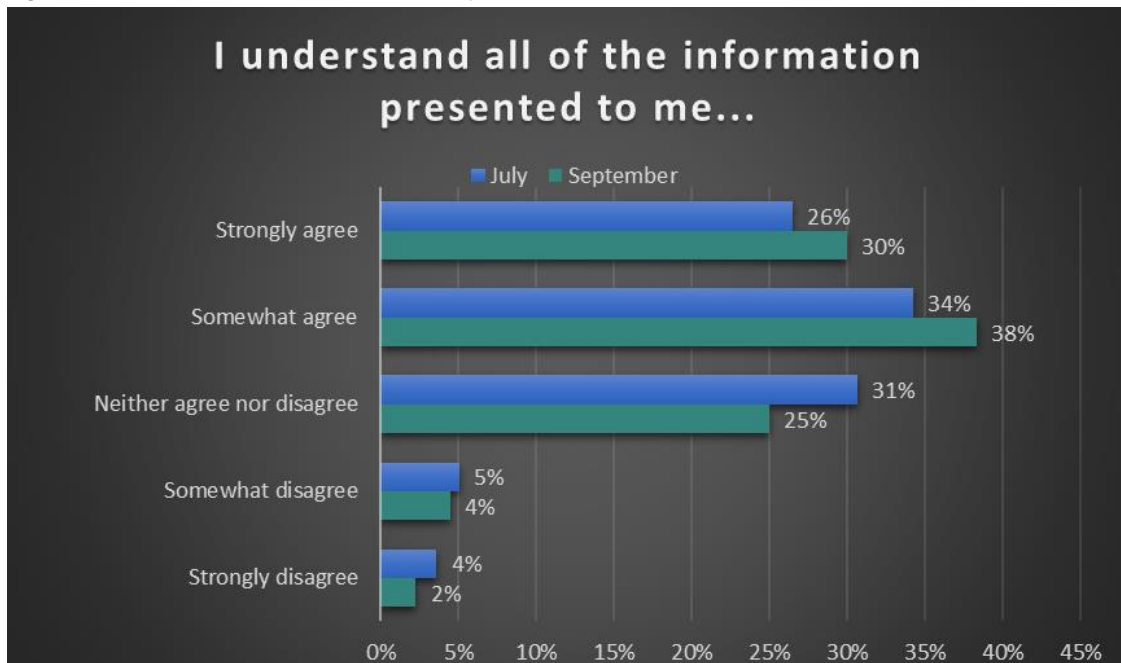
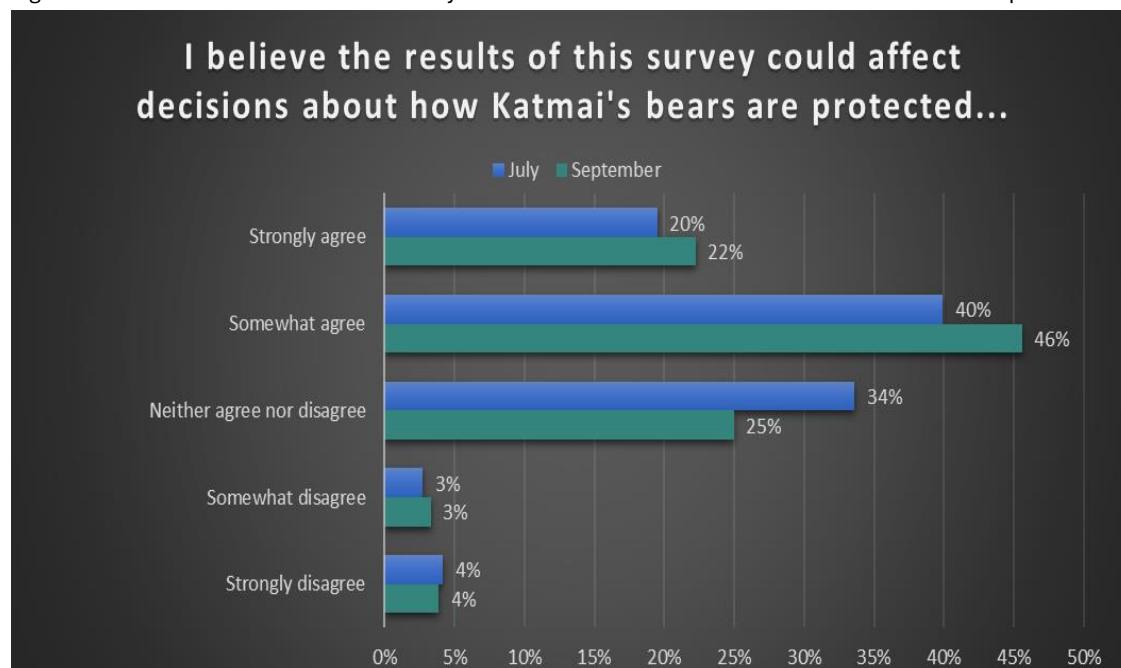


Figure 36: I believe the results of this survey could affect decisions about how Katmai's bears are protected.



Respondent Demographics

Ninety-two percent of July respondents and 94% of September respondents reside in the United States. During the July survey period, the other countries of residence included Albania (1), Armenia (2), Australia (3), Bahrain (1), Brazil (1), Canada (11), China (1), France (1), Germany (4), India (3), Israel (2), Japan (2), Netherlands (1), Spain (1), Sweden (1), and the United Kingdom (2). During the September survey period, the other countries of residence included Armenia (1), Australia (4), Canada (1), China (1), France (1), Italy (1), and Spain (1).

Fifty-four percent of July respondents stated their gender was female and 42% stated they were male. Fifty-seven percent of September respondents stated their gender was female and 41% stated they were male. Most respondents (July: 56%; September: 69%) are 45 years old or older. Forty-eight percent of July respondents and 47% of September respondents were full-time salaried employees, while 25% of July respondents and 27% of September respondents were retired. The three most common household sizes for July respondents were two people (53%), 3-4 people (24%), and 1 person (19%). The three most common household sizes for September respondents were 2 people (46%), one person (27%), and 3-4 people (24%).

Most respondents (July: 78%; September: 80%) had a bachelor's degree or higher level of education. Most respondents (July: 55%; September: 56%) reported annual household incomes of \$100,000 or greater. Twenty-two percent of July respondents and 25% of September respondents reported annual household incomes of \$200,000 or greater.

Figure 37: In which country do you currently reside?

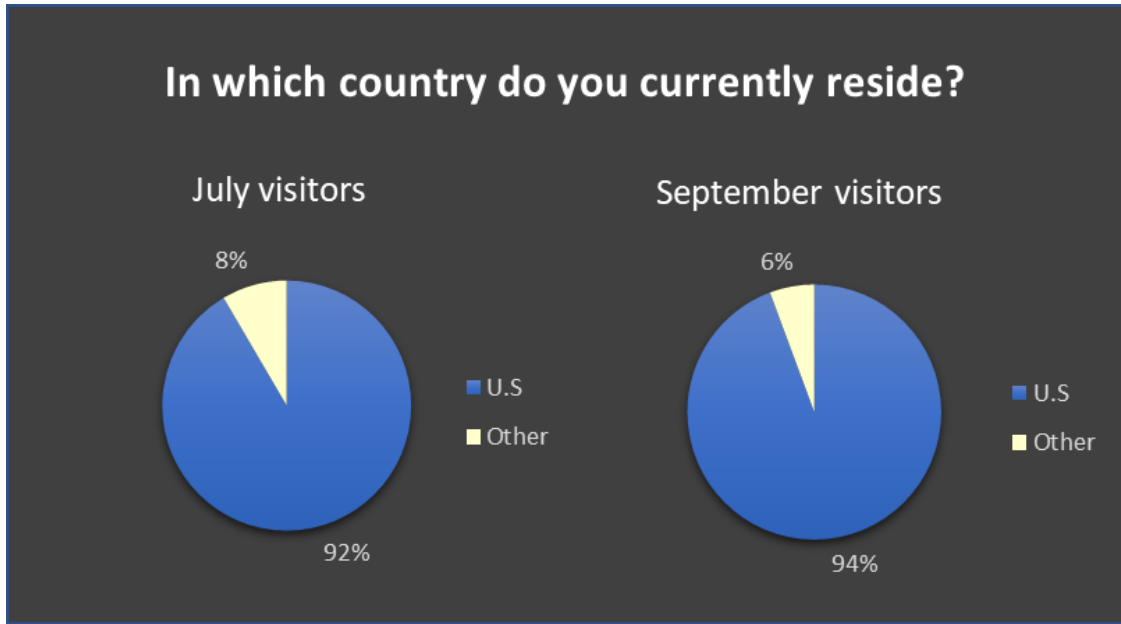


Figure 38: What is your gender?

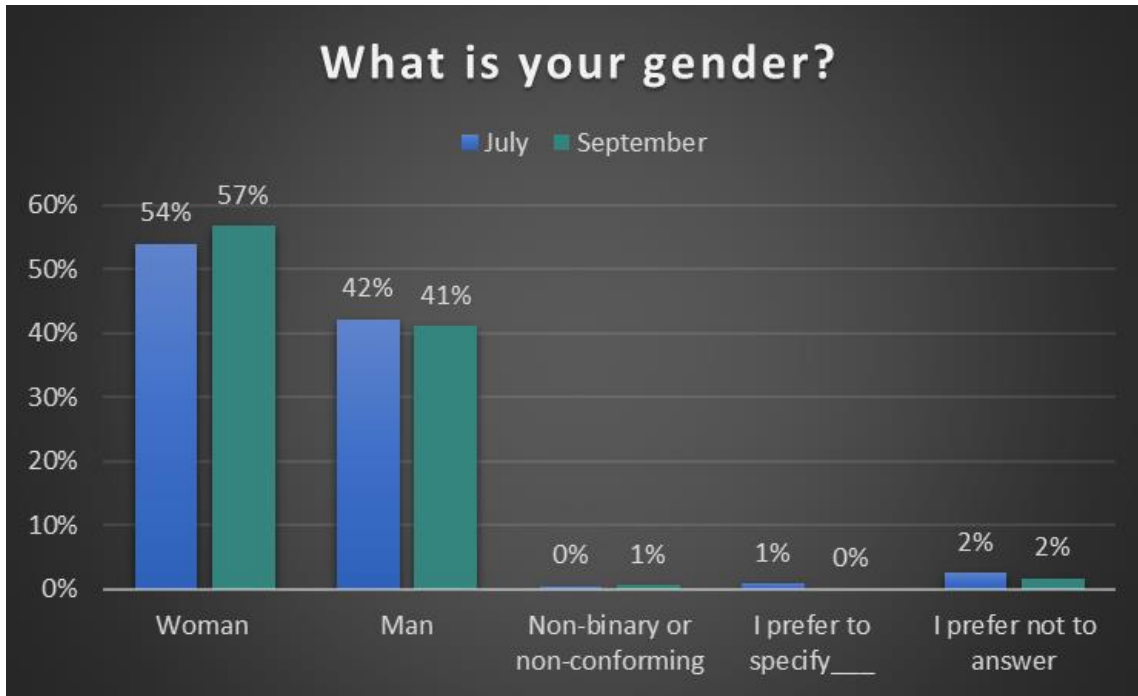


Figure 39: What is your current age?

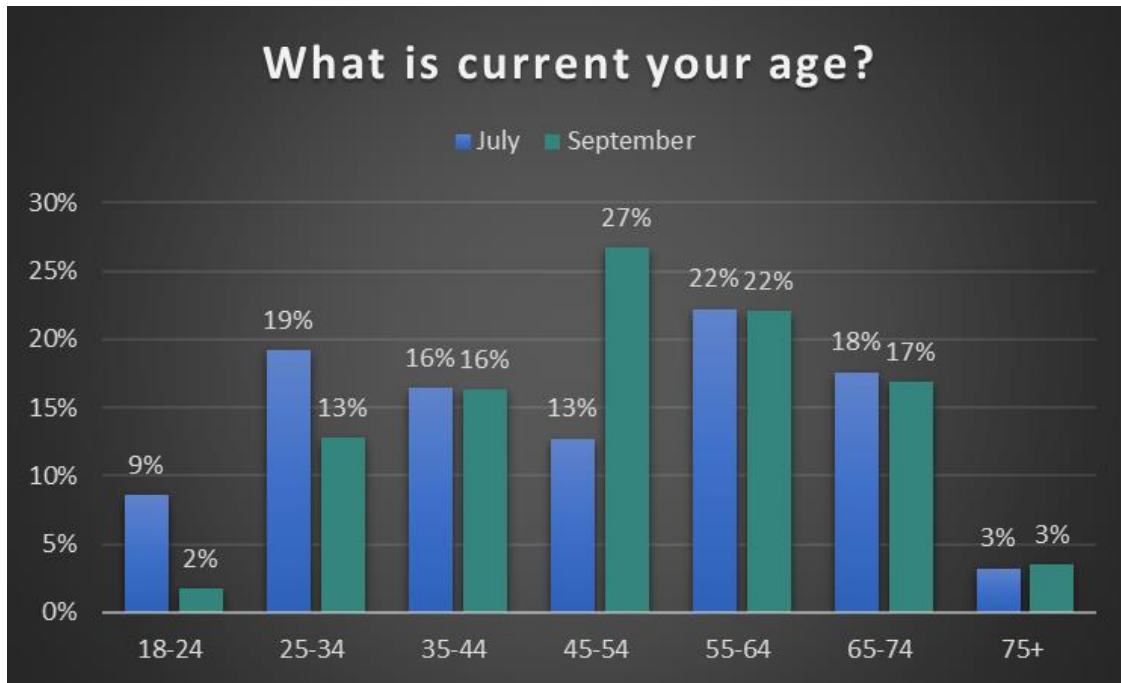


Figure 40: What is your employment status?

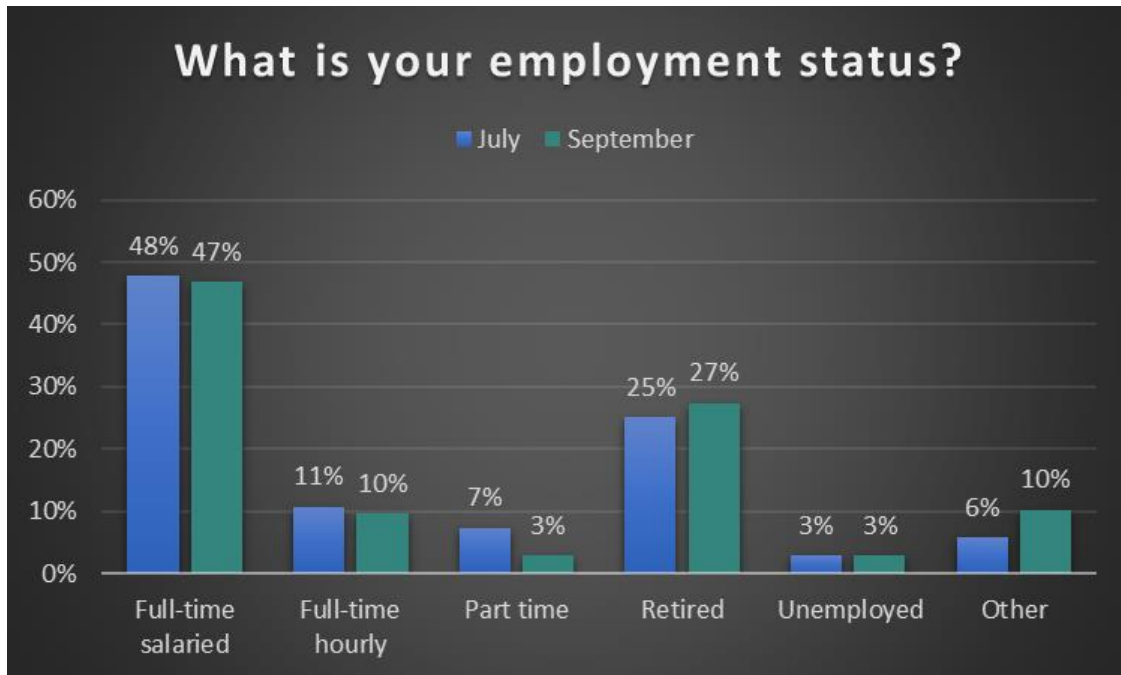


Figure 41: What is your household size?

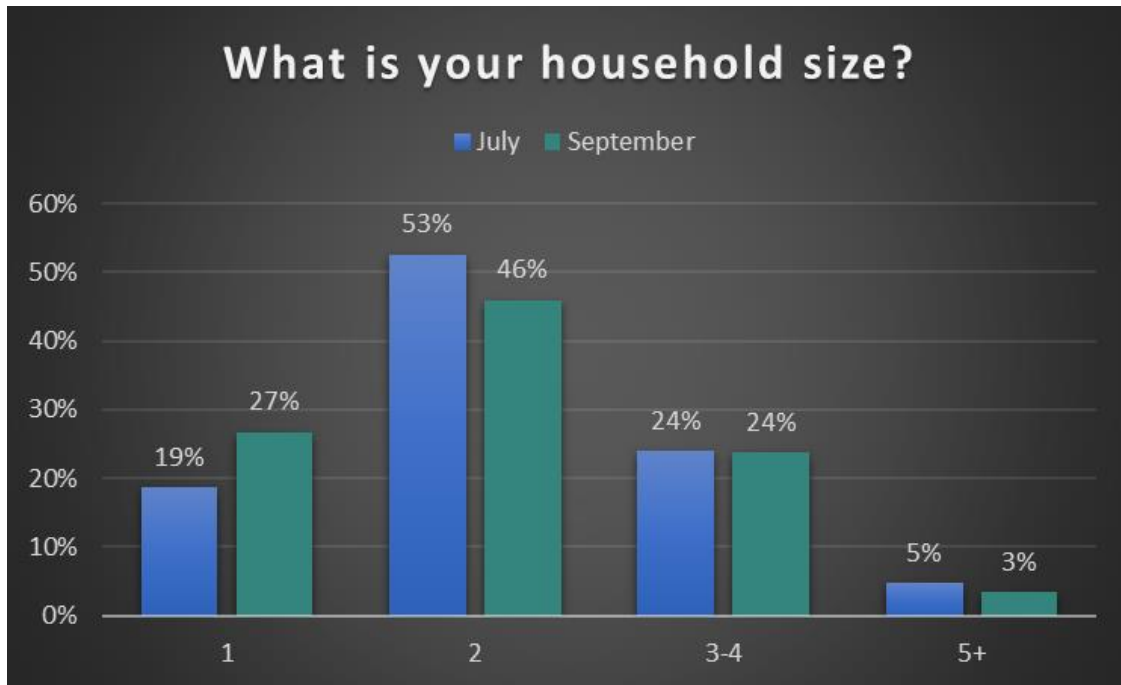


Figure 42: What is the highest degree of schooling you have attained?

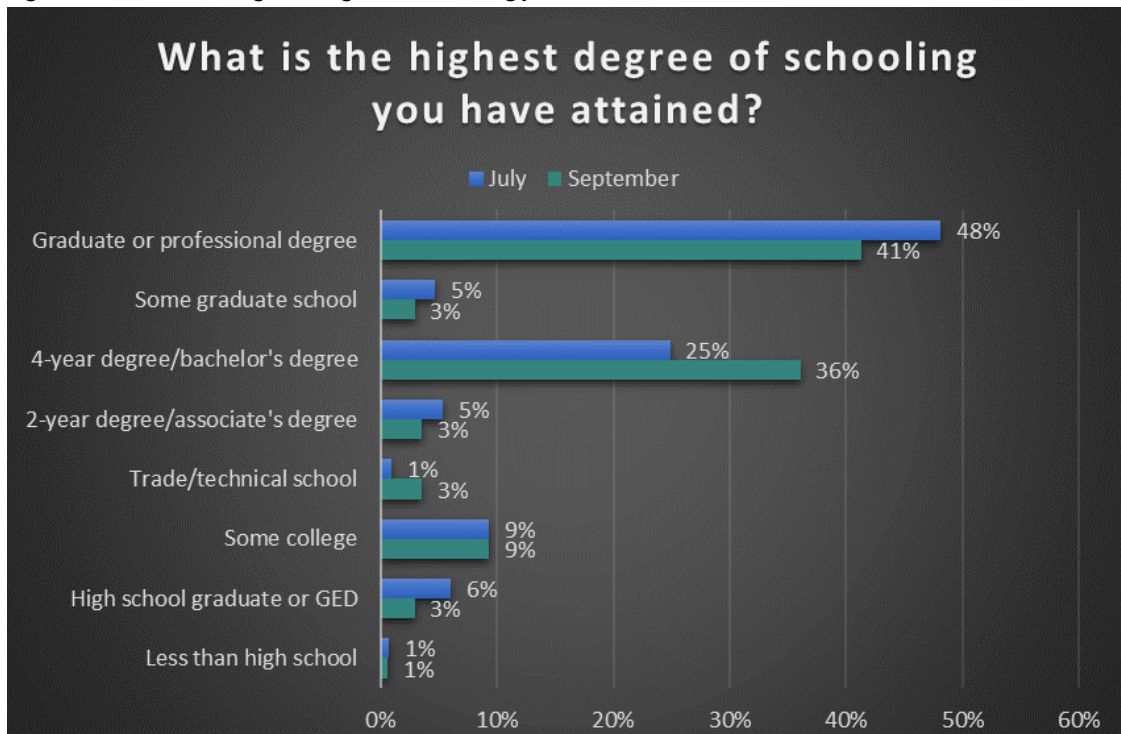


Figure 43: What is your annual income (U.S. dollars)?

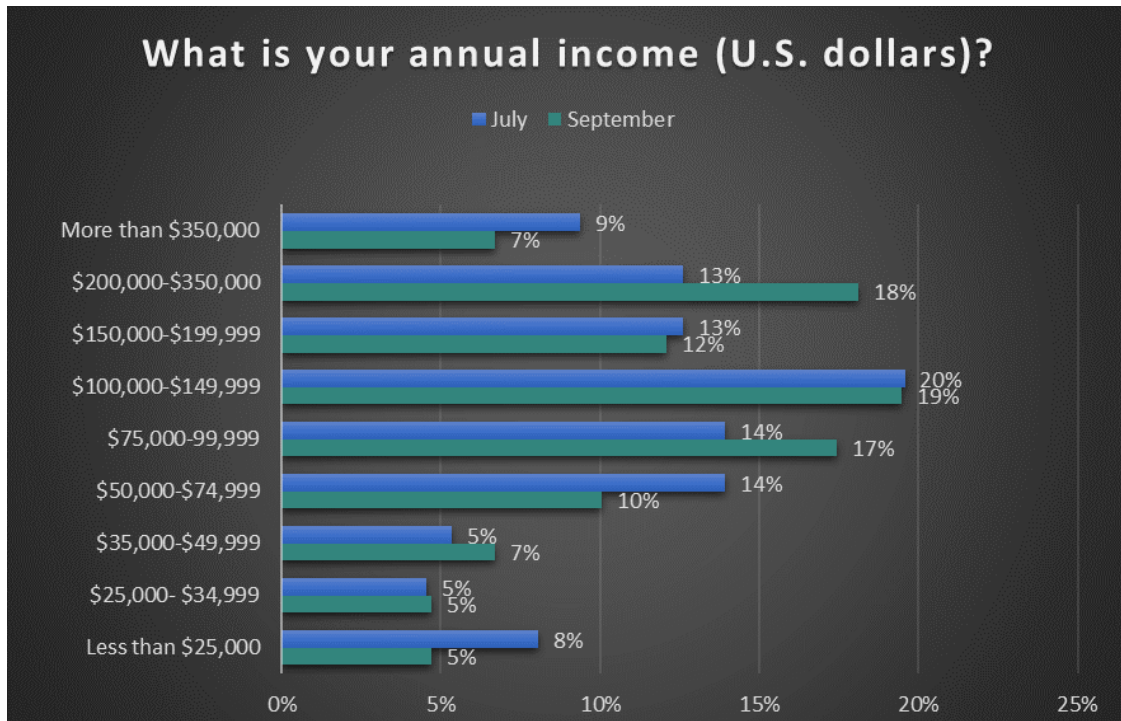
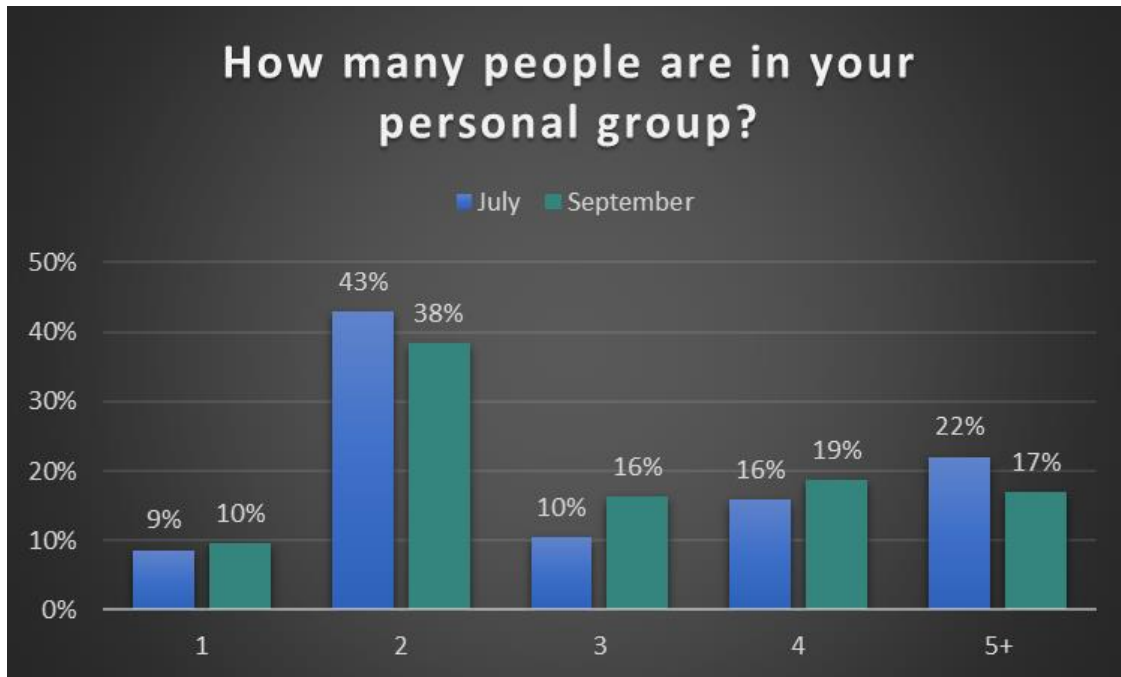


Figure 44: How many people are in your personal group?



Summary, Limitations, and Recommendations

Trip Characteristics

The trip characteristics of respondents in our survey are similar to those documented in prior surveys (Strawn and Le 2015, Sharp et al 2017). The 2014 park-wide survey by Strawn and Le found that 74% of visitors were on their first trip ever to Katmai. Sharp et al (2017) reported that 84% of visitors were first time visitors to Brooks Camp. Our survey also found high numbers of first-time visitors among respondents. Eighty percent of July respondents were visiting for the first time, but only 64% of September respondents were first time visitors.

Congestion and Visitor Experience

Visitation during both survey periods was similar to the same dates in 2022 (Table 4), even though overall visitation was higher for the summer season in 2022 than 2023 (Figure 1). The highest number of bear orientation attendees during our July 5 – 13 survey period was 389 on July 13. The highest number of bear orientation attendees during our September 11 – 17 survey period was 106 on September 11. Future surveys could evaluate visitor perspectives later in July or outside of the traditional July and September bear-viewing seasons at Brooks Camp. For example, visitation has grown substantially in August (unpublished NPS Brooks Camp visitation statistics) corresponding with an increase in mid-summer bear activity at the river compared to historic norms (Fitz, personal observations). Excluding 2020, the 2019-2023 August average of bear orientation attendance was 3,776, while the 2014-2018 August average of bear orientation attendance was 1,722.

Table 4: Average bear orientation attendees per day during the 2023 survey period compared with the same days in 2022. Attendance at the orientation approximates the daily visitation at Brooks Camp (Unpublished NPS Brooks Camp Visitation Statistics).

| | 2022 Daily Average Bear Orientation Attendance | 2023 Daily Average Bear Orientation Attendance |
|-------------------|--|--|
| July 5 – 13 | 264 | 286 |
| September 11 – 17 | 85 | 64 |

It is possible that the level of satisfaction expressed by respondents for the current Falls Platform management scenario is due to the efficient work of park staff. Most respondents across both survey periods agreed that the variety of different places to view bears, interactions with rangers, and the bear school orientation and safety talk contributed positively to their experience (Figures 10 - 13). These are additional components of the experience managed by NPS staff.

Some survey results regarding congestion/crowding should be viewed with caution. For example, respondents experienced only one management scenario for the Falls Platform during the survey period and this option was preferred most among respondents. Visitors may have preferred other platform management scenarios if they experienced those instead. More clarity could be gained by experimenting with different platform management scenarios while surveying visitors'

preferences for each. Additionally, respondents may not have always differentiated between access to the Riffles Wildlife Viewing Platform (Riffles Platform) and the Falls Platform.⁸ The Riffles Platform is part of the elevated boardwalk complex near Brooks Falls and is often used by people waiting for access to the Falls Platform, but park staff do not actively manage its capacity or maintain a waitlist for it. The 2023 survey team reported that many new visitors did not know which platform was which.

Respondents were broadly supportive of limits to the number of visitors if needed to protect visitors' experiences, to protect visitors' safety, to reduce environmental impacts, and to protect brown bears and other wild animals (Figure 16). Support for 'visitors' safety' differed in a statistically significant manner compared to the other categories, especially compared to protecting brown bears and other wildlife. Maybe Brooks Camp visitors viewed the available options in the question as mutually exclusive, or they did not correlate overall visitor safety with the protection of brown bears, or they perceive Brooks Camp to be safe regardless of numbers of visitors. Anecdotally, some visitors articulated to survey takers that Brooks Camp felt like a zoo and that they felt very safe. Overnight visitors also supported limits on visitation at much higher levels than respondents visiting on day trips (Table 2). We did not investigate the reason for the difference. A follow up study could seek to examine this pattern and the reasons for it. Please see Appendix A for respondent comments about congestion/crowding.

A prior survey (Skibins and Sharp 2018) also found support for restrictions on visitation to Brooks Camp to protect brown bears. That survey asked Brooks Camp visitors and online bear cam viewers to report the likelihood of their support for restrictive management such as limiting visitor access if it had a positive impact for brown bears. They found that online and onsite visitors expressed strong support for more restrictive management. On their 9-point Likert-type scale—with 1 being extremely unlikely, 5 neutral, and 9 extremely likely—mean scores were 8.09 (online) and 6.95 (onsite). Our survey results are not directly comparable to Skibins and Sharp (2018) since our management restriction scenarios were presented as a yes/no question rather than on a 1-9 scale. Yet, these results affirm that support for management restrictions to protect brown bears exists among onsite visitors to Brooks Camp.

Bear Viewing

Environmental economics as well as wildlife conservation and science has begun to place greater emphasis on the study and interpretation of individual animals (Costello et al 2023, Richardson and Lewis 2022, Skibins et al 2023, Wilkinson 2023), and we saw an opportunity to explore how Brooks Camp visitors relate to and value individual bears.

Seventy percent of July and 91% of September respondents knew that many of the bears at Brooks River have been identified with numbers/nicknames. More overnight respondents (91%) than day trip respondents (66%) knew that many bears at the river had been identified with numbers/nicknames. The increase in respondent knowledge from July to September and among

⁸ Surveyors noticed that many day visitors did not know the difference and many went straight out to the Riffles Platform since there was no wait and there were bears to see in that location.

overnight compared to day trip visitors might be explained by greater exposure to the webcams over the summer season or due to the lower proportion of day trip visitors in September compared to July. Many day trip visitors may not know they are going to Brooks Camp. Guides and pilots must contend with inclement weather that can prevent excursions to Brooks Camp. Day trip visitors might also have signed up for a bear viewing tour as part of their Alaska vacation (such as a cruise) and not investigated where they would go specifically.

Follow up questions among respondents investigated whether the chance to see individual bears affected the decision to visit and the quality of the visit to Brooks Camp (Figure 22). As noted previously, respondents slightly disagreed that the ability to watch/see specific individual bears influenced their *decision* to visit. Respondents slightly agreed that the ability to watch/see specific individual bears *enhanced* the quality of their visit. While the aggregate data for both statements skewed only slightly from neutral (neither agree nor disagree), notable differences in respondent answers are also apparent. In particular, “The ability to see specific bears at Brooks Camp influenced by decision to visit the park” generated polarizing responses (Figure 45). Among July respondents, nearly equal numbers of respondents either strongly agreed (24%) or strongly disagreed (26%), while 32% neither agreed nor disagreed. A similar pattern occurred among September respondents, although a greater proportion of September respondents (30%) strongly disagreed. Yet, a combined majority of respondents (July: 52%; September 58%) either strongly agreed or somewhat agreed that the ability to watch specific bears enhanced the quality of the visit (Figure 46).

Figure 45: The ability to see specific bears influenced my decision to visit the park. Results expressed as percentages.

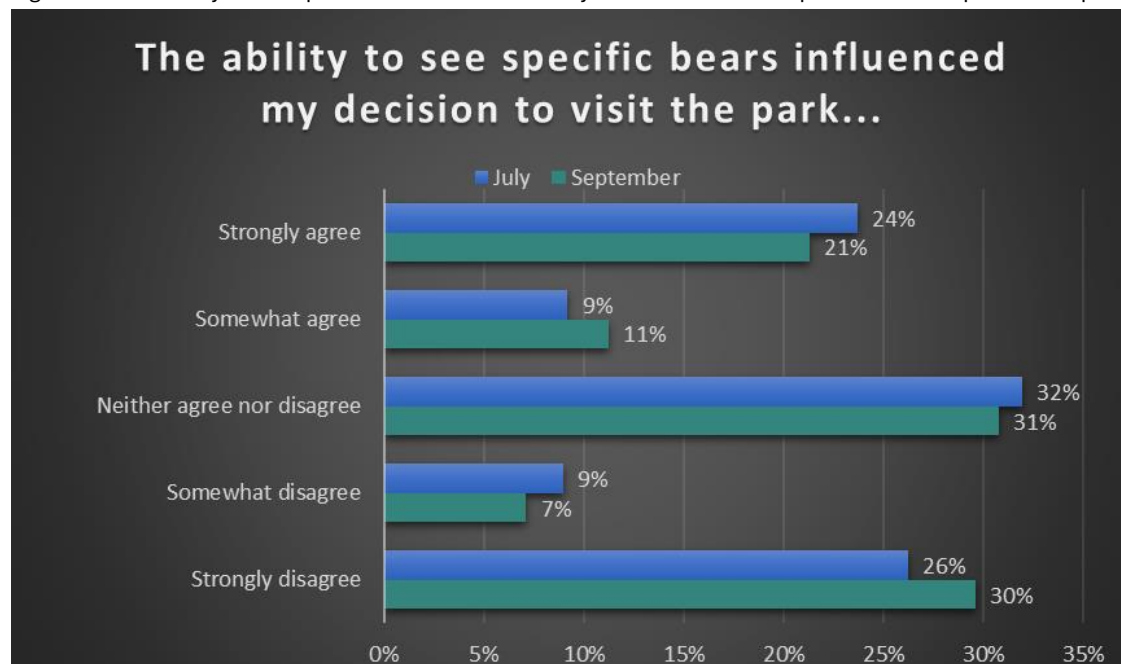
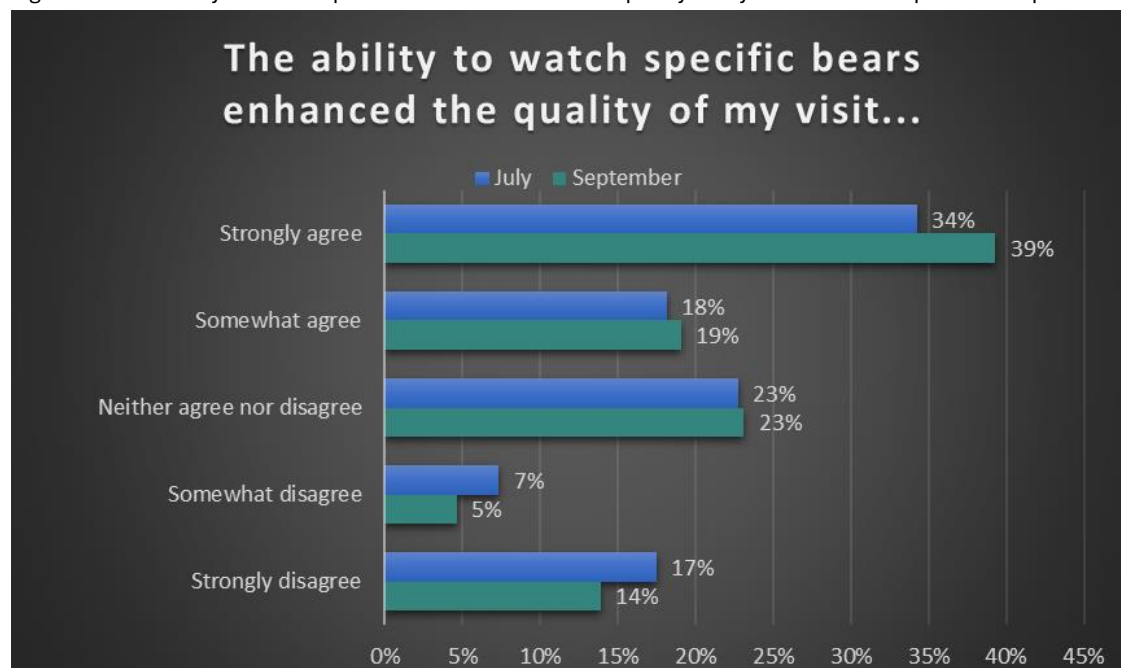


Figure 46: The ability to watch specific bears enhanced the quality of my visit. Results expressed as percentages.



Even if many visitors do not come to Brooks Camp with the intention of watching specific individual bears, it can quickly become apparent that bears are recognizable on an individual level and that their behaviors vary. Visitors may come to Brooks Camp just to see bears, but during their time at Brooks Camp they may make connections with individual bears and realize that there is value in watching certain individuals. By helping the public recognize individual bears and by highlighting and interpreting the behavior of individual bears at Brooks River, park staff can enhance the bear watching experience for more people.

Bear Cams

Respondents largely agreed that watching the webcams contributed to their decision to visit, helped them learn when and where to watch bears at Brooks River, helped them recognize some of the individual brown bears that they saw, and helped them understand the behavior of the bears that they saw (Figure 28). Overall, these results indicate that the bear cams contributed positively to the in-person experience at Brooks Camp. The biggest difference between July and September respondents for these statements was for “Watching the webcams helped me recognize some of the individual brown bears that I saw on this visit.” With several additional weeks of webcam watching during the summer, September visitors are more likely to recognize individual bears than July visitors. NPS interpreters at Brooks Camp can use this information to prepare to interact with late summer visitors who may have more knowledge about individual bears at the river.

Forty-four percent of July respondents had watched the webcams for less than one month. This is more than double other self-reported watch times for July. This could have resulted from the length of time that the cams had been online for the summer up to that point in time (approximately three weeks), or because those respondents were merely using the cams to

evaluate bear activity at the river before their day of departure. Regardless of the reason, compared with September visitors July visitors are likely to have less experience watching the bear cams and less time to engage with interpretive programming on the cams.

Sharp et al (2017) previously found that 73% of onsite visitors to Brooks Camp were aware of the bear cams on explore.org. We document an increase in awareness of the bear cams among visitors (July: 83%; September: 84%). High numbers of respondents also planned to watch the webcams after they returned home (July: 81%; September: 79%).

The bear cams undoubtedly influence visitation at Brooks Camp and reach a significant number of Brooks Camp visitors before their visit. Interpretation on the cams could be utilized further to extend the visiting experience beyond the time visitors are physically at Brooks Camp. Additional programming on the cameras could target future Brooks Camp visitors to establish expectations about the bear-viewing experience, educate visitors about bear and human conflicts at Brooks River, and inform visitors about ways to reduce their impact on other people and bears while visiting.

Willingness to Pay Scenario

The economics analysis of the survey results is ongoing, but the environmental economists on the project intend to use the responses collected from the willingness to pay questions to estimate the value of an individual brown bear. These numbers can be useful for natural resource damage assessments and for benefit-cost analysis for rulemakings. Richardson and Lewis' (2022) survey of on-line bear viewers produced a lower-bound estimate of \$260,000 annually for the preservation of an individual brown bear.

Demographics

Respondent demographics in our survey largely mirrored the demographics of respondents in previous surveys at Brooks Camp (Sharp et al 2017) and for Katmai National Park (Strawn and Le 2015), especially regarding group size, education, household income, and age. More respondents identified as female (July: 54%; September: 57%) than male (July: 42%; September: 41%) in our survey. Sharp et al (2017) and Strawn and Le (2015) found a nearly 50/50 split between those genders. Most Brooks Camp visitors have high levels of formal education. Seventy-eight percent of July respondents and 80% of September respondents reported having a bachelor's degree or higher. Sharp et al (2017) found 69% of the onsite visitors reporting a bachelor's degree or higher, but Strawn and Le (2015) found that 81% of respondents had a bachelor's degree or higher. Most respondents (July: 55%; September: 56%) reported annual household incomes of \$100,000 or greater. Twenty-two percent of July respondents and 25% of September respondents reported annual household incomes of \$200,000 or greater. This is a slight increase in the reported incomes compared to the Brooks Camp survey of Sharp et al (2017) where 47% of onsite visitors reported an income over \$100,000, but it is similar to the findings of Strawn and Le (2015) in their Katmai-wide visitor survey.

Conclusion

Visitors to Katmai National Park and Preserve are passionate about the park and opportunities to view bears. Almost everyone we asked agreed to take our survey and many of them talked to us afterward about their experiences. We haven't shared many anecdotes here, but are certainly willing to do so. The comments in the appendix also provide additional insights into the visitor experience. These are divided into three tables. Table A1 includes comments related to "other" in the congestion management scenario⁹. Table A2 includes congestion-related comments given in response to the survey's last question, "Is there anything else you would like to tell us?" Table A3 are other general comments from the survey's last question.

Survey respondents overwhelmingly came to Brooks Camp to watch bears. The bear cams on explore.org also allow visitors to extend their experience beyond their time spent physically at Brooks River. This creates a unique wildlife-viewing experience within U.S. national parks. The cams could be further utilized to help people prepare for their time at Brooks Camp.

Respondents largely agreed that their overall experience was positive, which reflects the hard work and diligence of NPS staff. However, congestion and overcrowding raised concerns among them about bears, visitor safety, and the bear-watching experience. Respondents were supportive of restrictive management to protect safety, the experience, the environment, and wildlife. The sustainability of the current situation at Brooks Camp is questionable if visitation continues to increase and congestion will need to be taken into consideration during future management planning processes.

⁹ A surprising number of these comments seem to suggest that many visitors do not understand the space constraints of the facilities at Brooks Camp or the space needs of the bears.

References

- Costello, Christopher, Lynne Lewis, John Lynham, and Leslie Richardson. (2023) The charisma premium: Iconic individuals and wildlife values. *Journal of Environmental Economics and Management*. 122:102872. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jeem.2023.102872>.
- Fitz, Michael, Lynne Lewis, Leslie Richardson, and Jeffrey Skibins. (2021) Live animal cam viewing: Survey of Katmai National Park Bearcam Viewers 2019 and 2020. Report for explore.org and the Katmai Conservancy. https://drive.google.com/file/d/1BGoeVoHZ_NvvSh6rJgNcy-5KI5BJV2wF/view?usp=sharing.
- National Park Service. (2020) Programmatic clearance for NPS-sponsored public surveys: Pool of known questions. U.S. Department of the Interior.
- Richardson, Leslie, and Lynne Lewis. (2022). Getting to know you: Individual animals, wildlife webcams, and willingness to pay for brown bear preservation. *American Journal of Agricultural Economics*. 104(2): 673–692. <https://doi.org/10.1111/ajae.12249>.
- Strawn, Matthew and Yen Le. (2015) Katmai National Park & Preserve Visitor Study: Summer 2014. Social and Economic Sciences Research Center, Washington State University, Pullman, WA. <https://www.nps.gov/katm/learn/management/upload/KATM14-report-final.pdf>.
- Sharp, Ryan L., Jeffrey C. Skibins & Julie A. Sharp. (2017) Online and onsite brown bear viewing: Influence on visitors' support for conservation-based management at Katmai National Park and Preserve. Kansas State University. <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1u7bv-x2omulbFaEauheFE0kSt7CuotBX/view?usp=sharing>.
- Skibins, Jeffrey C., Leslie Richardson, Lynne Lewis, and Mike Fitz. (2023) Is one the loneliest number? Impact of tourists' ability to identify individual bears on conservation outcomes. *Frontiers in Sustainable Tourism*. 2:1097511. <https://doi.org/10.3389/frsut.2023.1097511>.
- Skibins Jeffrey C. & Ryan L. Sharp (2018): Binge watching bears: efficacy of real vs. virtual flagship exposure. *Journal of Ecotourism*. 18(2): 152-164. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14724049.2018.1553977>.
- Wilkinson, Christine E. (2023) Public interest in individual study animals can bolster wildlife conservation. *Nature Ecology & Evolution*. 7: 478–479. <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41559-023-02009-9>.

Appendix A: Respondent Comments

Table A1: “Which option to reduce congestion/crowding at Brooks Camp would you most prefer?”
Comments from respondents who chose ‘other’ (Figure 15 and Table 1).

| Date and Time | Day Trip or Overnight | Comment |
|-------------------|-----------------------|--|
| 7/6/2023 14:01 | Day Trip | Educate viewers to take a few pic and allow others the same opportunity |
| 7/6/2023 14:07 | Overnight | Just make the platform wider at some point |
| 7/6/2023 19:21 | Day Trip | Schedule better |
| 7/7/2023 15:11 | Day Trip | Expand trails and platforms |
| 7/7/2023 15:51 | Overnight | Expand trails/platforms |
| 7/7/2023 19:21 | Day Trip | Expand access |
| 7/7/2023 19:24 | Day Trip | Limit concessionaires licenses |
| 7/8/2023 16:32 | Day Trip | More places to view from |
| 7/9/2023 13:58 | Day Trip | Manage crowds on platform |
| 7/9/2023 14:00 | Day Trip | Maybe more ranger presence to make sure people are doing what they should or shouldn't be doing. |
| 7/9/2023 14:13 | Day Trip | Please include a water taxi operated by NPS with more runs |
| 7/9/2023 15:59 | Day Trip | Idk |
| 7/9/2023 16:17 | Day Trip | Both of the above |

| | | |
|--------------------|-----------|--|
| 7/9/2023 16:22 | Day Trip | Eliminate overnight trips, remove infrastructure, and limit numbers of people to stop the habituation of bears and allow bears to actually live alongside people rather than as amusement park-like attractions. |
| 7/9/2023 17:16 | Day Trip | I would leave it up to rangers to decide - limit passes |
| 7/9/2023 17:33 | Day Trip | Less people on view platform that you wait for so it's not shoulder to shoulder |
| 7/9/2023 17:34 | Day Trip | Limit platform at one time |
| 7/10/2023 13:54 | Day Trip | Use a number system to keep people to adhere to a viewing timeline |
| 7/10/2023 14:27 | Day Trip | Maybe two platforms for viewing with lists |
| 7/10/2023 14:59 | Overnight | More places to watch platform along river |
| 7/10/2023 16:48 | Day Trip | Unsure |
| 7/10/2023 17:17 | Day Trip | Increase number of accessible areas |
| 7/10/2023 17:31 | Day Trip | More locations to see the bears |
| 7/10/2023 17:45 | Day Trip | Limit how many on platform |
| 7/10/2023 18:32 | Day Trip | Implement a limit per day including overnight folks |
| 7/10/2023 18:41 | Overnight | Add more platforms |
| 7/10/2023 20:48 | Day Trip | NA |
| 7/11/2023 16:29 | Overnight | Shut down the web cams except for one static view of the falls |
| 7/11/2023 20:32 | Day Trip | Keep it at these levels |
| 7/11/2023 20:46 | Day Trip | Don't reduce but don't increase |

| | | |
|--------------------|-----------|---|
| 7/12/2023 0:57 | Overnight | More camping areas but it's not bad |
| 7/12/2023 13:50 | Overnight | Reduce anglers |
| 7/12/2023 16:07 | Day Trip | Other viewing areas or small trails to reduce congestion |
| 7/12/2023 16:12 | Day Trip | Limit users further, but in a just and equitable way. |
| 7/12/2023 16:26 | Day Trip | Have visitors sign up online for a specific timed visit and control the number of visitors per time slot. |
| 7/12/2023 16:38 | Day Trip | Preregistration for viewing times |
| 7/12/2023 16:39 | Day Trip | Better buzzer system, no need to keep description of the people, just track buzzer number and number of people in party |
| 7/12/2023 17:14 | Day Trip | Redo the USPS system of allowing people on the viewing platform |
| 7/12/2023 17:33 | Day Trip | I am not sure, but it needs to be reduced |
| 7/12/2023 17:37 | Day Trip | Maybe shorter time on platform |
| 7/12/2023 18:12 | Day Trip | For me it's less about total number of people and more about increasing efficiency of how the waitlist for the falls is managed. A more streamlined system for check in/up next would help. |
| 9/11/2023 13:53 | Overnight | I have never been here in July when crowded |
| 9/11/2023 14:40 | Overnight | Make it fair in reservations corporations and large ruin the experience, crowd up the food hall and for people here last year should only get one reservation. The spots sold out in 45 seconds this year how is that possible? |
| 9/11/2023 17:00 | Day Trip | We did experience overcrowding |
| 9/11/2023 17:01 | Day Trip | We didn't experience an abundance of people here today due to this being the end of the season. |
| 9/11/2023 19:10 | Day Trip | It was not an issue in sept |

| | | |
|--------------------|-----------|---|
| 9/12/2023 14:44 | Overnight | Limit number of day visitors but concerned about equity and accessibility for people unable to afford the lodge or to camp. Would not wish to disproportionately penalize these individuals. Park belongs to everyone most of all the bears so hope for steps to permit bears to live on their terms in their own home and hope for fairness in how this is accomplished. |
| 9/12/2023 18:58 | Day Trip | Visited I. September so not many people here |
| 9/13/2023 15:30 | Overnight | Targeted area options of some kind — it's already hard to get space here so I wouldn't want to limit space to stay or visit. This is tricky because I could see crowding happening at BC if folks were caused to wait longer at the falls or bridge |
| 9/13/2023 18:53 | Day Trip | We came at the end of season so people were relatively low. |
| 9/14/2023 15:43 | Day Trip | It is already a difficult to get to park |
| 9/14/2023 15:44 | Day Trip | I think remote location is a natural limiting factor |
| 9/15/2023 15:16 | Overnight | Wasn't too busy this time of year which is why we chose this time |
| 9/15/2023 19:40 | Overnight | Eliminate sport fishing on Brooks river. Plenty of other places for this activity and it directly interferes with bears |
| 9/16/2023 17:20 | Day Trip | Let the main stream day trippers battle the crowds. I bring my passengers before or after the mad house hours |
| 9/16/2023 17:22 | Overnight | The total overall number of people visiting per day, inclusive of day trippers and overnights |
| 9/16/2023 17:29 | Overnight | Limit total number allowed at the part daily |
| 9/17/2023 15:23 | Day Trip | Limit number of CUA holders outside of the Bristol Bay Area |

Table A2: The survey's last question asked, "Is there anything else you would like to tell us?" Here we show those comments related to congestion/crowding only. Table A3 includes all additional comments.

| Respondent Comments on Congestion |
|--|
| There is a huge difference between the experience of watching the Bear Cams and that of visiting the Falls in person. I am a regular viewer and fan of the Bear Cams but I hope that this will be acknowledged even as in person visits are reduced. |
| Since we were here in September, it was not crowded like it is in summer. Also, there was bad weather which limited day visitors, so my opinion is based on those factors. Having seen pictures of the cross in summer and the number of float planes lined up on the lake, I do worry that the noise impacts the bears and potential pollution. |
| We were here in mid-September, so there were no issues with over-crowding, and we had all the time we wanted with the bears. It was wonderful. |
| Brooks is for the people, not the bears. People were here before bears. Separate tracking of bear viewers and fishermen, don't restrict unguided fisherman. Guided fisherman and bear viewers dominate this river. Private angler. |
| Cameras increased the visitation. Timmy Treadwell added to the infamy. Large part of the day trip crowd is clueless - going to the beaver pond, wasting time eating in the picnic area, asking dumb questions at the end of bear school, creating lines for pit toilets. Bears will be fine: look at photos inside the lodge with people fishing the falls and no bears in sight. Once basic rules were implemented and hunting banned with NP being established, bears took over. McNeil used to have 30 bears in the waterfall around 2015 and we were extatic with 14. Then fish runs changed and Brooks Falls had 40 bears in Aug 21, McNeil went lame. What is the goal of your proposal, better experience for the fewer or better life for the bears? |
| I'd donate to a trust fund if I saw any positive results, like Michael Saxton's DNA study, but the NPS's strict darting rules prolonged it needlessly but I was very supportive of his project. Maybe it could have been done faster without the strict guidelines I read. Also I'd support someone organizing all the old ID photos and developing family trees. But be careful what you ask for, look at the #s fat bear week brought in. Progress isn't always helpful to wildlife |
| Need more rangers. Too many bad visitors doing bad things. |
| Some visitors and rangers are too emotionally attached to bears, often the ones that have the most financial status to gain. This is public land. More participation is good for bears. We need more staff that is naps staffed full time with benefits. Not volunteer / part time rangers who often don't have adequate training or understanding of bear behavior. |
| I love coming to brooks but in my opinion it isn't the same or as good like when the floating bridge was here. There needs to be more rangers out and about spotting bears and helping you I'd them. When the floating bridge was here there were many more long time rangers who knew there bears. |
| Amazing place. I would not come when it's busy |

| |
|---|
| Every person every year should only be able to come once to make it fair for everyone. Same people in the cabins every year multi times though the season and 4-5 year wait for me to get the same experience. |
| Protecting the bears and less human footprint is key! Don't let this magical place become over run with tourists. I too love coming here but protecting the bears and ecosystem is come well above my wants and desires |
| Bigger platforms are nice; building another would be better; the issue of congestion is self-fixing; operators follow when it's crowded and go to other places |
| This is a rare and magical place. My top priority would be to limit its commercialization e.g. by limiting day trippers. |
| Please protect the bears. Don't allow people in the river and limit day trippers, I have spent a total of 60 days at Brooks camp since 2015 and have seen huge changes not for the better. |
| I was very surprised by the number of families now coming here with small children. Though I don't want to minimize someone's experience, seeing multiple small children plus children in strollers is starting to take the atmosphere of visiting the zoo. Plus how does one manage multiple small children if there is a bear on the trail? I will be back in September and am curious how that trip will go. |
| The park is an amazing experience, but some tourists behavior of impatience, lack of knowledge, and rude behavior can damper the experience. It would be ideal for Katmai to put a disclaimer that bear sightings are not always a guarantee. |
| Campground safety: visitors need to be more educated on rules and fines more quickly imposed to protect human and bear safety. I don't like relying on the idiots around me who can't seem to close a gate and want to leave food lying around their tent |
| Add a long platform that goes all the way along the river so everyone can spread out and watch bears. No waits |
| Age limit on younger visitors |
| This place is an amazing and people should get to see it. But less at a time to take care of the bears. |
| The ancient paper system with names has got to go! Also please get internet |
| Believe there should be more rangers or bear experts on the paths to protect the public from the bears as very surprised about the encounters you have and no one around even though you are told what to do in bear school |
| Would definitely recommend reducing the number of day visitors - the crowds and wait times have been extremely unpleasant especially after a couple of lovely days without them. Having huge groups show up all at once makes the traffic just crazy. |
| The day visitors are also louder and seem less respectful of the National Park overall. |

| |
|--|
| There seems to a good balance between caring for the park and its inhabitants and allowing people to see everything. |
| Not everyone is paying attention to their time limit. |
| Fisherman appear to have an impact on the movement of the bears. Consider limiting area of access of fisherman. Also the bridge crowd control seems to be backwards. Have people stop moving when bears are around. Bear viewing from the bridge helps with congestion along the trails. |
| Reduce day trippers and fishermen.. |
| Rangers & volunteers are fantastic. Love the ranger talks |
| I would recommend you hire Disney install trams and a seven story platform structure and quickly ruin the park OR SHUT OFF THE CAMERAS. It is too much of a good thing and is overloading the Brooks area. The visitors have changed dramatically in the last five years and are now of Yellowstone outdoor acumen. Not long before the selfie with a Bear becomes the THING to do at Brooks That's a shame. Enjoy |
| I have visited over 50 of the US national parks and the biggest control on crowds at Katmai is money and weather. |
| It costs quite a bit to get here, controlling crowds and user experience is necessary but \$500 per average US household per year is a huge commitment most people are not going to choose to make. Increase accessibility and the funding would come easily. |
| The whole process is very disorganized. Appreciate if better direction was made. |
| I think the old corner area and the old cg trail should be closed trails to allow bears unaffected access to the river. Fishing and bear guided viewing in the river should be curtailed, limited with permit system and time allowed. Visitor use limits!! |
| Because the salmon are running late, there are far fewer people than expected which is great. I think my answers would have been different otherwise. I think day trippers should be limited generally— I've experienced this in other wildlife areas and such tourists offer little economic and other benefits and really are not the keys to maintaining environmental impact. It was FANTASTIC having so few people today. |
| Need a more efficient system for getting people out on the platform. People should be let on to the platform once fold come out instead of putting names down first. It gets everyone out there sooner. :) Thanks! |
| I think the over fishing and angling in a lot of the bear river areas impacts the bears and experiences it isn't the viewers but the number in the river that is likely an issue. |
| Make this more accessible for older people Restrictions are an insult to the elderly It is important to properly preserve however making restriction to prevent people from visiting is not proper in fact it a reflection of power and control |

I've visited here 12 times and enjoy nature. Do not steal this

I camp every time I want to visit Brooks. The campground headcount limitations are doing a terrific job making the experience worthwhile for non day-trip visitors. Early morning and later at night is a great time to indulge in the full Brooks area experience.

It is a great place and you are doing such an amazing job at protecting it but I do think that I will get worse for the bear...

I had a great time at Brooks Camp. It is hard to balance the number of visitors while keeping the bears and environment safe. The rangers were all great, friendly, and helpful.

Table A3: The survey's last question asked, "Is there anything else you would like to tell us?" These are all additional comments that are not listed above.

| Other Respondent Comments |
|--|
| Love the bears |
| Enjoy your time here. Katmai is magic, |
| Great experience! |
| Wonderful time will try to come back! |
| Loved seeing a mom bear and her 3 cubs' spent at least an hour and half watching them alone |
| Amazing park |
| Loved it! |
| Add more warming stations. Crowded in the dinner hall |
| I had a wonderful experience visiting Brooks River Falls today - 9/13/23. |
| This is a very special place |
| Regarding the trust, I would want it to support additional resources and not simply fund something the NPS is already doing in order to save the NPS money. |
| wonderful experience. |
| More signs at intersections giving directions to places in the park, ie...visitor center, bridge, lodge.... |
| I love bears and I'm hyped |
| Can you extend breakfast to 930 even if not the full hot breakfast |
| Please make it easier to book cabins and make it fair |
| I don't like that annual income does not have a 'prefer not to answer' option. |
| I love how friendly the rangers are. |
| Both times I've been here, the experience has been incredible. I'm thankful that all parties involved are doing all they can to help visitors have such a good time |
| Visit to Brooks Lodge was incredible. We had 8 people in our group and we all loved viewing the bears and interacting with the other guests. Great experience. |
| Thanks! |

| |
|--|
| Had a great time |
| Some rangers are amazingly wonderful but one w Covid kept yelling at people by lowering her mask while talking at the visitor center. |
| Great experience |
| Awesome job stewarding this amazing place. Please keep up the great work. You are appreciated! |
| We had an amazing time! |
| Wonderful staff and an amazing park! |
| Shorten surveys and improve survey experience. |
| Awesome experience to visit brooks falls and see the bears! |
| Thank you |
| Just a wonderful experience, THANK YOU. |
| Alaska is an under appreciated state. I'm glad that I did this instead of a cruise because I got to be up close and personal. |
| Overall awesome experience while minimizing risk so the viewing |
| Best experience I've had second to antartica |
| I don't think it's necessary to ask people's income for a park. |
| Amazing time! We have loved camping. We would recommend it for anyone worried about not getting enough time on the falls. |
| I am from Taiwan, but there is no option of Taiwan in reside option |
| For the orientation, the ranger asked if there are any needs for other languages. But it was spoken in English. If they do need, they would be able to understand that ask too. This could be improved with a multi language sign. |
| Love Brooks Camp 🍷 |
| Lodge is too expensive. Rangers make no money. Lodge should give rangers free food. Consider a trust to take care of the rangers food. |
| Had a lovely time. All the rangers were so kind and helpful my kids loved watching the bear team chase the camp bears away! |
| Really great visit! |
| Thanks! |

| |
|---|
| Good luck. A worthy cause if it he bears are truly in danger, though the reasons presented didn't seem that urgent. Currently the cold water has delayed the salmon, not increase of temp |
| Great experience |
| Don't think annual income should be asked |
| I've also loved the Ranger talks and play by play that can be viewed online |
| Good luck. Worthy effort |
| Keep up the good work |
| Thank you! We hope this survey positively impacts the bear population on Kodiak |
| Would have loved more engagement with the rangers. Amazing to see the bears but you don,t learn anything about them eg age, size, nicknames mentioned earlier in this survey |
| We very much enjoyed our day at the park |
| Katmai is a phenomenal experience. |
| This was a long survey! |
| Not everyone is paying attention to their time limit. |
| Allow us to protect our clients as much as possible |
| Thank you |
| Cool bears old female looked tired and could see teeth were wore |
| Love Brooks camp I have been to BROOKS more than 900 times in the last 47 years |
| Continue to allow fishing on Brooks River |
| It costs quite a bit to get here, controlling crowds and user experience is necessary but \$500 per average US household per year is a huge commitment most people are not going to choose to make. Increase accessibility and the funding would come easily. |
| Love it |
| Would like to see more effort to view squatches. |
| So glad we made it this time |
| Thank you |
| This has been an incredible, singular experience I'll remember forever! Yay national parks! |

| |
|--|
| Thanks! |
| Enjoyed our time here |
| Impressive opportunity |
| This was incredible thank you for the opportunity to visit these beautiful animals |
| Amazing day that I will never forget thank you |
| More toilets |
| Thank you for everything that you do! |
| I love bears and Katmai! 🐻 🐻 🐻 |
| There were no proper instruction of how to get to the watching bridge |
| Great thanks to everyone |
| Good luck with your research. I hope it yields positive results for the park. |
| Thanks for taking the time to do the survey |
| More bathroom |
| This is place was much better than I expected. Thought it was just the platform and that's it. |
| Thanks for once in lifetime opportunity to view the bears in their setting. |
| Flush toilet amount |
| It is a great place and you are doing such an amazing job at protecting it but I do think that I will get worse for the bear... |
| Too long of a survey and financial |
| I had a great time at Brooks Camp. It is hard to balance the number of visitors while keeping the bears and environment safe. The rangers were all great, friendly, and helpful. |
| More opportunities to talk to rangers would be great! |